

**50,000-WORD LONG, COMPLETE
TALE OF SCHOOL LIFE**

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STORYETTES.

FATHER'S TAKING WAY.

The sad-faced young man came down the garden-path, sombre and sorrowful. The sweet girl watched him with anxious eyes.

"How did father take it?" she asked tremulously.

"He took it—well," came the reply.

"Oh, I'm so glad, George!" she cried excitedly, throwing herself into his arms.

"Are you?" replied George, holding her limply. "Well, I can't say that I am, dearest. At first your father refused to listen to me."

"But didn't you tell him you had five hundred pounds in the bank?" she exclaimed.

"I did," came the dejected answer, "when all else failed."

"And what did he do then?"

"Do?" echoed the young man wearily. "Why, he borrowed it!"

PLACING THE BLAME.

On his birthday little Freddy received a present of a beautiful model steam-engine from grandpa. He played and played with it until he managed to break the wheels off.

Mother was very angry with him, and talked to him severely on his roughness. Then she punished him by putting him in the corner.

When father came home he found his little man with suspiciously red eyes.

"Hallo, sonny!" he cried cheerily. "What's the trouble?"

"Oh, nothing!" replied "sonny."

"But look here, old chap," said father kindly. "Tell me, I want to know."

Freddy's lips quivered as he answered:

"Well, if you must know, I've just been having a row with your wife!"

THE PACE THAT KILLS.

It was a case of Canada versus the United States, the latter being the home team, and an easy favourite.

"Horses!" remarked the Yankee. "I guess you can't tell me much about horses. Why, I once had a mare that whacked our best express on a thirty-mile run!"

The company looked interested, but the Canadian gentleman was in no way abashed.

"That's nothing!" he said. "I was out on my ranch one day, twenty miles from home, when a frightful storm came up."

"Waal?" chimed in the American.

"So I turned the pony's head for home," continued the Colonial; "and, do you know, he raced the storm for the last ten miles!"

"Yes?" remarked the quiet member of the company.

"Well, I didn't get a drop of the rain, but my dog, ten yards behind, had to swim home!"

EVERY MINUTE PRECIOUS.

New York lay sweltering in the heat, as a long, lank, hatchet-faced man rushed into the hairdresser's.

"Say," he drawled, "I want my trousers pressed while you cut my hair!"

"Certainly, sir!" quickly responded the up-to-date proprietor.

"Get a hustle on, then. And, say, boy, just shine my boots at the same time, and hand me that newspaper. Is your manicurist around? Just step over here, and manœuvre this hand."

"That's the ticket! And will you just step into the restaurant next door, and tell them to send me some sandwiches, and I can be eating my lunch at the same time."

BETTER THAN NOTHING.

The moonlight shone on the lonely house on the hill, where all was peacefully hushed in sleep.

A dark form sat in the shadow of the hedge. Suddenly he moved as a soft whistle heralded someone's approach.

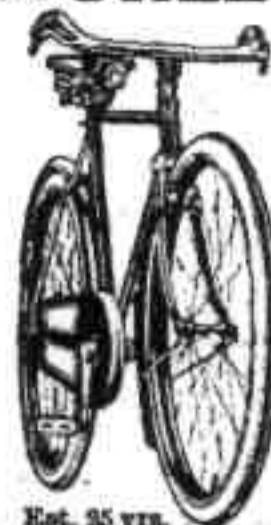
"That you, mate?" he whispered hoarsely, as a stealthy figure approached in the darkness.

"Yus," came the answer.

"What yer doin' with that dorg?" he muttered, as his burglar pal approached.

"Well," answered his confederate, "there's nothing worth taking in this 'ouse, and it's bad luck to come away empty-handed, so I brought along the watchdog and these burglar alarms!"

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Complete School Tale, dealing
with the Adventures of Harry
Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.
By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

Bob Cherry aimed with the remains of the bun, and caught the stranger's silk hat with it, tilting it over his ear. The new boy started and looked round. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! young shaver!" cried Bob affably. This way in, lone one!" (See Page 2.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Not At All Nice!

"HALLO hallo, hallo! That's the new kid, I suppose." Bob Cherry, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, was standing in the doorway of the little tuckshop in the old High Street of Friardale. Bob had a foaming glass of ginger-beer in one hand and a large bun in the other, and an expression of cheerful contentment on his face.

Inside the little shop, Harry Wharton was perched on a high chair, with his feet on the edge of a box of eggs. Frank Nugent was seated on the counter, swinging his feet lazily, what time he imbibed ginger-beer and devoured jam-tarts. Hurree Janset Ram Singh, the Indian junior, was sucking lemonade through a straw, his dusky face happy and smiling. The chums of the Remove looked red and ruddy, after a walk in the blazing summer sun; and they were "doing themselves" very well at the village tuckshop. Frank Nugent happened to be in funds, and when one of the famous

Co. was in funds, all were in funds. Hence the unusual plenteousness of their refreshment; and hence, too, the agreeable smile upon the usually sour visage of Uncle Clegg from behind the counter.

Bob Cherry, having taken an enormous bite from the bun, glanced into the street, and spotted a youth in Etons coming down from the direction of the railway-station. He was a lad of Bob's own age, with a good-looking, thoughtful face, and his clothes were very neat and clean, though evidently not expensive. His silk hat was well brushed, but it was quite clear that it had lasted him a good time.

"That must be the new kid!" repeated Bob Cherry.
 "New kid!" said Harry Wharton, as he munched doughnuts. "I heard there was a new kid coming into the Remove."

"Name of Brandon, or Brindle, or something!" yawned Nugent.

"That must be the joker," said Bob Cherry. "He looks too decent for a Highcliffe chap, and not wealthy enough, either. Any shots left in the locker, Franky?"

Nugent laughed, and felt in his pocket.
 "Yes—six or seven bob."

"Good egg! Let's take the stranger in," suggested Bob Cherry. "I dare say he can do with some ginger-pop after his journey. It's beastly hot. Makes a new kid feel cheery to be taken up a bit, you know. I was a new kid once. Shall I hail him?"

"Oh, do!"
 Bob Cherry finished the mouthful of bun as the stranger came abreast of the tuck-shop. Then he raised his stentorian voice, and hailed him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, young shaver!"
 The boy walked on, apparently not realising that the hail was meant for him. Perhaps he did not recognise his own description as a young shaver.

Bob Cherry aimed with the remains of the bun, and caught the stranger's silk hat with it, tilting it over his ear. The boy started and looked round. Bob Cherry waved his unoccupied hand to him.

"This way!" he called out affably.
 The other stared at him, as he put his hat straight.

"Did you chuck that at me?" he exclaimed.
 "Exactly. Only to draw your attention; no offence, you know," said Bob cheerfully. "Are you going to Greyfriars?"

"Yes."
 "New kid, eh?"

"Yes."
 "Then walk in here."

The boy hesitated. Evidently he did not quite know what to make of the boisterous and good-humoured Removeite.

"We're Greyfriars chaps," Bob Cherry explained.
 "You're Brindle, ain't you?"

"My name's Brandreth."
 "Brindle or Brandreth, all the same. I knew it started with a B," said Bob. "Come right in. We belong to Greyfriars Remove.—We always take new kids under our wing, and feed 'em on the fat of the land, and bring them up in the way they're inclined, you know. Come in!"

"But I say—"

Harry Wharton looked out of the tuckshop.
 "Come in, Brandreth," he said. "We're Remove chaps, and we're having a feed. Come and take your whack."

"You're very kind," said Brandreth.
 "Quite so," agreed Bob Cherry. "That's our little way. Kindness to animals is where we come out strong. Walk in!"

The new boy laughed, and still seemed to hesitate. He glanced up at the clock in the tower of the old Friardale Church.

"Oh, you've got heaps of time," said Bob Cherry, reassuringly. "No need to get into school till calling-over, unless you want to. Come in!"

"Thank you very much!" said Brandreth.
 There was something in the new boy's manner that gave

Harry Wharton a queer impression, that he would have declined the invitation if he could have done so. Why he should want to decline it was a mystery, and perhaps Wharton's surprise showed in his face, and helped to decide the new boy. He came into the tuckshop without further delay.

The juniors looked him over with friendly interest. He had a very pleasant face, though there was nothing striking in it, excepting, perhaps, a shade of thoughtfulness unusual in one of his years.

"Dry?" asked Nugent.
 "Yes, a little," said Brandreth, with a smile. "It's jolly hot this afternoon."

"Ginger-pop, Uncle Clegg," said Nugent, "and trot out the jam-tarts."

"Yes, Master Nugent."

Wharton jerked forward a stool for the new boy, and he sat down. He drank ginger-beer and ate jam-tarts with relish. The feed proceeded cheerfully.

"Pile in!" said Nugent hospitably. "Had a long journey down?"

"Yes, I've just got out of the railway-station."
 "Coming into the Remove, I hear," said Wharton.

"Yes, that's right."
 "Good! That's our Form. I'm Wharton—captain of the Remove. That's Nugent—and that duffer is Bob Cherry. This is the one and only Inky."

Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh grinned as he made an Oriental salaam to the new boy.

"Glad to meet you!" said Brandreth.
 "The gladfulness of my esteemed self is also terrific," said Hurree Singh.

Brandreth stared a little. Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh's fine flow of English was liable to cause some surprise to strangers.

"Your name's Inky?" asked Brandreth, as surprised by that peculiar name as by Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh's peculiar English.

"That's his name at Greyfriars!" Wharton explained. "In Bhanipur they call him Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh, Nabob of Bhanipur, Rajah and Jam and Highness, lord of a thousand spears, and goodness only knows how many elephants. We call him Inky for short."

"Oh, I see," said Brandreth, laughing.
 "One esteemed name is as good as another esteemed name," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "As your Poet Shakespeare remarks, an estimable rose by any other appellation would still emit the sanctful smellfulness."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Been to school before?" asked Bob Cherry, subjecting the new boy to the usual cross-examination.

Brandreth shook his head.
 "No. I've been prepared for the Lower Fourth at Greyfriars at home. I say, Greyfriars must be a jolly place, if all the fellows are like you chaps."

The chums of the Remove bowed deeply to the compliment.
 "Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry.

"Them's my sentiments!" agreed Nugent.
 "Right nail on the head at once," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Greyfriars is a jolly place, but I'm afraid all the goods don't come up to sample. We're the pick of the bunch—the flower of the family, you know. We are cocks of the walk in the Remove, monarchs of all we survey in the Lower School—Al at Lloyd's, gilt-edge, and check action."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Four of the best, in fact!" said Bob Cherry solemnly.

"And there are some more at home like us—Linley, and Johnny Bull, for instance. And young Penfold. But don't raise your hopes too high, my infant, or you'll be disappointed in Smithy, and Bolsover, and Snoop—"

"Snoop!" said Brandreth.
 "Oh, my hat!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Do you know Snoop? Of course, if you do, I withdraw my remark, and beg to apologise."

"Oh, don't mind Bob," said Harry Wharton. "He's always putting his foot in it. We don't pull well with Snoop, that's all; but if he's a friend of yours—"

"But he isn't," said the new boy hastily. "I don't know anybody at Greyfriars. I—I've heard the name before, that's all, somewhere or other."

"Good!" said Bob Cherry, much relieved. "I wouldn't say anything against Snoop, of course; but he is a worm and a toad. But I wouldn't say anything against a chap."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent. "Do you call that speaking in his favour, then?"

"Well, he is a worm, isn't he?" said Bob. "I've told him so often enough. I told him so to-day when I caught him listening at a door—same time that I shoved my boot into his ribs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The new boy finished his ginger-beer, and rose.

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"Is it you, Arthur?" Brandreth's voice, low but more distinct, replied: "Yes, father." Then the door closed upon him, and the light was shut off. But the spies had seen and heard enough, for that one word on Brandreth's lips had told them all! (See Chapter 19.)

"I'll be getting on," he remarked. "Thanks awfully for the feed. It was jolly decent of you to treat a new kid like this."

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton. "We're finished, and we're coming back to the school. We'll come with you."

"Shan't be a tick settling with Uncle Clegg," said Nugent; for the new boy had gone towards the door.

Brandreth paused, and the colour flushed into his face.

"I—I—" he began.

"No fearful hurry to get to the school," said Wharton. "Calling-over isn't for more than an hour yet, you know."

"No; but I—I—" Brandreth's face was scarlet. "I'm not going straight to school," he added hurriedly. "I'll see you fellows later."

And without waiting for a reply the new boy hurried out of the tuckshop.

The juniors stared after him, and then looked at one another. Brandreth's action was, to say the least of it, peculiar. The chums of the Remove had treated him very well, and he had shown that he did not want their company in Greyfriars, which was decidedly ungracious.

"Well, that chap's a queer merchant," said Bob at last.

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Next Monday's Number of The 10. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled:

"He must have forgotten to bring his manners with him when he left home."

"Why the dickens doesn't he want us to trot along with him?" exclaimed Nugent. "Not going straight to the school is all rot! Where is he going, then?"

"He can go and eat coke, for all I care!" said Harry Wharton shortly. "Seems to me to be rather a pig."

"The pigfulness of the esteemed Brandreth is terrific!"

The chums of the Remove, having settled their bill, left the tuck-shop, not in quite such a good humour as before.

Brandreth's action puzzled them, and they could not help feeling annoyed. As they walked out of the old High Street into the lane leading to Greyfriars they glanced round for the new boy, but he was not to be seen.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Snoop Meets an Old Acquaintance.

"GOOD old Snoop!"

"Gentlemen, here's to Snoop!"

"Hooray!"

Snoop of the Remove grinned. Sidney Snoop was in high feather. The fellow who had always been called

"THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

the sneak of the Remove was suddenly popular. Certainly anyone who had seen Sidney Snoop at this moment would have thought him very popular with the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

There were eight or nine of the fellows, and they were gathered round Snoop under the old elms of Greyfriars, and near the school tuck-shop. Mrs. Mimble, who kept the school shop, had been very busy serving such good customers. Jam tarts and cream puffs, and doughnuts and cakes, and all sorts of delicacies had been ordered by the dozen, and ginger-beer and lemonade flowed like water.

Snoop was the founder of the feast. It was certainly odd, for Snoop was not, as a rule, a generous fellow. He had generally toadied to Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, who was the son of a millionaire, and had plenty of money. But now Snoop had blossomed forth with more money than Smithy himself.

And the fellows whom he asked to his feed declared that old Snoop wasn't such a bad chap, after all.

Bolsover major had always called him a worm, though he palled with him to some extent, both being friends of Vernon-Smith. But Bolsover major called him a worm no longer. He said he had never expected Snoop to play up like this, even if his father was getting to be a millionaire like Smithy's.

Snoop, the sneak of the Remove, and old Snoop, the founder of a great feast, seemed to be quite two different persons.

If Snoop's father was going to be a millionaire, as Snoop declared, Snoop was worth cultivating; and as Snoop had received a "tanner" from his father on the strength of his new prospects, it seemed to be true.

And so the juniors devoured Snoop's jam-tarts, and drank his ginger-beer, and voted him a jolly good fellow.

Even Billy Bunter had been asked to the feed. Billy Bunter's destructive powers at a feed were known, and fellows whose funds were limited were chary about admitting him on such occasions; but just now the horn of plenty was flowing with milk and honey, as Micky Desmond put it, poetically and somewhat mixedly. Bunter was welcome to do his worst, and he did.

There were little tables and chairs under the elms in that corner of the Close, and the party were enjoying themselves. It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars. On the playing fields the Sixth were playing the Fifth at cricket, and Wingate of the Sixth was knocking Coker's bowling right and left. The shouts could be heard by the feasters, but they did not heed them. Snoop & Co. were thinking of something much more important than a senior Form match just then.

Billy Bunter rose to his feet, a glass of ginger-beer in his hand, a shiny grin upon his fat face. He blinked round at the assembly through his big spectacles.

"Gentlemen," said Billy Bunter, "I rise to say a few words."

"Hear, hear!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Pass the tarts!"

"Sure, and the tarts are all gone!" said Micky Desmond. "Tary the doughnuts, Russell."

"That's all right!" said Snoop loftily. "There's plenty more tarts where those came from. Trotter!"

"Yes, sir!" said Trotter. Trotter was the school page, and a munificent tip had caused him to desert his duties in order to wait upon Snoop's little party.

"Fetch some more tarts—six dozen!" said Snoop.

"Yes, sir."

"My hat!" said Bolsover major. "Snoop, old man, you'll need to have a millionaire for a pater at this rate!"

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Micky Desmond. "Snoop, me bhoys, I take back all the things I've iver said about ye. Ye're not a baste, or a thafe of the worruld, intirely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter. "Gentlemen, I rise to say a few words. Gentlemen, we are enjoying a great feast, stood by our esteemed, admired, and respected friend Snoop. I needn't tell much about Snoop—we all know his reputation—"

"Shurrup about that now, you ass!" said Micky Desmond, in a stage whisper.

There was a yell of laughter, and Snoop was observed to turn pink. Billy Bunter blinked indignantly at Micky through his spectacles.

"You ass, Desmond! Gentlemen, as I said, you all know Snoop's reputation. We all know him for his—his sterling character, his first-class qualities, kindest friend, and noblest foe. Ahem!"

"Oh, begorra!" murmured Desmond.

"Hear, hear!" shouted the assembly.

"Do we think any more of Snoop because his pater's THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 288.

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becoming a millionaire?" resumed Bunter, warming to his subject. "Never! We congratulate him; but nothing could make us feel a more sincere friendship for old Snoop than we have always felt."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"My hat!"

"Bravo, Bunter! Pile it on!"

"Therefore I propose a toast to Sidney James Snoop, the founder of the feast, our pal! And may his shadow never grow less!" said Bunter.

"Hooray!"

And the toast was drunk with cheers and enthusiasm and ginger-beer.

Bolsover major thumped Vernon-Smith on the shoulder. Vernon-Smith was at the feed, but there was a lurking gleam of mockery in his deep-set eyes. Perhaps the Bounder of Greyfriars did not wholly like being outdone in this way by a fellow who had always been his humble follower. Snoop's manner towards the Bounder had greatly changed since the good news from home. Snoop was not humble now. Snoop had an extremely good opinion of himself, and was not slow to show it.

"Speak up, Smithy!" said Bolsover major. "Say a few words for an old pal—chap we've always admired and esteemed."

Vernon-Smith grinned and rose to his feet.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

"We all know Snoop. What fellow amongst us has not had experience of his personal qualities? Gentlemen, Snoop has had great news from home. His pater is mixed up in a great speculation, and is growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice. Snoop is going to be as rich as Rothschild, and may die Sir Sidney Snoop. I hope he will. Gentlemen, I hope, for the sake of old Snoop and his devoted friends, that the news will not turn out to be a mistake in any way. I drink to our old pal Snoop!"

The juniors looked at Vernon-Smith dubiously. The Bounder had worded his little speech in such a way as to throw cold water on the whole business. Snoop's little green eyes glittered with anger.

"Now, then, Snoopey!" said Stott.

Snoop replied to the toast.

"Gentlemen, I am happy to say that Smithy's off side. There isn't any mistake about my news from home. I am sorry to say that Smithy's pater has been left out of the deal my father has been in, and has got left, as Fishy says. I hope this doesn't worry Smithy. Gentlemen, I thank you, and I hope my friends will always rally round me at many another little gathering like this."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Bravo, old Snoop!"

"I guess you're a bit of a pig, Smithy," murmured Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. "If your popper's got left, you needn't take it out of Snoopey. Snoopey is playing up all right. Yep!"

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders and strolled away from the feasters. His lip was curled in a sneer.

But the juniors under the elms did not notice that he went; they were too busy. The feast continued joyously.

And when it was over, and Snoop rattled out golden sovereigns to settle for it, there was no one who paid any heed to the Bounder's insinuations. They were real sovereigns, and it was so unlike Snoop to hand out money in this generous way, that it was evident that there were plenty more where they came from.

Quite an affectionate crowd of pals walked away with Snoop afterwards. Billy Bunter was overflowing with kind regard, and Stott and Skinner had linked their arms in Snoop's. Bolsover major addressed him incessantly as old chap and old fellow, and Hazeldene did him the honour of borrowing a sovereign from him.

It was curious to observe the change that had come over Snoop. He had toadied to Vernon-Smith because he was rich, and to Bolsover major because he was the bully of the Form. But there was no sign of toadying now; the boot was on the other foot. Snoop carried his head very high, and was quite off-hand with Bolsover major, and almost scornful to the Bounder.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the doorway of the School House, and they watched the little party strolling towards the House with smiles.

"Snoopey is a great man now!" grinned Frank Nugent. "Blessed if I knew he had so many pals before."

"I hope his good news is true," said Wharton, smiling. "If it turns out to be a frost, I'm afraid the pals will drop off as fast as they've dropped on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Bunter, my boy!" called out Bob Cherry, as the juniors came up to the School House steps. "Had a good time?"

Billy Bunter blinked at him loftily.

"Yes," he said. "My pal Snoop has been standing a feed—a jolly good feed. Sorry I can't stop to talk to you now, Bob Cherry. I'm with Snoop!"

"No occasion for sorrow," said Bob cheerily. "Snoop is welcome. Hallo, hallo, hallo! There is the new chap. He's come in, after all."

Brandreth had just come in at the gates, and was walking towards the School House. His eyes were bent on the ground, and he seemed to be buried in thought. All eyes were turned upon him as he came up to the House; a new boy in the Remove had a certain amount of interest for the other fellows in the Form.

"New kid—eh?" said Snoop.

"Yes; that's Brandreth!" said Bob Cherry.

"Brandreth!" repeated Snoop. "I know that name." He bent his glance upon the new boy as he paused on the School House steps, coming out of his deep reverie with a start as he found himself amid a crowd of juniors. "My hat! I know that chap, I think."

Brandreth looked at Snoop inquiringly, and all the other fellows looked at both of them. There was something peculiar in Snoop's manner as he gazed at the new boy. His look indicated only too plainly that he knew, or thought he knew, something to the new boy's discredit, and that he meant to reveal it. It would not have been like Snoop to hold his tongue about anything of that kind.

"Are you Arthur Brandreth?" demanded Snoop.

The new boy nodded.

"That's my name," he said.

"I'm Snoop—Sidney James Snoop."

"Are you?" said Brandreth.

"Yes. You know me?"

"No."

"Well, I know you," said Snoop, with a grin. "Where's your father? Have they arrested him yet? Is he still hiding himself, or is he in prison, where he ought to have been a year ago?"

There was an exclamation from all the juniors standing round. Brandreth's face became deadly pale, and his eyes seemed to burn. For a moment he stood quite still, and then he sprang forward, and his fist lashed out, and Snoop gave a wild yell, and rolled headlong into the Close.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Shadow of a Crime.

HOLD on, Brandreth!"

"Stop him!"

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry collared the new boy promptly. Brandreth was springing after Snoop, as if to inflict further punishment upon him. Snoop was lying on his back and roaring.

"Let me go!" shouted Brandreth, struggling in the grasp of the chums of the Remove.

"Easy does it!" said Bob. "You can't hit a chap when he's down, you know."

Brandreth panted.

"Let him get up, then. You heard what the cad said? He's insulted my father. Let him get up, and I—I'll smash him!"

"Get up, Snoopey."

"It's a good offer," grinned Nugent. "Get up and be smashed, Snoopey."

Snoop did not get up. Perhaps that one terrific drive was enough for him—he did not want any more after that sample.

"Let him get up!" panted Brandreth. "You liar and coward, get up!"

"Ow! I'm hurt!" groaned Snoop.

"Here, hold on, you new chap!" exclaimed Bolsover major, pushing forward in his most bullying manner. "Snoop's a pal of mine, and I'm not going to see him knocked about. Keep your paws to yourself, or you'll get into trouble."

"Let him keep his slandering tongue quiet, then!" said Brandreth passionately. "You all heard what he said. What have I done to him for him to jump on me like this?"

"Quite so," said Harry Wharton. "You keep off the grass, Bolsover. Snoop's big enough to look after himself. He had no right to say what he did. It was rotten to pitch on a new boy like that."

"It's true!" howled Snoop. "He oughtn't to be let in here; he's not fit to come to Greyfriars. It's a disgrace to the school. He's the son of a thief!"

"Oh, rot!" said Wharton sharply.

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry.

"I can prove it!" said Snoop, sitting up. "Keep the cad off, Bolsover. I'm not going to fight with the son of a forger and a thief!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Quiet, old chap!" said Wharton, holding the furious Brandreth back. "We know it's all rot, and we'll make Snoop eat his words."

"You can't!" yelled Snoop. "It's true, and I'll prove it. I'll—"

"Hallo! What's this row about?" demanded a rough voice, and Loder of the Sixth came out of his study. "Fighting, as usual, you young rascals?"

Loder was a prefect, the most unpopular prefect at Greyfriars. But he had authority, and his authority had to be regarded.

"What are you doing to Snoop?" went on the prefect sharply. "I'm not going to allow bullying, Wharton."

Wharton's lip curled. Loder's sudden concern for the sneak of the Remove showed that he had heard of Snoop's good news from home.

"I'm not touching the cad," said Harry coldly. "He's picked a quarrel with the new kid, Brandreth, and he's been knocked down, as he deserved."

"You're not a judge of that," said Loder. "Brandreth, if that's your name, you'd better learn not to be too handy with your fists. We don't allow hooliganism here, whatever you may be used to where you come from."

Snoop staggered to his feet, keeping the burly prefect between him and Brandreth. The new boy had calmed down now, and the flush in his face had given way to paleness again. But his eyes were still gleaming.

"You can come into my study, Brandreth," continued the prefect. "Perhaps a touch of the cane will help to teach you manners."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Wharton indignantly. "It was Snoop started it. He insulted Brandreth—told him that his father was a thief!"

"So he is!" yelled Snoop. "The police are looking for him now, and he's in hiding. That young scoundrel oughtn't to be allowed to come to this school!"

Loder looked curiously at the new boy.

"Is that true, Brandreth?" he asked.

Brandreth's lips trembled.

"No!" he said. "My father is an honest and honourable man; very different from that rotten cad's father!"

"So you know one another—eh?" said Loder, getting interested. "We'll have this out. If Snoop is wrong, I'll make him apologise. But this ought to be inquired into. What do you know about Brandreth, Snoop?"

Snoop's greenish eyes glittered as he fixed them on the new junior.

"I know him!" he said. "I've only seen him once, when he came to my father's office with his pater. That was a year ago. But I remember him, and his name. He says he doesn't know me, but—"

"I had forgotten you," said Brandreth quietly. "I remember you now."

"His father was my pater's partner at that time," continued Snoop. "He committed a forgery, and robbed my pater of a thousand pounds—I mean, my pater had to make it good after he had taken it. He ran away to escape the police, and he's been on the run ever since—unless he's been arrested; I don't know."

"Phew!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I guess that's pretty clear," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "Now, get up on your hind legs, and let's have your say, Brandreth."

"Well, what have you to say, Brandreth?" asked Loder.

"It's all lies!" said Brandreth. "My father was accused, but he was innocent. Snoop's father fixed it on him, somehow."

"Oh! You're making accusations now," said Loder. "Was the case ever tried?"

"Of course it was!" said Snoop. "There was a warrant out for old Brandreth. You could have seen it in the papers at the time. I've got some of the old papers, and you can see them if you like."

There was a hush.

Brandreth's face was very pale now. Some of the juniors looked at him compassionately. They understood now that Snoop's accusation was true; only the boy persisted in a belief in his father's innocence. But, so far as the law was concerned, the law had said its word, and Brandreth's father was adjudged guilty.

"Well, this is a pretty kettle of fish!" said Loder, with a whistle. "It seems that your father is a forger, and hunted by the police—"

"He is nothing of the kind. He was innocent!"

"But he was found guilty, is that it?"

"He was never tried, as he was not arrested," said Brandreth. "He was supposed to be guilty. But he wasn't."

"Has he been arrested yet?"

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"No."

"Are the police hunting for him?"

"Yes," muttered Brandreth.

"And why did he run away—because he was innocent?" asked Loder sarcastically, and some of the fellows chuckled.

"Because old Snoop had worked things so that he had no chance," said Brandreth steadily. "I've seen my father since then, and he's explained it all to me. It was a scheme of old Snoop to bolster up a failing business, and he made my pater the scapegoat."

Snoop burst into a sneering laugh.

"That's a likely yarn!" he said. "Who's slandering now, I'd like to know? Brandreth's father is a criminal, hiding from the police. If he was innocent, why couldn't he stay and take his trial like a man? My father was there ready to answer up before all the world."

"That settles that!" said Bolsover major.

"Yes, rather!"

"I should advise you, young 'un, to be a bit more careful in your accusations," said Loder, with a frown at Brandreth. "That kind of yarn won't do you any good. Anybody could say that—but facts speak for themselves. Whatever your pater did or didn't do, it's a fact that he's dodging the police now, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And you've got the cheek to come to this school—under those circumstances?"

Brandreth flushed.

"I've told you what I believe—"

"I know that. The trouble is that nobody else will believe as you do; and you have come here to disgrace the school. The sooner you go home the better, I should think!"

"That's for the headmaster to say, not for you!" said Brandreth, with spirit.

"None of your cheek, you young cub. It's my duty as a prefect to speak to the Head about this at once, and I recommend you to lie low till you get the order of the boot. You certainly can't stay here."

Loder turned away.

Brandreth looked about him. Most of the fellows were turning away from him, and a haggard look came over the boy's handsome face.

Snoop looked at him with a sneering grin, and turned his back ostentatiously, and walked away with his friends. As the crowd dispersed, Brandreth was left standing quite alone. He hesitated for some moments, his cheeks alternately crimson and pale. Then, with a firm step, he came on into the House.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Not Friendless!

"WELL, that takes the cake!"

Bob Cherry made that remark in No. 1 Study in the Remove passage. The Co. were all there.

Harry Wharton was looking unusually thoughtful. The chums of the Remove had been discussing the strange scene downstairs. They were sorry for Brandreth; but the general feeling was that, under the circumstances, he should not have come to Greyfriars. His firm belief in his father's innocence was natural; but it did not prove anything. He would naturally believe so, whatever the facts were.

"Poor kid!" said Nugent, as he cracked a walnut. "I suppose he didn't know that Snoop was at this school, and would recognise him. What a rotten thing to happen to a chap on his first day at school!"

"He ought to have sense enough to keep away!" said Johnny Bull. "Dash it all, this isn't a home for the sons of criminals!"

"Well, he can't help what his father did," said Bob Cherry.

"No; but he can't expect to get on here," said Bull. "A disgrace like that would ruin anybody. He ought to lie low, not come to a public school with a yarn like that hanging about him."

"He couldn't have known Snoop was here. Snoop might have held his tongue," said Harry Wharton.

"Catch Snoop doing that if he knew anything against anybody! I suppose he feels a bit ratty, too, as it was his father who was robbed. And the kid makes accusations against his father, too."

"Might be something in what Brandreth says, if old Snoop is anything like young Snoop!" said Wharton drily.

Johnny Bull shook his head.

"Not fair to believe that!" he said. "The man who was willing to face the music is the man to believe in. Innocent men don't run away and refuse to stand their trial."

"No, I must say that, though I don't like Snoop," Nugent remarked. "It's not fair to take the accusation of a hunted criminal against the man he's robbed."

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Wharton looked worried.

"That's right enough, I suppose," he said. "Any criminal could make reckless accusations against the man he'd robbed, and it wouldn't be fair to believe them. But—but—I like that chap Brandreth's looks."

"He looks all right."

"And he believes his father was square."

"He would!"

"Of course, anybody would believe his own father was all right," said Johnny Bull. "But that doesn't prove anything one way or the other."

"I know that. What I mean is, if a chap's father goes wrong, it's hard on the chap, and can't be laid up against him. It's hard cheese on him, without piling on him when he's down!"

Frank Nugent made a grimace.

"I know what's coming!" he groaned. "I can see it in his eyes. Blessed if I knew there was a rule of the school to make this special study a refuge for the weary, and a home for the oppressed. You needn't say any more, Harry—I know what's coming!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, why not?" he said. "The kid can't help what his father did. It's not in our province, I suppose, to visit the father's sins on the children. Everybody has turned the cold shoulder to that chap now, and he must be feeling pretty rotten. The disgrace is bad enough without having it rubbed in."

"If he's wise he'll clear out!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Well, he's here now," said Wharton. "He may clear out or he mayn't. Wouldn't it be only a decent thing to stand by him?"

"I knew it was coming!" groaned Nugent.

"He wasn't specially civil to us in Uncle Clegg's, I know," said Wharton. "But—but I can't help feeling sorry for him!"

"He's in a rotten position certainly!" said Nugent.

Wharton looked round the study.

"It's not our business to take him up and coddle him," he said. "But it won't do any harm to be civil, and show that we're not down on him. He must be feeling awfully down on his luck after what he's just been through. Suppose I look him up and ask him here to tea?"

"The fellows will say it's birds of a feather, and that kind of thing," Johnny Bull growled.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Let 'em say what they like," he said.

"Well, they will, whether you let 'em or not," said Bob Cherry. "But I think it would only be decent to show him that we're not down on him."

Wharton rose.

"Then I'll hunt him up!" he said. "Is it agreed?"

"Yes!" groaned Nugent.

The captain of the Remove quitted the study. His chums looked at one another and grinned. It was very like Wharton, and it was kind and generous of him. But it was one of the actions that detracted from his popularity in the Form. Fellows said that Wharton was always backing up somebody whom everybody else was down upon, and they attributed it to obstinacy. And Wharton, perhaps, was a little more careless of public opinion than was quite judicious.

"Seen the new chap, Smithy?" asked Harry, meeting the Bounder of Greyfriars on the stairs.

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"Do you mean the convict's son?" he asked.

"I mean Brandreth."

"He's waiting for Quelch to come in. I think I saw him sitting in the window-seat in the hall," said Vernon-Smith carelessly. "Are you fellows taking him up?"

"I'm going to ask him to tea."

"You're welcome to his company. I draw the line at criminals myself," said the Bounder, with a sneer.

"He isn't a criminal, whatever his father is," said Harry quietly.

"Like father, like son!" said Vernon-Smith. "If he stays here, I'm jolly sure that nobody will speak to him. I know I won't!"

"Nor I!" chimed in Bolsover major. "I'm not particular, but I draw the line at fellows who belong to the criminal classes."

"Oh, bosh!" said Wharton, and he went downstairs.

Brandreth was in the window-seat in the hall. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was out of doors, and the new junior was waiting for him to come in. He did not look up as Wharton approached. He seemed to be plunged into the depths of dejection. Fellows who passed glanced at him curiously, but did not address him. Snoop's accusation had done its work, and the general impression was that Brandreth



Billy Bunter came along the passage with books under his arm, an inkstand in one hand, and a chair in the other. Over his shoulder were a couple of cushions, while his pockets seemed to be bulging with articles. "I'm moving!" he explained, in answer to Nugent's inquiry. "I'm done with those Todds." (See Chapter 9.)

was a "fishy customer" it was best to have nothing to do with.

"Hallo!" said Wharton genially. "I've been looking for you!"

Brandreth glanced at him.

"What do you want with me?" he asked.

"We're just going to have tea in the study!" Wharton explained. "Would you care to come?"

Brandreth looked at him hard.

"Do you want me?"

"I shouldn't ask you if I didn't!" said Harry, determined to take no notice of the new boy's somewhat curt manner. "Of course, you can have tea in Hall if you like, but it's much more comfy in the study."

"You heard what Snoop said about me?"

"Yes; we all heard it."

"My father is a fugitive from justice. Wherever my history is known, I'm pointed at as the forger's son," said Brandreth bitterly. "I thought nothing would be known about it here, or I shouldn't have come to Greyfriars."

"I suppose so!" assented Wharton.

"My father was innocent."

Wharton was silent. He sympathised with Brandreth's belief in his father's innocence, but he could hardly share his opinion.

"Of course, it's no good saying so," said Brandreth wearily. "I've got to stand the disgrace, same as if he was

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guilty. If Snoop had had any decency, he would have held his tongue. There was no need to give it away."

"I think that, certainly!" said Harry.

"Now I shall have to stand it, I suppose?"

"You'll stay here, then?"

Brandreth's eyes gleamed.

"I shall stay if I'm allowed to. I'm not going to have my mother worried with this. If I asked her to take me away the first day I've got here, she would know it's got out, and you can guess what she'd feel like. It wasn't easy for her to send me here, and I'm not going to worry her and disappoint her, if I can help it. If the fellows are down on me, I can stand it, somehow."

"They won't all be down on you," said Harry. "There will be some talk at first, but if you stand it, and play the game, you'll soon be let alone. You've only got to show that you're all right yourself, and they'll soon stop caring what your father was. You'll have to be a bit more careful than other fellows, that's all. Only if you'll let me advise you, I'd take it quietly, and not be sulky or sullen about it. That won't do any good. And—and I wouldn't say anything more about Snoop's father."

"What I said was true."

"But how do you know?"

"My father told me so."

Wharton looked uncomfortable.

"Well, that's all right, of course. You're bound to believe

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what your father tells you. But—but you can't expect other fellows to take it in the same way. I'd let it drop if I were you."

"I understand."
"Now, come along and have tea, and cheer up," said Wharton encouragingly.

Brandreth hesitated. It was easy to see that he was high-spirited, and did not like being taken compassion upon. But he looked into Wharton's face, and read there only kindness and genial good-nature, and he rose to his feet.

"You're a jolly decent chap," he said. "I'll come with pleasure!"

"This way!" said Wharton cheerily.
And he marched Brandreth up to Study No. 1. And the Co. greeted him with great politeness, and Brandreth's face grew very cheerful over that cosy tea in the study. And the impression he left upon the Famous Five was that he was a very decent fellow, and one it was impossible to help liking.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

To Go or Not to Go?

DR. LOCKE, the Head of Greyfriars, was in his study talking to Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, when Loder, the prefect, knocked at the door. The subject of their discussion was Brandreth, the new junior, and both the masters were looking very grave.

"Come in!" said the Head, as Loder tapped.
The prefect entered the study.
"I have something to report to you, sir," said Loder. "It is important, I think. But if you are engaged now—It's about a new boy who has come here to-day."

"Indeed?" said the Head. "Then I will hear it. I was just speaking to Mr. Quelch about him. You have seen Brandreth, Loder?"

"Yes, sir! I am afraid he has entered this school under false pretences, sir," said the prefect. "It is my duty to report to you what I have discovered."

The Head and the Form-master exchanged a quick look.
"Indeed? What have you discovered, Loder?" asked Dr. Locke, and there was a slight flush on his cheek.

"Of course, you couldn't have known, sir," said Loder. "I know, of course, that you would not have allowed him to come to Greyfriars if you had known his history."

"That is not for you to judge, Loder," said the Head, with some sharpness. "Kindly tell me what you have to tell me, as concisely as possible."

"It has come out that he is the son of a criminal, sir; a man hunted by the police," said Loder.

"Indeed?"
"Yes, sir! A boy in the Remove has recognised him—Snoop of the Remove. Brandreth does not deny it. He is the son of a man who is now hiding from the police, who have a warrant for his arrest for a forgery committed a year ago. I thought I ought to report this to you, sir."

"Quite so, Loder! How does Snoop know about this?"
"Brandreth's father was his partner at the time, sir, and Mr. Snoop had to make good the loss caused by Mr. Brandreth's crime. Snoop remembers him well."

"This is very unfortunate," said the Head musingly.

"I suppose the boy must go, sir?"
The Head was silent and thoughtful. Mr. Quelch looked out of the window. Loder glanced from one to the other in surprise.

"The fact is, Loder," said the Head at last, "I knew this before the boy came here."

"You knew it, sir?" ejaculated Loder.

"I knew it. I am acquainted with the boy's mother—a very noble and estimable lady. Her husband, unfortunately, made a false step, if he was guilty—and I fear that the circumstances leave little doubt upon that point. But it would be unjust and cruel to visit the father's fault upon the son. I had hoped that nothing would be known here of Brandreth's antecedents—I am very sorry indeed that the matter has come to light, upon his very first day at the school."

"Oh!" said Loder.

"I wished the boy to have a chance, Loder," said the Head. "Now that the facts are known, of course the circumstances are different. I confess I do not know what is best to be done. I cannot send the boy away for committing no fault."

"But, sir," exclaimed the prefect, "he can't stay here, can he? The whole school will be down on him—and what would the governors say, if they knew? It's a disgrace to Greyfriars to have the son of a hunted criminal in the school."

"You seem very warm about it, Loder."

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The prefect flushed.
"I'm thinking of the good name of the school, sir. Surely—"

"He has committed no fault for which I can send him away!" said the Head. "I cannot count his misfortune as something against him."

"He has made accusations against Snoop's father, sir—that Snoop's father did what he was accused of, and put it upon him. Is it fair to Snoop to allow him to—"

"Certainly not!" said the Head, frowning. "I shall certainly speak to him about that. I should not allow such reckless talk for a moment. Find the boy, and send him here, Loder. For his own sake, it would be best for him to leave, and I have no doubt that he will recognise it. If, however, he remains, I shall not permit any persecution on account of his unhappy parentage. I shall expect you, as a prefect, to see that there is none."

"Oh, certainly, sir!" said Loder, as he quitted the study. Mr. Quelch turned away from the window, and his glance met Dr. Locke's.

"This is very, very unfortunate," said the Remove-master. "This spoils everything. The boy can scarcely remain now."

"It will be a blow to his mother, if he leaves," said the Head moodily.

There was a knock, and Brandreth entered. He was looking very quiet and subdued. The Head gave him a kind glance.

"You sent for me, sir?" said Brandreth.
"Yes, my boy. I wish to speak to you. You were, perhaps, not aware that I knew the unhappy circumstances relating to your father when I allowed you to come here."

"I did not know, sir," faltered Brandreth.
"Well, I knew," said the Head. "But I had the impression that nobody else here would know—excepting your Form-master, who is entirely in my confidence. It appears, however, that a boy here has recognised you, and told the story, and that it is now known to the whole school."

"Yes, sir," said Brandreth, flushing.
"Under the circumstances, Brandreth, it would be better for you to return home," said the Head gently.

Brandreth's face paled.
"You—you are going to send me away, sir?" he stammered.

"No; I am not going to send you away unless you wish it," said Dr. Locke. "But for your own sake—you can surely foresee how the other boys will probably treat you, on account of this unhappy story. You will not be happy here!"

"I don't mind that, sir; if you'll let me stay, I—I don't want my mother to know that the story has followed me here," Brandreth faltered. "She's very keen on my being here—it's not easy for her to get me into a good school—I suppose it was only your kindness that made it possible for me to come here. I—I don't want to make her miserable—she isn't happy now, sir!"

"My dear lad—"

"If you want me to go, sir, I must go; but—but if you'll let me stay, I shall stay. I can stand it—the mater won't know, if I keep my mouth shut, and she'll think I'm happy enough here—and I don't care for the rest."

"That is a generous view to take, Brandreth," said the Head, and his kind old eyes were a little moist as he spoke. "Your mother is a noble woman, and you are right to think of her before yourself. But have you reflected what your life will probably be like in the school—with this wretched story known about you?"

"I can stand it, sir. Some of the chaps are decent to me, though they know. Wharton knows, and he has asked me into his study, all the same."

"I'm afraid all the rest are not like Wharton," said Mr. Quelch kindly.

"I can stand it, whatever it's like," said Brandreth; "and—and if the fellows are down on me at first, I dare say they'll come round when they see I'm decent."

"You choose to remain, then?" said the Head.
"If you'll let me, sir."

"I shall certainly allow you, if you wish," said Dr. Locke. "But one thing I must say, Brandreth. You have uttered accusations against the man who was injured by your father—this must not be repeated. I can understand that you believe your father to be innocent; that is right and natural. But you must not utter rash accusations against others. You must promise me this."

Brandreth bit his lip hard.

ANSWERS

"What I said was true, sir; but I will not speak of Snoop's father again, if you wish me not to. I'll do anything you like, sir."

"Very well, Brandreth. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!"

Brandreth left the study.

"He is a manly and straightforward lad," said the Head, with a sigh. "It is a bitter shame that he should have to begin life with such a millstone about his neck. If he remains here, he has a hard struggle before him; but I have no right to send him away. He will remain, and he must take his chance."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Opinion!

"I'M not going to stand it, for one!"

Billy Bunter made that positive assertion.

It was the day after Brandreth's arrival at Greyfriars. The new junior had taken his place in the Remove that morning with quiet self-possession.

The other fellows had looked at him very curiously. A good many of them had edged away from him. Some were elaborately civil to him. A few were kind and considerate. But it was quite clear that the criminal's son was a pariah—an outsider—something unclean in the eyes of the school.

A good many fellows in the Remove were loudly indignant at the idea of such a fellow being allowed in the school at all.

Loudest and most indignant of all was William George Bunter.

Whether it was natural virtue rampant in his plump breast, or whether it was that he had failed to extract a loan from the new boy on the strength of a postal-order he was expecting, Billy Bunter was very much down on Arthur Brandreth.

Snoop's influence, too, was strong.

Snoop was rolling in money in these days, and any fellow who was rolling in money assumed an almost godlike character in the eyes of William George Bunter.

And so Bunter was laying down the law upon the subject in No. 7 Study, where he had come in to tea. Bunter shared No. 7 Study with Peter and Alonzo Todd, and Tom Dutton, the deaf junior.

The Funny Four, as they were sometimes called, generally pulled together, under the strong hand of Peter Todd. But Billy Bunter seemed to be unusually independent at this moment, and the frowning face of Peter did not daunt him.

"I'm not going to stand it!" repeated Bunter, blinking defiance at Peter Todd across the tea-table. "It's bad enough to have rotten factory kids and cobblers' sons coming into the school with rotten scholarships. But when it comes to admitting the criminal classes, too, I say it's time to make a stand!"

"Time to shut up, you fat duffer!" said Peter Todd.

"What has Brandreth done to you?"

"He's a criminal class—I mean, he belongs to the criminal classes!" said Bunter. "I'm not going to associate with criminals! It's disgraceful of the Head to let him stay in the school, now that we know the facts!"

"Better go and tell the Head so!" granted Peter.

"My dear Bunter," said Alonzo gently, "surely we ought to be very kind to a youth suffering under disgrace that is no fault of his own. I am sure that my Uncle Benjamin would recommend—"

"Oh, blow your Uncle Benjamin!" growled Bunter. "I'm fed up with your Uncle Benjamin. Those rotters in No. 1 Study are as civil to Brandreth as if he were the son of a duke instead of the son of a convict, or a man that ought to be a convict. I think it's rotten. If the chap hasn't the decency to get out of the school of his own accord, he ought to be drummed out! That's my opinion, for what it's worth!"

"And that's nothing!" said Peter.

Bunter glared at his study-leader through his big spectacles.

"And as No. 1 Study won't do anything in the matter, I think that this study ought to take it up!" bawled Bunter.

"Rats!" said Peter Todd. "Pass the other sardine!"

"What do you think about it, Dutton?" said Billy, blinking at the deaf junior for support.

"Eh?" said Tom Dutton.

"What do you think about Brandreth?"

"About the brand of these sardines, do you mean?" asked Dutton, with his hand to his ear. "The sardines are all right."

"I'm talking about the new fellow!" roared Bunter.

"Rot!" said Tom Dutton. "You don't have to bellow when you're talking to me! I'm not deaf! I can hear you if you speak plainly!"

"Look here, don't you think that convict chap ought to be kicked out of the school?" Billy Bunter roared.

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"Do you want a thick ear?" demanded Dutton, in his turn.

"Eh? No."

"Then don't you call me a fool!" said Tom Dutton warningly. "I don't like it!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

And he gave up the deaf junior in despair, and turned to Peter Todd again.

"Look here, Todd—"

"Sha'n't!" said Peter. "You are not a nice thing to look at!"

"Are you going to back me up in getting that criminal shoved out of the school?"

"I'm going to back you down, if you don't ring off!" said Peter Todd, in disgust. "If I have much more of it, I'll sling you out of the study!"

"Then you're going to be civil to him—hey?"

"Yes; so long as he's decent."

"My dear Bunter," said the gentle Alonzo, "surely it would be more kind and considerate to treat Brandreth with consideration—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Bunter. "Don't bleat at me! He's a young rotter! He's slandered Snoop's father, for one thing. My friend Snoop—"

"How long has Snoop been your friend?" growled Peter.

"He's an old pal of mine!"

"Ever since he heard from home that his pater's rolling in filthy lucre, and shedding tenners!" snorted Peter Todd.

"Look here, Bunter, No. 7 Study is not going to crawl up to Snoop for his disgusting money. I'm not going to have you cadging him. I've told you before that I'm going to make a man of you, if I have to break a cricket-stump on your fat carcass! You've got to stop this chumming with Snoop! I don't like it!"

But for once there was rebellion in No. 7 Study.

"I don't care whether you like it not!" said Bunter.

"What!"

"I'm not going back on an old pal to please you!" said the fat junior, with a great deal of dignity. "Snoopey was my pal before you came to Greyfriars, and I jolly well wish you hadn't come, too! I'm fed up with you Todds! I'm sticking to Snoop! Snoop is a splendid chap!"

"Hand me that cricket-stump, 'Lonzy!" said Peter.

Billy Bunter made a strategic movement towards the door.

"I'm down on that criminal, and I'm sticking to Snoop," he said; "and if you get backing up Brandreth, you'll find yourself in Queer Street, Peter Todd! I'm not going to take any more notice of you! Snoop's my pal!"

Peter Todd grasped the stump, and Billy Bunter whipped out of the study and ran. He blinked in again a few moments later. Peter was at the table finishing the sardines.

"You'll get licked if you come in!" said Peter.

Bunter sniffed contemptuously.

"I'm not coming in," he said. "I'm done with this study! I decline to know you Todds! I've got better pals than you! What sort of a tea is that for a chap—a few measly sardines, and stale bread-and-butter! Yah!"

And Bunter slammed the door and retired.

Brandreth was coming along the Remove passage as Bunter rolled down it. Brandreth had been put into Vernon-Smith's study, which the Bunder shared with Skinner. Both of them had objected, but they did not care to state their objections to Mr. Quelch, and so the new boy was quartered there. But both Vernon-Smith and Skinner intended to make his new quarters as uncomfortable for him as possible.

Bunter blinked at Brandreth, and turned up his fat little nose as ostentatiously as possible. The new boy did not appear to observe it, but went on quietly towards his study. Billy Bunter snorted, annoyed that his lofty contempt had passed unnoticed.

"So you're still here?" he exclaimed.

Then Brandreth looked round.

"Yes," he said. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that we're not going to stand you!" said Bunter disdainfully. "We don't want sons of criminals at Greyfriars! That's what I mean, and I say— Oh, oh, oh! Leggo!"

The new junior's grasp was upon the Owl of the Remove, and Billy Bunter descended upon the floor with a mighty bump. He groped for his spectacles, and set them straight on his nose, and roared.

"Ow, ow! Oh! Yaroooh! Beast!"

"You had better keep a civil tongue in your head!" said Brandreth, glaring down upon him. "I've a jolly good mind to kick you the length of the passage!"

He half raised his foot as he spoke.

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "I—I didn't really mean to say

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that, you know. I—I meant I was jolly glad you'd come! Ow!"

Brandreth's lip curled, and he went into his study. Billy Bunter scrambled up, and shook a fat fist at the closed door, and limped away.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Row!

BRANDRETH came into his study with a somewhat flushed face, and breathing hard.

Vernon-Smith and Skinner were both there.

They did not look at their new study-mate. They were doing their preparation at the table, and had it fully occupied, and did not make room for Brandreth.

To all appearance, they did not know that he had entered. Brandreth understood that they were ignoring him deliberately, and his flush deepened.

"Can I come to the table?" he asked, putting his books down on a chair.

Then the Bounder looked up. His eye travelled over Brandreth from top to toe, and then from toe to top. That disdainful and irritating survey brought a gleam into the new junior's eyes.

"No, you can't!" said the Bounder shortly. "We're using the table!"

"Just so!" said Skinner. "Don't bother, young 'un!"

"I must do my work," said Brandreth quietly.

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"You can do it in the Form-room?" he suggested.

"Or in the box-room," grinned Skinner, "or in the stable! Anywhere you like, in fact—excepting here!"

"This is my study, and I am going to work here," said Brandreth. "If you do not make room for me, I shall make room for myself!"

Vernon-Smith rose to his feet.

"I may as well put this to you plainly," he said. "You're not the kind of chap to come to this school. We don't want to associate with you. If you don't choose to get out of the place, you'll be sent to Coventry, and ignored. We don't want you in this study. I hope that's plain enough!"

"Quite," said Brandreth steadily. "I'll answer just as plainly. I sha'n't leave Greyfriars unless the Head says I'm to leave. I sha'n't take any notice of your opinion on the subject. And I shall do my work here!"

"You know what to expect if you don't make yourself scarce!" said the Bounder. "Do the decent thing, and get out!"

Brandreth came up to the table. He took up books and papers in both hands to remove them. The Bounder jumped up again.

"Put those books down!" he shouted.

"Put 'em down!" echoed Skinner.

Brandreth put them down—on a chair. Then he placed his own books on the table. With a sweep of the hand, Vernon-Smith knocked them to the floor. The books crashed right and left, and Brandreth's eyes began to blaze.

"If that's the game, two can play at it!" he exclaimed.

He seized the table by the edge, and tilted it up. The contents shot off in a stream, and an inkpot caught Skinner on the chest, and overflowed on him. Skinner gave a roar. The table fell over on its side—and on Vernon-Smith's toe.

"Ow!" yelled the Bounder.

"Groogh!" gasped Skinner. "Look at me! Ow! I'll smash you, you rotter! I'll pulverise you! Ow!"

"Leave him to me!" said the Bounder, between his teeth. "I'll smash him!" He whipped off his jacket. "Now come on, you son of a thief, and take your licking!"

"I'll come on fast enough!" blazed out Brandreth.

And he fairly leaped at the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith was the bigger of the two, and he was older, and he prided himself upon his knowledge of boxing. He had anticipated an easy handful in the new boy; but Brandreth turned out an unexpectedly tough customer.

Perhaps he did not have as much science as the Bounder, but he was hard as iron, and desperately determined, and he did not care how much he was hurt.

The Bounder got in several well-planted blows; but the new junior drove him back under a rain of thumps on the face and chest, and, as he staggered to the wall, seized him and got his head into chancery.

Pommel! Pommel! Pommel!

"Yow!" roared the Bounder. "Ow! Oh, help me, Skinny!"

Skinner rushed to his aid, and threw his arm round Brandreth's neck from behind, and dragged him backwards.

"Now we'll settle you, you cad!" yelled Vernon-Smith, springing at the new boy as he struggled in Skinner's grasp.

The study door opened, and Bob Cherry looked in.

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"Hallo—hallo—hallo!" he exclaimed. "Is it a riot or a revolution? Eh—my hat—two to one! That won't do! Fair play, you cads!"

Bob Cherry rushed in at once. He seized Skinner, and dragged him away from the new junior, and hurled him into a corner of the study. There was a bump as Brandreth went down at the same moment under the Bounder's lashing fists. The next moment Vernon-Smith reeled back with a yell, as Bob's open hand struck him across the face.

"No, you don't!" said Bob. "Give him time to get up—and tackle him one at a time, you cowardly cads! If the other one is spoiling for a fight, I'm ready!"

"Get out of my study, Bob Cherry!" shrieked the Bounder.

"No fear! I'm going to see fair play!"

Brandreth staggered up. He was looking dazed, and his lip was cut and running red.

"Pile in, kid!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "I'll see fair play. If Skinner is looking for trouble, I'll oblige him!"

"Thank you!" muttered Brandreth thickly.

"Not at all; pile in!"

Brandreth did not need bidding. He rushed at his enemy, and Vernon-Smith defended himself desperately. In a second they were going it hammer and tongs. Bob Cherry turned towards Skinner, who was sitting dizzily in the corner where he had been thrown, leaning against the wall and gasping.

"Not had enough, Skinny, have you?" asked Bob.

"Ow!" groaned Skinner.

"Jump up!" urged Bob. "See how the Bounder's going it. Always follow a good example. Jump up and have some more!"

"Let me alone, you beast!" panted Skinner.

"Sure you're satisfied?" asked Bob anxiously.

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

Tramp—tramp—tramp! Brandreth and Vernon-Smith were fighting furiously. A crowd of fellows came along the passage, attracted by the terrific din. They thronged the passage, and crammed into the doorway.

"What on earth's the row about?" demanded Harry Wharton.

Bob grinned and shook his head.

"Blessed if I know! I looked in, and found the two of them piling on the new kid, so I persuaded Skinny to stop it—didn't I, Skinny?"

"Ow!" groaned Skinner.

"You'd better mind your own business!" said Bolsover major threateningly. "Smithy has a right to kick a rotten criminal out of his study if he likes!"

"Oh, shut up, do!" said Bob.

"I'm jolly well—"

"Chuck him out, Bolsover!" said Snoop.

"Why don't you come in and do the chucking-out, Snoop?" asked Bob Cherry invitingly. "I'm waiting to be chucked!"

Snoop backed away; but Johnny Bull gave him a mighty shove, and sent him reeling into the study. Snoop staggered against Bob Cherry, who promptly grasped him.

"Ow!" roared Snoop. "Lend me a hand, Bolsover!"

"What-ho!" said Bolsover major. "Let Snoop alone at once, Cherry!"

Bob Cherry was not likely to obey an order given in that tone. He shook Snoop like a dog shaking a rat, and glared defiance at the bully of the Remove.

"Go and eat coke!" he retorted.

Bolsover major ran at him; but Johnny Bull promptly collared him, and they struggled. Stott joined in to help Bolsover, and Wharton joined in and collared Stott. The study was crowded with struggling juniors.

In the midst of the din there was a shout of warning from the fellows in the passage.

"Cave!"

"Here comes Wingate!"

The throng in the passage opened to give way to Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars. Wingate had a frown of anger on his face, and a cane in his hand.

"Stop that row at once!" he roared. "You can be heard over the whole house! Stop it! Do you hear, you rascals?"

And, to lend force to his words, the Greyfriars captain laid about him with the cane, lashing at all the excited combatants with great impartiality.

With loud yells, the fighting juniors separated. They stood, flushed and untidy and panting, glaring at one another.

Wingate eyed them sternly.

"A pretty-looking set of scarecrows!" he exclaimed. "Now, what is this row about? Out with it, sharp! There's been too many rows among you Remove kids—together too many. You got out of hand while your Form-master was

away, and you have been asking for lickings for a long time!"

"Well, Smithy has got one now, after asking for it!" grinned Bob Cherry, as he looked at the Bounder's bruised and stained face.

Vernon-Smith was stuttering with rage.

"What is all this about?" demanded Wingate. "It's your study, Smith—tell me what you started this for?"

"That cad started it!" said Vernon-Smith, pointing at Brandreth. "I'm not going to have him in my study! He's a criminal, and I'm not going to have him!"

"Mr. Quelch assigned him to this study," said Wingate, frowning.

"I don't care!" yelled the Bounder. "I tell you I won't have him in here. If he don't get out of Greyfriars, I'll get my pater to write to the Board of Governors about it."

"And I'll do the same!" yelled Snoop. "It's disgraceful."

"And so will I," echoed Skinner. "It's rotten!"

Wingate hesitated.

He was disposed to be kind enough to the new boy himself, though he had heard all about him; but he realised that the Form Brandreth had entered could not be expected to welcome with open arms a fellow with such antecedents.

"I don't see why you should be down on Brandreth," said the Greyfriars captain, at last. "And as Mr. Quelch put him in here, he must be here. You have no right to stop him. You will take two hundred lines, Smith."

"I'll take all the lines you like, but I won't have that cad in here," said Vernon-Smith furiously.

"And if you touch him again I'll cane you," said Wingate.

"I can take care of myself," said Brandreth.

"Hold your tongue!" said the worried prefect.

"If you two chaps don't want Brandreth in here, I'll speak to Mr. Quelch about it, if you like."

"Good egg!" exclaimed Skinner.

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth.

"Some of the fellows here seem to like criminals," he said. "Let them have him. Bob Cherry can have him if he likes."

"Well, there's four in No. 13 already," said Bob, "or I'd have him like a shot. But it would be easy enough to change with another fellow, Brandreth—and you can't want to dig in here with a pair of beastly cads like Smithy and Skinner."

"Look here—" roared the Bounder, with a fierce movement towards the exceedingly plain-spoken Bob. Wingate slung him back.

"Enough of that," he said sharply. "If there's any more fighting here, you will hear from me. Brandreth, you can go and bathe your eye—it needs it—and then you can come to my study, and I'll tell you what's to be done."

"Very well, Wingate," said Brandreth quietly. He picked up his book, and left the study without another word. The excited crowd of Removites dispersed, and Wingate made his way to Mr. Quelch's study. Vernon-Smith dabbed the "claret" from his nose, and grinned at Skinner—a rather sideways grin.

"We're rid of him, anyway," he said savagely.

"Oh, yes!" said Skinner. "That's a jolly good thing. I suppose they'll shove somebody else in here in his place."

"I don't care. We've settled that rotter."

But perhaps Vernon-Smith would have cared, if he had known exactly whom he was destined to receive into his study in the place of the obnoxious Brandreth.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

New Quarters.

WINGATE called in at Mr. Quelch's study as soon as he was downstairs. The Remove-master had heard the disturbance, and he gave Wingate an inquiring look as he came in.

"It's trouble over the new boy in the Remove, sir," said Wingate. "Young Brandreth."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

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ONE
PENNY.

"What is it?" he asked. "On account of his father, I suppose?"

"I suppose so, sir. I suppose it isn't to be wondered at that the juniors don't receive him with open arms," said Wingate. "It's very unfortunate that anything is known about his people. The fellows in the Remove seem determined to have nothing to do with him—most of them."

"I suppose it is natural; though the poor lad himself is not to blame."

"Vernon-Smith and Skinner object to his being in their study, sir. I suppose there would be no objection to his changing out, if any other study will take him in."

"Not at all," said Mr. Quelch. "I should be glad to see some study welcome him."

There was a tap at the Form-master's door, and Peter Todd looked in.

"If you please, sir—" he began very meekly.

"Well, Todd?"

"I hear that Brandreth may be changing out of his study, sir. I should like him to come into mine, in Bunter's place, if you will consent, sir."

"You have no objection to Brandreth, Todd?"

"Oh, no, sir! He seems very decent to me."

"Is Bunter willing to change?"

"Yes, sir. He wants to. He's here, sir."

"Come in, Bunter."

Billy Bunter rolled in. Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes upon the fat junior. He did not understand Bunter coming forward in this way to render a service to another fellow—it was not like Billy Bunter to render services to anybody.

"You are willing to change studies with Brandreth?" asked the Remove-master.

"Yes, sir," said Bunter promptly. "Todd wants to have that criminal's son in No. 7, and I'm not going to stand it. I think—"

"Never mind what you think, Bunter. And I shall cane you if you allude to Brandreth in that vulgar and abusive manner again."

"But, sir, his father's a criminal, and—"

"Silence! If you are willing to change studies with Brandreth, that settles the matter."

"Certainly, sir. I

should be glad to dig in with my friend Vernon-Smith. I'm fed up with these Todds, too—"

"That will do, Bunter. You may go."

And Billy Bunter went.

"Wingate, will you speak to Brandreth, and tell him to take up his quarters in Study No. 7?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"I am much obliged to you, Todd," added Mr. Quelch.

"Not at all, sir," said Peter. "It's a change for the better, so far as I am concerned."

"Yes, I think that is true," said the Remove-master, with a smile.

Peter Todd grinned as he followed Wingate out of the study. He had taken Bunter at his word, and allowed him to quit Study No. 7. The fat junior was somewhat surprised at Peter allowing him to go so easily; he had imagined that his company was much more desirable than it had proved to be. Neither Tom Dutton nor Alonzo showed any more regret than Peter, as a matter of fact. Perhaps they were pleased to be done with Billy Bunter; and perhaps they guessed that he would soon be wanting to come back again. The fat junior would have preferred Snoop's study to any other at Greyfriars just then, but Vernon-Smith was second best. Vernon-Smith had heaps of money, and his feeds were famous in the Remove. Bunter was looking forward with great enjoyment to a regular course of the fleshpots of Egypt. But Peter Todd had a shrewd idea that the Bounder would speedily undeceive him.

It was extremely probable that Vernon-Smith would not feel so keen about it as Bunter did. But the Bounder would

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not be able to object. He had got rid of Brandreth, and he would have to take Bunter in his place. It was a very ingenious punishment for Vernon-Smith's ill-nature and insolence.

Brandreth was bathing his nose in a bath-room when Wingate found him. The new boy turned a wet face and a red, swollen nose towards Wingate.

"You're going into Todd's study, instead of Vernon-Smith's," said the Greyfriars captain. "That's all right, eh?"

Brandreth nodded.

"I'm glad of the change, if Todd doesn't object," he said.

"Good!" said Wingate. "And for goodness' sake don't have any more rows."

And Wingate walked away, satisfied with his arrangement. Brandreth towelled his wet face, and looked rather dubiously at Peter Todd.

"Have they shoved this on you?" he asked.

Peter grinned.

"No; I asked Quelch to put you up with me."

"What about the other fellows in your study?"

"Oh, my cousin Alonzo is prepared to fold you to his bosom, and weep over you; and Tom Dutton is a thoroughly decent chap!"

"But Bunter?"

"He's not in No. 7 now. He's changed studies with you."

"Oh, I see!" said Brandreth. "Well, I'm jolly glad. It's decent of you to treat me like this. You don't seem to share the general opinion."

Todd shook his head.

"I don't see why it should be up against you what your father's done," he said. "You couldn't help it, I suppose."

"His innocence will be proved somehow, some day," said Brandreth.

"I hope so," said Peter diplomatically. "Come on."

Brandreth followed him to Study No. 7. Alonzo and Dutton were doing their preparation, and they rose to welcome the new boy.

"My dear Brandreth, I am glad to welcome you to this apartment," said Alonzo, in the best style of his respected Uncle Benjamin. "You are very welcome, and I am sure we shall be great friends."

"Thank you!" said Brandreth.

"Better than Bunter, anyway," growled Dutton. "That fat rotter won't come back in a hurry."

"My dear Dutton—" said Alonzo mildly.

"Eh!"

"I fear that Bunter will not receive a very warm welcome in Vernon-Smith's study. I fear that his motives were interested in making the change."

"Strange?" said Dutton. "It would be strange if we wanted the fat beast here, I know."

"I did not say that, Dutton. I remarked—"

"Eh?" said Dutton.

"I remarked—"

"Oh, rot!" said Dutton crossly. "Don't be an ass. He had a rotten, unpleasant voice, I know, but I can't see that he barked."

"My dear Dutton, I observed—"

"I agree with you there; he's got what he deserved," said Tom Dutton. "Got room for your books, Brindle?"

"Yes, thank you; but my name's Brandreth."

"Eh!"

"Dutton's a bit deaf!" murmured Peter Todd, in explanation.

"My name's Brandreth!" bawled the new junior.

"Blankets! Who's talking about blankets?" ejaculated Tom Dutton, in surprise.

"Brandreth!" yelled the new boy.

"Is that your name?"

"Yes."

"Jolly queer name, I must say," said Dutton. "Never knew a chap before named Brandy. Still, if it's your name, I suppose you can't help it. After all, one name's as good as another, Brandy, old chap."

"It's not Brandy—it's Brandreth!"

"Yes, I hear you all right, Brandy! Don't shout; I'm not deaf. Give Brandy a bit more room, Todd!"

And Dutton, with the firm conviction in his mind that the new boy bore the fearsome name of Brandy, settled down to his preparation again.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Makes Himself at Home.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Is that a moving job?"

"Looks like it," said Frank Nugent. "Where are you off to, Bunter?"

"Breaking up the happy home?" asked Harry

Wharton.

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Billy Bunter paused and grunted. He was coming along the Remove passage with books piled under one arm and an inkstand in one hand, a chair in the other. Over his shoulder were a couple of cushions, and his pockets seemed to be bulging out with articles.

"I'm moving!" he explained. "I'm done with those Todds. I'm fed up with them!"

"All the fed-up-ness on your side?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry! Peter Todd fairly went down on his knees to ask me to stay; but I wouldn't! I told him I was fed up. You see, Todd wants to make No. 7 top study in the Remove, and he can't expect to do it without my help. But I'm not going to stay there. It's the last straw, having that convict's son in the study."

"Is Brandreth in No. 7 now?" asked Wharton.

"Yes. I've changed with him. I'm going to dig with my friend Smithy."

The chums of the Remove stared at him. They could imagine the reception his friend Smithy would give him.

"Oh, you're in Smithy's study now, are you?" asked Bob at last.

"Yes, I am. I'm fed up with the Todds. I never really got enough to eat there—any more than I did when I was in your study. Wharton. Vernon-Smith will know how to treat a fellow like me. I'd rather be with my old pal Snoop, but he's got Stott and Trevor in his study now. They won't change out for me; they're after his money, you know."

"Horrid!" said Nugent. "Kind of thing you'd despise!"

"Certainly! I hope I shall never crawl up to anybody for the sake of money," said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity. "I value Snoop for—for his good qualities, and for the sake of old friendship. I say, you fellows, you might lend me a hand with these things, will you, and get them into Smithy's study? I've brought all my property away from No. 7, excepting the armchair. Dutton wouldn't let me move that."

"Hard cheese!"

"Yes, he's a regular beast, and so is Peter Todd, and Alonzo's an idiot," said Billy Bunter. "I don't know how I've stood them so long. I was thinking of complaining to Mr. Quelch about their not allowing me to move my armchair, but I suppose it wouldn't do; the chaps would consider it sneaking."

"Is it your armchair?" grinned Bob Cherry.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Mine! Of course it is!"

"I mean, did you buy it?"

"Well, I didn't exactly buy it, but I've always used it, and I always looked on it as mine," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at. Take this chair, one of you, and one of you take the cushions and bring 'em into Smithy's study."

"Oh, certainly!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were quite willing to help the Owl of the Remove with his "moving job." They were curious to see how Vernon-Smith would greet his new inmate. Wharton took the chair, and Bob Cherry the cushions, and Nugent a pile of the books. Billy Bunter led the way into Smithy's study.

He pushed open the door without knocking, as of course he had a right to do in his own study. Vernon-Smith and Skinner were at the table, and they did not look sweet-tempered. The Bounder's nose appeared to have doubled in size since his encounter with Brandreth, and his left eye persisted in winking and blinking. He scowled at the fat junior and the other fellows behind him.

"What do you want, hang you?" was his polite greeting.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"What are you bringing that rubbish here for?" exclaimed the Bounder, as Wharton set down the chair and Bob Cherry placed the cushions upon it and Nugent piled the books on top of the cushions.

"It's Bunter's!" explained Wharton politely.

"We're helping Bunter move!" said Bob Cherry. "Anything else to fetch, Bunter?"

"Well, you might get my armchair out of No. 7 Study," said Bunter. "If Dutton and Peter Todd object, I authorise you to slog them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

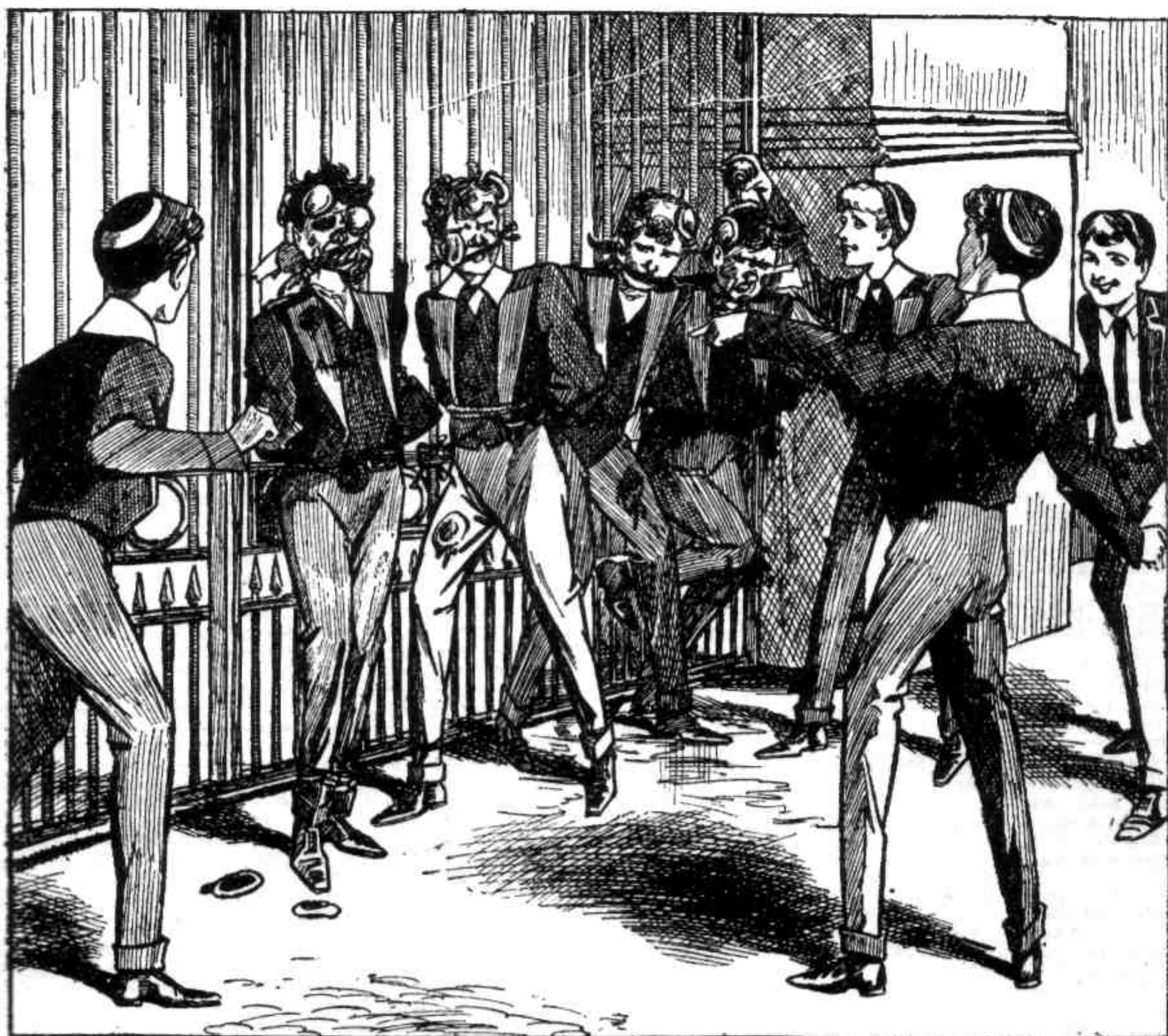
"Look here!" exclaimed the Bounder, rising to his feet, angrily. "What does this mean? What's the little game?"

"I've changed with Brandreth," Bunter explained.

"What!" yelled the Bounder.

"I suppose you're glad to have me instead of that criminal class—I mean, that member of the criminal classes?" said Billy Bunter.

The Bounder stared at him blankly.



Ponsonby & Co. were bound in a row against the gates, glaring at the grinning juniors of Greyfriars. "That's all right!" said Bob Cherry. "Now, we don't want to take away their tarts; they can have them!" The tarts were plastered over the faces of the Highcliffians, cream puffs were added, and then ginger-beer. By the time the juniors had finished with them, Ponsonby & Co. were in a dreadful state. (See chapter 17.)

"You!" he ejaculated.

"Yes."

"They've had the cheek to shove you—you into my study?"

"Oh, really, Smithy, I should have supposed that you'd be glad to have me," said Bunter, with an injured look.

"An old pal like me—"

"I'm not going to have you! I'll sling you out! I'll—"

"You can't!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "You've made fuss enough about Brandreth, and if you make any more trouble Quelch will drop on you, and serve you right!"

"You've got Bunter now!" grinned Nugent. "I hope you'll be a nice happy family together. Bunter's all right if you feed him well, only it comes rather expensive. We've had him in our study, you know, once. Better lock up your grab when you go out, too, or you won't find it at home when you get back."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Harry Wharton & Co. quitted the study, laughing. Vernon-Smith's face was a study. He had not given much thought to the question of whom it was likely to be that Mr. Quelch would assign to the room in Brandreth's place. But certainly the thought of Bunter had not crossed his mind. To have the fat, greedy, troublesome, cadging, tattling Owl of the Remove planted upon him like this was too bad.

Billy Bunter probably knew quite well how his intrusion

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was regarded. But he felt that he was in for a good thing, and he meant to stick to it. Vernon-Smith would not find it easy to get rid of the fat junior.

"You—you worm!" said the Bounder at last. "So you think you're going to plant yourself on me, do you?"

"You won't stay here!" growled Skinner.

Bunter blinked at them reproachfully.

"I must say this is a rotten way to greet an old pal," he said. "Didn't I back you up, Skinner, when you wanted to come back to Greyfriars after being expelled for bad conduct? Didn't I always say that you weren't such a beastly rotter as all the fellows believed, and—"

"Shut up!" roared Skinner. Skinner did not like being reminded of that episode in his career at Greyfriars, as Bunter very well knew.

"Well, you ought to remember those things," said Bunter. "I backed you up. I knew you weren't a fit chap to be in any decent school; but I stood by you—"

Skinner seized a ruler, and Bunter edged away round the table.

"And you, too, Smithy; I've always been a friend to you, haven't I? I wasn't down on you like the rest of the fellows the time you were telling lies about Wharton and getting him into trouble. I—"

"Will you shut up?" said the Bounder, white with rage.

"Well, I think you might be decent to an old pal," said

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Billy Bunter. "Anyway, I'm here, and here I'm staying—that's flat!"

"You can change out again," said the Bounder.

Bunter shook his head.

"I think I shall be quite comfortable here," he said calmly.

"You always have such jolly good feeds in your study, Smithy—"

"You won't get any of them!" said the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy. I would be extremely sorry if you made me get my back up. I want to be your pal. As your pal, I should overlook a lot of little things it would otherwise be my duty to mention to a prefect. In fact, I don't know whether I oughtn't to mention to Wingate at once about your having cigarettes in the study—"

"What!"

"And a bottle in that locker—"

"You fat scoundrel! You've been spying here!" yelled the Bounder.

He rushed towards the fat junior with a cricket-stump in his hand. Billy Bunter blinked at him, with a dangerous gleam in his little round eyes, as he backed away towards the door.

"You'd better not touch me, Smithy! I shall go straight to Mr. Quelch if you do. After the row you've had with Brandreth, you'll get it in the neck if you assault the next chap sent into your study."

Vernon-Smith lowered the stump.

Billy Bunter was, as a matter of fact, master of the situation. The Bounder dared not have another row in the study, and have the Remove-master's attention drawn to it; and Bunter's knowledge of his disgraceful secrets was a hold over him that the fat junior was prepared to make the fullest use of.

"That's better," said Billy Bunter, as Vernon-Smith hurled the stump with a crash into a corner. "Much better be friends, you know. Not that I want to dig in your rotten old study—I'd rather be with my pal Snoop any day. But as I'm here—"

"You fat rotter!" growled the Bounder.

"Oh, really, Smithy! I say, you fellows, have you had tea?"

"Yes, and finished," growled Skinner.

"Going to have supper?"

"No, hang you!"

"I was thinking of standing a little supper, to celebrate my first day in this study, if you fellows will join me," said Bunter, with dignity.

"Well, that's all right," said Skinner, a little more cordially. "No objection to that, so far as I can see."

"Mrs. Mimble has some jolly good things in," said Bunter. "What do you fellows say to rabbit-pie and sardines, and—and a seed-cake?"

"Good egg!" said Skinner.

"What do you say, Smithy?"

"Go and eat eoke!"

"Ahem! If you don't care to join us, Skinney and I can have the feed to ourselves," said Bunter. "What do you say, Skinney?"

"I'm on!" said Skinner.

"Good! I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow morning," explained Bunter. "I suppose you wouldn't mind lending me a few bob now, Skinney, and having it back out of my postal-order to-morrow morning?"

Skinner glared at him.

"So that's the little game, is it?" he snapped.

"Well, I don't see why you can't oblige a pal with a few bob—especially as the postal-order is certain to come by first post in the morning, and—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"If you won't oblige me, of course I can't stand a feed. The loss is yours," said Billy Bunter loftily. "As far as I'm concerned, I shall be satisfied with whatever there is in the cupboard. I'm not a particular chap."

"Keep away from that cupboard, you porpoise!" said Vernon-Smith. "What's in there belongs to me, and I'm not giving it away!"

"I should refuse to touch it now, if you offered it," said Bunter. "I decline to be beholden to you in any way whatever, Vernon-Smith."

And Bunter sat down and did his preparation. When Skinner and Vernon-Smith had finished, the latter locked the cupboard carefully and ostentatiously before he left the study. Billy Bunter watched him with an air of lofty scorn. When the two juniors had gone downstairs, Bunter rose to his feet, and examined the cupboard door carefully. With perfect coolness, he locked the study door, and then crashed the poker on the lock of the cupboard. The lock was not built to stand that usage, and at the third crash it was in pieces—and the door was open.

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Then Billy Bunter helped himself.

There was a furious kick at the study door. Vernon-Smith had heard the crashing of the poker, and returned. He rattled the handle furiously.

"Let me in, Bunter!"

"Haven't you finished here?" demanded Bunter, in surprise.

"Open the door!"

"I'm sincerely sorry, Smithy, but I can't open the door now. You see, I'm—I'm meditating on my work, and I can't be interrupted."

"You're scoffing my grub, you fat thief!" yelled the Bounder.

"I decline to reply to offensive remarks of that sort, Smithy. Unless you can be civil, I shall not trouble to answer you."

"You fat rotter! Open the door! Let my grub alone! I'll smash you! I—I—I'll pulverise you! Lemme in!"

But no sound came in reply from Billy Bunter, save the steady champing of his jaws. He was too busy to speak.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Snoop Takes the Lead!

"GENTLEMEN—"

"Good old Snoopey!"

"Hear, hear!"

There was a big crowd in the Rag. It was the day following Brandreth's change of studies, and afternoon lessons were over. Half the Remove had gathered in the Rag, and a good many of the Fourth came in, too, and Coker & Co. of the Fifth had turned up, to see what was going on.

Sidney James Snoop had mounted upon a chair to address the meeting. And the meeting was giving Sidney James Snoop a very enthusiastic reception.

Snoop's manner was decidedly important.

A very considerable change had come over Snoop during the past week. He evidently enjoyed his new position as one of the richest fellows at Greyfriars, and he spent his money so freely that there were a good many fellows who were inclined to vote him a very good chap indeed. Snoop, in fact, seemed generosity itself—quite in distinction to what the fellows had always thought of him. Other fellows had plenty of money, but they did not spend it as Snoop spent his. Money seemed to burn in Snoop's pockets till he had got rid of it—and his supply seemed unending. Billy Bunter was by no means the only fellow in the Remove who felt extremely "pally" towards Sidney James Snoop in his new and prosperous circumstances.

It was a very new thing for Snoop to take the lead in any matter—but he was taking it now. Indeed, Snoop had confided to his nearest friends that he didn't see any reason why there shouldn't be a new captain of the Remove, and why his name shouldn't be Snoop.

And Bunter, and Stott, and Skinner fully agreed with him. Why not, indeed? Where could the Remove find a better captain than old Snoop? Not that Snoop had the slightest chance of realising such an ambition.

But the meeting were backing up Snoop in the most enthusiastic way now. It was known that there was to be a feed at the tuckshop after the meeting, and that was enough to make the attendance very large.

And the object of the meeting was popular; it was to consider ways and means of disposing of the obnoxious Brandreth.

Snoop was more bitter against the new boy than anybody else, as was natural under the circumstances. But most of the fellows were "down" on him. They considered that he oughtn't to have come to Greyfriars, and that if he had a disgrace, whether it was his own fault or not, he should have kept it quiet, and not brought it out into the searching light of a public school.

Why didn't he go?—that was the question the Remove fellows asked one another indignantly. They couldn't be expected to speak to a fellow whose father was being hunted for by the police.

Brandreth had been made welcome in Study No. 7, and was an inmate there; and Harry Wharton & Co. made it a special point to be civil with him. Mark Linley and Penfold, too, were very kind to him, and Lord Mauleverer was good-nature itself. But most of the Lower School shunned him. Fellows in the Third and the Fourth felt as strongly about it as the Remove fellows. Potter of the Fifth had been heard to say that the Head ought to send him away—and Loder of the Sixth had stated his opinion, for what that was worth, that the presence of Arthur Brandreth in the school was an indelible disgrace.

Brandreth did not appear to hear, or, at all events, to

heed, the things that were said about him. He went on his way quietly, and made no sign.

He was not at the meeting; but Harry Wharton & Co. had come, and so had Study No. 7. But they had not come to cheer.

Bob Cherry snorted loudly as Snoop rose to speak, and snorted still more emphatically as the other fellows cheered.

"Silly ass!" said Bob, very audibly. "Yah! Go home!"

"You shut up, Cherry!" bawled Bolsover major. "Go it, Snoop!"

"Hear, hear!"

Snoop glared defiance at Bob Cherry, and proceeded:

"Gentlemen—"

"Bravo!" shouted Vernon-Smith.

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen, this meeting has been called to discuss a burning question," said Snoop, who had evidently prepared a little speech in advance. "The name of Greyfriars has always stood high—very high! It is in danger of being dragged into the mire. What will our people say when they know that the son of a criminal has been admitted to the school?"

"Shame!"

"What the Head was thinking about, I don't know! But the Head has made a mistake this time. He meant it out of kindness to Brandreth—but he should have remembered that a man ought to be just before he is generous."

"Hear, hear!"

"But for the fact that I recognised Brandreth when he came, he would have been palmed off on us as a respectable chap, and we might have made friends with him, and, in fact, palled on with him, without knowing that his father was a member of the criminal classes."

"Shame!"

"Oh, you wouldn't have palled on with him," said Peter Todd. "Brandreth is a bit too particular for that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!" roared Bolsover major.

"Shut up, Todd! Go it, Snoopey!"

"Fortunately, I recognised him, and was able to open the eyes of the school to his true character," continued Snoopey. "I have a right to speak on this subject. His father robbed my pater. Like father, like son! If that outsider stays in the school, no chap's property will be safe!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The Head ought to sack him, now that he knows who he is. I don't know why the Head hasn't done it."

"Why not ask him?" quoth Nugent.

"Order!"

"But I know jolly well that if the Board of Governors knew about his being here they would make it hot for the Head for admitting him. A school like Greyfriars ought to be like Brutus's wife—above suspicion."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Brown. "It was Cæsar's wife, you ass!"

"I don't care whose wife it was!" said Snoop. "Every fellow at Greyfriars ought to be above suspicion. A chap who is known to be a rotter ought to get out!"

"When are you going, then?" Bob Cherry wanted to know. And there was a laugh. The meeting seemed to be as ready to laugh at Snoop as to cheer him, as a matter of fact.

"Oh, you shut up!" growled Snoop, somewhat disconcerted. "What I say is, that we know what kind of fellow Brandreth is, and he ought to get out. If he won't go, he ought to be shoved out. He's a disgrace to the school. If the Head won't turn him out, we ought to send him to Coventry, and rag him till he's willing to go."

"Hear, hear!"

"Finished?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Mind your own business!" snapped Snoop.

"Well, when you've finished I've got a few words to say to the meeting, as captain of the Remove," said Wharton.

"Look here, this ain't your meeting!" roared Bolsover major. "You haven't come here to jaw. You can listen."

"Gentlemen, hands up in favour of ragging the outsider till he clears out!" shouted Snoop.

Wharton jumped on a table.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "I've got a few words to say first!"

"Hear, hear!" bawled the Co.

"Yaas, begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Let's hear Wharton. It'll be a refreshin' change to hear some sense talked at this meetin'."

"Go it, Wharton!" shouted Tom Brown, the New Zealander.

"Gentlemen of the Remove, before you pass a resolution for ragging Brandreth, kindly remember that any chap who starts ragging him will have to rag me, too!"

"Yah!"

"Booh!"

"Go home!"

"Shut up!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"The new kid isn't going to be ragged," pursued Harry Wharton, unmoved. "He can't help what his father has done, and if he chooses to stay at Greyfriars he's not going to be ragged. I'm not taking him specially under my wing, but I won't stand by and see any rotten bullying of a fellow when he's down, and I've got friends to stand by me in seeing fair play, too!"

"Yes, rather!" shouted Tom Brown. "Here's one!"

"And here's another!" roared Nugent and Bob Cherry, and Johnny Bull and Mark Linley together, and Penfold and Bulstrode joined in.

"The anotherfulness is terrific, my worthy and esteemed chums!" grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Yaas, begad!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"You see, you won't have it all your own way, Snoop," said Harry Wharton coolly. "About sending young Brandreth to Coventry, you can please yourselves. But you're not going to rag him! He sha'n't be touched!"

"What business is it of yours?" demanded Vernon-Smith hotly.

"Well, it's my business as captain of the Form to put down bullying; and I make it my business, anyway."

"We'll jolly well rag you, too, if you interfere!" roared Bolsover major truculently.

"You can begin that as soon as you like," said Wharton. "I mean what I say, Brandreth is not going to be ragged!"

"Look here, do you think he's a fit person to be at this school?" demanded Snoop.

"I don't see anything wrong with him."

"He's the son of a criminal!"

"He didn't choose his own father. If he had done so, he might have been a bit more careful," said Wharton. "But it's no good being down on him for a thing he couldn't possibly help."

"That sort of thing runs in the blood," said Snoop. "Like father, like son. If his father is a scoundrel, it stands to reason he's a scoundrel, too!"

"Oh, that's rot!"

"Then you're backing him up against the rest of the Form—is that it?" asked Vernon-Smith, his eyes glinting.

"Not exactly that. But I'm going to see fair play, as well as I can. If he ever does anything disgraceful himself, I'll be down on him as fast as anybody. But until he does, I say give him a chance!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, that's only fair," said Russell.

"And what about what people will say when they know that there's such a chap in the school?" demanded Snoop.

"What will the Highcliffe fellows say?"

"Blow the Highcliffe fellows! Brandreth is worth any dozen of them!" said Wharton.

"They'll jump at a chance like this to score over us!" said Bolsover major.

"Let 'em jump!" said Harry carelessly. "We've licked 'em at footer, and we've licked 'em at cricket, and we've licked 'em with our fists. If they feel it so bad, let 'em score over this as much as they can. I don't care twopence!"

"Well, I do!" said Snoop loftily. "I'm thinking of the honour of the school!"

"Rats!"

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Rats! And many of 'em!" roared Bob Cherry. "Give the chap a chance!"

"Yaas, begad!"

"Faith, and that's only fair play, entirely!" said Micky Desmond. "Sure, and ye're on the wrong thrack, Snoopey! If the spalpeen does anything rotten, it will be time to be down on him then."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!" shouted the whole meeting unanimously. That was a point both parties could agree upon.

Billy Bunter did not shut up. He jumped upon a chair, and waved a fat hand at the excited meeting.

"I say, you fellows, I've got a suggestion to make. Snoopey has made a jolly good speech, and I suggest that we pass a vote of thanks and adjourn for the feed!"

"Bravo!"

"Hooray!"

"Vote of thanks to Snoop!" shouted Bunter.

"Passed unanimously."

"And now come on to the feed! Come on, Snoopey. It's your treat!"

Sidney James Snoop was not really finished. He had something more—in fact, a great deal more—to say. But he had no opportunity to say it. Bunter's suggestion exactly "jumped" with the inclinations of the juniors. They closed round Snoop and marched him off to the tuck-

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shop. And Snoop had to yield to public opinion. Quite an army of fellows followed Snoop across the Close to Mrs. Mimble's little tuck-shop—even Coker & Co. of the Fifth joining them, a mark of great condescension from the Fifth-Formers. Whether it was Snoop's eloquence or Snoop's liberal feed that moved them, we will not undertake to say.

Harry Wharton & Co. were left alone in the rag. They did not join the feasters—the feast was only for the followers of the great Snoop. But the crowd was large, and Mrs. Mimble's little shop was crammed to its utmost capacity.

"Blessed if I can get on to this!" said Johnny Bull. "What is Snoopey chucking his money away like this for? He's spending pounds and pounds!"

"Must be true about his pater becoming a millionaire, I suppose," said Nugent.

"But that's no reason why he should chuck it away!"

"Yes, it's queer," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "I certainly never thought Snoop a generous chap. But he seems to have money to burn now, and to think of nothing but burning it. It's queer."

It certainly was queer; but, queer or not, there was no doubt that Snoop had plenty of money, and was spending it royally. And the fellows who shared in Snoop's royal spreads voted Snoop a very fine fellow indeed.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Rags!

BRANDRETH did not appear in the junior Common-room that evening, and the Removites did not see much of him till they went to bed. Brandreth's manner was very quiet, but the fellows knew that he knew about the meeting in the Rag. Whatever he thought about it, he gave no sign.

But Snoop & Co. did not mean to let him down lightly. When they were in the Remove dormitory, before the prefect had come to see lights out, Snoop and his backers exchanged glances, and bore down on Brandreth.

Whereupon Bob Cherry ceased unlacing his boots and picked up a pillow, with the evident intention of joining in if there was any ragging; and Harry Wharton & Co. showed a great readiness to follow his example.

Snoop & Co. were not looking for a free fight with the best fighting-men in the Form, and so they did not proceed to ragging. Snoop addressed Brandreth, who was sitting on the edge of his bed taking off his boots.

"We've held a meeting about you, Brandreth!" said Snoop.

Brandreth looked up, and fixed his clear eyes on Snoop, but did not reply.

"We've decided unanimously to send you to Coventry, unless you leave Greyfriars!" Snoop pursued.

"You can do as you choose about that!" said Brandreth quietly.

"You mean that you're not going?"

"Yes, certainly!"

"Mind, the whole Form have decided——"

"Liar!" sang out Bob Cherry. "Half the Form have decided, and they're still the silly half."

There was a laugh, and even Brandreth grinned. Sidney James Snoop cast a furious look at Bob Cherry.

"Will you shut up?" he yelled.

"No fear!"

"All the Form——" persisted Snoop.

"Half the Form!" persisted Bob.

"We're going to send you to Coventry, if you don't clear out, Brandreth," said Vernon-Smith, taking up the tale.

"And all the fellows who speak to you will be sent to Coventry, too. And it's not only the Remove—all the Forms feel the same about it—you'll be cut by the Shell and the fags as well!"

"And jolly well ragged, too!" said Skinner.

"Liar!" commented Bob Cherry.

"Do the decent thing, and get out!" advised Trevor.

"You can't expect us to stand criminals here, you know!"

"Not to be expected!" said Stott. "What you want is a reformatory, you know, not a public school! That's where you ought to be sent!"

"Liar!" said Bob Cherry again, contenting himself with that single polite epithet as a commentary upon the remarks passed by Snoop & Co.

Harry Wharton strode into the crowd that were baiting the silent new boy.

"This is where I chip in," he remarked coolly. "Brandreth, you needn't be afraid that there's going to be any ragging. There isn't!"

"No fear!" said Mark Linley.

"No ragging allowed!" said Bob Cherry. "All ragers will get ragged so raggedly that they'll be glad to chuck ragging on the spot!"

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And as for being sent to Coventry, that's all rot, too!" continued Harry. "There are a good many fellows here who don't intend to do anything of the sort!"

"Shut up, Wharton!" roared Bolsover major.

Brandreth gave Wharton a grateful look.

"Thank you!" he said quietly. "So long as you and your friends are decent to me, it won't worry me much what these cads say and do!"

"Cads!" shouted Bolsover.

"That's what I said," replied Brandreth coolly.

Bolsover major strode towards him, his big fists clenched. But Bob Cherry was between them in a moment, with his hands up. The bully of the Remove glared at him.

"Get out of the way!" he growled.

Bob shook his head.

"You're not going to touch Brandreth," he said. "He's not big enough to tackle you. If you're spoiling for trouble, I'm ready!"

The dormitory door opened at this moment, and Loder the prefect came in to see lights out. He frowned at the sight of the belligerent attitude of the juniors.

"Now, then, chuck that!" he growled. "That new kid in trouble again, I suppose? You will take fifty lines, Brandreth!"

"It's not Brandreth!" exclaimed Harry Wharton indignantly. "We——"

"Hold your tongue, Wharton! Get into bed, all of you!"

Wharton's eyes flashed at the Sixth Form bully. A good many of the juniors shrewdly guessed why Loder was always down on Brandreth. Since Snoop's sudden access to fortune, the blackguard of the Sixth had honoured him by accepting sundry little loans, and, in return for those favours, he was taking Snoop's side in the trouble with the new boy.

"It's not fair to give Brandreth lines, when he hasn't done anything!" said Harry Wharton. "I protest, as head of the Form!"

"You'll get a thick ear, as head of the Form, if you don't shut up!" growled Loder. "Turn in at once, or I'll give you lines, too!"

"Is Brandreth to do those lines?"

"Yes!" roared Loder.

"Very well. Then I shall go to Mr. Quelch in the morning, and explain the matter to him, and leave it to him!" said Wharton determinedly.

Loder glared at him.

"You cheeky cub——" he began. "Do you know you're talking to a prefect?"

"Prefect or not, you're not going to pick on Brandreth for nothing!" said Harry Wharton. "We'll see what Mr. Quelch has to say about it!"

Loder gritted his teeth; but he realised that it would not do to have such an act of rank injustice reported to the Form-master.

"Who started this row, then?" he demanded, changing his ground.

"Better ask Snoop that!"

"I was only explaining to Brandreth that he's going to be sent to Coventry if he doesn't have the decency to get out of the school," said Snoop.

"Quite right, too," said Loder. "I don't know what the Head's thinking of in letting him come here! Fellows can't be expected to speak to him! I certainly shouldn't if I were in the Remove!"

"You've no right to say that!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Get into bed, and hold your cheeky tongue!" roared Loder.

The Remove turned in, and nothing more was said about Brandreth's lines. Loder put out the lights, and retired in a bad temper.

When the prefect was gone there was the usual chatter from bed to bed; but it was not upon the usual lines. Half the Form, at least, had only one subject—they were talking at the new boy—not to him, but "at" him. Vernon-Smith, with his usual cunning, started the ball rolling, and the others followed.

The talk was on convicts and convict prisons, and forgers and forgery, crime and criminals; and although Brandreth and his father were not mentioned, the boy could not help understanding, of course, what was meant.

It was a cunning method of persecution, and quite worthy of the Bounder.

The young rascals expected the baited lad to break out sooner or later; but Brandreth declined to be drawn.

He lay quite quiet, and the juniors soon had the impression that he was asleep, and the ill-natured talk died away at last.

But Brandreth was not sleeping.

When the voices had died away, the new boy still lay awake, his eyes gleaming in the darkness, sleepless, and his cheeks were wet with tears.

HARRY WHARTON stirred in his sleep, and awoke.

He hardly knew what had awakened him.

The night was very warm and still; the dormitory windows were open, and a faint breath of air came in from the dark Close.

Wharton had had a suspicion that later in the night a ragging might be attempted, and this thought, perhaps, working in his mind after he slumbered, had made him sleep more lightly than usual.

He opened his eyes, and looked sleepily about him, without moving, and wondering what had awakened him.

Then all of a sudden he was wide awake, his senses all on the alert.

He had heard a step in the dormitory.

His eyes gleamed. His suspicion was well founded, then—and Snoop & Co. were preparing a ragging for the unconscious new boy, while his defenders were fast asleep. Wharton's eyes gleamed with anger at the thought.

But the thought remained in his mind only a moment. It was only one step that he heard, and it was not going towards Brandreth's bed. It was proceeding from that direction.

Starlight fell in dimly at the high windows, and in the dim light a dark form passed before the junior's eyes.

It was a fellow fully dressed, moving cautiously towards the window. The step that Wharton heard was light and careful, and the sound had not awakened anyone else.

Wharton's lip curled as he saw the junior reach the window, and draw himself up to the ledge. He guessed that it was the Bounder, breaking bounds, upon one of his little excursions, which would have earned him expulsion from the school if they had become known to the Head.

But was it the Bounder? As the figure came more clearly into the glimmering light of the window, Wharton was puzzled. He knew the Bounder too well to be mistaken, even in that uncertain light.

It was not Vernon-Smith. Wharton realised, with a painful shock, that it was the new boy, Arthur Brandreth!

Brandreth was breaking bounds at night!

Wharton sat up in bed, as the figure moved cautiously through the window, and hung into the thick ivy outside. He would have called out to Brandreth, but he was afraid of startling him at that critical moment—and a fall from that height into the Close below would have been instantly fatal.

The junior lowered himself outside the window, his head sank down out of view, and he disappeared.

Harry Wharton sat silent and motionless in his bed.

Brandreth had gone out—at that hour! Midnight chimed out as Harry Wharton sat, in a puzzled and painful frame of mind.

Where had Brandreth gone? What was his errand? It could scarcely be for an innocent purpose that he had broken bounds in the middle of the night. Wharton had declared to all the Form in the Rag that he would stand by the new boy, unless he showed that he was not of the right sort. It seemed as if Brandreth was losing no time in showing it.

Wharton laid his head upon the pillow again; but he did not sleep.

He was troubled in his mind. He felt that Brandreth ought not to be allowed to go upon this mysterious excursion at such an hour; and, at the same time, it was impossible to betray him.

The captain of the Remove was still wide awake, and thinking it over, when the half-hour boomed out, and then there was the sound of voices in the silent dormitory. The whispering tones of Sidney Snoop came to his wakeful ears.

"Wake up, Bolsover, old man."

"Hallo!"

"Smithy, wake up!"

"I'm awake!"

"Hush!"

Wharton smiled grimly. He had been right in his surmise, after all. The cads of the Remove had planned a ragging for that night; but the bird had flown, and the raggers would be disappointed.

"Don't wake Wharton!" whispered Snoop. "No good having a row. I'm going to drench the cad with water, and you fellows can be ready with the pillows to biff him when he jumps up."

There was a subdued chuckle from the raggers.

Harry Wharton did not move. Had Brandreth been in bed, Wharton would have turned out at once to put a stop to the ragging. But the new boy was out of the dormitory. Wharton listened, and heard a sudden swamping of water in the darkness.

Snoop had swamped the water from his jug upon Brandreth's bed.

Swoosh! Splash!

But the expected startled yell of the occupant of the bed did not follow. The silence was unbroken. The raggers, standing round the bed in the gloom with the pillows ready to smite as Brandreth jumped up, did not smite. There was nobody to smite at.

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Next Monday's Number of The **MAGNET** will be the usual price **1D.** and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled:

"He hasn't woke up!" muttered Bolsover, in amazement.

"My hat!"

"What the dickens——"

"He's not here!" yelled Snoop, feeling over the bed. He knew that nobody could have slept through that swamping of water.

"Not there!"

"No!"

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth.

"The rotter! He must have heard us, and sneaked out of bed. He's hiding somewhere in the dorm. now."

"Get a light," said Skinner's voice.

Careless now of awakening the other fellows, the raggers took matches, and a couple of candle-ends were lighted. The flickering light glimmered over Brandreth's bed. It showed it empty, and it showed empty, too, the chair upon which the new boy's clothes had been folded up when he went to bed.

"He's dressed himself!" said Skinner, pointing to the chair.

"And he's not in the dorm.," said Snoop, pointing to the window. "Look there!"

The window was open at the bottom instead of at the top. It was evident that someone had used it as a means of egress from the dormitory.

The Bounder started in surprise.

"My only hat! He's gone out!"

"Broken bounds!" chuckled Skinner. "Gone burgling like his father, perhaps."

"Phew!"

The excited voices of the raggers had awakened most of the Remove by that time. The absence of Brandreth was known to all the Form now. Some of the fellows looked under the beds, and into nooks and corners, suspecting that the new junior was hiding; but he was not to be found. It was soon evident that he had left the dormitory.

"Broken bounds in the middle of the night!" exclaimed Snoop, with a satisfaction he did not trouble to conceal. "That shows the kind of fellow he is. What has he gone out for, I'd like to know?"

"Something rotten, you can bet!" said Russell.

"Yes, rather!"

"What do you go out for, Smithy, when you break bounds at night?" asked Harry Wharton caustically.

The Bounder flushed angrily.

"That's nothing to do with it," he retorted. "If I play a game of nap sometimes with my pals, it's my own business, and not yours. That isn't what Brandreth has gone out for. He's a new kid here, and he doesn't know anybody in the neighbourhood. He's gone out for something jolly shady. May have been going out every night for all we know. There was a burglary in Courtfield the other night."

"Oh, don't be an ass. I suppose you don't think that Brandreth is a burglar?" growled Wharton.

"I shouldn't be surprised!"

"His father's a thief," said Snoop. "Like father, like son. I always believe that. What has he gone out for?"

"Better ask him when he comes in!" snapped Harry.

Harry Wharton was feeling somewhat sore. He had taken no notice of the new boy's unhappy antecedents, and had championed him against the fellows who wanted to persecute him because his father was a condemned man. And now the fellow he had championed had broken bounds at midnight, and it could hardly be supposed that he had a good motive for doing so. The best construction that could be placed upon it was that he was falling into the blackguardly ways of the Bounder, and visiting some disreputable "pub" where sporting men congregated. That would be bad enough; but if it was not that it could only be something worse.

Harry Wharton & Co., in fact, were utterly taken aback; the wind was quite taken out of their sails, so to speak.

Unless Brandreth could give a very good explanation of his conduct, they could not stand up for him any longer. The contempt they had always shown for the blackguardly doings of the Bounder would be shown to be manifest injustice, unless they condemned equally the same conduct in Brandreth. It was exasperating to the last degree to have their position undermined, as it were, like this. They had been championing a fellow who was showing an utterly cynical disregard of their opinion, by his actions—perhaps laughing at them in his sleeve all the time. That was the most unpleasant thought of all.

"Blessed young blackguard!" growled Johnny Bull. "I'm done with him, for one."

"He may have some reason——" began Harry.

Snoop interrupted with a scoffing laugh.

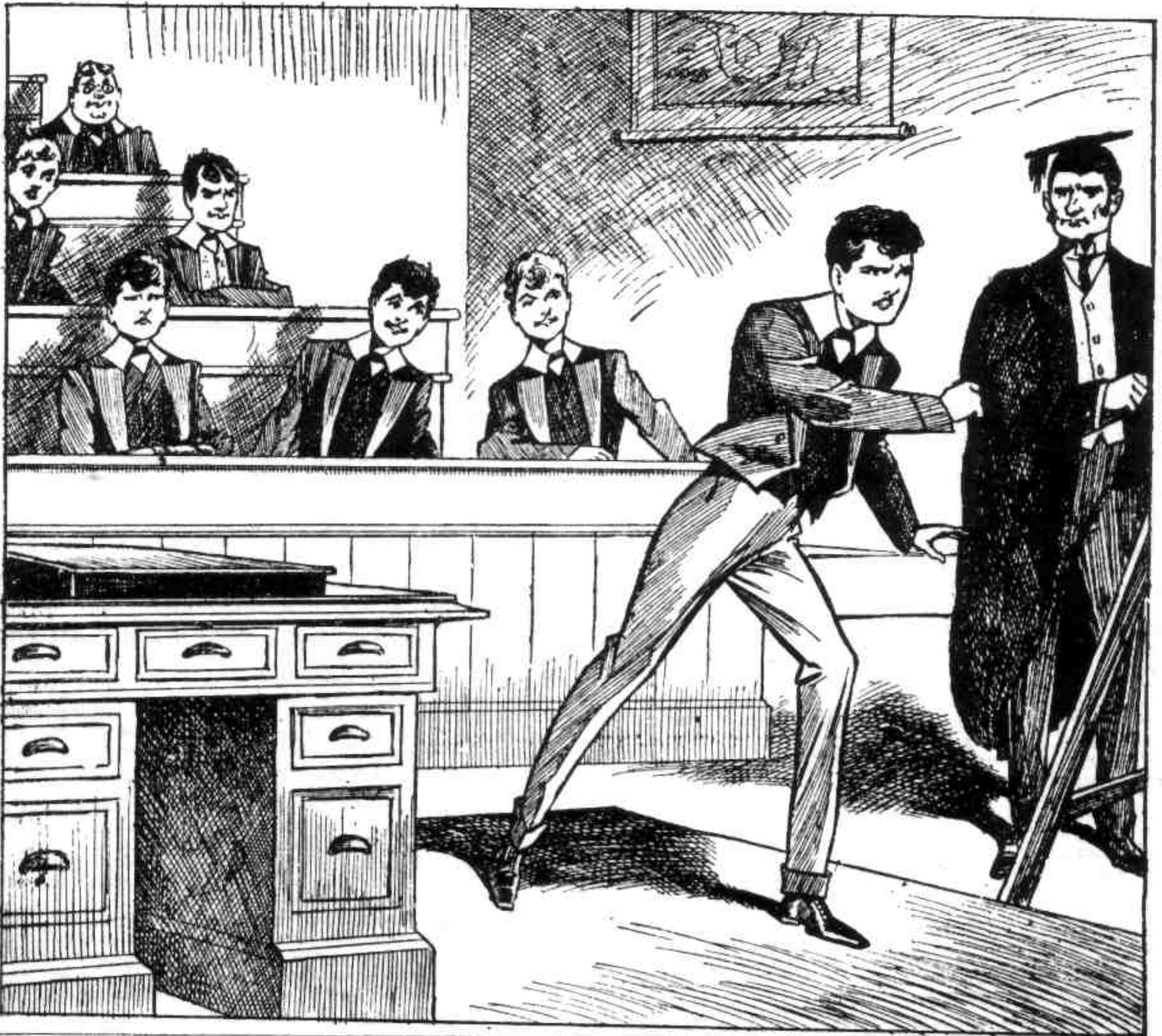
"I know his reason well enough. He's following in his father's footsteps. Very likely he's only come to Greyfriars at all to play some rotten game—may be using the school simply as a place to make his thieving excursions from."

"Oh, rot!"
 "Then what's he gone out for?" demanded Snoop.
 "Well, we broke bounds the other night to get some grub in from Uncle Clegg's," said Bob Cherry.
 "Brandreth isn't standing a feed."
 "And he wouldn't keep it so jolly dark in that case," said Bulstrode. "Why, we've only found him out by accident."
 "Exactly!" chimed in Skinner. "If we hadn't been going to rag him, we should never have found out that he was gone, and he'd have come back, and woke up in the morning along with us, looking as innocent as you please."
 "He may be able to explain," said Nugent.
 "Oh, rats!"
 "Well, we'll give him a chance to explain," said Veraon-Smith. "This is a matter for the whole Form to take up. If he can't give a reasonable explanation, Wharton, we shall expect you to stop backing him up."
 "That's only fair!" said Johnny Bull.
 Wharton hesitated.
 "If he's turning out a blackguard, I certainly sha'n't have anything more to do with him," he said, at last.
 "Same here," said Peter Todd. "But give him a chance."
 Bolsover major blew out the candles.
 "We'll wait for him to come in, and put him through it," he said. "If he's decent, he can explain, and if he can't explain, it's a proof that he's following in his father's footsteps."
 "Hear, hear!"
 And Harry Wharton & Co. had nothing to say. They were puzzled and disappointed, and unless Brandreth had something to say for himself, the friendship of the Famous Five was lost to him for good.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.
Condemned by the Form!

THE Remove were all wide awake now. Even Billy Bunter was sitting up in bed, and had just adjusted his spectacles upon his fat little nose, and was as keenly interested as anybody.
 There were many reckless fellows in the Remove, but most of them drew a line at really bad conduct. The Bounder was almost the only one who set at defiance the rules of the school, and mixed with blackguardly associates outside the school walls.
 And although many of the fellows admired the Bounder's nerve, they did not approve of his conduct—even his own friends were a little uneasy about such shady friendship. If Brandreth, as well as being the son of a criminal, was a blackguard or worse himself, all was over for him in the Remove. There would not be a fellow left to say a good word for him.
 Those who wished him well, and those who wished him ill, waited with equal eagerness for his return.
 But the absent junior did not seem in a hurry to come back. One had chimed out, and then the half-hour, and still the new boy had not appeared in the dormitory again. Some of the juniors had dozed off, weary of waiting, but most of them remained awake and watchful.
 There was a sound of rustling in the ivy at last, and a whisper from Snoop in the darkness of the dormitory.
 "Here he comes!"
 "Don't speak to him till he gets in," muttered Vernon-Smith. "He might fall if he's startled. Don't want him to break his neck."
 "Right-ho!"
 There was deep silence in the dormitory as the Removites waited. The dark head rose into view outside the open window, and Brandreth climbed in. He stepped upon a chair inside, and closed down the lower sash of the window after him.
 Then he stepped to the floor, and came quietly towards his bed. The juniors could hear him breathing hard in the darkness, after his exertion.
 Scratch!
 A match flared out!
 The light glimmered upon Brandreth's face, suddenly pale. He uttered a sharp, startled cry, and stopped.
 Two or three more matches were struck, and candles lighted. Brandreth stood looking about him with scared and startled eyes.
 The juniors were sitting up in bed and regarding him with accusing eyes. Snoop was the first to speak.
 "Caught!" he exclaimed jeeringly.
 Brandreth panted.
 "So you've been spying on me," he said, in a low voice.
 "It was the kind of thing I should have expected of you, Snoop."
 "We've all been spying, then," sneered Snoop. "We're all waiting for you, Brandreth."
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"The whole giddy family!" said Bolsover major. "What have you got to say for yourself?"
 "Nothing—to you!"
 "You've got to explain—"
 "I shall explain nothing. You have no right to ask me questions, and I shall not answer them!" said Brandreth coldly.
 "Will you answer me?" asked Harry Wharton quietly.
 Brandreth turned towards him, and his expression changed.
 "I've stood your friend up till now," said Wharton. "I woke up when you were going out, Brandreth. You've been out nearly two hours in the middle of the night. It's up to you to explain what you have done it for."
 Brandreth was silent.
 "Most of us have broken bounds at one time or another," went on Wharton. "If you've done it for something you can explain to us, it's all right. Have you been to the Friar-dale tuckshop?"
 "No."
 "Setting night-lines in the river?" asked Johnny Bull.
 "No."
 "Japing somebody?" questioned Peter Todd.
 "No."
 "Then what have you been up to?"
 Brandreth did not speak.
 The juniors waited for him to reply; but no reply came. Snoop and his friends exchanged sneering smiles. Their case was proved now. Like father, like son—was what Snoop had said—and Wharton and his chums had nothing to say. They could not speak up for a fellow who could not speak up for himself.
 "This matter will have to be settled," said Wharton, at last. "I suppose you see how bad this looks for you, Brandreth."
 Brandreth nodded, still without speaking.
 "If the Head knew, you'd be sacked from the school, or flogged at least. The Head is down on anything of the sort; you know that."
 "You don't mean to sneak about me, I suppose?" said Brandreth, in a low, suppressed voice.
 Harry Wharton reddened.
 "There's nobody here who will do that," he said.
 "I don't know," said Snoop. "It may be our duty to get a blackguard expelled from the school he's trying to disgrace."
 Brandreth clenched his hands.
 "There won't be any sneaking," said Harry, raising his voice a little. "If Snoop should sneak, we'll rag him till he won't want to sneak again. We're not bringing the masters into our own affairs. But it's got to be settled. You've been out from twelve till nearly two. If you expect anybody to look on you as a decent chap, you'll have to make it clear that you haven't been up to anything rotten. I can't see any reason at all why you can't explain where you've been, and what you've done."
 "Speak up!" said Frank Nugent, as Brandreth still remained silent. "We don't care what you've done, so long as it isn't anything rotten. Skinner used to go out poaching at night, and was jolly nearly sacked a second time for it."
 "Oh, shut up!" snarled Skinner.
 "Was that the little game, Brandreth?"
 Brandreth made an impatient gesture.
 "Of course not," he said.
 "Then you've been pub-haunting?" asked Russell.
 "No. Don't be an ass!"
 Brandreth went towards his bed, and began to undress. It was evident that he did not intend to explain. The dormitory was in a buzz of voices.
 "Haven't you anything to say, Brandreth?" asked Harry Wharton, and there was an ominous tone in his voice.
 Brandreth's face looked weary and tired. He shook his head without speaking.
 "I suppose you know what all the form will think of you, if you don't explain," said Wharton.
 "I can't help it."
 "But why can't you tell the fellows where you have been? Why should you make a secret of it?" said Harry. "It isn't just curiosity—I suppose you don't think I want to inquire into your private affairs. I want to see you set right, that's all. It's up against you here that your father is in trouble with the law, and you ought to know that it would be best for you to be careful. You have gone out of your way to do a thing that looks jolly suspicious, and you refuse to explain, though it must be perfectly easy to explain if you haven't been doing any harm. Why can't you?"
 "I can't!" said Brandreth, pale to the lips now.
 "You mean you won't!" growled Johnny Bull.
 "Well, I won't, then; if you prefer to put it that way," said Brandreth, with a flash of anger. "Nobody has a right to question me."



Brandreth, without any warning, suddenly rose from his place and dashed for the door. Mr. Quelch seemed transfixed for a moment, and the whole Form stared at the junior in amazement. "Brandreth, where are you going?" shouted Mr. Quelch, finding his voice at last. (See Chapter 21.)

"I've questioned you for your own sake," said Wharton coldly; "but I'm done now. I sha'n't ask you any more questions, you can be jolly sure of that."

"I've done nothing wrong," said Brandreth.

"Then you can tell the fellows what you have been doing."

"I can't!"

"That's enough," said Harry.

And he settled his head on the pillow, evidently resolved to leave the matter there, and to have nothing more to do with Brandreth.

Brandreth understood it, and his face seemed old and lined as he turned in. The candles were blown out; the dormitory was in darkness again. Brandreth uttered a slight exclamation as he found his bed soaked with water. But he made no inquiry, and after that exclamation was silent. He rolled himself in the bedclothes and lay down. And even Snoop & Co. did not feel inclined to trouble him further. The new boy, by his own action, had condemned himself, and from that moment he had no friend left in the Remove.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Shunned!

BRANDRETH realised the difference in his position the next day.

Snoop & Co. had sent him to Coventry, and nearly all the Remove had joined in it now.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not exactly "cut" him as the

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others did, but they did not go out of their way to show him any friendliness. He had sacrificed their good opinion, and they were civil to him, and that was all.

Brandreth seemed to sink deeper into his reserve, and that was the only outward sign to be seen that he felt the change.

He did not speak to any fellow unless he was spoken to first, and as hardly anyone addressed him his life was lonely enough.

Indeed, most of the fellows thought that he would not possibly be able to stand it, and that he would take the first opportunity of getting his people to remove him from the school.

But Brandreth, whether he was, as Vernon-Smith said, a "chip of the old block," or not, was a good sticker; and he showed no sign of leaving.

He was assiduous at his lessons, and Mr. Quelch was very kind to him. Wingate, of the Sixth, spoke to him kindly at times. When he went for a walk he went alone, and he rowed on the river by himself. He attended the cricket practice that was compulsory by the rules of the school, but he did not play with the Remove—they did not want him, and he was too high-spirited to force himself where he was not wanted.

Wingate asked him sometimes to fag at bowling on Big Side, and Brandreth gladly did so. He was a cricketer, and he felt his exclusion from the Remove cricket keenly. He was glad enough to get all he could, even in the form of

"THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

fagging for the seniors. Even that was counted against him by Snoop & Co., and he was condemned for currying favour with the Sixth.

A couple of nights later, Snoop, who was keeping an eye on the new boy for his own reasons, awakened the Remove fellows in the night to point out the fact that Brandreth's bed was again empty. Wharton was awakened with the rest. There was no doubt about it—Brandreth had gone out at midnight again, and although the fellows remained awake some time, they were all asleep before he came in.

The next morning allusions in plenty were made to his excursion overnight; but he did not utter a word of explanation.

He was a puzzle to Wharton. His conduct in the school was certainly exemplary. He did not smoke cigarettes in the box-room like Snoop and Skinner and their set—he showed no sign whatever of the "doggishness" which was a characteristic of Vernon-Smith. Yet the mystery of those midnight excursions remained unexplained.

Snoop & Co. had no hesitation in hinting that those excursions were for some dishonest motive, and that some day the police would be coming to the school to look for Arthur Brandreth.

Relations were somewhat strained in No. 7 Study. Perhaps Todd was a little regretful by this time of his kindness in taking the stranger in.

But he had taken him in, and he remained civil to him. It was not possible for Brandreth to change out of the study again without Mr. Quelch's attention being drawn to the fact, and Todd did not want to draw Mr. Quelch's attention to Brandreth's conduct. Whatever the boy might be, and whatever he might do, nobody wanted to "sneak" about him to the Form-master.

But Brandreth soon realised that his presence in Study No. 7 was not welcome, and one day when Peter Todd came in after lessons, he found Brandreth gathering his books and his personal property together.

"Not leaving?" asked Todd.

Brandreth smiled bitterly.

"No!" he said, "not leaving Greyfriars, if that's what you mean. I'm leaving this study."

"Oh!" said Peter, somewhat taken aback. "Leaving the study?"

"Yes."

"You can't go back to Smithy's study."

"I know that."

"What are you going to do, then?"

"I shall keep my things in my locker, and do my work in the Form-room," said Brandreth quietly. "The Third doesn't have studies, and I can do without one."

"I say, we don't want you to clear out," said Peter, awkwardly.

"Yes, you do!" said Brandreth, calmly. "It's natural, I suppose. You don't want the son of a man hunted by the police in your study."

"It isn't that!" growled Peter. "I stood by you at first, didn't I? But a fellow who goes out of the school at night, and can't explain where he goes to, can't expect to be trusted."

"I know that, Todd. You don't trust me, and you don't want me; and it's up to me to clear out—after thanking you for your kindness."

"Look here, kid," said Todd, earnestly, "why don't you get yourself right with the fellows? If you haven't been up to anything rotten, why can't you explain?"

"I've said I can't."

"But you haven't said why you can't!" urged Peter.

"I can't do that, either."

"You could do it, if it wasn't something that you're ashamed to explain, I suppose," said Todd, angrily.

Brandreth made no reply to that remark. He gathered up his belongings and left the study, leaving Peter Todd with a moody and troubled brow. Todd gave a discontented grunt, and sat down to his work—which happened to be a French imposition kindly bestowed upon him by Monsieur Charpentier. He was busy upon the "Henriade" when Vernon-Smith looked into the study.

"I hear that Brandreth has cleared out of here," he remarked, genially.

"Blessed if I know how you heard it," said Peter. "It didn't happen more than a quarter of an hour ago."

Vernon-Smith grinned.

"Well, Bunter happened to be passing, and he happened to hear you speaking—you know how he happens to hear things—and he told me."

"He'd have happened to get a thick ear, if I'd seen him," growled Peter.

"I suppose you'll be having Bunter back now?" hinted Vernon-Smith.

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"No fear!" said Peter, promptly; "you've got him, and you're welcome to him."

"Look here, I'm fed up with Bunter. I can't keep anything to eat in my study without that fat beast getting at it. He belongs to this study, and you ought to have him back," said Vernon-Smith, angrily.

Peter shook his head.

"You can keep him, Smithy."

"I don't want to keep him," growled the Bounder. "He belongs to your study. It's sickening to have him planted on me. It was all your doing. You ought to take him back."

"Not much. Ask Wharton—he used to be in Wharton's study at one time, you know. Ask Wharton to have him."

"Wharton won't!"

"And I won't either," grinned Peter Todd, "you won't find fellows jumping at having Bunter in their studies. Keep him, my infant; with my kindest regards."

"I think you're a rotter!"

"Thanks, same to you!" said Peter, imperturbably.

Vernon-Smith slammed the door and stamped away. He came into his own study with a lowering brow, and found Bunter there. Bunter was in Vernon-Smith's own special easy chair, and was drinking ginger-beer from Vernon-Smith's own special supply. He gave the Bounder a genial nod.

"Have some ginger-pop?" he said hospitably.

"That's my ginger-beer!" growled Vernon-Smith.

The Owl of the Remove nodded calmly.

"Yes, I'll settle for it if you like—when my postal order comes. Don't touch me with that cricket-stump, Smithy. I should be sorry to have to inform Wingate where you keep a box of cigars, but—"

"Shut up, you fat fool. Look here, Peter Todd would have you back in No. 7—if you insisted," said Vernon-Smith.

"I'm jolly well not going to insist, though," said Billy Bunter, with a chuckle. "I'm more com'y here, thanks. We get on all right, don't we?"

"No, we don't!" yelled the Bounder.

"Well, that's your fault; I'm sure I'm willing to be friendly. I'd rather be in my pal Snoop's study, but I'm making the best of this. You'd better do the same." And Billy Bunter gulped down ginger-beer and grinned.

"Snoop won't have you," snarled the Bounder.

"I'd change with Trevor or Stott," said Bunter, "I've offered them already, but they don't seem to want to dig with you, Smithy. You're not popular."

"My hat! I'll see if I can arrange it with Stott," said Vernon-Smith. "He owes me money, and I don't see why he shouldn't do me a favour."

"Good egg; I'm willing. I don't want to stay here if my pal Snoop has room for me. I'm not really satisfied with you, Smithy. I don't know what my people would say if they knew I was put in the same study with the son of a moneylender—your father is a moneylender, isn't he, Smithy?"

"My father's on the Stock Exchange, you fat cad!" said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth.

"And a moneylender off it," grinned Bunter. "Cent. per cent—money or your life—sell you up at three months' notice—be, he, he! Yaroooh!"

The cricket-stump came down, and knocked Bunter's glass of ginger-beer into his grinning face. The fat junior rolled back in the armchair, smothered with ginger-beer, and roaring and spluttering.

"Ow! Ow! Yow! Beast! Ow!" spluttered Bunter.

"Groogh! I'll— Yaroooh! Oh!"

Vernon-Smith strode out of the study, leaving Bunter still spluttering, and dabbing at the overflowing ginger-beer with his handkerchief. Ten minutes later Vernon-Smith might have been seen, as the novelists say, in close confabulation with Stott of the Remove. Stott's face wore a worried and reluctant look—but he appeared to yield to the Bounder's arguments—perhaps owing to the fact that he had borrowed money of Vernon-Smith which he had no prospect whatever of paying. And so it came about that William George Bunter changed studies once more—and that this time the change was the one he most desired—into the quarters of Snoop, the wealthy—into a land, so to speak, flowing with milk and honey.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Snoop's Old Pal!

BILLY Bunter made himself at home in Snoop's study at once.

Snoop happened to be out with Trevor, having treated his study-mate to a ride, with horses from the livery-stables at Friardale. Snoop was always treating

somebody to something in these days, and it was not surprising that fellows in his study did not want to change out. Since Snoop's accession to fortune, he had paid for all the feeds in the study, generally inviting guests to them, and his study-mates had lived on the fat of the land without expense to themselves. Trevor and Stott had shared in the flood of good things, though privately they compared notes on the subject, and wondered greatly how it was that a mean rotter like Snoop had developed such extraordinary generosity.

Billy Bunter was in for it now; he had reached the goal of his ambition, and he meant to be very agreeable to Snoop, and to stick in the study whether Snoop liked it or not. Snoop was not likely to like it, but Bunter would not easily be got rid of. He had great sticking powers.

Bunter, having found the study unoccupied, platted his possessions there, and proceeded to make investigations. Bunter was a Peeping Tom by nature, and took a deep and never-failing interest in everybody else's affairs, and as he was not at all particular in his methods of gratifying his curiosity, he generally knew a great deal that did not concern him.

If Snoop had known that Bunter was to be installed in his study, he would certainly have locked his desk before going out; but as it was, Bunter found that it opened to his hand, and he looked through it without hesitation.

The sight of a letter beginning "My dear Sidney" caught Billy Bunter's eye as he turned over Snoop's papers.

"Letter from the pater, I suppose," said Bunter. "Of course, I'm not going to read it—I can't, as an honourable chap! I wonder what old Snoop has to say, though. Snoop ought to have kept the envelope, if he didn't want anybody to see the letter—by accident."

Having read the first page by accident, Bunter turned the leaf—perhaps by accident too, and read the second.

Then a peculiar expression came over his fat face, and he stepped quickly to the door, and locked it, and then read the letter through carefully from beginning to end.

"My only aunt!" murmured Bunter, "this—this takes the cake! I wonder what Smithy would say if he saw this letter! I think I shall be able to bring Snoopey to terms if he should cut up rusty about my being in his study."

Bunter gave a fat chuckle, and read over again the passage in the letter that had surprised him:

"I am sending you another ten pounds with this. Spend it freely—in reckless extravagance, if you like. As soon as it is gone, I shall send you another. Above all, be careful to impress upon Vernon-Smith the fact that you have plenty of money, and can have as much as you care to write home for. This is very important. Do this, of course, without awakening his suspicions in any way. I think I can trust to your discretion."

"Well, if that doesn't take the giddy cake!" muttered Bunter. "Why does old Snoop want to impress the Bounder with his blessed wealth. I wonder if he's got any dealings with Smithy's father? I know Smithy and his father are hand in glove, and the old bounder tells all his secrets to the young bounder. I wonder—"

Billy Bunter replaced the letter where he had found it, and closed the desk. Then he left the study, and looked in on Vernon-Smith. The Bounder grinned at him. He was so glad to get rid of Bunter that he felt almost friendly towards him.

"I say, Smithy," Bunter remarked casually, "does your pater have any business with Snoop's pater?"

Vernon-Smith started. "What on earth do you know about that?" he demanded. "Oh, nothing; I was just asking, you know," stammered Bunter.

"Has Snoop been talking to you about it?" asked the Bounder, with a sneer. "It will be a long time before he can get my pater into his rotten company, I can tell Snoop that. Yes, I know he's making money hand over fist—till the crash comes. If you want to sponge on Snoopey, Bunter, you'd better buck up, and make hay while the sun shines. It won't last long."

"Oh, that's all rot," said Bunter. "Snoop's pater is simply rolling in money. He's sent Snoop two tenners this week, and he's going to send him another. Snoop can have all the money he likes to ask for."

"How do you know?" "I happened to see a letter—I—I mean, I do know," said Bunter. "I'm in Snoop's confidence, as a matter of fact. He's my old pal."

"He does seem to have a lot of money," said the Bounder, knitting his brows thoughtfully. "It can't be all gas; he really has it."

"I happen to know that he's lent Loder over five pounds," said Bunter. "And he's stood feeds that have cost him pounds and pounds. He's bought a new bicycle, and given his old one to Stott. He's negotiating for a motor-bike now, and his father's going to pay for it. His father's buying a pony, too."

"Looks genuine enough," said Vernon-Smith. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 288.

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"Genuine enough? It's real money, I suppose," said Bunter. "His father must be simply raking it in to hand it out to Snoop like that. Do you know what business it is that old Snoop is in, Smithy? The shares ought to be worth something—eh?"

"Perhaps. He's the head of the New Anglo-African Petrol Company," said Vernon-Smith. "He is making his money out of the high price of petrol, and if the new oil springs turn out a success—well, he will be a real millionaire."

"But they must be a success if he's making money now," said Bunter, who did not know any of the mysteries of the Stock Exchange—that wonderful institution of modern times, where men lose money they do not possess and make fortunes that are like fairy gold, that melt away like dew at a moment's notice.

"That's according," said the Bounder. "Money flows into the rottenest company sometimes—till the promoters get found out."

"But Snoop's pater's company can't be a rotten one," urged Bunter. "They're making heaps of money. Is your father in it, too?"

The Bounder's lip curled. "Snoop's pater wants my father in it," he said. "I know that; I've had it from my pater. But you don't catch an old bird with chaff."

"Well, you tell your pater from me that's he's missing a good thing," said Bunter. "I know old Snoop wouldn't hand out money like this to young Snoop unless he had plenty of it. I've seen him, and I know he's tight-fisted."

"That's true, too," assented the Bounder. "Jolly well wish I had some shares in the blessed company, that's all," said Billy Bunter. "I think I might give a tip about it to some of my titled friends. So your pater is sticking out of the concern, is he, Smithy?"

"Yes, he is," said Vernon-Smith. "Doesn't he think it's safe?" "No, he doesn't."

"But if he knew that Snoop's pater was making piles of money—"

urged Bunter. "Might be spoof!" said the Bounder coolly. "Still, it certainly does look as if there was something in it. Queer that Snoop should be telling you his affairs, though," the Bounder added suspiciously.

"Oh, he's my old pal, you know," said Bunter, and he rolled out of the study before the Bounder could question him further.

There was a grin on Bunter's fat face as he entered Snoop's study again. Billy Bunter was a dunce and an ass, perhaps; but in some matters he was no fool. He thought he knew now the reason of Sidney James Snoop's extraordinary liberality with money. It was, as Bunter would have expressed it, a sprat to catch a whale. Old Snoop knew that the Bounder was fully in his father's confidence, and that the flow of wealth to young Snoop would certainly be reported to Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire speculator. And that proof that the Snoop Petrol Company was making money might have the effect of deciding the millionaire, if he was wavering, to enter the new concern. Billy Bunter chuckled as he realised what a hold he had over Snoop now that he had seen the letter. For one word as to the contents of that letter would open the Bounder's eyes, and it would be reported at once to Mr. Vernon-Smith.

Billy Bunter stretched himself in Snoop's new, well-padded armchair, and put his feet upon a tasselled hassock, and ate tarts and drank ginger-beer belonging to Snoop. Snoop's study during the past week or two rivalled Lord Maudeverer's in its luxury.

Billy Bunter was thus enjoying himself when, half an hour later, Snoop came in.

Snoop looked at the Owl of the Remove in astonishment. "What the dickens are you doing here?" he demanded. "I don't remember asking you into my study, Bunter."

"A chap doesn't need asking into his own study, I suppose?" said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

"Eh! His own study!" ejaculated Snoop. "I've changed out with Stott," explained Bunter. "You see, I wanted to be with you, Snoopey, my old pal, you know. It's a pleasure to dig with you, Snoopey."

Snoop did not look as if he thought it would be a pleasure to him.

"Look here, that's all rot," he said. "I don't want a per-poise in my study, and I don't want to have to put Yale locks on everything. I shall jolly well tell Stott he's got to change back. I don't like it."

"Now, look here, Sidney, old man—"

"Don't call me Sidney, you fat ass!" said the exasperated Snoop.

"But I say, Sid!" urged Bunter.

"Chuck it!" roared Snoop angrily.

"Well, I don't see why I shouldn't call an old pal Sid," said Bunter, in an injured tone. "I want you to call me Billy."

"I'll call you a lot of things, if I talk to you!" snorted Snoop. "You've planted yourself on me because of the grub, and I'm not going to stand it. If Stott doesn't change back, I'll ask Mr. Quelch to interfere. You can't be stuck in my study without my consent."

"But you're going to consent, Snoopey. You don't know what a pal I shall be to you," said Bunter agreeably. "First of all, I'm going to give you some advice——"

"Keep it!"

"But it's jolly good advice."

"When I want your rotten advice I'll ask for it," snapped Snoop.

"It isn't rotten advice; it's jolly good advice," said Bunter calmly. "I was going to advise you to——"

"Oh, shut up!"

"To be a bit more careful with letters you leave about——"

"What!"

"Or fellows might see them, and might tell Smithy——"

Snoop turned quite pale, and ran to his desk. He opened it, and searched for the letter inside, and gasped with relief as he found it. He crumpled it in his hand, and then turned with a furious look towards the Owl of the Remove.

"You've seen this letter?" yelled Snoop.

"Certainly not. I happened to go to the desk for a—a—a stamp—I was writing to one of my titled relations; at least, I was going to—so I went to your desk, and—and the letter was right under my eyes," said Bunter. "Of course, a fellow couldn't help seeing a few words. I'm not going to mention it to Smithy. You can trust an old pal—a real pal like me, Sidney. I'm your pal, I suppose?"

Snoop gave him a glance that was certainly anything but pally.

"You fat cad!" he snarled.

"Ahem! If you want me to get out of this study, I'll go," said Bunter—without rising, however. "I'll go back to Smithy! If I should happen to mention to him, by chance, what your pater says to you in that letter——"

"You can stop here," said Snoop weakly.

"You really want me?" asked Bunter.

"Ye-es," said Snoop, between his teeth.

"Good!" said Bunter. "In some respects I was more comfy with Smithy, but I'll stay with you with pleasure, Snoop, if you really want me. I'd do more than that for a fellow I like. You can rely on an old pal to keep your little secrets, so long as you treat him like a pal. Snoopey, old man, I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow morning—five bob from a titled relation of mine."

"Oh, rats!" growled Snoop.

"Would you mind advancing me the five bob to-day?" asked Bunter smoothly. "I'll let you have the postal-order as soon as—as soon as it comes."

Snoop, with red fury in his face, placed five shillings in the hands of Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Remove picked himself up out of the chair.

"Thanks, Sid!" he said affably. "You can rely on having that postal-order when it comes. Thanks awfully, Sid!"

And Billy Bunter rolled out of the study, leaving "Sid" grinding his teeth and punching frantically with clenched fists into the empty air.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER. Picture Postcards.

"My hat! Look at this."

Bob Cherry made the remark, as he took a postcard from the letter-rack.

His exclamation drew the other fellows round him, and they looked at the postcard with angry ejaculations. It was addressed to Bob Cherry; but it was evidently intended for the eyes of all the Remove.

It was a picture postcard, but the picture had been drawn by hand with pen and ink. It represented a class-room, with the boys at their desks, and one of them, in a very prominent position, clad in a suit with broad arrows instead of Etons.

It was evidently an allusion to Brandreth of the Remove.

The postmark on the card was Highcliffe, which made it plain enough that the little joke came from the old enemies of Harry Wharton & Co.—Ponsonby and the Highcliffe juniors.

"The rotters!" growled Nugent.

"Nice, isn't it?" sneered Bolsover major. "The news has got to Highcliffe now that we've got a convict's son in the school."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 268.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
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Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR."
Every Friday.

"Who told them?" said Harry Wharton, knitting his brows. "There was no need for the thing to be jawed of outside the school."

"Smithy, of course," said Johnny Bull. "He's the only fellow here who visits Highcliffe."

"Well, they know it now," remarked Tom Brown. "We shall get chipping enough about it. This is only a beginning."

"Let's take that card to Mr. Quelch," said Snoop. "It will show him that Brandreth ought to be turned out. The thing's becoming a public disgrace."

Bob Cherry tore the card into fragments, and Snoop scowled. Bob was having very little to do with Brandreth lately, but he did not intend to hurt him in any way.

But all the Remove agreed that the thing was very rotten. Brandreth's secret was out of the school now. The Highcliffians knew that the son of a fugitive from justice was in the Remove, and they would spread the story as much as they could.

If Brandreth had shown himself the right sort, and had played the game, as the juniors considered it, all the best fellows would have sympathised with him in his misfortune. But that was precisely what Brandreth had failed to do. The mystery of those midnight excursions remained unexplained; and while it was unexplained, the Removites preferred to have nothing to do with Brandreth. Even Harry Wharton felt that he would be better away from Greyfriars if he was, as Snoop expressed it, following in his father's footsteps.

As Tom Brown had said, the postcard from Ponsonby was only a beginning. By the same evening's post there came another with a fantastic figure drawn upon it of a school-boy being led away in handcuffs by a policeman. The card this time was addressed to Vernon-Smith. And so Bob Cherry could not destroy it. Neither did the Bounder destroy it. He pinned it up on the wall in the common-room for everyone to see.

All the Lower School saw the card there, and when Brandreth came into the common-room later, the fellows watched him, to see how he would take it.

The card was pinned up directly opposite the door, and Brandreth could not help seeing it. He started a little, and then crossed over to the card, and scanned it carefully.

"Recognise your likeness?" chuckled Snoop, forgetting for the moment that the new boy was sent to Coventry.

Brandreth looked at him steadily.

"Did you draw this foolery, Snoop?" he asked, in a tone that made Sidney James Snoop draw back behind Bolsover.

"No; it came by post," said Snoop.

"By post?" exclaimed Brandreth, in astonishment.

"Yes," said Vernon-Smith, with a sneer. "They've heard at Highcliffe that we've got a member of the criminal class here, you see, and they're reminding us of it."

"Then they are cads, the same as you are," said Brandreth. And he walked out of the common-room.

"I shouldn't wonder if Smithy suggested that dodge to the Highcliffe rotters," growled Bob Cherry. "Look here, we're not going to stand it. Ponsonby & Co. are not going to pile in silly picture postcards on us."

"No fear!"

"If there's any more we'll go over and talk to 'em," said Bob Cherry.

"That's Brandreth's business," said Russell.

"Well, one chap couldn't do much against that lot," said Bob. "We'll go over in a crowd. We ragged them once in their own studies, and they didn't put up half a fight. It's time they were taken down a peg or two."

When the juniors went into call-over a little later, Brandreth did not answer to his name. Mr. Prout, the Fifth Form-master, was taking call-over, and he called Brandreth's name twice, and then marked him down as absent.

There were a good many comments on his absence in the Remove as the fellows dispersed after roll-call.

"Another night out, I suppose," Vernon-Smith remarked.

"He's starting a bit earlier this evening, that's all."

"May be gone over to Highcliffe," said Micky Desmond.

"Sure I saw him go out, and he went in that direction."

Harry Wharton looked concerned.

"The ass!" he said. "If he's gone over there alone, he'll be ragged bald-headed. They haven't the least idea of fair play."

"Oh, let him take his chance!" said Skinner. "Nothing to do with us."

But Harry Wharton & Co. could not help feeling concerned. Whatever might be the shortcomings of the new boy, they knew that he had plenty of pluck. But pluck would not be of much use to a fellow single-handed among the Highcliffians. Ponsonby & Co. did not have the most elementary notions of fair play.

Wharton and his friends waited rather anxiously for Brandreth to come in. But by the time for prep. he had not appeared. The Chums of the Remove went down to the gates to see if anything could be seen of him on the road. The school gates were closed, Gosling having locked up at dark as usual.

Bob Cherry uttered an exclamation as they came in sight of the gates.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look there!"

There was a figure to be seen outside the gates, pressed close to the iron bars. The juniors ran up, and made out the form of Brandreth. He was standing close to the bars of the gate, and seemed to be looking through at them.

"Hallo! Why don't you come in?" demanded Wharton.

Brandreth did not reply.

The juniors peered at him in the darkness. Then they discovered that he was bound to the bars of the gate; and that a handkerchief was stuffed into his mouth. Wharton passed his hand through the opening of the bars, and removed the gag, and cut Brandreth loose with his pocket-knife.

"Thanks!" gasped Brandreth.

"How long have you been there?" Wharton demanded.

"Half an hour," said Brandreth panting. "Goodness knows how long it might have lasted if you hadn't come. I couldn't call out."

"Who did it?" asked Bob Cherry

"The Highcliffe fellows."

"You've been over there?"

"Yes."

"Alone, you ass?"

"I had to go alone. I asked to see Ponsonby, and—and they got me into the quadrangle, and all of them piled on me," gasped Brandreth. "I thought I should get fair play. Then they marched me home, and tied me to the gate here."

"How long have they been gone?" asked Bob eagerly.

"Nearly half an hour," said Brandreth.

Bob gave a discontented grunt.

"Too late to catch them," he growled.

"They went down towards Friardale," said Brandreth.

"I think they've gone to Uncle Clegg's, and they're coming back this way. I heard one of them say they'd give me another look in to see if I was still here."

"Oh, good egg!"

The Greyfriars juniors did not need to consult upon the matter. They ran along the school wall to a spot where it was easy to clamber over, and in a couple of minutes they were in the road. They joined Brandreth outside the school gates, in the glimmer of the light from the iron lamp high over the gateway.

"What are you going to do?" asked Brandreth.

"Wait for 'em," chuckled Bob Cherry. "One good turn deserves another. Look here, you stick to the gate, so that they'll think you're still tied there—and we'll lie low on the other side of the road."

Brandreth grinned.

"Good egg!" he said. "I'm on!"

Harry Wharton & Co withdrew into cover, under the shadows of the thick trees on the opposite side of the road. Brandreth remained at the gate, as if he were still bound. Then they waited. Ten minutes later there were footsteps on the shadowy road, and the juniors of Highcliffe came in sight.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Tit for Tat!

PONSONBY & CO. came sauntering along the road, some of them carrying packages in their hands. They had been purchasing "tuck" at Uncle Clegg's in Friardale, for a feast in the dormitory at Highcliffe. They halted before the gates of Greyfriars, and scanned Brandreth as he stood close to the bars, looking just as when they had left him. In the gloom they did not observe that his bonds were gone. The Highcliffians gathered round him with loud chuckles.

"Still here!" grinned Ponsonby.

"Must be getting tired," remarked Gadsby.

"Absolutely," yawned Vavasour.

"Must be getting hungry, too," said Monson. "We've got some jam-tarts here. Suppose we give him a few tarts."

"Well, you ass——" Ponsonby began.

"I mean down the back of his neck," Monson explained.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monson opened the bag of tarts. Ponsonby took out one of the tarts, and approached closer to Brandreth. Then he experienced the surprise of his life. The junior whom he supposed to be securely bound to the bars of the gate, turned upon him in a flash, and his right arm lashed out, and a set of knuckles that seemed like iron caught Ponsonby on the point of the chin.

Crash!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 288.

Next Monday's Number of The **M**AGNET will be the usual price **1**d. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled:

"Yah! Oh, oh, oh!"
Ponsonby went down in a heap, roaring.
"Oh, by gad!" ejaculated Gadsby. "The beast's loose! Collar him!"

"Collar them!" roared Harry Wharton.

There was a rush of the Greyfriars juniors from the darkness of the trees.

"Run!" yelled Vavasour.

But there was no time to run.

The Famous Five were upon them, and they were smitten right and left, and they rolled in the dust with lamentable yells.

In a moment more each of the Highcliffians was on his back, with a boot planted on his chest keeping him there.

"This is where we smile!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The smilefulness is terrific!"

"Ow!" groaned Ponsonby. "Ow! Lemme gerrup, you beasts! Ow!"

"Caught in the act!" smiled Harry Wharton.

"Ow! You rotters! You're two to one! Ow!"

"You were four to one, and you thought that all right!" said Brandreth contemptuously. "Get up, if you like, and put up your hands! I'll give you fair play, and the biggest licking you ever had in your life!"

"I'm not going to fight with a criminal's son!" sneered Ponsonby.

"You can tackle me, if you'd prefer it!" suggested Bob Cherry.

"Ow! I'm not going to fight you! Ow! Lemme gerrup!"

"Yank them up!" said Harry Wharton. "I'm afraid we shall get into a row for missing our prep., but it can't be helped. These kids can't be left out alone so late. We've got to see them safe to Highcliffe."

"Yes, rather!"

"Look here——" yelled Gadsby.

"Oh, you shut up!" said Johnny Bull. "Jam their bankies into their mouths first, you chaps, or they'll call out all Highcliffe when we get there!"

"Good wheezo!"

"Leggo! Yow! Ow! Gorg-g-g-gh!" gasped Ponsonby.

And then his remarks ceased, as his own handkerchief was jammed into his jaws, and stuffed securely there, and tied in its place with a length of whipcord round his head.

The Highcliffe quartette were marched quickly along the road, with their arms taken by the Greyfriars juniors. Johnny Bull walked behind, helping a little with his boot when the prisoners showed any signs of lagging. With that aid, they covered the ground quickly, and they soon arrived at Highcliffe School.

But for the handkerchiefs stuffed in their mouths, Ponsonby & Co. would have yelled for help, and soon brought a hornets' nest about the ears of the Greyfriars fellows; but, as it was, they could only moan and grunt.

The gates of Highcliffe were locked. Harry Wharton & Co. jammed the unhappy four against the gates, and tied them there, using the fragments of the rope that had fastened Brandreth, and odds-and-ends of whipcord and twine, cking the supply out with the neckties of the unfortunate Highcliffians.

Ponsonby & Co. were soon bound in a row against the gates, glaring almost murderously at the grinning juniors of Greyfriars.

"That's all right!" said Bob Cherry. "Now, we don't want to take away their tarts; they can have them, especially as they were going to give some to Brandreth."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The tarts were plastered over the faces and heads of the infuriated Highcliffians. Cream puffs were added, and then bottles of ginger-beer were opened and poured over them.

By that time Ponsonby & Co. were in a dreadful state. It was what they had intended for Brandreth, but that did not make it any more pleasant for themselves.

The Greyfriars juniors roared with laughter as they looked at them.

"Is that all right, Ponsonby?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Another savelay down your back, old man?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh!" grunted Ponsonby.

"Another jam-tart in your other ear, Gaddy? There you are!"

"Gug-g-g-g-g!"

"And some more ginger-beer down your neck, Monson? There you are, my infant! That's the last bottle, or I'd let you have some more!"

"Gro-o-o-o-oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now perhaps you won't send us any more picture-postcards!" remarked Harry Wharton. "If you do, we

"THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

shall come over and see you again, and we sha'n't be so nice to you next time! Good-bye!"

"Gro-o-o-o-oh!"
And the Greyfriars fellows marched off, yelling with laughter. A light was moving inside the gateway, and they guessed that the Highcliffe porter had been aroused by the noise. Ponsonby & Co. were likely to be released soon, but it would probably be a long time before they were rid of the jam and the ginger-beer. Their anguished grunts could be heard as the victorious Removites retreated.

"I fancy we sha'n't have any more picture-postcards from Ponsonby & Co.!" chuckled Bob Cherry, when they were within the walls of Greyfriars again.

And Bob was right. That unpleasant experience had been quite enough for Ponsonby & Co., and they wisely decided to leave the Greyfriars Remove severely alone.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.
Bunter Is Very Cute!

"I 'VE got a ripping idea!"
Thus Sidney James Snoop.
"Go it, Snoopey!" said Bolsover major encouragingly.

"Let's hear it, old fellow!" said Skinner.
It was amazing to see the respect with which Sidney James was treated in these days. The fellow who had once been

"It's about Brandreth, of course," said Snoop.
"Go on, Snoopey!" said Bolsover major, helping himself to ginger-beer, of which Snoop seemed to keep an endless supply in his study. "Pile in! I think the cad's getting pretty sick of Greyfriars by this time! Blessed if I can understand why he doesn't go!"

"He's got some object in staying here," said Snoop sagely; "and it's connected with his going out at night."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Skinner. "Pass the tarts!"
"His father's a thief and a criminal!" pursued Snoop. "Like father, like son! He's sticking at this school, and he's sneaking out of the dorm. at nights. He doesn't go to the Cross Keys—Smithy knows that."

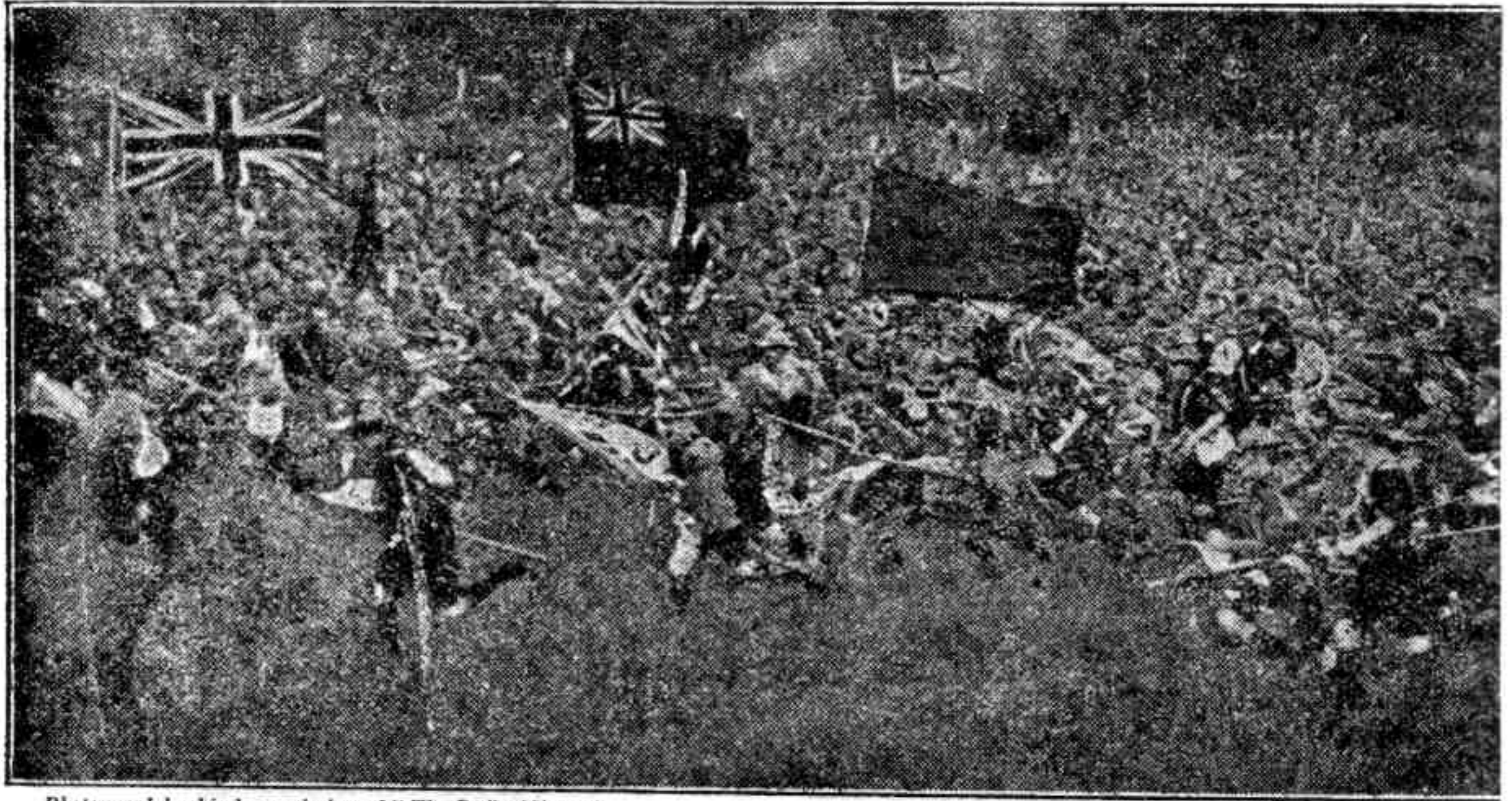
"I've asked them there," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "They don't know anything about him."

"He might be pub-haunting somewhere else," suggested Bolsover. "Smithy's special pub isn't the only pub in the place."

There was a laugh, and Vernon-Smith scowled.
"It may be that," agreed Snoop; "but I suspect it's something more serious. We know there was a burglary at Courtfield one night since Brandreth has been here, and the police haven't found the rotter!"

"Oh, draw it mild, Snoopey!" murmured Skinner. "That couldn't have been Brandreth."

A UNIQUE PHOTOGRAPH. A GREAT



Photograph by kind permission of "The Daily Mirror."

despised—and had deserved it—seemed to have become an oracle to a section of the Form. Fellows hung upon his words as though pearls were dropping from his lips.

Even the Bounder had come round, and was very pally with Snoop. The doubts of the Bounder seemed to have been set at rest. The horn of plenty had not ceased to flow; only that morning Snoop had received another "tenner" from his father, and he was now, also, the happy possessor of a motor-bike. It was evident that the lines of the Snoop family had fallen in pleasant places.

Snoop was living up to his new position. He was growing decidedly "cocky" in his manner, and had taken to cuffing the fags, like Bolsover major. Loder, the prefect, frequently borrowed little sums of him, and in return stood his friend—and it meant a great deal to a junior to have influence over a prefect of the Sixth.

Bolsover major, the biggest fellow in the Remove, was his close chum now; and Snoop was always surrounded by a little troop of admirers.

The rise and progress of Sidney James Snoop was, in fact, very interesting to watch, and as yet there were no signs of the decline and fall.

"Why not?" demanded Snoop. "If his father's a forger, why couldn't he be a burglar? There have been kid-burglars before now. Anyway, it's jolly certain that what he goes out for is something shady. If it wasn't, he would explain what it was. It can't be nice for him to be cut by the Form."

"That's so."
"Well, my idea is to find out where he goes," said Snoop. "If it's something awfully shady, we can find it out and show him up, and perhaps save the school from being disgraced."

"My hat! Rather!"
"He went out last Thursday, and the Thursday before," said Snoop. "To-day's Thursday, so he may be going again. It seems to be a sort of regular appointment."

The juniors looked at one another. They would have been glad enough to discover Brandreth in some shady action that would compel him to leave Greyfriars. But getting out of the dormitory at midnight to follow him was not an easy thing. It was, as Bolsover major remarked, a big order.

"You mean following him—eh?" asked Skinner.

"That's the idea."
"Well, you're just the chap to do it," said Skinner. "I wish you luck! I'd volunteer to come with you, only I'm such a sleepy chap."

"Same here," said Bolsover. "It requires a really keen chap to do a thing like that—a chap like you, Snoopey. I shouldn't be any good."

"Just what I was thinking," said Stott thoughtfully. "I shouldn't be any good, either; but I think Snoop's the chap to do it first-rate."

Snoop looked at his comrades rather unpleasantly. It was not at all his idea to make such a difficult and dangerous expedition by himself.

"Here's success to Snoop as a giddy shadower!" said Bolsover major, filling his glass with ginger-beer for the sixth time.

"Hear, hear!"
"I can't go alone," said Snoop. "It might be dangerous. Suppose Brandreth meets burglar pals outside the school—a chap might get knocked on the head with a jemmy."

"Oh, you'd have to be cautious!" said Bolsover. "You're an awfully cautious chap, Snoopey. You're not the kind of fellow to run into danger."

Skinner hid a chuckle in a glass of lemonade.

"Who's coming with me?" persisted Snoop.

"Ahem!"

"I shouldn't be any good, you know."

"Better leave me out!"

"I'll come with you," said Vernon-Smith quietly.

study table, through his big spectacles, and snorted indignantly.

"You didn't tell me you were having a feed here, Snoopey," he said.

"I knew you'd smell it out pretty soon," said Snoop sarcastically.

"You clear out, Bunter!" said Bolsover major.

"Rats!"

"What!" exclaimed Bolsover, half rising.

"This is my study," said Bunter. "I'm Snoop's best pal. He takes me into his confidence; don't you, Snoopey—even about his pater's business affairs, eh? I could tell you fellows a lot of things if I liked, especially Smithy—"

"Shut up!" growled Snoop. "Let him alone, Bolsover. He's my study-mate, and he can feed if he wants to."

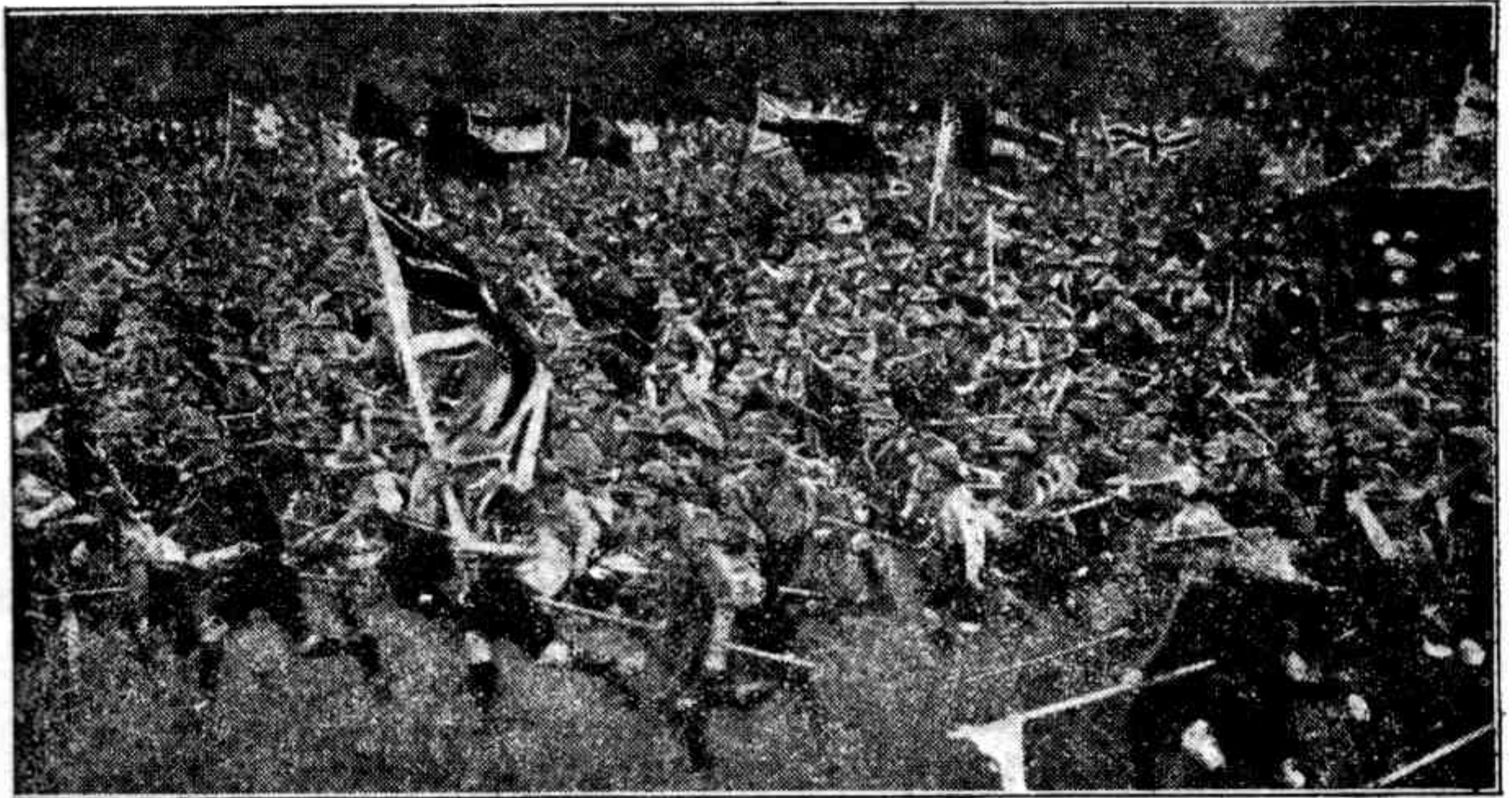
"That's all right," said Bunter. "Just you let me know when there's another feed on again, Snoopey. I don't like being left out like this."

"All right," said Snoop, with unexpected meekness.

"Pass the ham-sandwiches," said Bunter, "and the sardines, and the tongue! Next time you have a feed here, Snoopey, have a pineapple. I like pineapples."

"I'll remember," said Snoop.

CHARGE BY OVER 30,000 BOY SCOUTS.



"Good egg!" said Bolsover major heartily. "You're just the chap, Smithy. Two heads are better than one, but a crowd would spoil all. You two chaps can do the bizney A. I."

"All right," said Snoop. "Then we'll stay awake tonight, Smithy, and keep an eye on the rotter! If he goes out, we go out, too."

"That's it," said Vernon-Smith. "I suppose you've got nerve enough to get down the ivy?"

Snoop hesitated.

"That's jolly dangerous!" he said.

"Not if you've got plenty of nerve."

"I—I think I'll slip out another way," faltered Snoop.

"I could get out by the box-room window all right. Then I'll join you in the Close after. You can go down the ivy, so as not to lose sight of Brandreth—if he goes."

Vernon-Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"It's a jolly good idea," said Skinner. "I think—"

The door of the study opened just then, and Billy Bunter came in.

The Owl of the Remove blinked at the feast spread on the

"Blessed if I'd let the fat beast dictate to me!" growled Bolsover major. "I'll sling him out on his neck, if you like, Snoopey!"

"Let him alone!" said Snoop.

Vernon-Smith was regarding Snoop and Bunter very curiously. The Bouncer left the study a little later. Billy Bunter remained there so long as there was anything left to eat. But afterwards, while Snoop was busy with his preparation, Vernon-Smith found Bunter in the common-room, and proceeded to pump him.

"You seem to be getting on jolly well with Snoop, Bunter," he said, quite affectionately.

"Yes; he's my old pal, you know," said Bunter.

"He seems to let you do as you like."

"He'd better!" said Bunter.

"In fact, you're quite cock of the study," said Vernon-Smith. "By the way, Bunter, what was that you were saying—about being able to tell me something or other—"

Billy Bunter blinked.

"Ask me another!" he said. "You can't pump me, Smithy."

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"No; you're too jolly cute for that," he said.

"That's it!" said Bunter, with a self-satisfied smirk. "I'm a cute chap. You can't get anything out of me I'm as close as an oyster when I've got a secret!"

"Is it a secret?"

"Of course it is. Blessed if I quite make it out, but Snoop's got to keep it a secret. I don't see why his pater cares more about what you know than about what other fellows know. But there it is, and I'm not going to tell you anything."

"No, don't, if it's a secret," assented Vernon-Smith. "But I dare say I know as much about it as you do."

"Bet you you don't!"

"You see, old Snoop and my pater are negotiating about some business together," the Bounder explained, "and my pater tells me all about it. I'm being brought up to the business, you see! I shall have to run it some day. I know all about old Snoop's new petrol company."

"I'll bet you don't know why old Snoop is sending young Snoop so much money," said Billy Bunter, with a grin of superior knowledge.

"Oh, that's because he's making such a lot—simply rolling in it," said Vernon-Smith.

"That's all you know."

"It's all you know, too," said the Bounder.

Bunter gave a fat chuckle.

"It might be to make an impression on a certain party," he said. "Not that I'm going to tell you anything, Smithy. I'm too jolly cute for that. But old Snoop is deep—very deep. Of course, he knows about you telling your father things. I'll bet you've told your father about the Snoops having such heaps of money now—haven't you?"

The Bounder nodded.

"Thought you had!" grinned Bunter. "You are pretty deep, Smith, but you ain't quite so deep as old Snoop. Not that I'm going to tell you anything."

"No; you'd better not," agreed the Bounder. "You're a jolly cute chap, Bunter. If I had any secrets, I'd give 'em to you to keep—I don't think."

And the Bounder walked away, perfectly satisfied that he knew all there was to know.

And he left Billy Bunter equally satisfied with his own cuteness in refusing to reveal anything to the inquiring Vernon-Smith.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

His Father!

THERE were two fellows at least in the Remove who were determined to remain awake when Wingate saw lights out in the Remove dormitory that night. Whether Brandreth had the same intention they did not know—but they were to know ere long. Brandreth went quietly to bed, as if nothing was further from his thoughts than another excursion from the dormitory at forbidden hours.

Snoop and Vernon-Smith remained wide awake, but they seemed to sleep. When eleven o'clock rang out, Brandreth sat up in bed, and cast a searching glance up and down the silent, gloomy dormitory.

Both the watchers saw him, and remained quite still—watching.

As if satisfied that all were sleeping, Brandreth slipped out of bed, and dressed himself quietly in the dark.

Then he moved towards the window.

Vernon-Smith and Snoop watched him climb out, and they heard the rustle of the ivy as he descended into the Close.

Then they leaped from their beds.

"Awake, Smithy?" Snoop muttered.

"Yes, rather! Get into your things—quick!"

"You bet!"

It did not take the two juniors long to dress. They exchanged a few whispered words, and Snoop left the dormitory, taking his boots in his hand. He had not the nerve for the climb down from the window. But Vernon-Smith had plenty of nerve, and he did not hesitate a moment about making the perilous descent.

The Bounder swung himself down the ivy, and dropped into the Close.

He hurried across the Close towards the wall on the road, the place it was pretty certain that Brandreth would make for.

He was not many minutes behind the junior, and he muttered an exclamation of satisfaction as he caught sight for a moment of a figure on the school wall. It disappeared, dropping into the road.

Vernon-Smith was on the top of the wall a few seconds later. In the dusk of the road, he caught sight of Brandreth again, hurrying along in the direction of Friardale.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 238.

"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR."
Every Friday.

The Bounder looked back into the darkness of the Close. Lights were still gleaming from two or three windows in the School House. He heard a panting breath, and Snoop came running up to the wall.

"Is that you, Smithy?"

"Yes. Buck up!"

"You've spotted him?"

"He's gone towards the village."

Snoop clambered over the wall. The young rascals dropped into the road, and hurried in the direction taken by Brandreth.

"Keep on the grass," muttered the Bounder. "If he spots us, he will try to dodge, and if he takes to the wood we shall lose him."

"Right-ho!"

"There he is!" murmured the Bounder.

Brandreth's figure appeared in sight for a moment in the light of the lamp at the cross-roads. Vernon-Smith and Snoop, keeping on the belt of grass beside the road, under the shadow of the trees, were invisible, and they made no sound as they pressed on. Brandreth paused at the cross-roads and glanced back, as if a doubt had flashed into his mind for a moment.

Vernon-Smith grasped his companion by the arm, and drew him deeper into the shade.

Hardly breathing, the two hidden juniors watched Brandreth as he stood in the dim radius of light from the lamp.

Satisfied, apparently, with the silence and stillness, Brandreth turned into the road that led towards the sea. He was no longer going towards Friardale, so it was evident that a visit to the village was not his object.

"He's going down to Pegg!" muttered the Bounder. "That lane leads nowhere else—only to Pegg and to the cliffs."

They turned into the lane after Brandreth.

The shadow of the trees overhead was so thick now that they could hardly see a yard in advance, and Brandreth had quite disappeared from sight.

But it was hardly possible to miss him, at all events until they came out upon the open shore, if Brandreth proceeded so far.

Suddenly from the darkness ahead a light gleamed out.

The Bounder paused, catching Snoop by the arm.

"Somebody out with a light," muttered Snoop. "Must be the chap Brandreth is going to meet!" His voice was thick with suppressed excitement.

"That light is from a window!" murmured the Bounder. "I remember. There's a cottage in this lane. Queer old johnny lives there," said Snoop. "Invalid, I think, down here for the sea air. Hardly ever goes out, and never sees any visitors. I've heard the people in Pegg speak of him."

"Maybe that cottage Brandreth is going to."

"Blessed if I see why—"

"Hush!"

They crept on, almost on tiptoe. The light from the cottage window gleamed out over the road, and they caught sight of the figure of Brandreth revealed by it. The tracked junior had stopped.

He was standing in the middle of the road, looking up and down, as if still uneasy that he might be under observation.

The two shadowers crouched back into the dense darkness under the trees.

They hardly breathed as they watched the still, silent figure of the junior in the road. Their excitement was almost painful by this time. They felt that they had come to the end of the hunt. But they were as far as ever from understanding what it all meant. Arthur Brandreth had left the school to visit this lonely cottage at the foot of the Black Pike. But why? What could there be in common between him and the recluse of the cottage, the unknown invalid who dwelt secluded in that solitary place?

They felt that they were upon the verge of a discovery. Brandreth's strange secret would be a secret no longer.

"He's going to the cottage!" murmured Snoop, as Brandreth made a movement at last.

"Hush!"

Brandreth moved towards the cottage, invisible in the darkness under the trees, only the light from the window revealing its existence.

The junior did not go to the door. He approached the window, and tapped upon it twice, softly, but in the deep silence the sound of the tapping reached the ears of the two spies a dozen yards or more away.

They did not need telling that it was a signal to the occupant of the cottage, whoever he was.

Brandreth moved quietly from the window, and stopped in the little porch outside the door. There he was completely hidden from view, both by the darkness and by the honeysuckle that grew thickly over the old porch.

Vernon-Smith and Snoop drew cautiously nearer. They were anxious to see by whom the door would be opened.

They reached a spot where they could look into the porch, as soon as there should be a light. As they looked they saw the cottage door open.

The light within was dim, but they caught a vague glimpse of a man's form—a man whose hair was very grey, and whose manner seemed somehow to imply a weight of care that was heavy and crushing. His head was bowed, and his movements slow and hesitating. When he spoke, his voice was low and tremulous, and it was with difficulty that the watchers caught the words, near as they now were.

"Is it you, Arthur?"

Brandreth's voice, low, but more distinct, replied:

"Yes, father!"

Then the door was closed upon him, and the light was shut off.

But the spies had seen—had heard enough. They remained in the dense shadow, silent, their hearts throbbing.

For that one word upon Brandreth's lips had told them all! Father!

They knew all now. They knew that Brandreth, the boy who was shunned by his Form at Greyfriars, had stolen from the school in the hours of darkness to see his father—his father, the man who was hunted by the police, and had nowhere to lay his head in safety!

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER. Under His Thumb!

HIS father!

The discovery was so sudden, so utterly unexpected, that it seemed to stun the two spies, and it was some minutes before either of them spoke.

Snoop was the first to break the silence.

"His father!" he said, with a deep breath. "John Brandreth, the man who's wanted by the police!"

"His father!" repeated the Bounder. "Great Scott! Poor beggar!"

"Let's get away!" said Snoop.

There was nothing more to learn. They hurried away down the dark lane, and did not speak again till they were in Friardale Road, a good distance away from the lonely cottage. Then Snoop burst into an irrepressible chuckle.

"Blessed if I should ever have guessed that!" he said.

"Same here!"

"His father! It isn't what I expected. I thought he was up to some shady business—some thieving or other," said Snoop. "Not that this is much better—helping a criminal to escape from the police. He's liable to be imprisoned for it, I believe. My hat! He's under our thumb now, and no mistake!"

Vernon-Smith did not reply.

"It couldn't have worked out better!" said Snoop, with another chuckle. "Fancy spotting the old gal-bird like this! What a ripping stroke of luck! The police had been looking for him for more than a year, and they supposed he'd succeeded in getting out of the country with the money he collared. Nobody thought he was living in a country cottage and pretending to be an invalid. What a deep dodge! But he's bowled out now!"

"Yes, he's bowled out now."

"It's ripping!" chuckled Snoop. "What a surprise for him when the police drop in on him to-morrow! What?"

The Bounder started.

"The police?" he said.

"Yes. They'll have him now."

"If we tell them, you mean," said Vernon-Smith uneasily.

Snoop stared at him.

"Of course, we're going to tell them!" he said. "I suppose we're not going to help a criminal to escape from justice, are we?"

"We're not bound to know anything about it, or to tell anything, if we don't want to."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 288.

Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price 1D.

and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled:

"THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

NEXT MONDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

"Going dotty?" asked Snoop politely.

"Look here," said Vernon-Smith. "We came out here to find Brandreth out if he was doing something shady. If he was thieving, or doing something rotten, he ought to be shown up, and I'd be the first to do it. I think it's a disgrace having him at Greyfriars, and I'd like to get him kicked out. But—"

"But what?"

"But I'm not a rotten informer!" said the Bounder. "That old chap isn't simply pretending to be an invalid, he's a real one; you could see that. What he's been through has knocked him over."

"Serve him right!" said Snoop.

"Well, yes, it serves him right. I haven't any pity to waste on criminals, especially those who are idiots enough to get found out. But—" The Bounder paused.

"But, what?" said Snoop angrily. "What are you driving at, you ass? I suppose you're not thinking of letting Brandreth off, now that we've got him right under our thumb?"

"Brandreth hasn't been doing anything rotten, as we suspected. He's simply standing by his father; and any decent chap would do that, whatever the old boy had done."

"Would you?" sneered Snoop.

"Yes, I would! The kid's not up to any harm, and that poor old wretch must like seeing him occasionally, shut up here like this. That's why he goes at night; it wouldn't be safe to visit him in the daytime."

GOOD TURNS.—No. 5.



A Magnetite doing a good turn by taking his three favourite weekly story-papers to a chum recovering from a long illness.

"Of course. But this will be the last visit. There won't be anybody in the cottage when he goes again!" grinned Snoop.

"I'm not going to have a hand in it!" said the Bounder obstinately. "I'm not a particular chap, but I draw the line at playing the informer. An informer ought to be boiled in oil. Why, we should be like those rotters they call 'narks,' spying on people and betraying them to the police! It's not good enough."

"A criminal ought to be given up!"
 "Let the bobbies do their own work. I'm not going to have a hand in it. You can put it how you like, Snoop, but it would be a caddish thing to inform about that miserable old wretch, and get him sent to chokey. He's not doing any harm there. I know that he's been there six months, at least, and he's certainly not done any harm."

"You want to let him alone?" snarled Snoop.
 "Yes."
 "And what about Brandreth?" said Snoop between his teeth. "Is he going to stay at Greyfriars? and have we taken all this trouble for nothing?"

"No; I've thought that out. We'll jaw to him to-morrow, and tell him he's got to go, or we'll put the police on his father. He'll go sharp enough at that."

"I dare say he would!" sneered Snoop. "But that's not enough. That man has robbed my father, and he's living now on the money he stole."

"That may be true—"

"May be true?" shouted Snoop. "You know it's true!"
 "I don't know anything of the sort!" said the Bounder coolly. "I know your father is too jolly keen for a man to rob him easily. Old Brandreth seems to have done the forgery right enough; but I doubt very much if he succeeded in getting away with any of your father's cash."

"My father had to make good the loss, as Brandreth was his partner."

"Maybe!" said the Bounder again. "Anyway, I don't want to have a hand in giving him up. So long as we get rid of Brandreth, we can be satisfied."

"You can be, if you like; but I'm going to see justice done. I'm going to inform the police to-morrow morning where they can find old Brandreth."

"I can't stop you, of course; but—"
 "You jolly well can't!" said Snoop. "It would take more than your silly rot to stop me, I think. That's what I'm going to do."

"You can leave me out of it, then, that's all," said the Bounder.

"I don't care!"
 They tramped back to the school without exchanging another word. The Bounder's scruples did not appeal to Snoop in the least. He was only thinking of making the utmost of his discovery. The Remove dormitory was still and silent when they entered it again, and they turned in, each busy with his thoughts. But before he settled down to sleep the Bounder spoke once again.

"Snoop, old man—"
 "Well?" growled Snoop.
 "Leave it to me, and let's get rid of Brandreth, as I suggested, and let the old man alone. That's all we want."

"Go and eat coke!" was Snoop's reply.
 "You're a cad!" said Vernon-Smith.
 "And you're a fool!" said Snoop. "Good-night!"

And no more was said. When Brandreth returned they did not know, for they were fast asleep before he came back to the dormitory. But in the morning, when the rising-bell clanged out to rouse Greyfriars to a new day, Brandreth was in his place. He awoke at the clang of the rising-bell—little dreaming what the day held in store for him.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

French Leave!

VERNON-SMITH glanced with a curious interest at Brandreth when the Remove went downstairs. Brandreth was calm and sedate as usual—shunned as usual, too, and taking it in his quiet way.

With the exception of Snoop and Vernon-Smith, no one knew that he had been out of bounds the previous night.

Snoop was bursting with the importance of his discovery; but he kept it to himself for the present, in case a hint should get to Brandreth, and from him a warning to the wretched man whose hiding-place had been at last discovered.

Vernon-Smith wondered what the quiet, composed Brandreth would have said if he had known of the Damocles' sword that was suspended over his head.

The Bounder's feeling of uneasiness was growing. It was so rarely that Vernon-Smith was troubled with

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scruples of any sort, that he was a little surprised himself. But the more he thought of it, the most distasteful it seemed to him, that the miserable man hiding in the cottage should be seized and dragged away to prison, as a result of his spying. It was a result that the Bounder had never dreamed of—a thing that could not possibly have been foreseen. His conscience was at work—a novel enough experience for the Bounder.

After breakfast he spoke to Snoop again. Snoop met him with a gleam of defiance in his eyes. The cad of the Remove had evidently not changed his intention.

"How are you going to work it, Snoopey?" asked Vernon-Smith. "I suppose you're still intending to give the old wretch away?"

"Of course."
 "You are going to the police-station?"
 "Perhaps."
 "Can't you tell me how you're going to work it?" demanded Vernon-Smith.

"I'm not going to tell you anything," said Snoop coolly. "You can go and eat coke. I'm doing this on my own, as you wanted to stand out of it. And I shall get all the credit of handing a criminal over to justice."

The Bounder's lip curled.
 "You're welcome to that kind of credit," he said. "I don't envy you. But I can't help feeling sorry for that wretched old man."

"Oh, rats!"
 Snoop walked away.

The Bounder walked in the Close for some time, with a moody brow. When he came in to morning lessons he felt as if he could not meet Brandreth's eyes. Certainly, as Snoop had said, a criminal ought to be handed over to justice. And after the arrest and the scandal it would cause, surely the obnoxious Brandreth could not remain at Greyfriars. But—but Vernon-Smith could not help feeling that there was something cowardly and treacherous about the whole business, and he wished heartily that he had had no hand in it.

Billy Bunter was talking to Snoop as the Bounder came in.

"When are the things coming, Snoopey, old man?"
 "Eh? What things?" said Snoop irritably.

He did not want to be bothered by the Owl of the Remove just then.

"The things you've ordered, of course," said Bunter, blinking at him. "You've been ordering things for a feed, haven't you?"

"No," growled Snoop, "I haven't."
 "But I saw you using the telephone," persisted Bunter. "What were you telephoning about, if you weren't ordering something for a feed?"

"Mind your own business."
 "Oh, really, Snoop—"

"So you've been telephoning, eh?" broke in Vernon-Smith.

"Yes, I have!" said Snoop defiantly.
 "To Friardale Police-station, I suppose?"
 "Yes, if you want to know."

And Snoop swung away into the Form-room. Billy Bunter blinked after him, and then at the Bounder, in great astonishment.

"I say, Smithy, what has Snoop been telephoning to the police-station for?" asked Bunter inquisitively.

"Find out!" said the Bounder, turning away.
 "Beast!" grunted Bunter. "I say, Wharton! Harry, old man—"

"I'll give you a thick ear, if you Harry-old-man me!" growled Wharton.
 "But, I say, what has Snoop been telephoning to the police-station for—do you know?" asked Bunter.

"No, and I don't care, either."
 "Oh, really—"

The bell was ringing for classes, and the Removes went into their Form-room. There was a grin of cattish satisfaction on Snoop's face. He was anticipating with great glee the surprise that was in store for Brandreth.

Mr. Quelch was not in the Form-room yet, and Vernon-Smith paused by Brandreth's desk, half-minded to give him a warning of what was intended. Brandreth did not look at him.

"I say, Brandreth—" began Vernon-Smith.
 "Hallo!" broke in Bolsover major. "What are you up to, Smith? Forgotten that Brandreth is in Coventry, eh?"

"Shut up, Smithy!" said Skinner.
 Mr. Quelch came into the class-room, and Vernon-Smith had to go to his place. His desk was in the same row with Brandreth's, but at a distance from the new boy. Vernon-Smith hardly heard Mr. Quelch as the lesson began. He was thinking. Finally he scribbled upon a half-sheet of paper under his desk, and folded it up into a note.

"Pass this along to Brandreth, Cherry!" he muttered, to the junior next to him.

Bob Cherry looked at the note suspiciously.

"What is it—some rotten joke?" he asked.

"No, no!"

"Well, I'm not going to pass it; I suppose it's a beastly insult," said Bob. "The kid's in Coventry—and that's enough."

Mr. Quelch glanced round, having caught the sound of whispering voices, and the Bounder had to give up the attempt.

After a few minutes, he squeezed the paper into a ball, and, taking advantage of Mr. Quelch's back being turned, he tossed the paper along to Brandreth, so skilfully that the little ball dropped on the junior's desk just in front of him.

Brandreth glanced round in surprise.

Vernon-Smith caught his eye, and made a sign to him to pick up the paper ball, and the junior did so.

He looked puzzled for a moment, and then a frown of anger came over his face. Snoop & Co. had often amused themselves by passing along slips of paper to Brandreth, with sketches of convicts and policemen on them, and Brandreth supposed that this was something more of the same kind.

He looked Vernon-Smith full in the face, and, without unrolling the paper, flung it to the floor.

Vernon-Smith gritted his teeth.

He understood what was in Brandreth's mind. It seemed impossible to convey a warning to the junior. Brandreth looked away from him, steadily refusing to see the signs he made. The Bounder rose from his place at last.

"May I get some more ink, sir?" he asked.

"Certainly," said Mr. Quelch.

The Bounder took the ink-well from his desk, and went to the cupboard in the corner of the Form-room. As he came back, he paused for a moment by Brandreth's desk.

He bent towards the boy and whispered hurriedly:

"Read the paper! Your father's in danger!"

Then he passed on.

Brandreth looked after him with a face that had grown suddenly white. Vernon-Smith sat down in his place again, his mind relieved. He had done all he could—more than anyone who knew him would have expected of him.

Brandreth sat quite still for a full minute, stunned by the shock he had received. That fear had always been upon the boy's mind—the dread that his father would be discovered. John Brandreth had evaded search for a long time; but hourly danger menaced him, and the Bounder's words showed that he knew something—but what? Why should the Bounder warn him—his enemy? Was it only a trick after all, to scare and worry him?

Probably it was; but Brandreth determined to read the paper. He dropped his pen, as an excuse for stooping, and groped on the floor for the paper ball. He found it, and sat up again, his hands trembling. Under cover of his desk, he opened the paper, and read what the Bounder had scribbled there in pencil:

"Your father's found out. Snoop has telephoned to the police this morning to go to the cottage in Pegg Lane. Buck up, if you want to warn him."

The Form-room seemed to swim round the eyes of the unhappy boy.

For some moments he sat quite still, the paper clutched and crumpled in his hand. He heard the voice of Mr. Quelch as in a dream.

But that was soon over. His father was in danger, and what the Bounder had written proved that all was, indeed, known. Was there time to warn him yet—to save him from the impending blow? Brandreth, sick at heart with fear and horror, pulled himself together, and rose, swaying, from his place.

Mr. Quelch looked round in surprise.

"Brandreth, where are you going?"

Brandreth did not reply. There was no time to make excuses, and he could not tell Mr. Quelch where and why he was going. He had to risk everything. And, indeed, in the stress of the moment, he hardly heard the Form-master. Greyfriars, lessons, everything, had faded into the background now. The only thought in his mind was how to save his father.

He ran for the Form-room door.

Mr. Quelch seemed transfixed for a moment. The whole Remove stared after Brandreth in amazement.

"Brandreth!" shouted Mr. Quelch, finding his voice at last.

Slam!

The Form-room door, closing after Brandreth, was the only reply the Form-master received. Mr. Quelch strode to the door, and tore it open.

"Brandreth! What do you mean? Come back instantly."

But Brandreth was gone. Hatless, pale, almost wild-eyed, the unhappy junior was tearing across the Close to the gates, and he was gone!

Mr. Quelch, very angry and very astonished, turned back into the Form-room with a brow like thunder. His looks showed what the truant had to expect when he returned.

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NEXT
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ONE
PENNY.

And for the rest of that morning the Remove were very much on their best behaviour. Mr. Quelch was not in a mood to be trifled with.

THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

Too Late!

HATLESS, excited, panting, Brandreth dashed from the school gates, and ran down the long white road.

He had forgotten Greyfriars. The school vanished from his mind as it vanished from his sight.

One thought was in his mind!

His father!

Why the Bounder had warned him he did not know, did not care. He had no time even to think how curious it was that the Bounder, his enemy, should do so. The only thing he thought of was, had the warning come too late?

If Snoop had telephoned before morning lessons, the police had had time—if they had started at once. But had they? Had they relied wholly upon information unexpectedly received by telephone? More likely they would not hurry themselves. They would visit the cottage in the lane, and make an examination there; but it would be at their leisure. The country police were not quick to move. And yet—and yet—there might be a chance to save his father, or his father might be already in the hands of the police.

Brandreth's heart was aching with fear and anxiety as he tore on.

He ran swiftly down the lane, and reached the cross-roads. There was no one but a jogging waggoner in sight on the road towards Friardale. But if the police were going to the cottage, they might cut across country, or they might have passed already. Yet the quiet solitude of the road gave Brandreth a ray of comfort.

He turned into the lane to Pegg, and dashed on, with the rising acclivities of the Black Pike on his right, and the fields stretching away on his left. If he could warn his father in time, John Brandreth might find refuge on the Black Pike—in one of the caves on the rugged mountain that the Greyfriars fellows often explored on half-holidays. There were caves, too, in the cliffs along the sea coast, amid the rocks of the Shoulder. Many, many chances, if he could only get the refugee away from the cottage in time.

While the hurried and disconnected thoughts raced through his mind, Brandreth was dashing on at top speed, panting, his heart thumping against his ribs, but his speed never slackening. Few fellows at Greyfriars had ever covered the ground so well on the cinder-path as Brandreth. The Remove covered it now.

He stopped suddenly, as if a bullet had struck him, as he came in sight of the lonely cottage, half-hidden under the trees in the corner of the winding lane.

For outside the porch, full in view in the bright morning sunshine, was the helmet of a policeman.

The rest of the man was hidden by the bushes of the garden, but his helmet was enough. The police were there.

Brandreth stopped, his heart almost ceasing to beat. He caught at a tree beside the lane to steady himself, in the sudden weakness that came over him.

The police!

Then all was over!

He moved on again towards the cottage, and came into the porch. The policeman—it was P.-c. Tozer, of Friardale—glanced at him, and held up a fat hand to stop him.

"You can't go in just now, young gentleman," he said.

Brandreth looked at him.

"Why are you here?" he asked dully.

P.-c. Tozer jerked his thumb towards the open door of the cottage.

"My inspector's makin' an arrest," he said.

"I must go in," said Brandreth. "It's my father."

Mr. Tozer started, and gave him a compassionate look, and allowed him to pass into the cottage.

Inspector Jones was in the little room inside, and with him the man whom Snoop and Vernon-Smith had seen the previous night open the cottage door to Brandreth.

A man of barely middle age, but grey-haired and worn by trouble; but with an expression of patient kindness in his face. A man of weak but kindly and lovable character.

His worn face grew paler at the sight of the Greyfriars junior.

"Arthur!" he muttered.

"Father! I—I came—"

"I can give you a few minutes, Mr. Brandreth," said the inspector, joining the constable in the porch.

"Thank you, Mr. Jones."

The portly inspector was kindness itself. He had his duty to do, but he was doing it as kindly as possible.

"Father," murmured the junior—"oh, father! Isn't

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"THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" By FRANK RICHARDS.



there a chance? I—I was warned. A fellow knew somehow, and told me, and I came. I hoped there'd be time."

John Brandreth shook his head sadly.

"Too late, Arthur."

"You might give them the slip yet, father. I—"

"Impossible, my boy. It is all over," said the man patiently. "I must bear it the best I can. I am thinking mostly of your poor mother. It will be a terrible blow to her." His face twitched. "You must comfort her the best you can, Arthur."

"Yes, dad. But—"

"I wish I had stayed to take my trial at first, now," said his father, with a sigh. "It would have been wiser. But the proofs were overwhelming, though I was innocent. Arthur, my trial will come now, and I fear I shall be found guilty, but always believe that your father was innocent."

Brandreth choked.

"I am not likely to doubt it, father."

"It was Josiah Snoop's cunning—he was at the point of ruin, and the forgery saved him—and he contrived to place it upon me. Imitations of the forged name were found in my desk, to which I alone had the key; but he must have obtained an impression of it. And there were other proofs, cunningly arranged. I never suspected him till it was too late."

"The villain!" muttered the boy.

"I should have been arrested. I lost my head, and fled," said his father. "Now they will count that flight against me, though I had no chance, no chance at all, if I had remained. I knew that before I went

The junior groaned.

"They will send you to prison, father."

"I know they will. I shall go there an innocent man. There is only one chance for me—that Josiah Snoop may come to justice."

"He will never confess the truth."

"Once a rascal always a rascal, Arthur. He saved himself from ruin by one crime, but the next time he may not be so lucky. And when he is caught—if he is caught—the whole truth may come out. That is what I hope for."

The inspector looked in.

"I must trouble you now, Mr. Brandreth," he said.

"I am ready."

"I have sent for a trap, so that you will not have a staring crowd," said Mr. Jones.

"You are very kind."

Father and son grasped hands for the last time. John Brandreth looked old and feeble as he went out, leaning heavily on the inspector's arm. Brandreth realised how slight a chance his father would have had of escape, even if he had been warned in time. The man was not in a condition for running and hiding. Now that his place of concealment had been discovered, all was over with him.

Brandreth stood in the porch of the cottage, watching the trap drive away, with his father sitting, with bowed head, beside the portly form of the inspector.

The trees hid them at last from the boy's aching eyes.

A groan burst from the junior. It was all over now—his father was gone—his father was in the hands of the police, and the prison gates were yawning wide for him. What news for his mother!

He flung himself upon the stone seat in the porch, and covered his face with his hands, and the tears flowed thickly through his fingers.

When he rose at last he was calmer; his face was white, and wet with tears.

He moved blindly away, with faltering footsteps. He did not go back to Greyfriars.

His place then was with his mother, to break the fearful news to her as gently as he could—to give her what comfort could be given. A little later he was in the train, speeding away towards his home. As he sat there, with fields and meadows fleeting away past the train window, he saw nothing—nothing but a bowed grey head—the picture of his father as he had seen him last—a picture that would never be erased from his mind.

THE TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER.

The Secret Out!

THE Remove were amazed.

Brandreth had taken French leave during morning lessons, and he had not returned.

When the Lower Fourth went into their Form-room for afternoon lessons, Brandreth's place was still empty.

Where was the junior who had been shunned by the Form?

Had he left the school, after all?

Snoop had a pretty clear idea of what had happened. Vernon-Smith thought that he could guess. Both of them knew that John Brandreth had been arrested that morning.

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But the other fellows were puzzled.

Billy Bunter was in a state of curiosity that had grown almost agonising during the day. It was not in the slightest degree any business of his; but Billy Bunter felt that he must know all about it. He was so oppressed with curiosity and a desire to know that he ventured to ask Mr. Quelch. Mr. Quelch was unusually grave that afternoon.

Billy Bunter rose in his place, taking his courage in both hands, as it were, and asked the Remove-master questions.

"If you please, sir—" began Bunter.

Mr. Quelch looked at him coldly.

"Well, Bunter?"

"Is—is Brandreth coming back, sir?" stammered Bunter.

"Has he left Greyfriars for good, sir?"

"He has not left Greyfriars for good, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch. "I have received a wire from him, and he has been called home by very bad news in his family. He will not return to Greyfriars to-day. But his friends need not be anxious about him; he is quite well personally."

"Th-thank you, sir!" said Bunter.

He wanted to ask more questions, but Mr. Quelch's manner was not encouraging, and he had to sit down unsatisfied.

"Not gone for good—eh?" Snoop muttered to Vernon-Smith. "He's got the nerve to come back, then—after his father's been in prison!"

"Looks like it!" said the Bounder. "You should have left it to me, Snoop. He would have got out on the terms I should have offered him!"

"He will have to get out, anyway," said Snoop. "Even the Head can't be idiot enough to allow the son of a gaol-bird to stay here! His father will be a convict now—broad arrows and cropped head, and the rest of it!"

"It was a rotten thing to do, Snoop," said Vernon-Smith—"a rotten thing! I don't call myself a scrupulous chap, but I wouldn't have done that!"

Snoop sneered.

"Oh, rot! I did my duty!"

"Well, I wouldn't have done what you did!"

"You warned him," said Snoop. "You must have warned him, to make him bolt out of the Form-room this morning as he did!"

Vernon-Smith nodded.

"I don't deny it," he said. "I did warn him. And I'm sorry he wasn't in time to help his pater get away. You've hit too hard, Snoop. It's cowardly to pile on a fellow when he's down!"

"I like that from you!" grunted Snoop. "Satan rebuking sin! He, he, he!"

Mr. Quelch looked round sharply, and the whispering ceased. After lessons, when the Remove were dismissed, they talked of Brandreth and hardly anything else. By this time it was known that the junior's father had been found and arrested, and Brandreth's absence was explained. Snoop had not related his share in the business. He knew that a good many of the fellows would take an even more unpleasant attitude about it than Vernon-Smith did. The character of an informer was never likely to be popular. But, somehow or other, it was known before long that it had been Sidney Snoop who had denounced Brandreth's father.

Billy Bunter, whose gift for finding out things was simply wonderful, was heard saying so in the common-room, and fellows rushed about for Snoop to inquire of him.

Then the story came out.

"Well, of all the rotters, I think you take the cake!" was Bob Cherry's comment. "It was a dirty trick, Snoop!"

"And following him and spying on him was a dirty trick, too!" said Harry Wharton, with a curl of the lip. "A precious pair of rotters, I must say!"

Vernon-Smith flushed red at that.

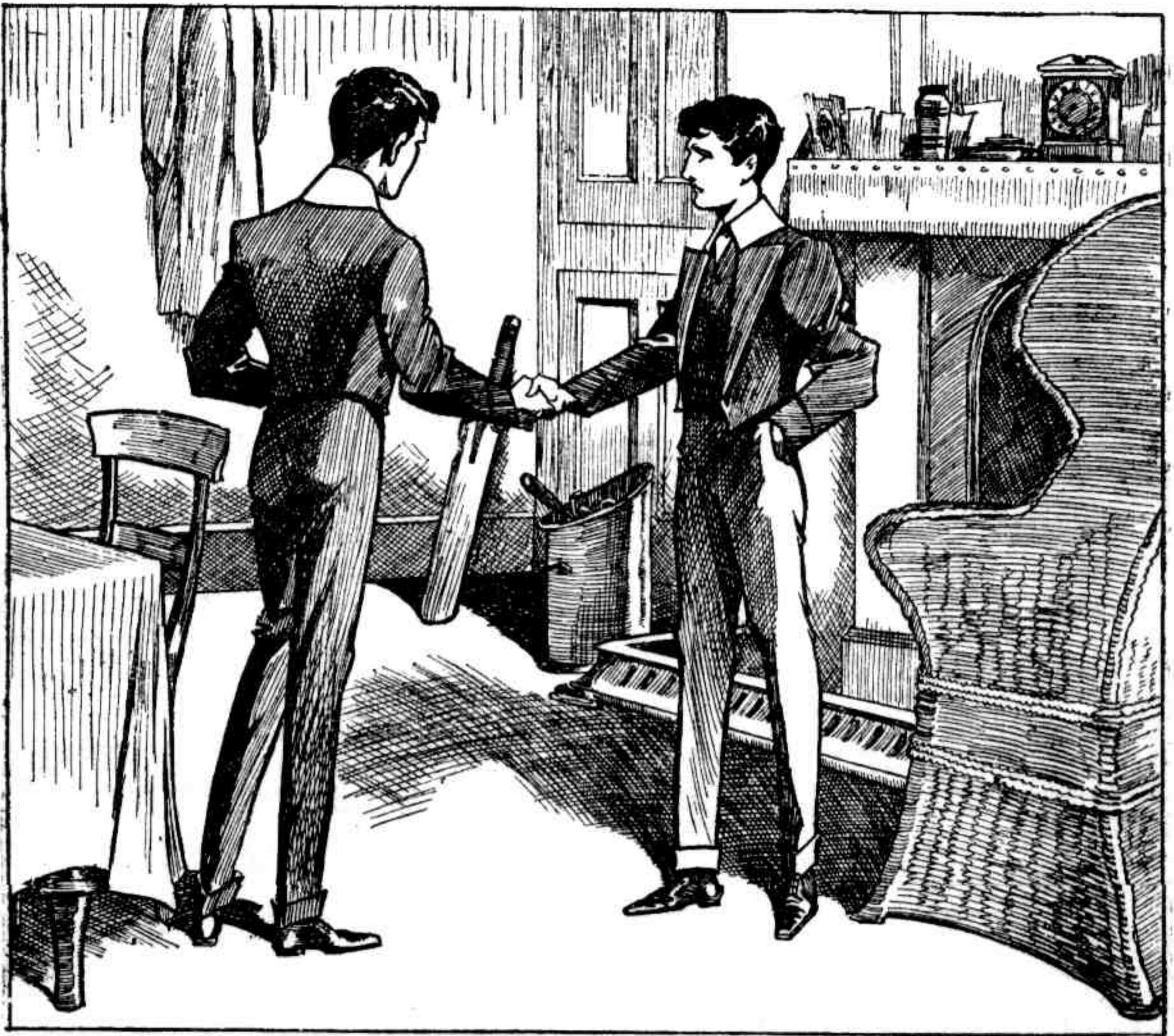
"We didn't know what we were going to find out," he said. "We suspected that Brandreth was up to something shady—and so did you all. I never guessed that the ass was going to see his pater; how could I? When I knew what it was, I tried to get Snoop to hold his tongue about it, and I gave Brandreth warning—I couldn't do more. I'm sorry enough the poor brute has got into this trouble!"

"I'm not!" said Snoop savagely. "He deserves it all, and more! Criminals ought to be given up to the police, I suppose, and Brandreth was breaking the law in helping to hide him!"

"He was standing by his father," said Peter Todd. "That was a decent thing to do. He believes his father's innocent—as any decent chap would. Brandreth is true blue. If we had known what it was he went out for, we shouldn't have been down on him. The poor kid—never able to see his father without sneaking out at night to do it! It was hard enough on him, without us making it worse!"

"Yaas, begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "And he couldn't explain without riskin' givin' his pater away! That's why he wouldn't explain!"

Wharton knitted his brows.



The tears were running down Snoop's wretched face. He took Brandreth's hand, and there seemed to be some comfort for the wretched boy in the firm, strong grasp of the junior he had injured. "Buck up, old man, and keep your pecker up!" said Brandreth kindly. (See Chapter 25.)

"We couldn't be expected to guess that," he said. "It's clear enough now. I suppose that's one reason why he didn't want to leave Greyfriars—because he was near his father here. And that's where he was going to the first day he came here, Bob—you remember, when he was in the tuck-shop, and he didn't want us to walk to the school with him?"

Bob Cherry nodded.

"Yes, that was it," he said commiseratingly. "Poor kid!"

"Poor kid be blowed!" said Snoop. "He's the son of a gaol-bird, and he ought to be kicked out of the school! Why, the papers will be full of it when the trial comes on; and a ripping show-up that will be for Greyfriars, won't it? If the Head doesn't send him away, the board of governors ought to interfere!"

"He'll have to go now," said Bolsover major. "But you can't help feeling sorry for the poor beast!"

"I don't feel sorry for him!" said Snoop.

"Well, I do!" growled Bolsover.

"He's a decent chap, whatever his father is," said Harry Wharton; "and when he comes back, I'm going to stick to him, for one. All that we had up against him has been explained away now, and explained away to his credit. I wouldn't be down on any chap for sticking to his father, if his father was a criminal ten times over! Some duties come before others, and it's no chap's business to set up in judgment on his parents. That's what I think!"

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Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price 1 D. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled:

"Oh, rats!" said Snoop.

Opinion in the Remove was, in fact, very much divided. Sidney James Snoop was more bitter against Brandreth than ever—perhaps on the grounds sung by the old poet:

"Forgiveness to the injured does belong.

But they ne'er pardon who have done the wrong!"

Most of the fellows were sorry enough for the unhappy junior; but they felt that he ought to go. His presence in Greyfriars, in the midst of so much disgrace and scandal, was too invidious. The school was not, as Stott remarked, a home for the sons of convicts. If he came back, he would be shunned by most of the school. Harry Wharton & Co., however, were determined to stand up for him. The mystery of those midnight excursions was cleared up now, and certainly nothing to Brandreth's discredit had come to light. And the Famous Five stuck to their original opinion—that it was no business of theirs to visit the father's sins upon the son.

However much the fellows might disagree upon other points, they were generally agreed upon one—and that was that it was beastly mean of Snoop to play the informer. Snoop's recently acquired popularity seemed to be in danger, and only a few fellows—like Bunter and Stott and Skinner—backed him up through thick and thin. And their backing was likely to last exactly as long as the horn of plenty continued to flow—and no longer.

"THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

And, oddly enough, it was at this critical time that Snoop's funds showed signs of what Fisher T. Fish called "petering out."

He had told his friends that he was getting another "tenner" that very day. But the letter did not come; and when Snoop turned away disappointed from the postman, Vernon-Smith smiled a very peculiar grin.

"No tenners, Snoop?" he asked.

"Next post, I suppose," said Snoop.

"I hope so!" grinned the Bounder. "Your pater is making money hand over fist—isn't he?—out of that new petrol company!"

"Yes, he is—practically a millionaire now!" said Snoop. "And your pater's left out in the cold, with all his cuteness, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith chuckled.

"Perhaps it's his cuteness that's made him stay out in the cold?" he suggested.

"Oh, rot!" said Snoop. "Why, the petrol company paid a first dividend of ten per cent.!"

"I've heard of such things as dividends being paid out of capital—ten per cent. back out of your own subscriptions!" chuckled the Bounder.

"Why, that's swindling, isn't it?" said Stott.

"Yes, rather! Of course, I don't suggest for a single moment that anything of that kind is going on in the Snoop family!" sneered the Bounder. "I only say I've heard of such things!"

And he walked away before the furious Snoop could reply.

"Just jealousy!" said Billy Bunter, taking Snoop's arm affectionately. "Come up to the study, Snoop. I've got a good fire going ready to cook the stuff. Shall I get the grub from Mrs. Mimble's for you?"

Snoop shook off Bunter's arm and walked away. The failure of the expected remittance, and Vernon-Smith's sneering words, had made him vaguely uneasy. Snoop did not know very much about his father's business, but he was aware that Josiah Snoop had sailed very near to the wind sometimes. Why had his father been so anxious to impress Vernon-Smith with the new wealth of the Snoop family? It was because he knew the Bounder would report it to his father, of course. But why did he want that? To impress upon Mr. Samuel Vernon-Smith the great value of the new company's shares; to induce the millionaire to enter the concern? But if it was so valuable a concern, why so much anxiety? If the company was sound there was no need to coax and entice capital into it—capital would flow freely enough into sound ventures. Was it possible that it was all spoof, that the great Snoop enterprise was one of those "wildcat" concerns that make a great noise on the Stock Exchange and fade away when the bubble bursts and are heard of no more? It seemed to Snoop, as he thought about it wretchedly, that his new wealth was fairy gold, and melting away in his fingers.

When he saw the Bounder again, the sneer upon the latter's face was like a confirmation of his worst forebodings.

But it must be all right—it must be; and in the morning his remittance would come, and the crisp "tenner" would reassure him. The morning came, but the tenner did not, and neither did it come the day following. And the next day Brandreth returned to the school.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER.

No Admittance!

BRANDRETH came into the schoolhouse as classes were being dismissed after morning lessons on Monday. He met the Remove coming out of their Form-room, and paused.

Brandreth was looking pale and worn, his face showing plainly enough the stress he had been through during the past few days.

Snoop was the first to spot him, and Snoop burst into a jeering laugh.

"Here he is!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Glad to see you, Brandreth." And he greeted the junior with a sounding thump upon the shoulder.

"Same here," said Harry Wharton and Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "I have estimable pleasure in beholdfully seeing again the esteemed and ludicrous Brandreth."

"That cad's in Coventry!" exclaimed Snoop.

"He's not in Coventry as far as I'm concerned," said Harry Wharton. "Brandreth, you can explain now. Was it to go and see your father that you broke bounds at night?"

Brandreth nodded.

"It's not a secret now," he said. "Of course it was that."

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

It won't happen again. My father has been taken, as you know." He set his teeth for a moment.

"And you've got the cheek to come back here and tell us your father's in prison!" exclaimed Snoop.

Brandreth's pale face flushed.

"I'd better explain to you fellows," he said. "I didn't want to leave Greyfriars. I didn't want my mater to know that it was all found out here, and I didn't want to leave the district where my father was living. Now it's different."

"Then you're going?" asked Peter Todd.

"No. My father will be standing his trial soon. If he's proved innocent, as I hope, I shall stay here. If he's condemned, I shall go. That ought to satisfy you."

"It's no business of ours," said Harry Wharton. "You could stay in any case, if you liked, and I shouldn't have anything up against you."

Brandreth shook his head.

"You don't want a convict's son here," he said. "My father is innocent; but innocent men have been sent to prison before, and it may happen again. If he goes to prison, I shall leave Greyfriars. That's all I've got to say."

"Well, that's good enough," said Bolsover major.

"Hear, hear!"

"You oughtn't to have come back!" said Snoop. "I consider——" Snoop was interrupted by a general shout:

"Shut up, Snoop!"

The cad of the Remove glared round defiantly. It seemed as if all the Form intended now to back up the junior they had shunned and ragged.

"You're changing your opinions mighty suddenly," sneered Snoop. "That fellow is a gaol-bird's son, and he oughtn't to be here at all, and only a few days ago you were all saying the same."

"It's different now," said Bulstrode. "Brandreth is playing the game. He's going to stay till the trial, and if his father's cleared he's going to stay, and I shall make him jolly welcome for one."

"His father's guilty! What did he run away for if he was innocent?" sneered Snoop.

"Well, if his father's proved guilty he's going to leave," said Russell. "Nothing could be fairer than that. And the poor kid's got enough trouble now without any more from us. You can shut up, Snoop!"

"Look here——"

"Ring off!" shouted the juniors; and Sidney James Snoop had no choice about the matter. He sneered and walked away.

Even Stott and Skinner had fallen away from their old pal Snoop. Perhaps it was because the horn of plenty had run dry. In expectation of unlimited further supplies Snoop had spent his money recklessly, and it was very nearly all gone. And the further supply had not come. In fact, he had not heard from his father at all for some days, though he had written an anxious letter home.

Billy Bunter rolled after Snoop, and joined him in the Close. Billy Bunter was too short-sighted to see the scowl on Snoop's face, and he was thinking of other and more important things. He linked his arm affectionately in Snoop's.

"I say, Snoop, old fellow, Mrs. Mimble has got a fresh lot of tarts to-day——"

Snoop shook off Bunter's hand.

"Don't bother!" he said.

Billy Bunter blinked at him in surprise.

"Better come and have a snack before dinner," he urged.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Well, if you don't want to come, you needn't," said Bunter, with dignity. "I suppose you won't mind lending me a few bob till my postal-order comes? I'm expecting it by the afternoon post."

"Go and cadge off somebody else!" said Snoop.

"Eh!"

"Let me alone, you fat rotter!"

Snoop swung angrily away. Billy Bunter blinked after him in astonishment and suspicion, and rolled in pursuit. Billy Bunter was suspicious, and he meant to be satisfied.

"I say, Snoop, you're not hard up, are you?"

"Mind your own business."

"It is my business," said Bunter warmly. "If you've got me into your study under false pretences it's up to you to say so. Smithy wants me back, and Peter Todd asked me with tears in his eyes to come back to No. 7. If you've spoofed me——"

"You rotter!" howled Snoop. "I didn't want you in my study. You shoved yourself in there for what you could get."

"Precious little to get as far as I can see," sniffed Bunter.

"I suspected all the while you were spoofing us, and your

father wasn't a millionaire at all. I knew all along that it was only gas, and—Ow! Yarcob!"

The exasperated Snoop hit out, and Bunter caught his knuckles on his fat chin. The Owl of the Remove sat down on the ground with a bump, and Snoop stalked away.

"Ow! Beast!" groaned Bunter, sitting up and feeling his chin tenderly. "Ow! Ow! The awful rotter! Ow!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Taking a rest on the ground, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry, coming along as Bunter sat rubbing his fat chin.

"That beast Snoop pushed me over," growled Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha! You mean your old pal Sid!" yelled Bob.

"He's no pal of mine! I'm done with him. He's been spoofing us. His father ain't a millionaire at all, and he's got no money."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I consider it disgraceful. He's hard up, and he got me into his study under false pretences. There actually isn't anything in the study for tea," said Bunter, greatly aggrieved.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter did not see anything to laugh at. He was simmering with indignation. He bestowed a sniff of contempt upon his old pal Sid when he met him going in to class that afternoon. After lessons, Billy Bunter looked into the study and found Snoop there. Snoop was writing home once more, and his face was dark and anxious. Bunter blinked at him indignantly from the doorway.

"Going to have tea?" he demanded.

Snoop did not reply.

"Is there anything for tea?" Bunter howled.

"No!" snarled Snoop. "Get out!"

"Then you're stony, you spoofer! You've practically swindled me into coming into this study, and I say—Yah! Yah! Oh!"

A cushion caught Bunter on the chest and hurled him bodily into the passage. Then Snoop slammed the door.

Billy Bunter picked himself up, and rubbed his chest, and shook his fist at the closed door of the study, but he did not venture to open it again.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER.

Good For Evil!

BRANDRETH!"

"Yes, sir!"

Brandreth looked up quickly. The Remove were in class in the morning, and Brandreth was in his place with the rest. Mr. Quelch was very easy with the junior, whose thoughts were but little on his lessons—but the Form-master knew when to be considerate.

"There is a telegram for you, Brandreth!" said Mr. Quelch. "You may leave the Form-room."

"Thank you, sir."

Brandreth's face went red and pale as he rose. The telegram, of course, was from home, and there must be news in it—good or bad he did not know.

The eyes of the Removites followed him as he quitted the Form-room. Sidney James Snoop's lip curled in a sneer.

"News from prison, I suppose?" he remarked.

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob Cherry.

It was a quarter of an hour before Brandreth came in. The juniors all looked at him as he entered—and they stared, then!

A wonderful change had come over Brandreth.

His pale face was lighted up—his eyes were shining—he seemed to be walking on air. He had the telegram in his hand.

Mr. Quelch gave him a kind smile.

"You appear to have had good news, Brandreth?" he said.

Brandreth's eyes danced.

"Yes, sir—the best! Oh, sir! My father's innocent—I mean he's been proved innocent." The tears rushed to his eyes. "Innocent, sir! My father!"

"Is it possible, Brandreth? I am very, very glad to hear it," said the Remove-master. "This is, indeed, good news for you? But are you sure?"

"Yes, sir! He is going to be released to-day, and they have allowed him to send me this telegram to tell me so! My mother knows already! Oh, isn't it ripping? They've got the right man now!"

And Brandreth, forgetting in his excitement that he was in the Form-room, and in the dread presence of his Form-master, waved the telegram above his head.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Cherry.

"Hip-pip!" roared Peter Todd. "Jolly glad to hear it."

"Bravo!"

"I told you so all along," chirruped Billy Bunter. "You wouldn't listen to me, you fellows. Perhaps you'll listen to me another time."

Mr. Quelch did not rebuke the cheer. He was very glad

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Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price 1D. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled

NEXT
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ONE
PENNY.

himself of the news that had come to Brandreth, and he was pleased to see that the Removites were glad too.

But Brandreth's face became sober again in a few moments.

"There's bad news for somebody else in the telegram, sir," he said. "I think you ought to see it."

"Certainly, if you wish, Brandreth," said the Remove-master, a little puzzled. He took the telegram, and read it—it was a long one—and his face became very grave. His glance wandered from the telegram to Snoop, in his place in the Form.

"This is very serious, Brandreth," he said.

"Yes, sir!"

"I suppose there cannot be any doubt about it?"

"Oh, no, sir. I knew it all the time—it was what my father told me, sir," said Brandreth quietly. "I knew he was innocent, and I knew who had really done it."

"I should say nothing about this until there is further news, in confirmation," said Mr. Quelch.

"Very well, sir."

Brandreth put the telegram into his pocket, and went back to his place. He gave Snoop a glance in passing—a glance that was full of kindness and compassion—and to which Sidney James retorted with a glare of scorn.

The Removites were on tenterhooks of curiosity. They could hardly restrain it until classes were dismissed. When the juniors were out of the Form-room at last, Brandreth was surrounded in the passage by a crowd of inquirers.

"What's the news, Brandy?" asked Dutton.

"Show us the telegram, old chap."

"Who's the other fellow you spoke of?"

"Roll it out, Brandreth."

But Brandreth shook his head.

"You'll get all the news soon enough," he said. "It will be in the evening papers, I expect. Snoop, I want to speak to you, if you don't mind."

"I don't want to speak to you," said Snoop contemptuously.

"You've nothing up against me now," said Brandreth, mildly. "My father's innocence has been proved, Snoop."

"I don't believe it."

"The police would not let him wire to me saying it was so if it wasn't so," said Brandreth, still with the same mildness of manner. "It's true, Snoop. And I should like to speak to you—in a friendly way. Let me come up to your study. I want to do you a good turn."

Snoop looked at him with eyes glittering with hatred and scorn.

"Keep your good turns till you're asked for them!" he said. "I know it's all spoof—your father's guilty. Why, it rested between your father and mine, and if your father's innocent mine is guilty. I suppose you don't expect me to believe that?" he added, with a sneer.

There was a sudden hush. The look on Brandreth's face told as much as his tongue could have revealed—so full of kindness and pity was it. Snoop stared at him blankly, and slowly understood—and his face became as white as death.

"Come up to the study," said Brandreth gently.

Snoop made no further demur. He went blindly up the stairs, and Brandreth passed his arm through Snoop's, and went with him. There was a murmur among the crowd of juniors as they went.

"My hat!" said Harry Wharton, in a hushed voice. "Is it possible—is that it? Poor old Snoop! And he's been so rough on Brandreth—"

"Brandreth isn't being rough on him, though," said Nugent.

"No; he's a good chap!"

Not a word was spoken between Brandreth and Snoop until they were in the latter's study. Brandreth closed the door. Snoop sank into a chair, his eyes, burning from his colourless face, fixing themselves wildly on Brandreth.

"Show me the telegram," said Snoop hoarsely.

Brandreth handed it to him without a word.

Snoop's dizzy eyes could hardly read the message. But the force of it was borne in upon his brain, and he sank back in the chair with a groan. For the telegram ran:

"Dearest Arthur,—My innocence is proved. Josiah Snoop has been arrested for embezzlement and falsification of accounts in petrol company. He has confessed the truth about the forgery, a year ago. Shall be released in a few hours.—YOUR FATHER."

"Oh!" groaned Snoop. "My father arrested. Then the company—it was a swindle! I—I half suspected it, too. Oh, what shall I do?"

"It was bound to come out sooner or later," said Brandreth. "Your father is in for it now; and it may make

things better for him to have confessed about that old affair, and cleared an innocent man. But it wasn't your fault, Snoop. You can't help what your father does, and the fellows won't be down on you—not the decent fellows. Like father like son is all rot. Don't think about that. You'll have to get over this. And if nobody else will stand by you, I will!"

Snoop looked at him in a dull kind of wonder.

"After the way I've treated you?" he muttered.

"Never mind that now."

"I was down on you worse than anybody else, because—because your father was a thief. And now, it's my father. My father! And you—"

"Don't think about that now. Buck up, old man, and keep your pecker up."

The tears were running down Snoop's wretched face. But he had taken Brandreth's hand, and there seemed to be some comfort for the wretched boy in the firm, strong grasp of the junior whom he had injured, and who had repaid the injury in the noblest possible way—by forgiveness.

All Greyfriars knew it that evening.

The Lower School buzzed with the news.

Somebody had obtained an evening paper, and there was a full account of the affairs of the Anglo-African New Petrol Company. It had been a swindle from first to last. Dividends had been paid out of the capital as it was subscribed, thus inducing fresh capital to flow in. But such methods could not last for ever. The concern might have kept afloat longer if Samuel Vernon-Smith, the millionaire financier, could have been induced to invest in it. But the acute financier had not been caught. The crash had come suddenly; and Josiah Snoop had been arrested while in the very act of flying with all that he could lay his hands on of the few remaining assets of the company.

Josiah Snoop was certain of penal servitude; but perhaps he had made things a little better by full confession, and

above all by clearing John Brandreth of that old charge. It had cost Josiah Snoop nothing to confess that now. It could not add to his disgrace, and could add little or nothing to conscience, and he was glad to be relieved of that crime now that secrecy could no longer be of use to him.

John Brandreth came forth once more, a free man without a stain upon his character. The clouds that had so long darkened his life—and his son's—had rolled away for ever.

Brandreth of the Remove was heartily congratulated by all the fellows, even those who had shunned him in the days of his disgrace. It was upon his enemy and persecutor that shame had fallen—and Snoop was almost crushed by it. It was well for him that he had not to deal with a fellow of his own kind. Brandreth's vengeance was ready to his hand—if he had chosen. But he did not. He was all kindness and consideration to the wretched fellow who deserved so little from him.

Snoop's first thought was to leave Greyfriars; but he did not. A relative assumed charge of him, and he remained at the school. And Brandreth's example was followed by the other fellows. Harry Wharton & Co. took the same side; and it was agreed that Snoop should not be treated as he fairly deserved. What he had inflicted upon Arthur Brandreth was not to be inflicted upon him in his turn.

If anything was necessary to complete Brandreth's popularity it was his conduct towards Snoop. The Remove voted him a brick—as undoubtedly he was—and from that time there were few fellows better liked in the Greyfriars Remove than the boy who had been once Shunned by the Form!

THE END

(Next Monday's grand, long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. is entitled: "THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" by Frank Richards. "The Magnet" next week will be the usual size and usual price—One Penny.)

THE END.



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FOR NAME AND FORTUNE



A Splendid, New, Long, Complete Story of Adventure. Specially Written for this
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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY.

By PETER BAYNE.

CHAPTER I.

A Bolt from the Blue—A Bold Resolve.

"YOU'LL have to give it up one day, Madge." Madge Lewson laughed, shook her head, and darted a look of interested inquiry at the speaker—a tall, handsome youth of about nineteen.

"And when will that be?" she asked. "You might tell me."

"When you change your name for mine," he replied, a smiling twinkle in his eye. "I couldn't allow you to risk your neck then. I should be a callous sort of brute if I did, shouldn't I?"

"I suppose you would," said Madge thoughtfully. "But there's really no more danger in flying than in motoring—at least, I think not. However," she added laughingly, "you're looking a long time ahead, Roddy; and before our wedding-day I might persuade you to share my own opinion as to the safety of travelling through the air in an aeroplane."

Rodney Wayne shrugged his broad shoulders.

"I don't fancy so," he answered. "Flying is a splendid sport for men, but it's too risky for girls, especially for you."

They remained discussing the matter for some few minutes longer, and then Madge, having locked up her aeroplane in the shed where it was kept, started to walk home with her companion. She was a pretty, fascinating girl, with a courage that knew no fear, as the flights that she was constantly making in an aeroplane belonging to her brother, who was abroad, abundantly testified to.

Proud as he was of her achievements in this direction, Rodney Wayne suffered constant anxiety on her account, and was never happy when he knew that she was out in the flying-machine. They had been playmates together as children, had grown up to think of one another with trusting confidence and affection, and now they were looking forward to the day when they would live in a home of their own making.

After having taken leave of Madge at Maple Lodge, where she lived, Rodney Wayne walked across the fields to his own home. This was Rivers Court, a fine old place that had come into his possession about eighteen months before, at the death of his father. As he looked at the house, whose thick, grey walls had stood for many an age, his eyes flashed with a light of mingled pride and affection.

Almost immediately, however, a little frown of uneasy thought furrowed his brow. His father had died leaving the estate encumbered with debt, and he had been compelled to sacrifice a great part of it, and at the same time cut down expenditure in every way. There were still many difficulties to be met, but the worst of them had been overcome, and Wayne could look to the future with all the hope and confidence of youth.

Yet, for some unknown reason, a presentiment of coming evil clouded his mind as he walked up the drive; and, try how he would, he could not shake it off. As he entered the hall the old footman, who had been with the family close on forty years, came up to him.

"Well, Johnson," said Wayne, as the other took his hat and coat, "anyone to see me while I've been out?"

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"Yes, sir," was the answer. "Mr. Crooksley called a few minutes ago, and said he'd wait for you, so I showed him into the smoking-room."

Wayne gave a little start of amazement.

"Waldon Crooksley here!" he murmured to himself. "What can he want? All right, Johnson," he added aloud; "I'll go to him at once!"

A strangely puzzled look in his eyes, he crossed the hall to the smoking-room. As he opened the door his visitor—a well-dressed man of about thirty—rose from his seat to welcome him.

"Surprised to see me—eh?" remarked Waldon Crooksley, as he and Wayne shook hands. "Expected you would be. Ought to have wired saying I was coming, but guessed that you'd not be far from here."

He uttered the words with a smile which, intended to be pleasantly familiar, gave to his dark, keen face a distinctly sinister expression.

"I'm pleased to see you!" said Rodney Wayne, in a formally polite tone of voice. "I presume you wish to speak to me on some matter of business?"

"Yes," Crooksley answered; "and it's rather important business, too! The fact of the matter is, I'm here to discuss the mortgage that your father took out with me on the Rivers Court estate."

Wayne stared at the speaker in speechless astonishment.

"What on earth do you mean?" he asked. "A mortgage on the estate! This is the first time I've ever heard mention of one!"

"Ha!" said Waldon Crooksley, slowly puffing a long cloud of cigar-smoke from his lips. "It's as I expected, then, and you're entirely ignorant of the transaction. That's a pity."

Taking a long envelope from his coat-pocket, Crooksley drew from it a parchment document, which he placed on the table.

"There's a copy of the mortgage deed," he said affably. "Perhaps you'd like to glance at it?"

Picking up the document with a trembling hand, Rodney Wayne cast his eyes over the written contents. As he did so his face turned pale, his heart beat fast and furiously, and a thick mist seemed to gather before his eyes. When he had read the last line he groaned aloud.

"A mortgage for five thousand pounds!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "I can't believe it! Why did my father keep it a secret from me?"

Waldon Crooksley shrugged his shoulders.

"That I'm unable to tell you," he answered. "Probably he intended to take you into his confidence, but, as you see by the date, the mortgage was only taken out a few weeks before his death. Had he lived, I presume he'd have told you."

Mastering his emotion, Rodney Wayne again looked at the document.

"I see that the repayment of the money you advanced," he said, "was due over six months ago. Why did you not apply to me then for it?"

"I knew you were being hard pressed for money at the time," Crooksley answered, "so I decided to let the matter

"THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

stand over for a while. Now, unfortunately, circumstances compel me to ask for a speedy settlement of the debt."

Wayne passed his hand across his brow with a despairing gesture.

"You must wait!" he said hurriedly. "I must have time given me in which to obtain so much money. Five thousand pounds! It's a huge sum!"

Crooksley's face took on a grimly evil look.

"I'll give you a month," he said, "and not a day more, unless—"

He paused, and the other shot a questioning glance at him.

"Unless what?"

"Unless," Crooksley continued, "you break off your engagement to Madge Lewson. Hear me out!" he added sharply, as Wayne uttered an inarticulate cry of rage.

"You know perfectly well that I've loved Madge for a long time. It was her refusal of me that made me leave the neighbourhood a year ago to live elsewhere. But that didn't kill my love for her, and I've never abandoned the hope of making her my wife. You stand in the way. Very well, then. Do as I want you to, and the debt of five thousand pounds owing to me shall be cancelled, and you will never hear of it again. You—"

"Stop!" cried Wayne, almost unable to control himself.

"I've heard enough! You're a scoundrel, Waldon Crooksley, and a low, mean coward to make such a dastardly proposal to me! Now go, before I throw you out! Go!"

Pointing to the door, he advanced threateningly to the other, who, craven at heart, fell hastily back. But in the doorway Crooksley paused to look round, with a face that was livid with malignant hate.

"I'll go," he hissed, "and leave you to your pleasant thoughts of the future! In one month, mind—one month your old home will be lost to you, for I know that you cannot find the money to pay me my debt! Everything of value on the estate has already been sold. You're little better than a pauper!"

Chuckling with derisive spite and malice, he snatched up his hat and strode out of the house. When the other had gone, Rodney Wayne, faint and shaken with emotion, sank into a chair and covered his hot, burning face with his hands. Waldon Crooksley had dealt him a crushing blow.

With a dull, aching sense of miserable impotence he realised the utter impossibility of raising such a sum as five thousand pounds inside a month. It was folly to think of doing so.

"The scoundrel!" he muttered. "This plot of his to ruin me must have been hatched months ago. What am I to do?"

His heart heavy with the sense of a burden he had never experienced in his young life before, he went out, to wander aimlessly beneath the starlit sky in the hope of devising some plan whereby he might stave off the evil day. His attention was suddenly arrested by the sound of someone singing, and he paused and listened eagerly, for he knew the singer to be Madge Lewson. His footsteps had brought him to her home.

He was but a few yards away from the house. The windows of the drawing-room were open, and Madge, the lamplight falling caressingly on her face, was seated at the piano. Crossing the lawn, Wayne looked in through the window. She turned her head and saw him, and was at his side in a moment.

"Why, Roddy," she said laughingly, "what are you doing here?"

Then he told her of his trouble, and the hunted, haggard look that was in his face crept into her own. She was brave, but this was a disaster new to her, and she did not know how to meet it.

"But surely you will be able to find the money?" she said at last. "Your friends will help you."

Wayne shook his head.

"I sha'n't ask them to help me!" he said doggedly. "I'd hate to do it. If the worst comes to the worst, then it must; that's all. Only I thought you ought to know about it, Madge. I expect your people will want us to break off the engagement now. It would be only natural if they did."

Madge flushed up, and shook her head.

"Whatever they may think, or say," she said firmly, "will never make the slightest difference to me, Roddy! Whatever may happen, I shall be true to you!"

When he left Madge some little time later, Rodney Wayne felt all the brighter and better for his talk with the girl. The outlook did not appear so dark now as before. There must be some way, he told himself, out of the difficulty.

As he was crossing the yard to reach the house a stableman, carrying a lantern in his hand, passed him by.

"Good-night, Snape!" he said. "Not finished work yet, then?"

"Not yet," the other replied. "I've got to give Red Star his feed of oats. He'd be fretting all night else, and I'd have rare work with him in the morning. Wonderful

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how well he's come on during the last few months, sir. You ought to run him for the Harbury Cup. He'd take a lot of beating."

He moved on, but Wayne stood motionless, his eyes gleaming with a look of strange excitement. The words uttered by the stableman were echoing in his brain.

"Red Star!" he murmured. "Run him for the Harbury Cup. Why not? He'd stand a great chance. And if he won—why, the stake money is two thousand pounds; and on the strength of gaining such a prize I could easily raise the rest of the money wanted to pay off Crooksley. Yes; Red Star shall run in the race, and I'll ride him to victory!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Bribe—Villainy—Red Star Foils His Enemy!

IN a lonely road that passed through a part of the Rivers Court estate stood Waldon Crooksley, thoughtfully smoking a cigarette. He was leaning against a wooden fence, a thick bush in front of which screened him from the sight of anyone who might be passing by.

The beat of hoofs up the road caused Crooksley to suddenly straighten his back with a movement suggestive of alert attention. Tossing away his cigarette, he peered over the bush, and his eyes glistened with satisfaction, for they beheld what he had come out to see.

"It's Red Star," he muttered, "and some stable-hand or other is riding him! Lucky it isn't Wayne. My time would have been wasted else."

The horse referred to—Red Star—came on down the road. He was a noble beast, brown in colour, with a curious, star-shaped patch of bright chestnut between the eyes, a distinguishing mark that was responsible for his name.

The rider was the stableman, Sam Snape—a short, wiry individual, whose face, sharp and thin, wore an expression of mingled shrewdness and cunning. He was riding easily, for Red Star was going at a walking pace, and when the horse all at once swerved violently and reared he was almost thrown headlong from the saddle.

"Hold on!" he said gruffly, as he adroitly regained his balance. "What's the matter with you—a gnat bit you or what? You nearly had me off that time!"

At that moment Waldon Crooksley stepped out into the road.

"I'm afraid that your mount took fright at me," he said amiably. "I was behind the bushes there, and my movement must have startled the horse. Very sorry!"

Sam Snape gave an angry snort.

"You're no business here at all," he remarked. "This is a private road. Suppose you're a chap who's out to pick up sporting tips for the newspapers? Well, you'll get none here, so clear off!"

Waldon Crooksley gave vent to a genial laugh.

"What a joke!" he exclaimed. "How some of my friends would smile if they heard that I'd been taken for a tipster! I should never hear the last of it! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

The scowlingly suspicious look in Sam Snape's face slowly gave way to one of recognition as he stared at the other.

"Beg pardon!" he said, then. "Didn't know it was Mr. Crooksley speaking to me. I remember you now, sir, although it's a longish while since I last saw you."

"That's better!" Waldon Crooksley rejoined, inwardly exulting over the change of manner that the knowledge of who he was had brought about in the stableman. "Now I come to think of it, I remember you, too. Still working for Mr. Wayne? Glad to hear it! Fine horse that you're on. Looks all over a racer."

"That's what he is," said Sam Snape, "and you'd have your work cut out to find another one to equal him. He's the best steeplechaser I've ever set eyes on. You just ought to see him sail over the fences. If it isn't a sight to make a fellow open his eyes and get excited then I don't know what is!"

"Ha!" Crooksley remarked. "You're enthusiastic on the subject, I see. Suppose you're hoping to ride the horse in some big race?"

"I'm not," Sam Snape replied, "but Mr. Wayne is. He's entered Red Star for the Harbury Cup, and stands a rattling good chance of winning, too. But I oughtn't to have told you," he added, quickly, "for Mr. Wayne wants it to be kept a secret down here."

"Don't worry!" said Crooksley easily. "I sha'n't split on you. It'll be as well, though, for you not to mention to Mr. Wayne that you've seen me. By the way," he added, "I'm staying at the Blue Boar at present. If you're passing by there at any time this week you might look me up. You'll always find me in the evening."

Taking something from his pocket he handed it to Sam Snape, and then, with a good-natured smile, walked away. What he had given the other was a five pound note. Looking back over his shoulder, he saw that the stableman

was riding on down the road, his head bent in thought, and his lips parted in a wicked smile of satisfaction.

"He's risen to it like a hungry fish to the fly!" he muttered. "I don't fancy I shall have any difficulty with him. So the rumour I heard that Red Star was running in the race is correct. Well, Rodney Wayne, you'll be sadly disappointed, I'm afraid. You're not going to escape from me so easily as you hope to."

Soon after dusk that evening, Sam Snape called at the Blue Boar, a roadside inn standing by itself about two miles from Rivers Court. He found Waldon Crooksley expecting him, and they went into a private room, where there was no chance of anyone overhearing them.

"You must have made a mistake," said Snape, directly the door was closed. "When you left me this morning you gave me a five-pound note. What was that for, eh?"

"To make sure that you'd pay me a call," Crooksley answered. "Sit down and make yourself at home. I've got a lot to say to you."

A cunning light sparkled in Sam Snape's eyes. "About Red Star?" he remarked. "Because if so it's more than another fiver I'm expecting, and don't you forget it!"

Unlocking a writing-case that lay on the sideboard, Waldon Crooksley took out a thick wad of bank-notes, which he ticked off, with finger and thumb, one by one.

"These are Bank of England notes to the value of two hundred and fifty pounds," he said, softly, "and it rests entirely with you whether you leave this room with them, or without them. All you have to do is to give me an undertaking, in writing, that Red Star shall not run for the Harbury Cup next month."

A long silence followed the words. Then Sam Snape, whose face was burning with a dark flush of unhealthy excitement, uttered a queer little laugh.

"That's a tallish order!" he said, unsteadily. "How am I to do it?"

Waldon Crooksley carelessly shrugged his shoulders. "That's for you to find out," he replied. "You know more about horses than I do, and no doubt your experience has made you acquainted with ways by which they can be rendered useless. Undertake to make it impossible for Red Star to run in the race and this money passes to you. More than that, when the race has been run and won by another horse, I'll give you an equal amount. With five hundred pounds to your name you ought to do some good for yourself in the world. Is it a bargain?"

The banknotes rustled crisply as he ran his fingers over them, and the sound seemed to fire Sam Snape's blood, to fill him with a raging passion of greed and avarice. He stretched out his hand to the man who was tempting him to his downfall.

"It's a bargain," he said. "Red Star sha'n't run in the race!"

When Snape left the Blue Boar an hour later the bribe of two hundred and fifty pounds was in his pocket. The promise he had given to betray his young master had cost him no qualm of conscience. The thought of all that he would be able to do with his ill-earned gold had decided him to commit a black and treacherous act of wrong and cruelty against the employer who trusted him.

On his way back to Rivers Court he happened to pass Rodney Wayne and Madge Lewson, who were returning from a walk across the fields to Riverside, a market town about three miles away.

"Isn't that your man Snape?" Madge inquired, as the stableman hurried quickly on. "He seemed particularly anxious, I thought, to avoid speaking to you."

"Nonsense!" Wayne answered smilingly. "Why should he wish to avoid me? But I'm forgetting," he added, "that poor Snape is no favourite of yours. You've never got over the first prejudice you took against him."

"No," Madge said gravely. "I've not, Roddy. Perhaps it's unjust of me, but whenever I look at Snape I vaguely distrust him. He's got such cunning eyes. Never once has he been able to look me straight in the face."

Rodney Wayne laughed again. "No doubt he's caught on to the fact that you dislike him," he remarked. "There's nothing wrong with Snape," he went on to say. "He's served me well, and it's largely due to him that Red Star's in such perfect condition. He's as keen on the horse winning the Harbury Cup as I am myself."

Madge looked fondly up into her lover's face. "Roddy," she said, "you're very confident that Red Star will win."

"I am," he replied, "for I know what he can do with me on his back. Red Star must win the race. I refuse to think of any such thing as failure. And so must you, Madge, for the sake of your own peace of mind."

"I'll try my best to," she said, "for upon your success depends everything."

It was true. Before many more days were over Rodney

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Wayne would know what his fate was to be. Not until he had entered Red Star for the great race did he tell Madge of the resolve he had come to. Since then a week had elapsed, and each day his hope and confidence grew stronger, the future less dark and menacing.

"I shall win," he said again, "and you must be there to witness my triumph, Madge. It's the greatest steeplechase of the year. The finest horses and the finest amateur riders in the country take part in it. Well, I'm not afraid of them, for I've got Red Star, and there are few to beat me in the saddle."

The boast was no more than a modest one, for Rodney Wayne had enjoyed a widespread reputation for magnificent horsemanship ever since he was a mere boy. Now his skill and experience were to be used for a far more serious purpose than ever before. It remained to be seen whether the training he had received in the hunting field would enable him to secure the prize he had set his heart upon.

A day or two later, coming home after spending the evening at Maple Lodge, Rodney Wayne thought he would like to have a look at Red Star before turning in for the night. It was late, and, supposing that the stable would be locked up, he took his private key with him to open the door.

As he reached the yard at the back of the house, he was astonished to see a little flash of light appear at the stable window, evidently caused by the striking of a match. A moment later there was the steady gleam of a burning lantern-wick—or such he took it to be.

"That's strange!" he murmured. "It must be Snape, of course. But what can he be doing there at this time of night?"

Into his mind there suddenly darted vague doubt and mis-giving. He remembered what Madge Lewson had so often said to him about the stableman. Next moment he laughed at his thoughts, and moved on a few steps, to pause again as the light at the window faded out.

Now Rodney Wayne was conscious of an intense and quivering alertness. Across the inside of the window a strip of sacking had been drawn, for the evident purpose of preventing any chance observation of what was going on within. Stealing softly to the wall, Rodney Wayne looked through the glass, and, as the sack put against it had fallen back a little at one side, he was able to gaze right into the stable.

The light of the lantern showed Sam Snape opening a paper that contained a small quantity of white powder. When he had done this he emptied the powder into a wooden measure, and mixed it well in with some bran mash. Then he took up the measure, and stepped towards the horse-box where Red Star was standing. As the horse welcomed him with a sniff of equine delight he stopped, and his face went as white as chalk, for a warning sound had fallen on his sharp ear.

It was the click of a lock. Next moment the door swung open, and Rodney Wayne, his lips set in a hard, stern line, strode into the place.

"Well, Snape," he said, "what are you doing here?" Guilt, fear, and fury were all expressed by Sam Snape's attitude. He shrank back against the side of the horse-box, trembling in every limb of his body, his brow damp with sudden perspiration.

"I've come to give Red Star a feed," he said, attempting to brazen it out. "Had to go to Riverside early in the evening, and was late in getting back."

Stretching out his arm, Rodney Wayne caught up the paper that had contained the powder, a little of which still remained unused. Scooping up a grain or two with his finger, he put it to his lip, and his eyes flashed like coals of fire.

"So," he exclaimed, his voice vibrating with passionate anger and horrified loathing, "it was your intention to poison the horse! The stuff you've mixed with his food is cyanide of potassium! You loathsome scoundrel!"

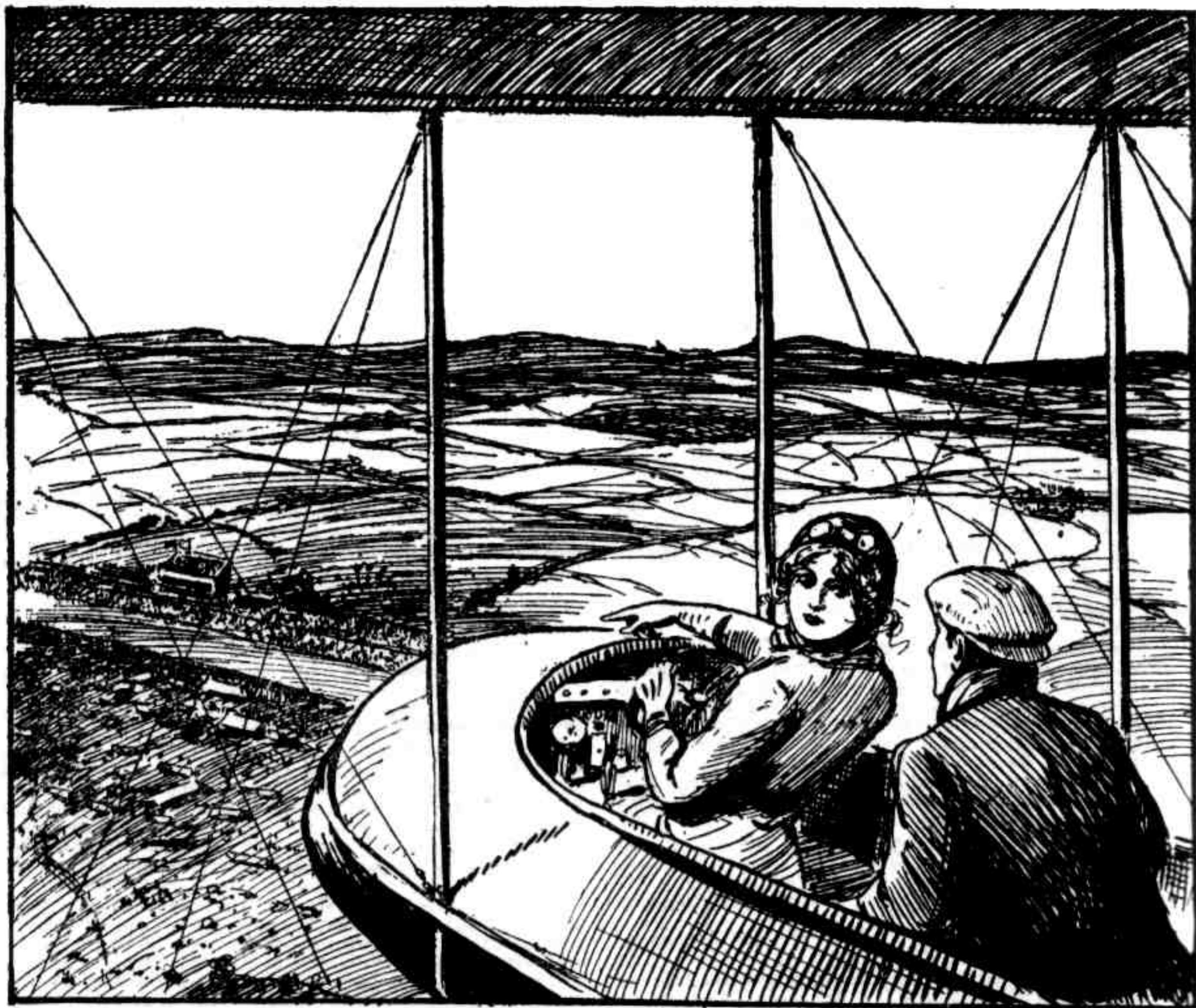
Carried away by his rage, he stepped forward to seize the other; but Sam Snape, uttering a beastlike growl, snatched up a heavy hammer, and hurled it straight at his face. The weapon missed its intended mark, but it grazed Rodney Wayne's shoulder, and sent him staggering.

Before he could regain his balance Snape was upon him; and, placed at a terrible disadvantage, he was thrown to the ground. Kneeling on his chest, his antagonist gripped him by the throat, and, raising his head, banged it down on the stone floor with stunning force.

"That settles you for a time!" hissed Sam Snape, as he rose to his feet and stared at the unconscious figure of his master. "You've interfered to your own hurt! And when you come back to your senses you'll find Red Star dead as a doornail! No more racing for him!"

Chuckling savagely, he turned and picked up the measure,

"THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" By FRANK RICHARDS,



The dim sound of the "saddling-bell" floated upward. "It's for the Cup race!" cried Wayne, excitedly. "Shall we do it! Shall we do it?" Madge did not answer. The aeroplane was now immediately over the race course, and she was looking down for an empty space to land in.

meaning to empty its poisoned contents into the manger of the horse-box. But Red Star, with the marvellous instinct of its kind, seemed to divine the nature of the plot against his life.

Quick as lightning he lashed out at the stableman with his heels. Then he swung round, with a wicked glare in his eyes, his lips drawn back from his strong, white teeth, and rushed at Snape like a demon let loose.

Giving vent to a yell of terror, Sam Snape dashed out of the stable, swinging the door to after him with a thunderous crash. In the madness of his fear, he fancied that he heard the beat of Red Star's galloping hoofs behind him. Panting, sobbing, his heart almost ready to burst, he sped away into the darkness of the night, whipped on by the lash of his own terrified imagination.

Not many minutes later, Rodney Wayne opened his eyes, and looked up, to see Red Star standing over him. His dazed memory quickened into activity at once, and he sprang up, trembling with apprehension lest Sam Snape's act of vile treachery should have met with success.

After a speedy search he found the wooden measure outside in the yard, where Snape had dropped it in his flight, the poisoned bran-mash scattered about the ground. The discovery enlightened him as to what had happened while he was lying helpless and insensible, and a great sigh of relief came from him.

"The horse knew," he murmured, "and turned on the fellow. Red Star," he added, as he stroked and patted the glossy neck of the noble animal, "if anything had happened

to you, I should have been in a sad state at this moment. You've done more than save yourself from deadly harm, old chap—far more. Had the scoundrel poisoned you, my last hope would have been swept away!"

As though understanding the words, Red Star whinnied softly, and rubbed his head against Rodney Wayne's shoulder, his dark, lustrous eyes shining with intelligence.

"Madge was right, after all," thought Wayne; "and had I paid more attention to what she said, Snape would have gone long ago. But someone was behind him in this dark work. Who can it be?"

The name of his beaten rival in love flashed across his mind, but he scouted the fancy a second later, for whatever his opinion might be of him, he could not believe that Waldon Crooksley was bad enough to instigate such a deed of villainy.

It was more likely that Snape had become the tool of a set of racecourse sharpers, who, knowing that Red Star had a great chance of winning the race for which he was entered, had determined, for their own base purposes of gain, to put the horse out of the way.

Had he been able at that moment to look into the private sitting-room at the Blue Bear, occupied by Waldon Crooksley, he would have more clearly realised the true character of his bitter foe.

Immediately after his flight, Sam Snape made his way there, for in the panic that had seized him he thought of the lonely roadside inn as his only place of safety. One glance at the

pale, desperate face of the stableman was sufficient to tell Crooksley that disaster had befallen his evil scheming.

"You've muddled things!" he said quickly, his eyes flashing with anger. "I know it by the look in your face! What have you done?"

He listened impatiently while the other told him.

"You're a blundering fool!" he said harshly. "It's evident from what you say that Wayne must have seen you enter the stable, and followed you. It was your business to run no risk of any kind. Wait!" he added, as Snape opened his lips to speak. "It's no use wasting time in making excuses. One plan having failed, we must think of another one!"

He paced silently up and down the room for several minutes, his head bent in thought, and at last a look of savage satisfaction flashed in his eyes.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed. "Pity I didn't think of it before! It's a far better plot than the one you've bungled, Snape!"

Lowering his voice, he swiftly acquainted his associate with the details of the new scheme for ruining the young man he hated that had taken shape in his mind. Then, after some further talk with him, he took the other out by a back way.

No one had seen Snape enter the inn, and no one but Waldon Crooksley saw him leave it. The next day all trace of him was lost, for he had gone into hiding, and only Crooksley knew where he might be found.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

High Hopes—Surprised—The Prisoner of the Cave.

"HE'S done two miles at his fastest gallop," said Rodney Wayne enthusiastically, "and he's as fresh as paint at the end of it! What d'you think of him?"

"I think," Madge Lewson answered, her face aglow with happy emotion, "that there's not another horse like him in the whole world! How splendidly he rose to those high jumps! If he does the same on Wednesday, nothing can stop him from winning the race!"

"He'll do it right enough, won't you, old boy?" said Wayne, giving the horse an affectionate pat. "See how he nods his head! I believe he catches on to the meaning of every word that's said to him!"

He had just ridden Red Star into the yard at Rivers Court from an exercise gallop, that Madge had been eagerly watching through a pair of field-glasses. What he had told her about the horse was true. Red Star might have been out for a mere canter, instead of being pushed at top speed over a two-mile, stiff-fenced course, so perfectly fit was his appearance.

"He goes to Harbury by the midday train," Rodney Wayne continued, "for I want him to have a complete rest to-morrow. A long railway journey is apt to make a horse as fretful and nervous as you please!"

"Are you quite sure that he won't be tampered with on the way?"

"Quite," said Wayne confidently. "I'm sending Jim Hawker along with him; and you know what Jim is—a chap who'd go through fire and water for me. I've also taken the precaution of hiring the services of a detective, who'll never let Red Star out of his sight until he's safe at Harbury; so, you see, I needn't fear foul play a second time!"

Madge looked thoughtful.

"You've heard no news of Snape yet?" she inquired. "It seems strange that he should have disappeared so mysteriously that night, without leaving a trace behind him."

"Not at all," Wayne answered, with a reassuring smile. "You can depend upon it that he made tracks as fast as he knew how to for another part of the country. It's not likely that he'd remain here, knowing that he'd done his best to kill me!"

Madge shuddered, and turned pale; but she did not pursue the subject. It was her secret belief that Snape was still in the locality, although, now that Red Star would soon be out of reach of danger, she had little fear for the sake of the horse. It was for her young lover that she feared, and every night and morning she prayed for his safety on bended knees; but Rodney Wayne knew little of her anxious solicitude.

He saw Red Star off at the railway station, and in the evening received a wire stating that the horse had reached Harbury without a mishap. He went with the message to Maple Lodge, where he remained for some time, for he was leaving for Harbury by the first train in the morning, though the race would not be run until the following day.

"Take great care of yourself, Roddy," said Madge, as she wished him good-bye. "I shall see you at Harbury on Wednesday morning."

"I'll be at the station to meet you," he replied, "so do not fail me. If you did, my luck would change!"

At a turn in the path Rodney Wayne looked back, to see Madge leaning against the garden gate, gazing after him, and with that picture of her in his mind's eye he walked on towards Rivers Court. He had covered about half the distance, when the sound of swiftly approaching footsteps caught his ear.

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Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price 1d. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled:

NEXT
MONDAY.

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ONE
PENNY.

He looked round. The figures of two men loomed up in the darkness. Instinctively realising that some unknown danger was threatening him, Rodney Wayne hastened on; but the men instantly rushed forward, and flung themselves upon him. A cry escaped his lips as he was borne to the ground. Then a wet rag, that emitted a sickly, pungent odour, was pressed over his mouth.

A sense of suffocating faintness quickly stole over him. His struggles grew feebler, until at last he ceased to move, and lay, limp and motionless, where he had fallen.

"Quickly done!" said the voice of Waldon Crooksley. "There's nothing to beat chloroform for a job of this sort. Now, help to lift him, Snape, or someone will be coming this way!"

Between them the scoundrelly pair carried Wayne across two or three fields to a deep hollow close to the edge of a wood. Dense patches of gorse bush grew all about the spot, choking up the hollow itself in places, and making it inaccessible, except by a tortuously winding path from the wood-side.

"Plague take it!" muttered Crooksley venomously, his hands and face torn and scratched by the thorny leaves of the bushes. "How much further have we got to go? I can't see a step of the way we're following."

"Here we are!" Sam Snape replied, his unhesitating movements indicating that he was no stranger to the place. "All we've to do now is to cross to the cave. I know where to find it without striking a light, as you may guess, having made it a sort of home for a week or more past."

Stooping down, he rolled back a large stone concealing the entrance to an underground continuation of the hollow. Beyond the entrance, which was low and narrow for two or three feet, was a large cave, high enough for a man of average height to stand upright in. Lighting a lantern, Snape assisted his companion to bring Rodney Wayne into the cave.

"We've got him here at last," said the stableman, chuckling maliciously. "I've not had a rosy time here myself, but it was heaven to what his will be, when he wakes up and finds himself booked to stop here until Wednesday night."

Taking a spirit-flask from his pocket, Waldon Crooksley poured some of the contents between Rodney Wayne's lips. The fiery liquid quickly took effect on the unconscious youth, who stirred, and opened his eyes. The evil, sneering faces of his enemies met his puzzled gaze, and made him understand something of the desperate position he was in.

"Hallo, Wayne!" said Crooksley mockingly. "Sorry to wake you up so soon, but I don't want to leave you without letting you know why you're here."

Rodney Wayne attempted to rise, but his limbs were bound, and he could not move hand or foot. That he had been chloroformed he knew from the strange dizziness that oppressed him, and the motive that his enemies had in making him a prisoner flashed through his mind with vivid distinctness.

"I see you've tumbled to the meaning of it," Waldon Crooksley went on to remark, smiling with fiendish glee; but so that you shall labour under no misunderstanding whatever, Rodney Wayne, I'll give you a precise explanation. When the starting-bell for the Harbury Cup race rings on Wednesday afternoon, you won't be there to hear it. You'll be here, bound and helpless, as you are now, eating your very heart out with futile rage and despair. How do you like that, eh?"

As he uttered the last sentence, he bent forward and hissed the words into Rodney Wayne's face. The captive did not wince, but into his eyes there crept a look of terrible apprehension and wild alarm. Crooksley saw the look, and laughed until the roof of the cave echoed to the sound of his hateful mirth.

"You don't like it," he said. "It means that you're a disgraced and ruined man, Rodney Wayne—completely in my power. And I will show you no mercy. In the morning I'm sending a telegram to Harbury, in your name, scratching Red Star for the race. That will dispose of any anxiety that the stewards of the race club might feel at your not turning up. And on the day following the contents of Rivers Court, your beautiful old home, will be seized and sold to pay the debt of five thousand pounds you owe me."

The fury of dreadful despair rushed over Rodney Wayne. Uttering a hoarse cry of rage, he strained his muscles in the hope of splitting the cords that held him captive. Vain attempt! He but exhausted his strength, while Crooksley and Sam Snape roared with brutal merriment.

"Had enough of it?" asked Crooksley jeeringly. "Well, I advise you to be more patient, for this is only the beginning. And so that you sha'n't make your voice hoarse by shouting, I think it best for you to be dumb for a day or two."

He motioned to Snape, who stepped forward and forced a cork gag between Wayne's teeth. Then both the men, taking the lantern with them, left the cave, taking care to roll back the great stone over the entrance to the passage.

The noise of the boulder fitting into its position sounded to Rodney Wayne like the voice of death. It was quickly stilled, and a horrible silence succeeded. A silence in which the unfortunate prisoner could hear the beating of his own heart.

He tried again to free himself, only desisting when his strength was completely spent, when the cords bit cruelly into his wrists. The wild, torturing rush of his thoughts threatened to drive him mad. As well might he be a thousand miles as but a few hundred yards away from those who would dash to his assistance did they but know of his desperate plight.

He had often explored the cave, for it was in a field that formed part of the Rivers Court estate. Yet few were aware of its existence, and fewer still ever passed by the hollow, which was waste, useless land.

"I might as well be in my grave," he thought. "And in all probability this place will be my grave. Waldon Crooksley isn't the man to run the risk of being sent to penal servitude for a crime that he can hide all trace of by simply leaving me here to die of starvation. The world will say that I disappeared to save myself from disgrace, knowing that I could not pay my debts, and the truth will never come to light."

He lay back, and closed his eyes, seeking a temporary forgetfulness of his misery; but the oblivion that he sought refused to ease his tortured brain. Hour after hour he lay awake, tossing from side to side on the hard, rocky floor, mind and body racked with pain.

Towards morning he fell into a fitful slumber that lasted for some time. He awoke again with a start. The cave was still in darkness, but some distance off there was a faint glimmer of daylight that he guessed came through some chink or crevice near the entrance.

"It must be getting late," he thought distractedly. "That ray of sunlight strikes from the West. The day nearly gone, and I am here!"

He looked round, his gaze searching for some jagged stone, or other likely object wherewith he might sever his bonds, but could see nothing that would answer for such a purpose. The few odds-and-ends scattered about the place, however, indicated that he was not the first occupant of the cave.

"Snape used it to hide in," he thought. "No wonder that he couldn't be found. It was here that he and Waldon Crooksley hatched their vile plot against me. It was Crooksley who bribed Snape to poison the horse. Failing on that scheme, he's hit on this one."

The time dragged slowly on; the ray of sunlight that had stolen into the cave drew back and at last vanished, leaving Rodney Wayne once more in utter darkness.

The message sent by Waldon Crooksley, in his name, withdrawing Red Star from the great race on the morrow would, he realised, have been despatched hours before. The horse would not run, and he, who had hoped to ride it to victory, could do nothing to expose the base wickedness of which he was the helpless victim.

His enemy had triumphed over him. All was lost. The future that he had looked forward to but yesterday with such confidence was now blacker than the surrounding darkness that his gaze could not penetrate.

Yet to the inner eye of Rodney Wayne a bright and glowing vision presented itself. It was the pictured face of the girl he loved, happy and radiant, as he had seen it when he parted from her on the previous evening.

The words of affectionate encouragement she had spoken to him rang echoing in his brain. She had believed that he was going to victory, that she herself would be a witness of it, and even now she was ignorant of the truth.

To-morrow she would go to Harbury, and he would not be there to meet her, would not be there to ride Red Star past the winning-post at the end of the great race. When he thought of these things, Wayne almost found it in his heart to long for death, which alone could end the bitter torments that he was suffering.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Missing—The Search—Found at Last—A Wild Ride Through Space—Victory.

MADGE LEWSON'S lips shaped a dainty little pout. "No letter for me!" she murmured. "He might have sent a line. But there," she added, the pout giving way to a swift smile, "he'd have so much to think about that he'd forget me for the time being."

It was Wednesday morning, and Madge had come down to breakfast, expecting to find a letter from Rodney Wayne lying on the table. That he had not written seemed strange,

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"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
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"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
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for he had promised to; but she contented herself by supposing that it had slipped his memory.

The train she was going to Harbury by was an early one; but she was allowing herself plenty of time to catch it, so that when a note came to her from Johnson, the old footman at Rivers Court, saying that he would be glad to see her, she immediately set out for Rodney Wayne's home.

"What in the world can Johnson wish to see me about?" she wondered, as she made her way along the private footpath through the fields. "Surely Roddy can't have met with an accident at Harbury. No; or he'd have sent word direct to me."

Happening to look round as she reached the top of a high slope, Madge caught sight of a man on the far side of a hedge that divided the field she was in from another one. Directly afterwards she saw him more plainly as he passed a gap in the hedge, and she gave a quick start, while a look of mingled recognition and perplexity shone in her eyes.

"How like that man is to Sam Snape," she murmured. "Yet it can't be him. He wouldn't dare to show himself so near to Rivers Court as this."

Could she have spared the time, Madge would have satisfied herself as to the identity of the fellow by following him a little way. As it was, she hastened to Rivers Court, where Johnson immediately answered her ring at the bell.

"Very glad you've come, miss," he said, looking worried and anxious, "for I've had a letter from Jim Hawker that's fairly puzzled me. Here it is. You'd better read it."

Madge took the letter and read it. Then her face went white as a sheet, and she uttered a cry of alarmed amazement.

"Mr. Wayne not at Harbury!" she exclaimed. "But he went there yesterday morning. You know he did, Johnson."

The old man shook his head.

"He went the night before," he said. "About eight o'clock a boy came here from Riverside with a message from the master saying that he was going to Harbury by the night train instead of in the morning."

"At eight o'clock!" Madge cried, trembling from head to foot. "Why, he was with me at Maple Lodge at that time!"

"Then I can't make head or tail of it," Johnson said, his hands shaking with agitation. "There's been foul play at work, you may depend upon it; and where the master is now—"

He broke off to run down the hall steps as a telegraph-boy rode up on a bicycle, and snatched the buff-coloured envelope from the messenger's hand.

"It must be from Hawker!" he said as he tore the envelope open. "It is, and it says that Mr. Wayne isn't at Harbury yet. What's to be done?"

Madge pressed her hand hard against her hot brow to check the impulse she had to break out into a fit of hysterical sobbing. Her strength of will triumphed, and, scribbling a reply to Hawker's message, she gave it to the astonished telegraph-boy, and sent him off with it.

"Now, Johnson," she said, "send to Riverside for the police at once! I'll stay here and wait for them. Mr. Wayne never sent that message the boy brought you the night before last. It was sent by someone who has done harm to your master. He is, I believe, being held a prisoner somewhere with the object of preventing him from riding Red Star in the race for the Harbury Cup to-day."

Twenty minutes later a sergeant and three constables came over from Riverside on their bicycles. With a calm alertness that surprised even herself, Madge told her story to the sergeant, leaving out no mention of anything that she thought might help to throw a light on the mystery.

He declared the only thing to be done was to send out a search-party to look for Rodney Wayne.

"I've already seen to that," said Madge quickly. "What you must do, sergeant, is to go to the Blue Boar and question Mr. Crooksley on the matter. Since coming here this morning I've heard that he was seen talking to Snape the very day before Red Star was nearly poisoned. That is a sufficiently good reason why he should be interrogated, at all events, isn't it?"

The sergeant reluctantly agreed that it was, although it was evident from his manner that he did not relish the idea of questioning Waldon Crooksley, who, as a person of wealth and social position, was not likely to be mixed up in the affair. In the end, however, he set off for the Blue Boar, leaving two of his constables to take part in the search.

"And take care that Crooksley doesn't give you the slip," said Madge warningly, "and clear off. If he does, things may turn out badly for you!"

As the sergeant went off, Madge heard the shriek of an engine-whistle. It told her that the train she was to have caught for Harbury was leaving Riverside Station. The tears rushed to her eyes, and she choked down a sob in her throat, for that whistle was as the dirge of all her hopes.

Then she dashed the tears impatiently from her eyes. There was something of far greater importance to occupy her thoughts than grief and regret for the crushing misfortune that had befallen, and that was the safety of her young lover—the problem of what was to be done to restore him to her alive and uninjured.

"If I only had an idea of where he might be!" she murmured, her hands clasped tightly together. "Then I should have something to go by; but now—"

She paused, and the look of painfully futile concentration of thought in her mind was replaced by one of eager excitement. She had remembered the incident of the earlier part of the morning, of the man who had passed the gap in the hedge, and whom she had recognised as Sam Snape, or someone resembling him closely enough to be taken for him.

"I'll find out who he really is!" she said to herself. "If it was Snape, he was trespassing, for the land is private all about there."

She went back to the field where she had seen the man, and, going through the gap in the hedge, looked for the footprints that she hoped would be there. She was not disappointed, for the grass, fairly long, had a track through it that was easy to follow.

Guided more by instinct than reason, Madge decided to go in the direction whence Snape had come, this taking her across the field next to the wood. The track was lost after a while, but she succeeded in picking it up again, to lose all trace of it a second time.

She searched carefully in every direction, but to no purpose, or so she believed. But her movements had now brought her close to the woodside, and as she paused, wondering what she should do next, her gaze was suddenly arrested by a deep hollow about twenty or thirty yards away.

The hollow was surrounded by thick gorse-bushes, and her keen eyes noted that at one particular spot there was a narrow opening in the bushes. She ran towards it, and found that it was a path leading down into the hollow. More than that, she saw fresh footprints in the soft, sandy soil.

Trembling with excitement, Madge hastened down the path, slipping and stumbling in her haste. There was no one in the hollow, no sign of anyone having been there except those faintly outlined footmarks, which took her to a huge boulder that seemed to be fast imbedded in the bank.

Bending her head, Madge listened intently. Not a sound came to her ear. Again she stared at the boulder, and then, swayed by an overmastering impulse, she grasped it by both hands, and tugged at it with all her might.

The boulder shook, tottered, and crashed to the ground. "It's a cave!" cried Madge, as the daylight darted into the subterranean passage. "Can they have dared to bring him here?"

Falling on her hands and knees, she crept into the opening, to find herself able to stand upright in a few moments. Her eyes, dazed by the sudden gloom, refused to do their office for a minute or two. Then she perceived something that brought a loud cry from her lips.

Lying on the ground, a few paces away from her, was a man, bound hand and foot—her lover, Rodney Wayne!

"Roddy!" she cried, rushing up to his side. "I've found you, Roddy—I've found you!"

Sobbing and crying with wild delight and gratitude, she knelt down, took the gag from his mouth, and cut the cords that bound him with her penknife. He was so weak and numbed that she had to literally lift him to his feet.

As she turned to lead him out of the cave a shadow suddenly darkened the entrance, and a man sprang in, a wild curse on his lips.

It was Sam Snape!
"Leave go of him, girl!" he shouted hoarsely. "If you don't, I'll kill him!"

Hurling Madge to one side, he threw himself on Rodney Wayne, and attempted to drag him back to the cave.

"Help!" cried Madge. "Help! This way, men!"

Her cry was answered by a lusty shout, and next moment a police-constable, followed by three or four other men, ran down the path into the hollow. Fighting and struggling like a mad bull, Sam Snape was thrown to the ground and overpowered.

"We've got him!" panted the constable, as he slipped the handcuffs over Snape's wrists. "He can snarl and bite as much as he likes now. It won't harm anybody but himself."

As they came to the field path they heard the clock in the tower at Rivers Court striking the hour of twelve. The sound reminded Rodney Wayne that although his life had been saved all that he had hoped for was lost.

"Twelve o'clock!" he said, with something like a groan. "The race is at half-past two. It's too late to think of getting to Harbury now. The fastest motor-car in the country couldn't get me there in time."

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Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price 1d. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled:

Madge Lewson's eyes flashed with the light of a sudden inspiration.

"No!" she exclaimed. "But you shall be there in time for the race yet, Roddy. I'll take you there in the aeroplane. Come, you shall win the race yet!"

Rodney Wayne stared at her in excited wonderment. "Send a telegram to Jim Hawker," Madge continued, "telling him to have the horse ready and another one to the stewards of the race club, explaining matters. Then we'll set off."

Rodney Wayne gave a cry of hope and joy. "By Heaven, Madge," he said, "we'll do it!"

High above the earth an aeroplane was shooting through the air at seventy miles an hour. It was being piloted in its wild career by a girl, Madge Lewson, and behind her sat Rodney Wayne, his eager gaze ever in front of him.

The machine had been in the air over two hours. It was past two o'clock. The time for the great race for the Harbury Cup was rapidly creeping on, and Harbury as yet was not in sight.

"We shall never do it!" Wayne muttered between his set teeth. "We can't do it!"

Another five minutes of tense suspense went by, and then Rodney Wayne gave a shout, for in the distance Harbury loomed up in the valley like a panoramic picture. In an incredibly short space of time it became clear and distinct to the naked eye.

The occupants of the whizzing aeroplane could make out the racecourse, swarming with thousands upon thousands of people, and hear the music of the military band that was playing there.

Then a saddling bell rang.

"It's for the Cup race!" cried Wayne. "Shall we do it?"

Madge did not answer. The aeroplane was now immediately over the racecourse, and she was looking down for an empty space to land in. She found one, and the flying-machine, hovering almost stationary for a moment, swooped down like a great eagle.

As it touched ground, a surging crowd of spectators flocked round it. Springing from the machine, Rodney Wayne forced his way through the wondering throng, to be met by an official of the race club whom he knew.

"Good gracious," exclaimed the official, "if it isn't Wayne! We'd given you up. Didn't expect to see you arrive in an aeroplane."

Rodney Wayne grabbed the other by the arm.

"Am I too late for the race?" he inquired.

"No," was the reply. "We got your wire, and saw that the horse was got ready for you. But hurry up. The saddling bell's gone two or three minutes since."

"The favourite wins! No! Red Star! Red Star wins! The favourite's beat!"

As the mighty roar of innumerable voices thundered in her ears, Madge Lewson, standing on the seat of the aeroplane that had brought her and Rodney Wayne so many miles, bent forward with a blaze of excitement in her eyes.

She could see her lover, his colours of yellow and scarlet shining brightly in the sunlight, bending low down in the saddle. Red Star was a little behind the favourite, but he was creeping swiftly up to him, galloping as he had never galloped before.

The last fence was jumped, and the horses were in the straight leading past the winning-post. Would Red Star do it? The roar of the excited multitude increased to a frenzy of sound. But ten lengths now stretched between the favourite and the coveted goal.

"Go on, Red Star!" cried Madge. "Go on!"

The horse seemed to shoot forward like a flash of light. The favourite was caught, left behind, and Red Star went past the winning post, securing the victory by half a length.

Rodney Wayne had won the Harbury Cup and a prize of two thousand pounds!

The great race was won!

Saved from his enemies by the dauntless courage of the girl he loved, Rodney Wayne had successfully overcome the hardest battle of his life, and now that was done, as though eager to make amends for its previous treatment of him, fickle Fortune smiled upon the young man.

The debts that had hampered him, through no fault of his own, were paid in full. Those who had so deeply wronged him were punished by the law of the land they had set at defiance. And a few months later the greatest prize of all came to him. Madge became his wife.

THE END.

"THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

Our Grand New Serial Story, introducing Ferrers Lord, the British Multi-Millionaire, owner of the Lord of the Deep; Ching-Lung, the famous Ventriloquist and Juggler; Rupert Thurston; Gan Waga; and Prout & Co.



By SIDNEY DREW, Prince of Adventure Story-tellers.

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 cove on its mysterious new quest. Ferrers Lord makes for an uncharted island, which he intends to use as his headquarters, and, arrived there, he lands with a party to make the acquaintance of the inhabitants, leaving Prout in charge of the launch. Prout captures a wonderful talking cockatoo, which has evidently escaped from some vessel, but which is now enrolled as one of the crew of the Lord of the Deep as James Jimson, A.B. Back on the submarine, the adventurers at last catch sight of "Mysteria." The mysterious island—bare and ghostly-looking—appears to be floating in the sky. It is a mirage, but, as Ferrers Lord points out, there can never be a mirage without a substance. The millionaire determines to start in pursuit of the floating island at once, but first grants a short spell of shore-leave to the crew. Barry, Prout, Maddock, and Herr Schwartz, the German cook, are just commencing operations on a picnic-hamper in a secluded spot, when a terrific banging is heard, and Gan-Waga somersaults into the midst of them, howling like a maniac, with a big jumping cracker tied to his back and going off like a Gatling gun. "It's the Eskimo!" roars Maddock. "Dig a hole, and we'll bury him!"

(Now go on with the story.)

A Rush for the Submarine—Upset—The Rain of Dust—A Bolt from the Sky—"She's Sinking!"

"Wuss nor the serpent's deadly boite!" muttered O'Rooney, holding his head. "Wuss than the pizened dagger's blow! Wuss than a noightmare in the noight is that ould pork-faced Iskimo!" Then, after this poetic flight, he repeated, with almost a sob: "And all the beer's gone!"

"If there's a tree about, we'll sling him up!" said Prout fiercely.

"Oh, no! Bad 'nough. Waits till a tree grows!" moaned Eskimo. "Den stlingees me up, Tom!"

"Why did you do it?" roared Maddock, ignoring Gan's small request about the tree.

"Don't ax him," said Prout. "Get a move on, and scalp him!"

"I can't, souse me! He's borrowed my knife, and swapped it to a dirty nigger, souse me!"

"And all the beer's gone—iv'ry dhrop of ut!" said Barry, with tears in his eyes. "And the grub! Oh, musha, ut's enough to break a heart of a cast-iron wid brass bands round it! Luk at the sandwiches. They're all sand-sandwiches now! Oh, why did Oi lave that sweet cottage, round whose porch the carrots grew, to go and be a policeman wid a uniform of blue? Saze the riptoile! Fall on, Macsnuff, and drag him to the scaffold!"

"Me back's broke!" said Prout, wincing.

"And what about my ear?" said the bo's'un. "Oh, the blackguardly taller-merchant! Now I'm going to start!"

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"THE GEN" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Tying a large, hard knot in his handkerchief, Maddock spat on his hand, and prepared to strike.

"Wan to be ready," said Barry, "two to be sthidy, and whin Oi say three, clip the paint off him, darlint. Wan, two, and three——"

Maddock let the handkerchief fall.

A hollow rumbling rose from the earth beneath them, and the ground quivered under their feet.

Boom! came the deep summons of a gun from the sea.

The men of the Lord of the Deep were no strangers to earthquakes. Prout and O'Rooney dragged Gan-Waga up, and told him to run. Gan-Waga, after trying to be a small volcanic eruption himself, was in the proper frame of mind to do anything he was told to do. The rest of the crew streamed across the sand in answer to the signal from the vessel.

"Everybody 'ere?" panted the steersman, as he raced up to the launch.

"All but his Highness and Mr. Rupert!" cried a sailor.

"'Old easy, then, by hokey!" said Tom Prout.

A glance seaward showed him that the submarine's anchor was already swinging at the catshead. A second boom proclaimed the millionaire's impatience. Again the ground trembled, and a small avalanche of sand rolled down the slope with a soft hiss.

"Steady her! 'Ware ankles!" bellowed Joe. "Don't mind about getting wet!"

Then a great wave shouldered in, broke with a rush against

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Every Friday.

the two pillars, and surged along the channel, tossing up the crowded launch like a cork.

"Oi see thin, bedad!" said Barry. "They ain't in no hurry, neither, the darlints! Ahoy! Come along; the tay's gettin' cowl!"

It was no time for chaff. Ching-Lung gave a warning shout as he sprang into the boat. Another great, green wave rolled in. The launch faced it, nose on. It broke over her in a seething froth, and she shot down into the trough with barely a coat of paint between her rib and the rocks.

"That was just near enough to be exciting," said Ching-Lung, clearing the spray out of his eyes. "Next time you want to play that game, Tommy, let me know beforehand, and I'll stop ashore and watch you. Bail out some of this juice before more of it comes along. My stars! You nearly spoiled our nice little boat! Hallo! Somebody's in a desperate hurry! Catch!"

A rope shot from the engineer's hand.

"Make fast!" he shouted.

The next instant the launch was racing out of the bay at the heels of the submarine.

"Hold on with your eyebrows, lads!" said Ching-Lung. "Here's another daisy, if she doesn't smash it for us!"

"If she don't, by hokey, it'll smash us!" grunted Prout, watching the white-crested green mountain.

They held their breath as the Lord of the Deep bored through the monster. A second later the rope snapped with a report like the crack of a pistol, and every man was battling for his life in the frothing water. The wave rolled onwards, and broke in the bay thunderously as the submarine churned back to the rescue.

All Ferrers Lord's men could swim like otters. The launch, too, was unsinkable, and she had righted herself. She was racing round in a circle, for her motor was still working.

"Dive, Rupert—dive!" screamed Ching-Lung. "Dive for your life, man!"

Thurston's back was towards the launch, that would have cut him in halves. He could not see his danger, but heard the prince's frenzied cry just in time, and, throwing up his arms, sank like a stone. The leaded keel slid past above his head, and Prout scuttled out of the way. Hal Honour was at the submarine's wheel, and Ferrers Lord stood in her bow ready to spring. The Lord of the Deep, unerringly handled, came up with the dangerous runaway. Ferrers Lord sprang into her, splashing up the water she still contained, and stopped the screw. Within ten minutes all the dripping men were safe.

"That," remarked the steersman, as he wrung out his beard, "was what I calls a short 'oliday, by hokey, and a wet 'un!"

"Oi should guess ut, me bhoy!" answered Barry. "Aft'er that, Oi wish Oi'd gone into the winkle and sausage thrade, loike my poor grandmother wanted me, insthead of bein' a sailor. There's too much wather and too little whisky in a sailor's loife, Tommy! Whisht! Phwat a wave ut was! Bedad, by the whoite whiskers on ut's top-knot, ut must have been as ould as Adam!"

"If it had caught us when we were in the bay, it would have bashed us ashore, and broke us into bits the size of sago!" said Prout. "That's what the chief was expecting, and that's why he hustled us out so quick!"

Undoubtedly Ferrers Lord's promptness had saved both the launch and the submarine; probably, too, it had saved some lives. An angry haze had gathered in the sky, and the surf beat heavily against the shore.

"Well," said Ching-Lung, "we live and learn. I only felt a couple of shocks, and they didn't seem strong enough to shake down a house built of cards. Funny thing a wave like that should come along!"

"The earthquake was under the sea," said the millionaire, "and I saw the wave forming almost before you were afloat. We have got out of it very luckily."

"And ut's got us out of our holiday, bad luck to ut!" growled Barry O'Rooney. "We all must have been born on a Friday to be so onlucky. Luk how ut's took my hair out of currl, the baste! Av Oi'd known phwat Oi had to go through, Oi'd have been born a duck!"

"And then I'd have wrung your silly neck!" said Prout, turning away.

Their exciting departure from the island had made them forget Gan-Waga's remarkable conduct. It was still uppermost in Gan's mind, however, and he sat in a corner below trying to worry out why he did it, and how he did it. One thing Gan was pretty certain about—somebody had helped him a good deal. Ching-Lung, he knew, had a pronounced weakness for fireworks, but then Ching-Lung was not in the immediate locality at the time the display took place; but Joe was.

"I gotted him!" murmured the Eskimo. "Old, ugly, bad 'nough Joe did it! I tells my Chingy, and den we gives him socks!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 288.

Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price 1d. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled:

NEXT
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
LIBRARY.

ONE
PENNY.

Ching-Lung was discovered in the billiard-room by the weary and vengeful Gan. His Imperial Highness was taking large soap-bubbles out of one pocket, and carefully placing them in another. Gan watched the queer performance in mild surprise.

"What's yo' doings, Chingy?" he asked.

"Teaching whelks to whistle, sweet Romeo!" said Ching-Lung. "Funny, isn't it? You see, I had some soap in my pocket when I got wet; the wetness and the soap and the blowing breezes do the rest. Here's a beauty!" he added, producing a bubble the size of Gan's head. "I have to be careful not to bend 'em!"

"Buts why yo' sticks dem away, Chingy?" inquired the mystified Eskimo.

"Because we're going to fry 'em later on. They're a real treat when they're fried, sonny, nicely sprinkled with pepper and vinegar. You've heard of bubble-and-squeak, haven't you?"

"Courses I haves, Chingy!" said Gan-Waga. "Dat taters and cabbages alls fired up togethers butterfuls. Likes him a lots!"

"Well, this is the same thing, only different, you see. I bubble and you squeak, and there you are! That's the last of 'em, I think. I'll show you how to do that trick some day, and then you'll know about as much as you do now, or less. What are you looking so glum for?"

Gan told his tale of woe.

"Joe is a juggings," said Ching-Lung, "and a juggings is exactly the same as a juggins, only more so. If he'd burnt you I'd have slapped him hard."

"I knows dats, Chingy," beamed Gan. "Yo' not let anybody knocks me 'bout, hunk? Nots burns me neithers, hunk?"

"Just let me catch anyone burning you, that's all!" said his Highness. "I'll talk to them with a shovel! Why, I'm saving you up specially for the Fifth of November myself! We shall want a Guy Fawkes to burn on bonfire night, and you'll make a beauty!"

Gan-Waga stopped beaming, and looked at his beloved Ching-Lung more in grief than anger.

"Nots burns me, Chingy," he said; "burns Tom Prouts. Tivnk how butterfuls lovely him whiskers blaze wid paraffins on. Ho, ho, hoo!"

Ching-Lung agreed that the cremation of Prout would be a cheerful and pleasant spectacle, except for the steersman. Then Rupert came in after changing his clothes.

"Have they decided on anything, old boy?"

"Not yet, that I know of," answered the steersman. "Lord is studying the weather, which does not look promising."

"What's the weather got to do with us? I've never been made seasick down below. Why don't we go under?"

"Because the symptoms point to another earthquake—a submarine one—and we don't want to be shot up like a flying machine on the top of a gleeful water-spout that his kicked over the traces, you see. I don't anyhow."

His Highness of Kwai-Hal sighed.

"Fancy sliding down a waterspout, Gan, and catching fishes all the time. Wouldn't it be blissful? Let's go and look into things."

The sky had grown darker still, and the sea was a dull, leaden colour. A glance at the thermometer was startling. It registered eighty-five degrees Fahrenheit, and the heavy, clammy heat made the Eskimo gasp. Heavy beads of moisture ran down the sweating panes.

"Pouf!" gasped Barry O'Rooney. "This reminds me of the wan and only toime Oi was iver stewed by cannibuls Oi felt just loike Oi faal now."

"Here comes another full-sized fib, by hokey!" said Prout, as he polished the moisture from the brasswork.

"Was dey goings to eats yo', Barry?" asked Gan-Waga.

"Ate me? Bliss me loife and sowl, whoy d'yez think they wanted to stew me, thin?"

"P'r'aps dey wanted to makes dog-soapses!" said Gan sweetly. "Yo' makes butterfuls dog-soaps. Ho, ho, hoo! He, he, he, hee! Oh, butterfuls!"

Barry would have used his boot on Gan's laughter-shaken form had not Ferrers Lord been so close at hand.

"Now I come to think on it, he would make some good dawg-soap, by hokey!" said the steersman. "It is 'ot. I say, you ugly blubberbiter, would you mind runnin' upstairs to the drawing-room and fetchin' my pearl and diamond fan which I left on the ruby-encrusted mouth-organ—I mean on the amethyst piano?"

"Nots minds fetchin' ropes if yo' promises to 'angs yo'self, Tommy!" lisped Gan. "Ho, ho, hoo! I runses all de way backs and deres!"

Meanwhile, Ferrers Lord was examining sky and sea.

43

"THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

Occasionally he consulted the barometer, which had suddenly fallen, and the thermometer, which was steadily creeping higher. Ching-Lung, his hands deep in his pockets, wandered about the deck whistling for a breeze. The atmosphere resembled that of a Turkish bath. The sky was a sullen purple now, darkening at the horizon to bluish black.

"Hallo! These are odd-looking clouds, Ching," said Thurston. "We've going to have a hurricane, it's my impression."

"I'm jolly sure, whatever kind of cane it is, it won't be as sweet as sugar-cane!" remarked the prince. "Yes, those clouds are a bit rummy. What the— Here, where's my umbrella? Why, it's dust!"

Soft grey dust, so fine as to be almost impalpable, began to fall in a smother. They hurried into shelter, for it was not pleasant to have to breathe it.

"This is lovely, Gan," grinned Ching-Lung. "We shall soon have enough to make a little garden on deck, and then we'll grow pineapples and tomatoes and spring onions and spring mattresses and whistlers and carrots and bluebells and muffin-bells and— Oh, won't it be nice?"

"Oi wondher av yez cud grow any brains in that same garden, bedad?" said Barry.

"For your dear sake, Shamrock, we'll try!" said the prince. "You need 'em sadly. Just look at it."

It was hardly possible to see across the deck. The dust resembled smoke.

"They've had a tough volcanic eruption somewhere, Rupert," said the millionaire's deep, quiet voice, "but to judge, or even guess, where is mere folly, for I have known volcanic dust fall on my yacht in the English Channel. That was months after that dreadful Krakatoa affair, where whole planets were blown to shreds. Can we have run into another great subterranean and submarine disturbance?"

"I hope not, old chap."

"Well, there we must agree to differ," said Ferrers Lord, smiling. "I hope the contrary—not that I wish to see devastation or loss of life."

All of them except Ching-Lung, who continued his mournful whistling, looked at their chief in perplexity. A man who desired earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, with their usual accompaniments, and tidal waves, and general ruin, had odd tastes.

"You get a greater puzzle every day," said Rupert.

"Perhaps he'd like a few tame earthquakes of his own," chuckled the prince, winking at Gan-Waga. "Only say the word, and, although we've forgotten what bait they take, this noble Eskimo and my nobler self will be on the job."

"Oi niver catched an earthquake," added Barry O'Rooney with judge-like gravity, "but Oi wance nearly catched a comet. Oi grabbed the comet by the tail and hild on toight, but, bedad, that tail came out by the roots, and the brute scuttled away. Arrah, yez ought to have heard ut squeal! Oi cud hear ut squalin' when ut was t'other side of the sthar Vanus and the planet Mars!"

Prout, Gan-Waga, and Joe tittered at this highly truthful account, and a slight smile curved the engineer's lips.

"Because of Mysteria," he said, looking at Ferrers Lord, and answering the unspoken question.

"Because of Mysteria, Hal," said the millionaire. "According to my belief, the island only makes its appearance at such times as these. What little I got from the chief yonder strengthens that opinion."

The island was utterly invisible, and the dust lay thick on the deck, and was still falling. Suddenly they staggered back—dazzled, half-blinded. A white-hot ball of fire cut down through the smoke of dust. There was an ear-splitting roar, and great clouds of steam rolled across the lower deck. They were thrown together violently as the vessel heeled over.

Loud shouts of alarm sounded from below.

"She's sinking! She's sinking!"

Crippled—An Anxious Time—Towing the Submarine—Aground at Last—Word for Hal Honour—A Trip Upstream After Timber, and a Great Surprise.

"Beach her, if the engines will work, Hal. I'm off below. Come with me, Ching."

Ferrers Lord spoke quickly but without raising his voice a single note higher than usual. Ching-Lung slid down the ladder after him. They stood aside to allow the startled men to pass.

"Keep well aft, all of you, Maddock!" cried the millionaire to the bo'sun, "and get the pumps going."

The plates sloped away forward at a slight angle. What had struck the boat, Ching-Lung wondered—a ball of electric fluid, a thunderbolt, or a falling meteorite? As he raced at the millionaire's heels, he longed to hear the throb of the engines, but the welcome sound was not heard.

"Pretty bad, Ching."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 288.

"THE GEN" LIBRARY, Every Wednesday.

The prince looked up. Dust was whirling through a round, jagged hole in the deck. At his feet yawned another hole, also round, but less jagged, for the steel had actually fused at the edges. He jumped back with a yell. The plate he stood on felt hot through the leather soles of his boots. With a hiss, the salt water bubbled through and poured over their feet.

"The wretched thing has dropped clean through her like a bullet through a drum," said Ferrers Lord. "She'll be standing on her nose in a minute. Mind, there, my lad!"

Ching-Lung dodged the swinging hose that dropped through the upper hole.

"This seems out of the frying-pan into the fire," he said. "The luck is wretched. Do you hear that?"

Only the hand-pumps were being worked. Something was amiss in the engine-room. They ran to the bridge. Men were crawling in and out of the huge machinery like human ants, and Hal Honour looked up.

"In one minute!" he cried.

It was one of the longest minutes Ching-Lung had ever known. He saw the millionaire slide down a wire stay, and fling off his coat. He dived into the mass of shining cranks and wheels. The vessel took a deeper list.

"Out of the way! Stand clear there, men!" There was a scramble and a cheer. Ferrers Lord's magic touch had awakened the steel monster from its swoon. With folded arms, he stood amid the throbbing pistons and roaring wheels. On deck, Maddock uttered a yell of delight, and called the crew from the pumps.

Prout gripped the wheel, and, with one eye on the black vista of dust, and the other on the compass, he swung the Lord of the Deep round, and sent her backwards towards the hidden shore.

"That's better than blisterin' your 'ands, souse me!" said Joe, as the water poured into the scuppers. "'Ands is 'ands, and hengins is hengins. I'd sooner be punched in the eye wi' the biggest fist in creation any day than with the buffer of a locomotive."

Barry coughed hoarsely.

"And, bedad, Oi'd sooner ate bread and mate noine days a wake than this blissed dust!" he growled. "Our old family doctor at Ballybunion—the chap Oi towld yez doied through foindin' a horse-shoe wid a horse fastened to ut—wance towld me there was microbes in dust. Oi didn't believe him at the toime, thinkin' he was chaffin'. Oi do now, sure as turkey eggs isn't whitewash!"

"What made you alter your opinion, Irish?" asked his Highness, who had sauntered that way.

It was an incautious question, and Barry winked his starboard eye gleefully.

"Whoi did Oi? Faith, sir, Oi seed them same microbes in dust wid both my mortal eyes! Can't Oi see thim now—Prout, and Maddock, and Joe, and yersilf? Ha, ha, ha, ha! Microbes in dust. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Barry, my noble son, yez are gettin' too clever. He, he, he, he, he!"

Ben Maddock ran for a mop, but Barry hopped nimbly away, his outspread fingers to his nose.

"We're starting to grind corn, sir!" roared Prout from the wheel-house. "By hokey, she's turning herself into a windmill!"

Ching-Lung understood the meaning of both these mysterious but striking remarks. The list was becoming so great that the propellers were not properly submerged, and were churning the air as well as the water. But the noise of the surf was louder and hoarser.

"We can't close the water-tight partition!" said the millionaire through the telephone. "Try the tanks; that should pull her down a little."

Prout pulled the levers without result.

"Can't, sir!" he answered. "The valves won't act."

"Can you see land?"

"Not a hinch of it, sir! It's as black as a tall 'at, and the compass is jumpin' about like a frog, sir!"

"Fire a gun, then. That may do some good," said the quiet, even voice. "And see how much water there is. Get the launch ready."

The steersman bellowed the orders in his mighty bass. The men rushed to their appointed tasks, but without an atom of confusion.

Gan-Waga heaved the lead, and found seventeen fathoms—a discovery that pleased nobody.

Every moment the submarine's nose sank deeper; every moment the propellers rattled and jumped as it "ground the corn," as Prout put it.

Ching-Lung tilted the gun. It uttered a roar and the concussion of the air; scattered the fog of dust for a second.

(Another splendid, long instalment of this exciting serial story will be continued in next Monday's issue of the "The Magnet" Library, which will be usual size and usual price—1d. Order your copy early.)

AN INTERESTING ARTICLE ABOUT AN HISTORIC OLD SHIP WHICH
MAY STILL BE VISITED BY SEASIDE HOLIDAY MAKERS.



PERHAPS one of the most interesting vessels now in existence is the old convict-ship, *Success*, the last of "the yellow frigates"—as the ominous hulks moored in Hobson's Bay, off the port of Williamstown, Australia, were called.

The *Success* was the commodore of a felon fleet of five ships, of which she alone survives to remind us of a dark page of Imperial history. Her story is a romantic one, full of incident, and of sufficient vicissitudes to have made an end of a less sturdy barque. Once she was attacked by a French privateer in the Bay of Bengal; but merchantman as she was, she made such a stout resistance that the Frenchman was glad to draw off, leaving marks on the hull of the *Success* which are visible to this day.

Again, when her Lascar crew mutinied in Calcutta Bay, her captain signalled to the authorities at Fort William for assistance; but by some extraordinary mistake was rewarded by a well-aimed shot from one of the guns of the Fort, which left a mark on the great teak mainmast which is also clearly visible. Later in her career, the old ship was maliciously scuttled in Port Jackson Harbour, only to be raised again five and a half months later.

In spite of these misadventures, the condition of the wonderful old vessel as the visitor steps aboard to-day is as sound as the proverbial bell, as was proved during her five and a half months' voyage from Adelaide to London as recently as 1895, when not a single stick was lost, nor was the least weakness discovered.

The *Success* was built at Moulmein, British India, in 1790, of solid Burmah teak, two and a half feet thick, and is a curiosity as a specimen of old-time British shipbuilding, apart from her historical interest. Her unusual solidity baffled the efforts of more than one of her miserable convict crew to bore his way out of his floating prison; in fact, it is on record that no prisoner ever succeeded in escaping from the *Success* during the whole of her career as a convict hulk.

This is the more remarkable when it is considered that attempts to escape were of almost daily occurrence. And no wonder! As one treads the

worn planks of the gruesome old vessel the relics of man's inhumanity to man in the past meet the eye at every turn, and the mind reels at the mere conception of the horrors which must have been suffered by the wretched tenants of the rows of tiny dark cells in the depths of her black hold.

Somewhere, and somehow, in the confined spaces below deck 120 prisoners were "accommodated"—save the mark!—besides twenty-seven warders. In all there were seventy-two cells of various sizes and degrees of torture. Those which line the sides of the first corridor, 'tween decks, were for the use of the better-behaved prisoners, and are as large as seven feet by seven. Those on the lower deck are only four feet by seven, and every prisoner brought on board the hulk, whatever his offence, by rule, was incarcerated for two years in a

lower-deck cell! All the cells are provided with a grating of iron bars above the massive, iron-bound doors, through which filtered all the light and air to which the prisoner was considered entitled.

To be shut up in one of these cells, even for a few minutes, causes such a feeling of oppression that it is hard to imagine any mortal being confined in there for any length of time without his reason giving way. Yet far more terrible than these ordinary cells are the "Black Holes," which occupy the corners on each side of the lower deck.

In these inferior fractions prisoners were punished by solitary confinement lasting from one day to twenty-eight, according to the gravity of their offence, or to the temper of the inspector-general.

The Black Holes are tapering in shape, and measure only two feet eight inches across. Over the grating a perforated iron plate is fixed, to increase the intensity of the blackness, and scarcely enough air to maintain life can filter through the perforations. The doors fit tight, and exclude all other air and ventilation. The furniture of this noisome hole consists of a stout iron ring, fixed about as high as a man's knee in the shelving back of the cell. Through this ring the right wrist of the malefactor was passed, and handcuffed to the left hand.

The resulting position of the poor wretch was such that he could neither stand upright nor lie down, but was forced



Many a broken-spirited convict made a bold dash
to hurl himself over the bulwarks!

Next Monday's Number of The
"MAGNET" will be the usual price

1 D. and will contain a splendid
long complete story, entitled:

"THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

to stoop or lean against the sloping side of the vessel as she rolled and pitched at her moorings. From this fearful torture the prisoner was only allowed one hour's respite a day for exercise. One has only to have the door closed upon one in the Black Hole for a moment to experience the sort of darkness which can be felt, and a feeling of suffocation which becomes absolutely unendurable.

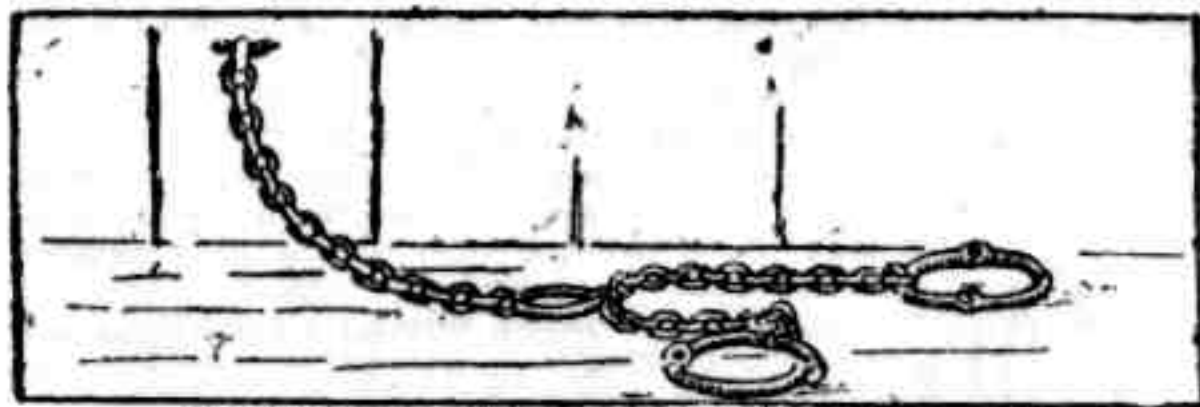
It is almost impossible to credit that even the callous-hardened ruffians who for the most part inhabited the hulk were able to endure such punishment and live. More than one malefactor's reason gave way under the fearful torture, and yet we are told that some seemed almost unmoved by it, though their eyesight often suffered.

At the stern of the vessel is the fearsome-looking structure known as the "Tiger's Den," and built of huge two-inch iron bars embedded in solid timber above and below. Here the worst characters on the hulk were huddled together indiscriminately to the number of twenty-two. The tigerish ferocity of these maddened wretches, who were treated and behaved more like beasts than men, gave the den its name.

The howls and bestial roars from the fetid den floated across the bay to the shore-folk, making night and day alike hideous. Landsmen shuddered as they heard those awful cries, and dubbed the old Success, once a proud merchantman, "Ocean Hell." And never was a name more fitting.

The mockery of the "justice" which sentenced Englishmen to such infernal tortures! Six of the prisoners on board the Success went by the nickname of "The Six Men of Dorset." Their crime was agitating for a payment of eight shillings a week for farm-labourers instead of seven shillings, which was then the standard in England—in other words, they were pioneer trade unionists, and bitterly did they pay for their advanced opinions.

Another prisoner received a sentence of seven years' for "drunkenness and resisting the police," for which offence he would now be fined seven-and-sixpence! Numerous other



Leg-Irons used on board "The Success."

such sentences were passed for the pettiest of thefts, and one prisoner, whose health was so undermined by the vile treatment he suffered on board the hulk, that he died three weeks after his release, was afterwards discovered to have been absolutely innocent of any offence whatever!

Such was the mockery of justice in the bad old days of transportation, when there were 145 offences punishable by death under the English Penal Code.

Once a week a surgeon visited the ship, invariably finding plenty of work for him to do in the way of setting or amputating fractured limbs gained in the frequent collisions between the desperate convicts and their gaolers.

On the lowest deck, in the very bowels of the sinister old hulk, the solitary confinement cells, and the condemned cell are to be seen. In the massive planks which form the floor of the "solitaries" deep ruts and grooves worn in the solid wood tell a pitiable tale of prisoners, loaded with irons, and driven almost mad by solitary confinement in utter darkness, standing long weary hours in their fetters just inside the cell door, to catch a ray of light from the barred aperture above, or to await eagerly the coming of the warder with their scanty meal of bread and water.

The condemned cell, a tiny, gruesome den in which the doomed ones awaited their oft welcome fate, is to-day furnished with the original ring and bolt which held the fated wretches secure during their last fleeting moments.

The flogging-frames and the cruel cat-o'-nine tails, wire-bound and shot-weighted, from which some hardened ruffians received as many as 1,500 strokes during their time on board; the irons, spiked collars, strait-jackets, and punishment-ball, all these grim objects are still to be seen on the Success.

No wonder many a broken-spirited desperado, shambling in his fetters during exercise-hour along the well-worn path which is still easily traceable in the planks of the deck—no wonder many a one summoned up his enfeebled energy to make a bold dash to gain the bulwark, and hurl himself over to a watery grave, a welcome release from his treatment at the hands of his fellow-countrymen!


Well might the ominous words of Dante have been inscribed above the handsome old ship's bell, which still hangs from the fore-castle, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 288.

"THE SKY" LIBRARY,
Every Wednesday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.



Greyfriars Lyrics.

BY
The "MAGNET"
Library's Own
Rhymester.

No. 3.—MARK LINLEY.

We read of men who nobly fought
To justify the nation,
And all the wondrous deeds they wrought
Compel our admiration.
The Yankees speak, with proud delight,
Of Roosevelt and McKinley;
But who has fought a harder fight
Than good and gallant Linley?

When Wolfe won glory at Quebec,
The British drums did rattle;
The foe was battered to a wreck—
It was a glorious battle!
And Wellington at Waterloo
The way to fight did show 'em;
His nature also—staunch and true—
The hero of this poem.

Mark has no letters to his name,
Nor could he raise a dollar;
He's not yet won immortal fame—
He's just a humble scholar.
And yet how grand it is to hear
The praises that are written
Of this fine lad from Lancashire—
A frank and fearless Briton!

A scholarship gave Mark his place,
And made his prospects sounder;
Though from the start he had to face
The insults of the "Bounder."
The cruel taunts were hard to bear,
So fierce and unforgiving;
And Mark considered, in despair,
That life was not worth living.

But soon the clouds began to lift,
And Linley felt light-hearted;
He gained the great and golden gift
Of friendship never parted.
For Cherry, with a generous heart,
Cheered Mark in all his troubles;
And such a warmth did Bob impart,
That cares grew light as bubbles.

The schoolboy rarely feels depressed
When occupied at cricket;
And Linley bowled with skill and zest,
Thus taking many a wicket.
But Vernon-Smith was still the same—
His wrath was undiminished;
And through a cute and crafty game,
Mark's school career seemed finished.

Right always triumphs in the end,
And Smith became confessor;
When this was done he had to wend
The way of the transgressor.
Mark Linley, from a noble fight,
Came forth with colours flying;
And with each loyal "Magnetite"
His praise will be undying!

The Subject of next Monday's Lyric
will be

BOB CHERRY.



My Readers' Page

WHOM TO WRITE TO ;
EDITOR,
THE MAGNET LIBRARY,
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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 'NUT' OF GREYFRIARS." By Frank Richards.

This splendid long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars deals with the astonishing behaviour of Mr. Knutt, the new Form-master, who is engaged to take charge of the Remove Form in the temporary absence of Mr. Quelch. The Removites have had experience of more than one eccentric Form-master in their time, but for sheer originality of conduct, Mr. Knutt, in Bob Cherry's parlance, "takes the giddy biscuit." His peculiar views upon the subject of Roman history, and upon Form work in general, astonish the juniors greatly. The new master, however, is, none the less, vastly popular, and the way in which he takes off his coat and "sets about" Loder, the bully of the Sixth Form, with his fists, in proper schoolboy fashion, earns the cordial approval of the juniors, and causes Mr. Knutt to be generally known as

"THE 'NUT' OF GREYFRIARS."

OUR SPECIAL SUMMER NUMBER.

The preparation of this Special Summer Number of THE MAGNET LIBRARY has been my chief concern for several weeks, and I leave it now in the hands of my readers with the comfortable feeling that I have done my best, and that my loyal chums will appreciate the result of my efforts accordingly. I purposely designed this Special Number to come as something in the nature of a pleasant surprise to my readers, and to this end gave no hint until last week of what was in store. Now that this issue, packed from cover to cover with the best procurable stories, illustrations, and special features, is actually in my readers' hands, I confidently anticipate that they will be practically unanimous in declaring that it is a pleasant surprise. And I look to them, also, to see that not a single one of their friends is ignorant of the fact that the Grand Summer Number of THE MAGNET LIBRARY—the best twopennyworth procurable—is now on sale.

With these few words I wish my readers, one and all, a very happy holidaytide!

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

S. Jerome (Stoke Newington).—All the halfpenny MAGNETS are out of print, and unobtainable from this office.

P. Brown (Kentish Town).—Many thanks for the ingenious verses.

C. Woodland (Plaistow).—It is possible that Osborne may appear at Greyfriars again at some future date.

B. R. F. (Airdrie).—Write to the Admiralty, Whitehall, London, for booklet, "How to Join the Navy."

L. Cossingham (Bournemouth).—Thanks for card and suggestions. Have not been advised of any "Gem and Magnet" League in your district.

M. A. W. Roberts (Southend-on-Sea).—More may be heard of Frank Cleveland at some future date. Thank you for your letter.

J. McCall (Glasgow).—I am afraid what you ask is impossible at present.

A. A. (London, S.E.).—Write to one of the big steamship companies, such as the Cunard Line, Liverpool.

Miss M. Clayton (Australia).—Take your books to your local stationer. I do not think there is a better way.

"HOW TO RUN A SCHOOL MAGAZINE."—No. 1.

Before I commence to tell you how to edit and publish your own school magazine, I want you to make up your mind—that is, if you are to run such a paper—you will do it seriously; as the saying is, "put your back into it." If you just play with it—get one number out this week, and another after Christmas—it will do you more good to leave it alone.

In the first place, everything depends upon the size of your school, and the state of the exchequer. If you are at a small school of not more than thirty, then you will be able to run a little magazine for the whole school; but if your school is of the large, secondary type, with several hundred boys, then probably you will restrict the magazine to your own Form—at least, to commence with.

I presume that a small number of fellows is interested; then call a meeting of those few, and discuss ways and means, ere putting the matter before the whole school, or Form. You will find it advisable to be content with a single, handwritten copy at the beginning, which may be handed round to the boys; although later on there is no reason why your magazine should not be copied by a gelatine process—which I will explain later—giving you as many copies as required.

Having called your general meeting, each one will give his ideas of the scheme, and the various positions on the paper will be allotted by means of votes. First, select your editor; and, apart from literary ability and keenness, it is vitally important that you pick one who is universally accepted as just and fair in all his dealings. Several sub-editors, according to the size of the paper, should be appointed, together with a treasurer, and, with a view to future issues, an advertisement manager.

If there be one among you noted for his neat, but quick style of writing, offer him the post of copying clerk, so that he may be able to re-write illegible contributions. For a start, make it a monthly magazine; and the sub-editors must consult with the editor-in-chief as to what features they are to include. The school news—both in the class-room and the playing fields—should feature largely in your magazine, and a careful programme of the events of the month should be compiled, from which you will take the pick.

If possible, obtain the use of a special room—no matter how small—for editorial purposes, where contributions and other papers may be filed. As soon as you decide to run the magazine, then you may announce yourself open for contributions, provided they are written out neatly, and on one side of the paper only. The sub-editors will wade through these contributions, and the pick of them will be passed on to you for final acceptance.

Resolutely refuse to enter into discussion with contributors anent reasons for rejecting their stuff. If editors in the big world outside do it, then, as your school mag. is to you quite as serious a thing as the big London daily to its editor, it is reasonable that you conduct things in the proper way. Announce a date for the first issue some time ahead, and take care that you are prompt. Use one size of writing paper only. I do not advise foolscap; it is too large, and makes monotonous reading. I prefer something about 8in. by 10in.

Work out how many pages you are going to have by making a list of your features, and then allow three or four spaces for miscellaneous paragraphs which take your fancy. Whatever you do, aim at getting something original, which makes pleasant reading, and on no account cast any adverse personal reflection upon either masters or boys.

On the other hand, the "sports" man—generally the captain of the footer or cricket team, as the case may be—should not hesitate to give frank opinions anent the general tone of play, not forgetting that to nervous, but keen, players, a little encouragement means far more than a harsh word. Ask your master if he would like to see your magazine, and do not be afraid to ask for advice from him.

(Further valuable hints on "How to Run a School Magazine" in next Monday's "Magnet" Library. Price 1d. as usual.)

Next Monday's Number of The "MAGNET" will be the usual price 1d. and will contain a splendid long complete story, entitled:

"THE 'NUT' OF THE SCHOOL!" By FRANK RICHARDS.

OUR SPECIAL COMIC SUPPLEMENT

A VERY TALL STORY TO S-TALK ABOUT



1. It is not generally known that an artful Briton in the reign of Wilkie Bard XI. was the first person to make an airship. He put some glue on two pieces of wood and sprinkled birdseed around.



2. So that when the storks placed their tootsies on they stuck fast. Then the artful Briton ran forward, sat astride the long hambone—



3. And there you are! The very first airship—two bird-power and guaranteed! Hurry up and you'll win the first prize offered by the "Daily Mail."



HE COULDN'T SUIT HER!

Maisie: "So you were her suitor?"
Maurice: "Yes; but I didn't suit her."

NO ROOM FOR DOUBT!

Servant (who has received a dismissal): "Depend upon it, sir, when I am gone there will be a large vacant space here that cannot be filled."
Master: "I knew that long ago."



QUITE RIGHT!



Phyllis: "Where was the Magna Charta signed?"
Tommy: "At the bottom."

GOOD ADVICE!



First Merchant: "My brother has threatened to kick me. What would you advise me to do?"
Second Merchant: "Sit down whenever he approaches."

AT-TROCIOUS!

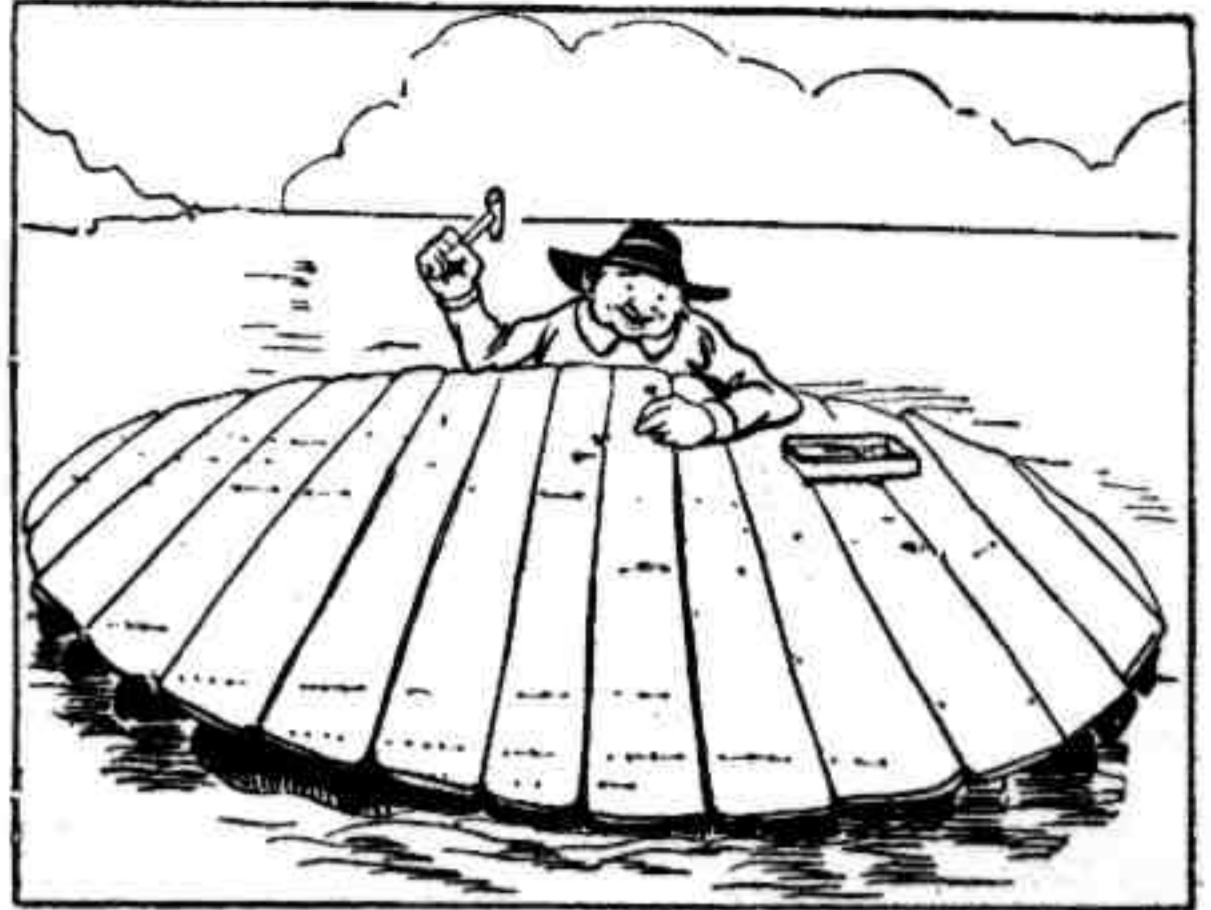


Fatty: "Some silly fellow has taken my hat!"
Thinny: "That's funny! Some idiot has collared mine!"

HIS BRAIN WAVE!



1. "Seems to me that this roller-skating craze has made the holiday-maker forget that such things as bathing-machines and the briny blue exist!" so murmured Longshore Lucas.

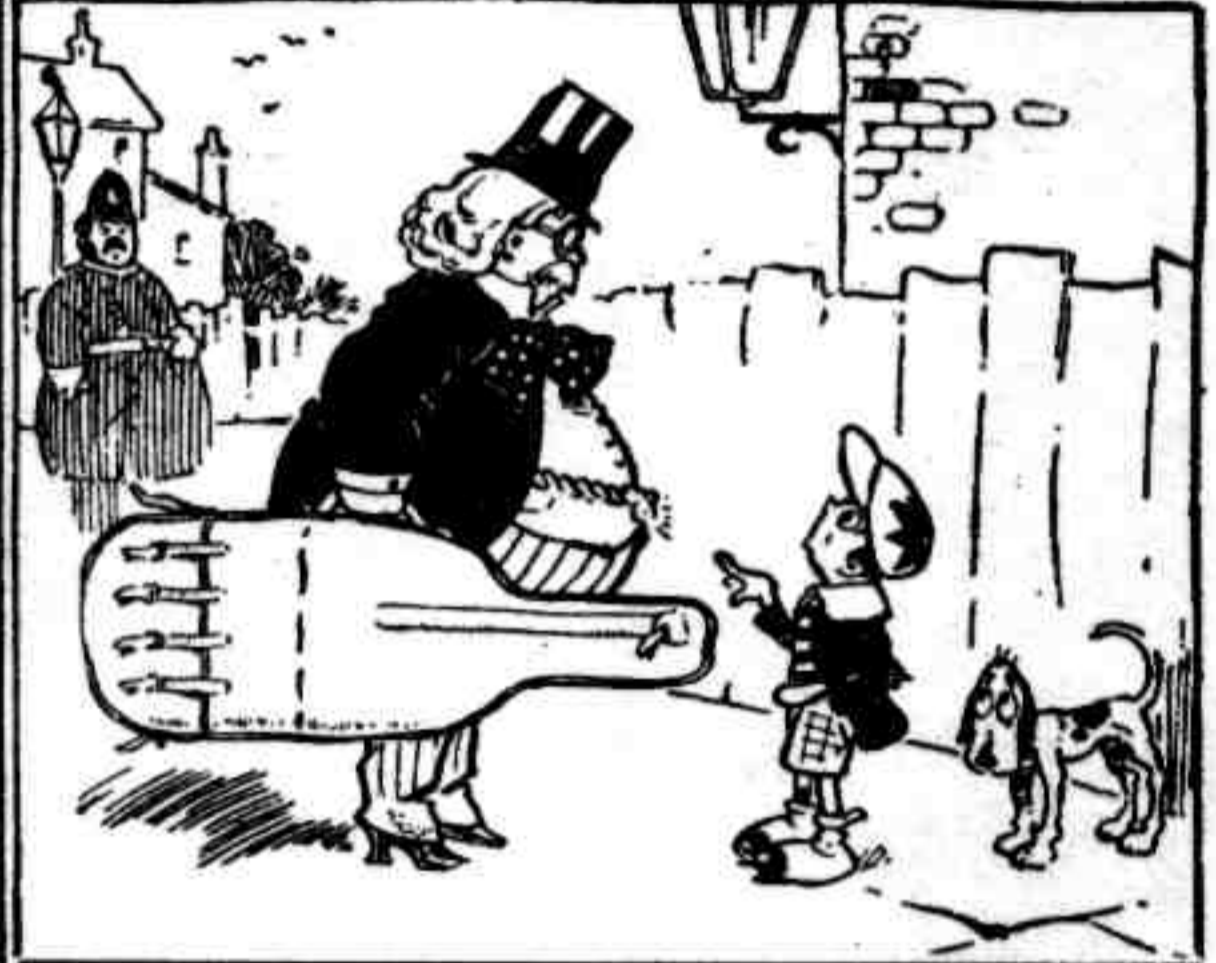


2. However, a few stray planks happened to float his way about the same time as the idea which we see him working out above.



3. And all the chapsies and girlyies cottoned on to the old salt's notion like half-past one o'clock. The money rolled in as quick as the sea-bathers.

AND A GOOD REASON, TOO!



"Why is your father so bitter against your Uncle Nebuchadnezzar?"
"He lost his money shortly after mother and father named me after him."



1. "Oh, dear, isn't it hot! And we have still got ninety-nine and a bit miles to walk to the Pyramids!" said the two tired tourists.

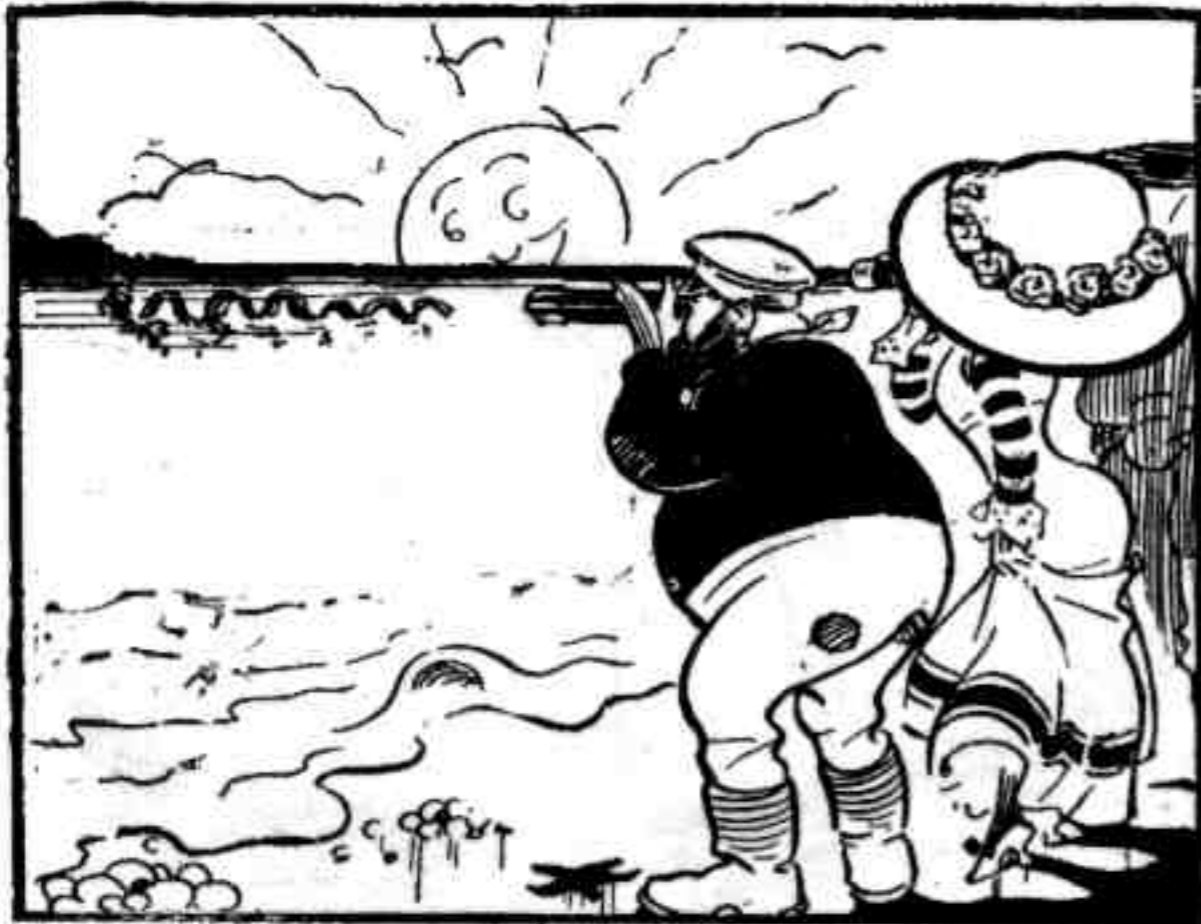


2. But just then one of those sand storms came along and whisked them up before they could say, "Stop the 'bus, I've fallen out!"



3. And carried them straight to those Pyramids, landing them nice and gently as per above. That's a fact! And it didn't charge them even a fare!

WHAT A SC-HAIR!



1. "Ah, a sea serpent, for a cert!" cried the people on the beach.



2. But it was merely Lucy Longlox having her morning dip.

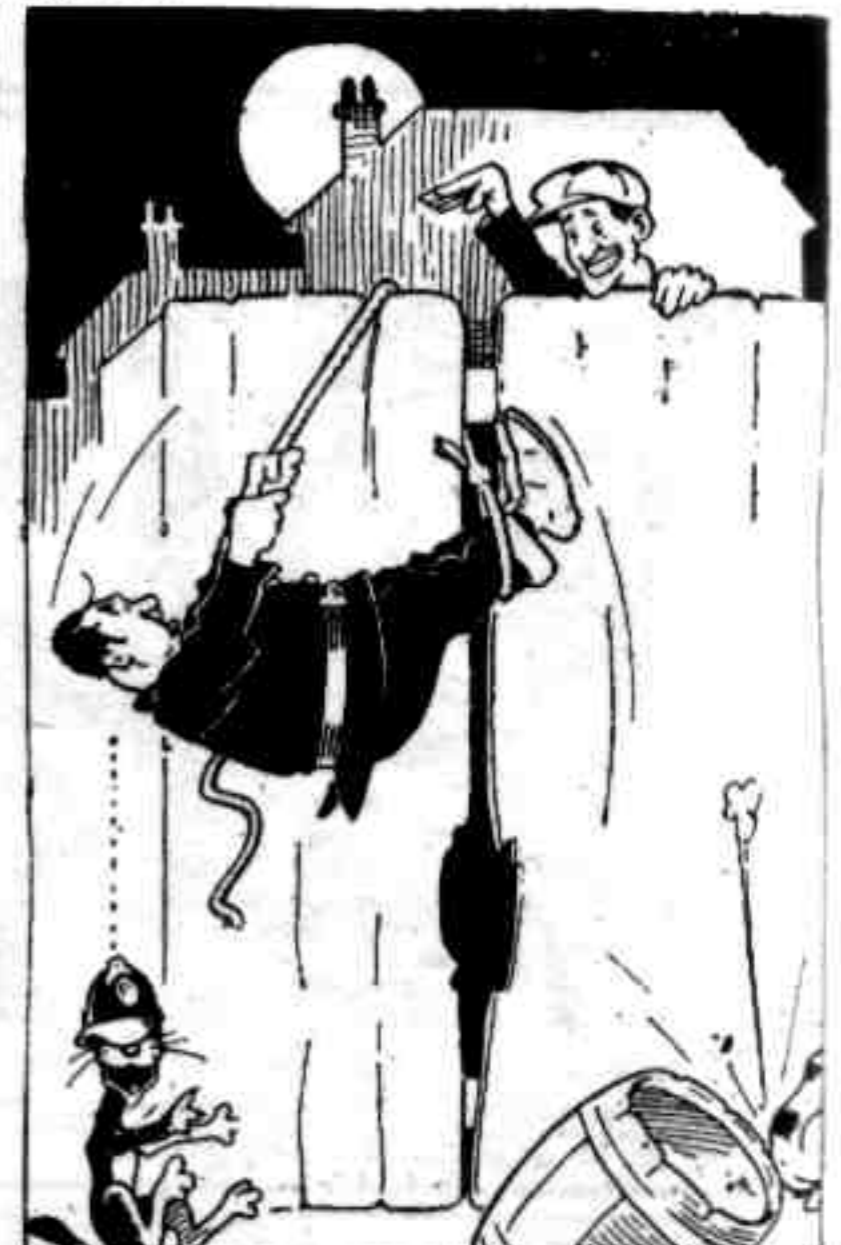
HAD HIM ON A LITTLE BIT OF STRING!



1. "Now, I wonder where that bold bad burglar is I was a-chasing?" said the bobbie. Just then, however, he noticed a rope over the fence,

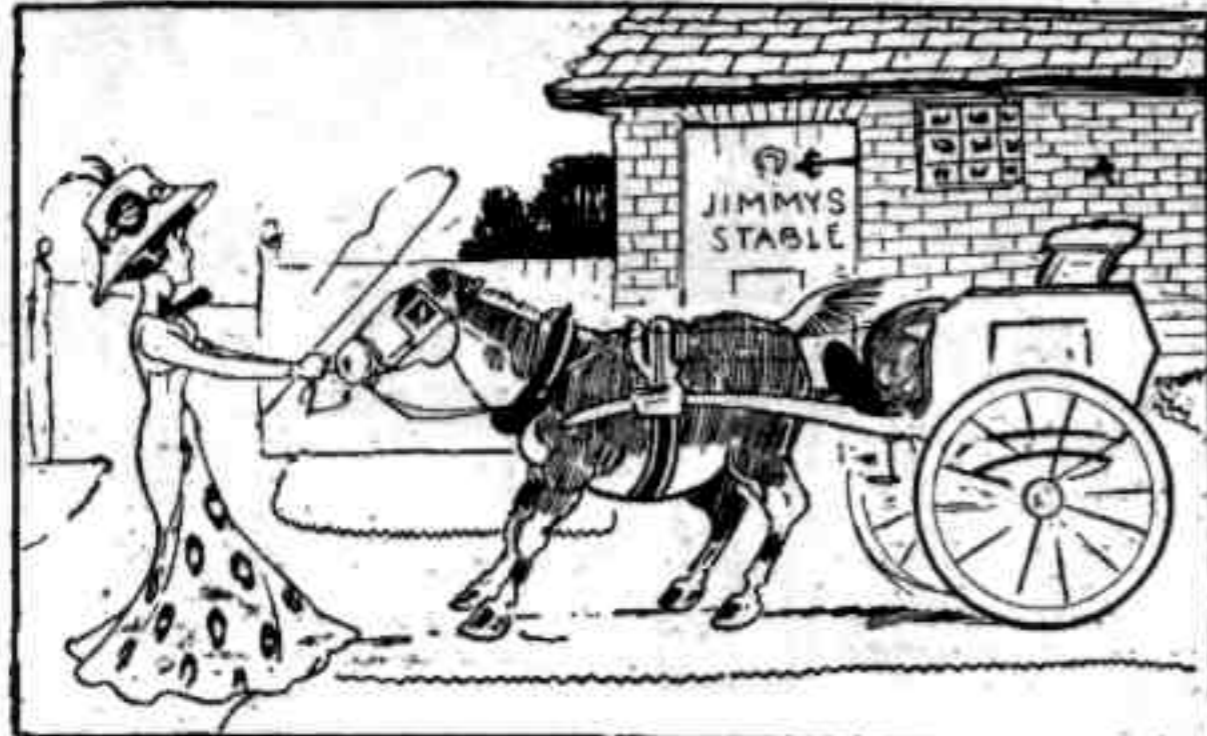


2. "Ah, I know his little game! He's thrown the swag over here until I have gone! I'll just haul it up!" (Notice the hands through the fence, dear readers.)

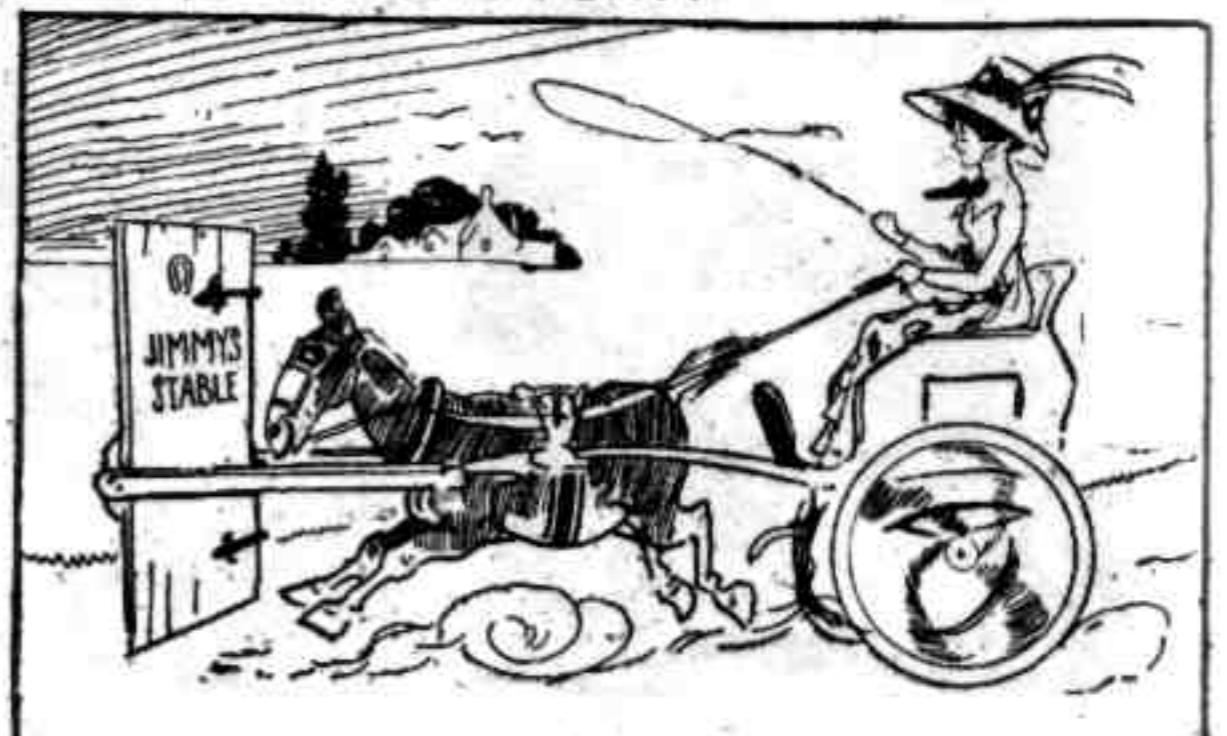


3. And wasn't that bobbie surprised when he hauled away and pulled his own tootsies off the tub, as per above, while the night-bird laughed muchly. Fact!

HOW SHE TURNED THE S-TABLES ON THE PONY!



1. Pretty Dolly Daydreams couldn't get the pony to move, and she had to make a special call at Lady Vere de Vere's. The pony absolutely refused to move an inch, for he wanted to have forty winks in the stable,



2. But presently Dolly struck upon the wheeze of putting the stable door in front of the selfish steed, as above, and she arrived at her friend's house in record time, beating all the Marathon records!