

# THE STORY-PAPER FOR BANK HOLIDAY!



**The Magnet**  
Library

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**SAVED FROM HIMSELF!** Harry Wharton plunged into the harbour, and swam towards the sinking Bounder. "Smithy!" he shouted. "Loder's all right! Don't you hear?" (See the Grand, Complete School Tale inside.)







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With one foot on the window-sill, one hand holding the brickwork, the Bounder reached out for the rain-pipe, and gripped it. He gripped an iron clamp with his left hand—and swung himself away from the sill! (See Chapter 11.)

# THE . . . . RUNAWAY!

A Grand, New, Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars School.

—By—  
**FRANK RICHARDS.**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Trouble Ahead!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What's the matter with Smithy?"  
 "Smithy, old man—"  
 "What's wrong?"  
 Harry Wharton & Co. all spoke at once.  
 They were coming along the Remove passage at Greyfriars, when they met Vernon-Smith of the Remove—the junior who was known at Greyfriars as the "Bounder."  
 There certainly was something amiss with Smithy.  
 He was striding along the passage at a great rate, his hands clenched hard, his eyes glinting, and his brows contracted.  
 The Bounder was not good-tempered, and sometimes his passionate nature had caused trouble to himself and to others; but the chums of the Remove had seldom seen him in so savage a temper as he evidently was now.  
 The Bounder did not reply to their questions; he did not seem even to hear them. He strode right on, scowling blackly; and would have passed the juniors, had not Bob Cherry caught him by the arm and forcibly brought him to a halt.  
 "Smithy—"  
 The Bounder gritted his teeth.  
 "Let me go!"  
 "But what's the matter?"  
 "Who's been disturbing your noble serenity, old chap?" asked Frank Nugent. "Blessed if you don't look like the heavy villain in a giddy melodrama."  
 "Let me go!"  
 "No hurry!" said Bob Cherry, calmly, keeping a tight grip on the Bounder's arm. "Tell your uncle all about it!"  
 "You silly ass—"  
 "That's what I call gratitude!" said Bob indignantly. "Here we are, all ready to sympathise and to give you good advice—"

"I don't want your advice!" growled the Bounder, shaking his arm to free it—not an easy matter, for Bob Cherry had a grip that was like a vice.  
 "Never mind, you shall have it all the same," said Bob cheerfully. "It is more blessed to give than to receive—especially advice. What's happened?"  
 "Get it off your chest, Smithy!" said Harry Wharton kindly. "We're all your pals now, you know."  
 Vernon-Smith paused.  
 From the end of the passage at the stairs, came a piping voice—the voice of Tubb of the Third, Loder's fag.  
 "Loder's waiting for you, Smithy. Don't say I didn't tell you!"  
 And Tubb scudded downstairs.  
 "So it's Loder?" asked Harry Wharton.  
 "Yes!" muttered the Bounder. "It's Loder—and I'm fed up! There's going to be trouble—and you fellows had better keep out of it!"  
 "My dear chap, we're always looking for trouble," said Bob Cherry. "If it's Loder, we'll back you up. But what's the matter? You used to be on very chummy terms with Loder of the Sixth? Is there a rift in the lute?"  
 The Bounder hesitated, and Harry Wharton & Co. regarded him curiously. Time had been when they were on the worst possible terms with the Bounder; but that was no longer so. Vernon-Smith had earned that name by his reckless ways—when he had first come to Greyfriars he had been a "bounder" with a vengeance. He had been very thick with Loder, the black sheep of the Sixth, and with other fellows of the same kidney. But of late there had been a change in the Bounder—he was on more friendly terms with his old foes—and apparently on more hostile terms with his old friends. That, perhaps, followed as a matter of course.  
 That the fast set of fellows at Greyfriars would not like Vernon-Smith turning over a new leaf was pretty certain.

Smithy was the son of a millionaire, and always had plenty of money—though he also had a remarkable ability in looking after it, too. But certainly he was missed from the lively circle at Greyfriars, who considered it their chief business to "see life." Loder of the Sixth had taken him up—and it was a great honour for a junior in the Remove to be taken up by a Sixth-Former. If Loder had dropped him again, there would have been nothing surprising in it, but when Smithy dropped Loder, there was naturally trouble. The condescending Sixth-Former did not like being dropped by a junior he had kindly taken notice of.

He had only taken Smithy up for his own reasons, certainly, and his reasons were not noble ones; but, all the same, he had keenly resented the fact that the Bounder did not want to have anything more to do with him.

"Chuck it out, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "Is Loder down on you? If you're up against Loder, you can rely on us to back you up!"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry Wharton.

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh chimed in with the remark that the rutherfordness was terrific.

The Bounder set his teeth savagely.

"You can't do anything," he said. "Loder's been down on me for a long time now—ever since I chucked going to his little parties. Not that he made a lot out of me. I play nap better than he does, and I've got more capital. But he didn't like my giving him the go-by, you see."

"I suppose he wouldn't," said Wharton reflectively.

"And, as he's a prefect, he can make things pretty warm for any chap he dislikes," said the Bounder. "You know that. He's made things pretty warm for you!"

"He has—he has!" sighed Bob Cherry. "Very warm sometimes. But we've warmed him as well, once or twice!"

"He reported me to-day to Quelchy for bullying, as he called it," said Vernon-Smith. "I only cuffed young Tubb for being cheeky."

"Ahem! You cuffed him rather hard, didn't you?" said Bob. "I saw him blubbing in the Close afterwards."

"Well, he checked me!"

"Ahem!"

"You are a bit of a bully, Smithy," remarked Nugent. "You see, you give Loder a chance at you, when you do these things."

"You were a bit rough on Tubb," said Harry Wharton. "As a matter of fact, I was going to speak to you about it myself."

The Bounder sneered.

"Well, speak away!" he said. "I'm ready to answer for anything I've done—with or without gloves, just as you like."

Wharton frowned a little. He had been on much better terms lately with the Bounder, and the Bounder had certainly shown himself to be a decent fellow in many respects. But there was no doubt whatever that he was an exceedingly difficult fellow to get on with.

"I won't quarrel with you now, Smithy, as you're in hot water with Loder," said Harry quietly. "Never mind that now. Only bullying fags is a rotten thing. Not that Loder cares about it—he's the worst bully in the school himself. But that's what gave him a chance at you, you see."

"And he took it!" said Vernon-Smith. "Quelchy licked me hard!"

The Co. were silent. They could not help thinking that the Bounder had deserved that licking; but they did not want to say so at the present moment.

"I saw Loder afterwards, and told him what I thought of him," said Vernon-Smith. "He never found fault with me for bullying when I used to play cards with him."

"You bet he didn't!" said Bob Cherry. "But if you always play the game now, Smithy, Loder can't touch you. Don't bully the fags—don't break bounds—don't play the giddy ox at all, in fact—and it will be like drawing Loder's teeth. He won't be able to get at you at all!"

Vernon-Smith laughed sneeringly.

"I shall do just as I choose, and hang Loder—and hang you too, Bob Cherry, for the matter of that!"

"Ahem!" coughed Bob. He felt a strong impulse to knock Smithy's head against the wall, but he nobly refrained. After all, the Bounder was in trouble because he was trying, upon the whole, to do the decent thing, and so it was up to the Famous Five to back him up as well as they could, and avoid taking offence.

"What did Loder do when you told him what you thought of him?" asked Harry.

"He gave me two hundred lines, to take to him at tea-time."

"And you're taking them?"

"No fear! I told him to go and eat coke!"

Wharton whistled softly.

"You told a prefect to go and eat coke? Ahem!"

"He's not going to come the prefect with me, considering what I know about him!" growled the Bounder. "I could tell the Head a good many things if I chose!"

"That would be sneaking."

"And Loder would deny it all, so it wouldn't be much good," Bob Cherry remarked.

"I know that. Anyway, I haven't done the lines. He's just sent Tubb to tell me he's waiting for the lines. If they're not done, he's going to lick me!"

"Well, prefects always do, if you don't do the impots."

"He's not going to lick me!" said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth. "If it were any other prefect—Wingate, or Courtney, for instance—it would be different. But Loder is only going for me because I've chucked him!"

"I suppose that's so," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully. "But—but he's got right on his side, Smithy—right enough, I mean, to justify him in what he's doing. You'd better take it quietly."

"That's exactly what I'm not going to do."

"Then what—?"

"I'm going to his study." The Bounder's eyes glinted. "If he tries to lick me, there will be trouble! I won't stand it from him!"

"Yes; but—"

Tubb's voice was heard from the stairs again. There was a note of jubilation in it. The Third-Former was very pleased to deliver Loder's message to the fellow who had thrashed him.

"Smithy, Loder says if you don't come he's coming to fetch you."

"You'd better go," said Wharton. "Look here, Smithy! You've put yourself in the wrong this time, and you'd better take it quietly."

"Well, I won't!"

"Smithy," yelled Tubb from the stairs, "you've got to come, you fathead!"

Vernon-Smith ran quickly along the passage to the stairs. Tubb saw him coming, and fled, but he did not flee quite quickly enough. The enraged Bounder was close behind him, and he kicked Tubb with vigour as he ran downstairs, and the fag roared, and rolled down to the lower landing. Vernon-Smith gave him another kick in passing, and Tubb roared again. And then the Bounder stamped away down the lower stairs, and made his way to Loder's study.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged dubious glances.

"Looks like trouble!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Wharton nodded.

"The trouble is that Smithy's put himself in the wrong," he said. "He did bully Tubb, and he's just treated him in a rotten way, this minute, under our eyes. If Smithy does that kind of thing, he must expect trouble. He'd have trouble with me for it if he wasn't getting it from Loder. If he gets a licking, I must say that it serves him right this time."

"All the same—"

"Yes, all the same, it's rotten of Loder. And if Smithy will only be decent, we'll back him up, and I think we should be a match for Loder," said Harry. "We've downed him before, and we can down him again."

And the Co. agreed heartily.

### THE SECOND CHAPTER.

#### Loder Comes Down Heavy!

L ODER of the Sixth was not alone in his study when Vernon-Smith arrived there. His pal Carne was with him. Both the Sixth-Formers were evidently waiting for Vernon-Smith. They exchanged a quick glance and a grin as the Bounder entered.

The Bounder did not come in with the respect due from a junior to members of the high and mighty Sixth. He threw the door roughly open, and stalked in, with his brow clouded and defiant. He did not close the door.

Loder fixed his eyes upon him.

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Loder staggered back as he entered his study, for something came swooping down from above, and settled over his head like a bonnet. It was a tin, and from the tin came swamping a sticky mixture, which ran down his neck, his chest, his face, and ears! (See Chapter 4.)

"Shut the door!" he rapped out.

"Rats!"

"What!"

"Shut it yourself!" said the Bounder.

Loder set his teeth. He crossed to the door, closed it, and turned the key in the lock.

Vernon-Smith watched him sullenly.

"Have you done your lines, Smith?" asked Loder, with ominous quietness.

"No."

"Then you know what to expect."

"And I am not going to do them, either," said the Bounder.

Loder took up a cane.

Vernon-Smith clenched his hands harder, and backed away a little.

"We'll have this out," he said, in a low and concentrated voice. "First of all, Loder, you're not going to come the prefect over me."

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"Indeed!" said Loder.

"Yes, indeed! Do you think I don't know the whole game?" the Bounder exclaimed passionately. "You're down on me because I've chucked you and your set. You're going to make things hot for me unless I come round. Well, I'm not coming round. I'll never play nap in this study again. I'm going to keep clear of that betting gang in Friardale. I've done with the whole bizney."

"I don't know what you are talking about," said Loder calmly. "If you hint that cards are ever played in my study I shall punish you for insolence!"

The Bounder stared at him.

"Oh, I'm not going to tell the Head, if that's what you're afraid of!" he exclaimed bitterly.

"You can tell the Head what you choose, Smith. If you made any accusation of that kind against a prefect, you'd have to prove it, that's all, or else be expelled from the school. I think you would find it a little difficult to prove."

"Just a little!" grinned Carne.

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MONDAY—

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The Bounder's lip curled.

"Oh, I know you cover up your tracks pretty carefully," he said. "But whether I could prove it or not, I'm not going to sneak. But considering how much I know about you, I'm not going to let you come the prefect over me. Let me alone, and I'll let you alone. That's all I want."

"It is necessary for a prefect to put down bullying among the fags, and to punish a junior for insolence," said Loder, swishing the cane in the air.

"Oh, chuck that! I'm putting it to you plainly," said Vernon-Smith. "I'm not going to do any lines you give me, and I'm not going to be caned. That's flat!"

"We shall see!" remarked Loder.

"That's what I've come here to tell you," said the Bounder. "Now I've told you, I'll go. I'm finished here."

He made a movement towards the door. Carne, at a sign from Loder, stepped between the junior and the door of the study.

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

Loder swished the cane again.

"Hold out your hand, Vernon-Smith!" he said.

"Rats!"

"Do you refuse to obey me—a prefect?"

"Yes."

"Very well," said Loder, his eyes glittering. "Then I shall use force. Collar him, Carne, and lay him on the table, and he shall have the licking of his life!"

"What-ho!" said Carne.

Vernon-Smith backed away again as the two seniors closed in upon him. He cast a quick glance round, and caught up a chair by the back, and swung it into the air. His white, desperate face startled the bullies of the Sixth, and they paused involuntarily.

"Hands off!" said the Bounder thickly. "If you lay a finger on me, I'll brain you! I mean business!"

"Put down that chair!" shouted Loder furiously.

"I won't!"

Loder sprang forward. His temper was up now. To be openly defied in his own study by a junior of the Lower Fourth was a little too much for Loder.

Vernon-Smith kept his word. He did mean business. He brought the chair down with a sweep, right at the prefect as he sprang upon him. The Bounder, when his blood was up, was utterly reckless, and his blood was up now.

Loder threw up his hands, and caught the downward sweep of the chair upon them, and gave a yell of pain.

The next moment he had wrenched the chair away, and hurled it aside, and his grasp closed upon the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith struggled desperately.

Junior as he was, he was muscular and wiry, and able to put up a good fight, even against a big Sixth-Former. But Carne was rushing to Loder's aid, and he seized the Bounder from behind and held on to him. Between the two of them Vernon-Smith was quickly reduced to helplessness.

"Now," panted Loder, "chuck him across the table!"

The Bounder, kicking and struggling frantically, was dragged to the table, and thrown across it, face downwards.

Carne held his legs, and Loder gripped his collar and held him there, and, with his free hand, Loder raised the cane.

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

Loder had been considerably hurt by the chair, and he was furious. He had said that he would give the Bounder the licking of his life, and he kept his word. It had been Smithy's fate to be flogged more than once, but his floggings had been nothing to this.

The cane rose and fell like lightning, with all the force of Loder's powerful arm.

Vernon-Smith writhed and struggled and panted under the rain of blows.

Swish, swish, swish!

"My hat!" gasped Carne, as he grappled with the junior's writhing legs. "Blessed if I can hold him much longer! Lay it on!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

The Bounder, choking with pain and rage, made a desperate effort and freed one leg from Carne's grasp. He kicked out furiously and caught the senior under the chin with his boot, and Carne staggered away with a howl of agony.

Vernon-Smith curled round on the table like a cat, and flicked at Loder, and the prefect caught his boot full on the chest, and reeled away.

The Bounder was off the table in a twinkling then, and making for the door. But he had to pause to unlock it, and in that second Loder was upon him again.

Vernon-Smith dragged the door open and bounded out, and the cane came lashing upon his shoulders as he went. He staggered across the passage, and the cane lashed again and again, till he fled.

Loder did not pursue him. He did not want the rest of

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the Sixth to see him chasing a breathless junior down the passage. He turned back, panting, into his study. Carne was holding his jaw in his hand and groaning.

"Has he hurt you?" asked Loder.

"Ow, ow! Yes! Groogh! The infernal little beast!" groaned Carne. "Ow, ow!"

"Well, he's had it pretty thick!" panted Loder, throwing down the cane. "I fancy he'll think twice before he checks me again! And this isn't the end. I'll make the young cad feel that life isn't worth living at Greyfriars before I've done with him!"

"He's had it a bit too thick, I fancy," said Carne, after a pause. "Suppose he goes to his Form-master and complains? Old Quelch wouldn't allow that kind of a licking, you know."

Loder shrugged his shoulders.

"That's all right. Bullying the fags, and refusing to obey a prefect. Pretty serious things, you know. That will make it all right for me. Must keep cheeky juniors in order, somehow. He won't go to Quelch. He'll try to think out some dodge for getting even with me. And he's just the fellow to do something desperate, and then I'll get him sacked from the school and finish with him."

Carne rubbed his chin ruefully. He had a big bruise there, and it felt far from comfortable.

"The sooner the better," he agreed. "He knows too much about us, and I should be jolly glad to see the last of him."

The two black sheep of the Sixth did not know what was to happen before they saw the last of Vernon-Smith.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Planning a Surprise!

HARRY WHARTON knocked at the door of Vernon-Smith's study in the Remove passage.

He had heard the Bounder return there, and he was anxious to see him. Several fellows had seen the Bounder bolting from the Sixth Form passage, and there was a great deal of discussion in the Remove about it.

"Who's there?" came a muffled voice from the study.

"I am," said Harry, turning the handle of the door.

"Can I come in, Smithy?"

The door was locked on the inside.

"What do you want?"

"Only to know how you got on with Loder."

The key turned, and the door opened. Wharton stepped in. The Bounder was alone there. His face was white, and his eyes were gleaming. Whenever he moved his face showed a twinge of pain.

He fixed his eyes upon Wharton.

"Well?" he snapped.

"Did you have it bad?"

"I've been licked—thrashed like a dog," said the Bounder in a suffocated voice. "But I'm going to make Loder pay for it."

Wharton looked uneasy.

"That's really what I was thinking about, Smithy," he said abruptly. "Look here, what is it you've got in your mind?"

"That's my business."

The Bounder's manner was intensely disagreeable, but Wharton was determined not to take offence.

"You remember the time you rowed with Skinner, Smithy," he said. "You remember how you went too far that time, and got yourself into trouble. There's a limit, you know. If you want to make Loder sit up, we're all willing to help you."

"I don't want your help."

"But don't think of doing anything rotten," went on Wharton quietly. "You can get your own back without that. You don't want to do anything that would get you the sack. That's just what Loder would like."

Vernon-Smith ground his teeth.

"I'm going to give him worse than he's given me, I know that," he said.

"You can't lick a prefect, you know."

"Can't I?" The Bounder sneered. "I'll do worse than lick him. You'll see."

"But the consequences—"

"Hang the consequences!"

"The Head—"

"I don't care a rap for the Head!"

Wharton made an impatient gesture.

"Look here, Smithy, you don't want to be sacked from Greyfriars, do you?"

"I'll risk that."

"Tell me what you're thinking of doing," said Harry un- easily.

"That's my business."

"But—"



"Look here, let me alone," said the Bounder gruffly. "I don't want your help, and I don't want your sympathy. I can look after myself. And I don't want any fellow meddling in my affairs. That's plain English, isn't it?"

Wharton coloured. "Quite plain enough," he said quietly. "I was only speaking to you as a friend. I shouldn't like to see you ruin yourself, that's all. I'll get out, if you want me to."

The Bounder made no reply, but he watched Harry Wharton with lowering brows as the captain of the Remove left the study. The key clicked in the door again as Wharton took his departure.

Harry returned to No. 1 Study with a troubled brow. He was really concerned about the Bounder. Hard and reckless and cynical as he was, with too many disagreeable traits in his character, it seemed decidedly "rotten" that Vernon-Smith should be victimised in this way just when he was beginning a new and better way of life. It would be still more "rotten" if he should do some reckless thing that would cause him to be expelled from the school, at the time when a new and better prospect was opening before him. But that was what Wharton could not help thinking was very likely to happen. But it was impossible to act as a friend to a fellow who refused all offers of friendship.

The Co. were in No. 1 Study having tea when Wharton came back. They looked inquiringly at the captain of the Remove as he came in.

"Seen Smithy?" asked Bob Cherry. "Yes. He seems to have been through it pretty badly," said Harry, with a clouded brow. "Loder has been pretty rough on him."

Bob Cherry nodded. "Temple of the Fourth saw him bolting out of Loder's

study, and Loder whacking him as he went," he remarked. "All the fellows are talking about it. If I were Smithy, I think I'd go to Quelchy about it. Loder has no right to treat him like that."

"I saw Carne a little while ago," said Nugent. "He's got a big bruise on his chin. Smithy must have given them a tussle."

"He can't complain to Quelchy," said Harry. "It all came about through his bullying young Tubbs, and he was in the wrong there. The duffer has put himself in the wrong, and Loder has the pull over him. What I'm afraid of is that he's going to do something stupid that will have serious consequences for him."

"What can he do?" "I don't know. But he's got some scheme or other in his mind, and he might do Loder some real injury," said Harry uneasily. "He looks capable of it."

Bob Cherry whistled. "That would mean the sack," he said. "Yes; and we don't want Smithy to be sacked. He's been turning out quite a decent chap lately, and that's really why Loder is down on him. I think we ought to look after Smithy a bit, and see that he doesn't make a fool of himself."

"Good. He'll cool down when he's got over the licking, and then it will be all right," agreed Johnny Bull. "We'll keep an eye on him."

The study door opened, and Peter Todd of the Remove looked in. There was a broad grin on Todd's face.

"I suppose you fellows have heard about Smithy?" he remarked.

"Yes. Nothing to grin about in that that I can see," said Wharton, a little gruffly.

"Not at all; but I'm taking the matter up," explained Peter. "Loder is going too strong, and as my study is top study in the Remove—"

"Oh, chuck it!"

"As my study is top study in the Remove," said Todd calmly. "I regard it as being up to me to give Loder a little reminder that he can't handle Removeites in this way. Smithy is simply wriggling now. I heard him gasping when I passed his study. He's too blessed proud to blub. I'm going to take the matter up, and I've looked in to borrow your cake-tin—that big tin you make cakes in, you know. The cakes are rotten, but the tin is just what I want."

"What on earth do you want it for?" demanded Wharton. "To fill it up with liquid glue and ink," said Peter calmly.

"Then I'm going to lodge it on top of Loder's door—ajar. When Loder goes into his study, he will meet with a sudden surprise. He's in the prefects' room now, but he will be going back to his study presently. Mum's the word, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Can I have the tin?" asked Peter Todd.

Harry Wharton handed over the tin.

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"And if you've got any ink to spare, you can shove it in," said Peter.

Nugent cheerfully emptied a bottle of ink into the tin. Wharton, with equal cheerfulness and generosity, added the contents of a jar of treacle.

"It's beginning to look nice already," said Peter, surveying the horrible mixture with satisfaction. "It will be quite a surprise for Loder, won't it?"

"I should jolly well say so. There will be trouble if Loder gets that on his napper!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Well, there's a risk in everything," said Peter Todd cheerily. "We're bound to remind Loder that the Remove stand together. This will remind him."

And Peter Todd walked off with the tin. He returned to his own study, No. 7, with his prize. His study-mates, Billy Bunter and Tom Dutton and Alonzo Todd, were there, and they all stared at the tin in surprise.

"What on earth's that for?" asked Bunter. "Loder!"

"My dear Peter!" began Alonzo Todd, in great surprise. "What can Loder possibly want with what appears to me to be a mixture of ink and treacle?"

"He doesn't want it," said Peter. "But he's going to get it all the same—and some more nice things with it. No. 7 Study is going to give Loder a lesson."

"Look here," began Billy Bunter, blinking at Peter in alarm through his big spectacles, "I'm not going to have a hand in this, Todd. It's too jolly dangerous laying booby-traps for a prefect—especially a prefect like Loder. You know what he's done to Smithy."

"That's why!" said Peter.

"But suppose he licks us the same way?" roared Bunter indignantly. "I tell you, it's not jolly good enough. I'm off!"

And Bunter made for the door. Peter Todd inserted his fingers in the fat junior's collar, and jerked him back again.

"No. 7 Study always stands together," he said severely. "You are going to have a hand in it, Bunter, if only to keep you from chattering about it afterwards. Get the bottle of red ink from the cupboard, and pour it in."

"Look here—"

"Get that ink!" roared Peter.

Bunter jumped, and brought the bottle of ink. Peter Todd ruled in No. 7 Study with a rod of iron. He always kept a cricket-stump handy, for the purpose of impressing upon Bunter, when occasion required, that he, Peter, was head of the study. Billy Bunter groaned dimly as he poured in the red ink; but he realised that it was better to chance a licking from Loder in the future, than to get one on the spot from Peter.

"Now stir it up with the poker," said Peter.

"But I say, you know—"

"Stir it up!" thundered Peter.

Bunter snorted, and stirred it up.

"Now, Alonzo—"

"My dear Peter," said the mild and gentle Alonzo. "I am not at all sure that Uncle Benjamin would approve of punishing Loder in this manner—"

"Never mind Uncle Ben now. Get a shovelful of ashes out of the grate, and stick them in. They will give it a consistency," said Peter. "It's too thin now. Buck up, and don't jaw!"

Alonzo sighed, and obeyed.

"Now you put in some liquid glue, Dutton," said Peter. "We've all got to have a hand in this. Do you hear?"

Tom Dutton was afflicted with deafness; and, as a matter of fact, he did not hear.

"Get the glue!" shouted Peter.

"Looks purple to me," said Dutton. "I don't think it's glue."

"Glue!" yelled Peter.

"Eh?"

"Glue!"

"What rot!" said Dutton. "Tain't glue! It's ink and treacle. What are you getting at?"

"Get the glue, and shove it in."

"I know it's a tin," said Dutton. "What's the good of telling me it's a tin, when I can see it with my own eyes. I think you're a silly ass!"

"Will you get the glue?" roared Peter.

"Oh, the glue! Certainly! Why don't you speak plainly?"

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And Dutton fetched the liquid glue, and it was added to the mixture. Billy Bunter stirred away industriously.

"There, I think that will do!" said Peter. "I'll take it to Loder's study. Can't trust any of you fellows to do that—you'd make a muck of it."

And Peter Todd bore the tin away with its fearsome contents. It was getting dusk now, but the lights were not yet on, and it was a favourable moment for Peter's little plan. He reached the Sixth Form passage, and as there was no light under Loder's door, he knew that the prefect was still absent from his quarters. He opened the door quietly.

"Good egg!" murmured Peter. "Loder will be surprised! Uncle Benjamin would approve of planning pleasant surprises for one's dear schoolfellows—Ahem!"

He fetched a chair along the passage, mounted upon it, and carefully arranged the tin. One edge of it rested on top of the door, the other edge on the ledge above the doorway inside the study. It was quite safely perched there—until the door was opened. As soon as the door was pushed open there would be a catastrophe. Peter Todd chuckled as he carried the chair away; and he lost no time in returning to his own quarters. He would have liked very much to be on the scene, to see Loder's face when he received that pleasant surprise—he felt that it would be worth seeing. But considerations of prudence prevented that; it was much safer to be off the scene. Peter Todd sat down to tea in No. 7 Study, feeling that he had deserved well of his country.

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. The Blow!

**L**ODER of the Sixth lounged out of the prefects' room, and walked along the Sixth Form passage with Walker. He was going back to his study, little dreaming of what was awaiting him there. He left Walker at his door, and went on to his study. The door was six inches open, and Loder pushed it with his right hand, feeling in his pocket at the same time with his left for a matchbox.

Then—  
Swish! Splash! Squelch!  
Loder staggered.  
Something—he did not know what it was—came swooping down from above as he stepped into the study, and settled over his head like a bonnet.

It was a large tin!  
And from the interior of the tin came a swamping of sticky mixture, swamping his hair, his ears, his face, his neck, his chest.

He was blinded, choked, almost suffocated.  
He let out a gasping yell, which was throttled by the sticky stuff over his face and his mouth, and staggered out into the passage.

"Grooh! Groo-hoogh! Hooh!"  
Walker came out of his study again hurriedly, startled by those wild, muffled ejaculations in the passage.

"What the dickens—" began Walker. Then he jumped. He did not recognise the awful-looking figure before his eyes. Ink and treacle, ashes and glue, completely concealed the features of Gerald Loder.

"My hat!" howled Walker. "What's that? Who is it?"

"Grooh! Ow! Oh!"

"Loder!" gasped Walker. "What the dooce—"

"Gerrroogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Walker, as he caught sight of the nearly empty tin lying in the doorway. "It's a booby-trap, is it? My hat! You do look sticky! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ugh! Groogh!"  
"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, coming out of his study. "What—why, what—Oh, crumbs! Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder gouged the sticky mass frantically away from his mouth and eyes.

"There's nothing to laugh at, you silly owls!" he spluttered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at me—I—I—" Loder choked.

"I'm looking!" roared Walker. "I think you look funny! Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate wiped his eyes.

"It was a booby-trap, I suppose," he said. "Rather a rough joke, too. You seem in a bad way, Loder."

"I'll slaughter the young villain who did this!" shrieked Loder.

"Who did it?"

"Vernon-Smith, of course—because I licked him this afternoon," spluttered Loder. "I'll skin him—I'll smash him—I'll—"

"You'd better go and get a wash," grinned Wingate; "and you'd better make sure it was Vernon-Smith before you go for him, too."

But Loder did not stay to listen.

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He dashed away to a bath-room, followed by a howl of laughter from all the fellows who caught sight of him.

Under a steaming tap, Loder rubbed and scrubbed frantically at the sticky mixture clinging to his face and to his hair.

It was half an hour before he was anything like respectable. Walker, still grinning, brought him a clean shirt and collar, and another jacket and waistcoat, and Loder towelled himself down and donned them, breathing fury.

His flight to the bath-room had been watched by fifty pairs of eyes, and a crowd of juniors were now in the passage outside, howling with laughter.

But when Loder's furious face appeared at the door, they scattered. Loder looked as if he would be dangerous at close quarters.

The prefect strode away through the crowd, and the juniors, keeping at a safe distance, roared with merriment.

The prefect made his way directly to Vernon-Smith's study. There was not the slightest doubt in his mind as to who had laid the booby-trap for him. He had thought of Vernon-Smith at once—and he would have been disappointed if the culprit had turned out to be someone else. But he was sure of it; and he did not waste time in inquiries.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! He's coming here!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the enraged prefect was seen stamping up the stairs.

"Better give him a clear berth, Toddy!" whispered Wharton.

And Peter Todd grinned and vanished. Loder certainly didn't know that he was the guilty party; but the lively Peter felt that it was wiser not to catch the prefect's eye just then.

Loder came stamping furiously along the passage, and the Removites bolted for their studies. There was a sound of locking doors all along the passage. There was no telling upon whom Loder's wrath might fall.

The prefect stopped at Vernon-Smith's door, and turned the handle. That door was not locked. Skinner, who shared the study with the Bounder, had gone in a few minutes before, and he was there with Vernon-Smith. The Bounder had not left his study, and he did not even know yet what had happened to Loder. Skinner was beginning to tell him, with breathless chuckles, when Loder's hand was heard on the door.

The door was flung open, and the prefect's furious face appeared.

Skinner dodged round the table.

"Here, you keep off!" he yelled, in alarm. "Twasn't me, Loder!"

Loder strode into the study, and pointed to the door with a shaking finger.

"I know who it was," he said thickly. "Get out, Skinner."

Skinner was only too glad to get out. He fairly jumped into the passage. Then Loder turned upon Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder faced him, his eyes glinting.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked, with grim coolness.

The Bounder was in a dangerous temper himself, and he was not afraid of Loder.

Loder's fingers worked convulsively. He was in so deadly a rage that he could scarcely control himself.

"You know what you've done," he said, in a choking voice. "I've come here to thrash you for it. What I gave you this afternoon will be nothing to it!" His eyes wandered round the study—he had not thought of a cane, and he wanted an instrument for punishment. His eye fell upon a cricket-stump in a corner, and he made a stride towards it.

The Bounder's teeth came together with a click.

His cricket bat lay on the table—he had been oiling it earlier in the afternoon, before his visit to Loder. He caught it up, his long fingers closing hard and fast on the cane handle.

Loder swung round, with the cricket-stump in his hand.

The Bounder swung back the bat. His eyes gleamed and glinted over it with a deadly light.

"Stand back!" he said, and the words came in a low, concentrated tone through his hard-gripped teeth. "If you come near me, Loder, I'll lay you on your back."

Loder did not even reply.

He ran straight at the Bounder.

Vernon-Smith's eyes seemed to burn. He struck—with savage force and with deadly aim. Loder instinctively threw up his arm, and the blow fell upon it, but with such force that his arm fell away, and the bat crashed upon his head.

Crash!

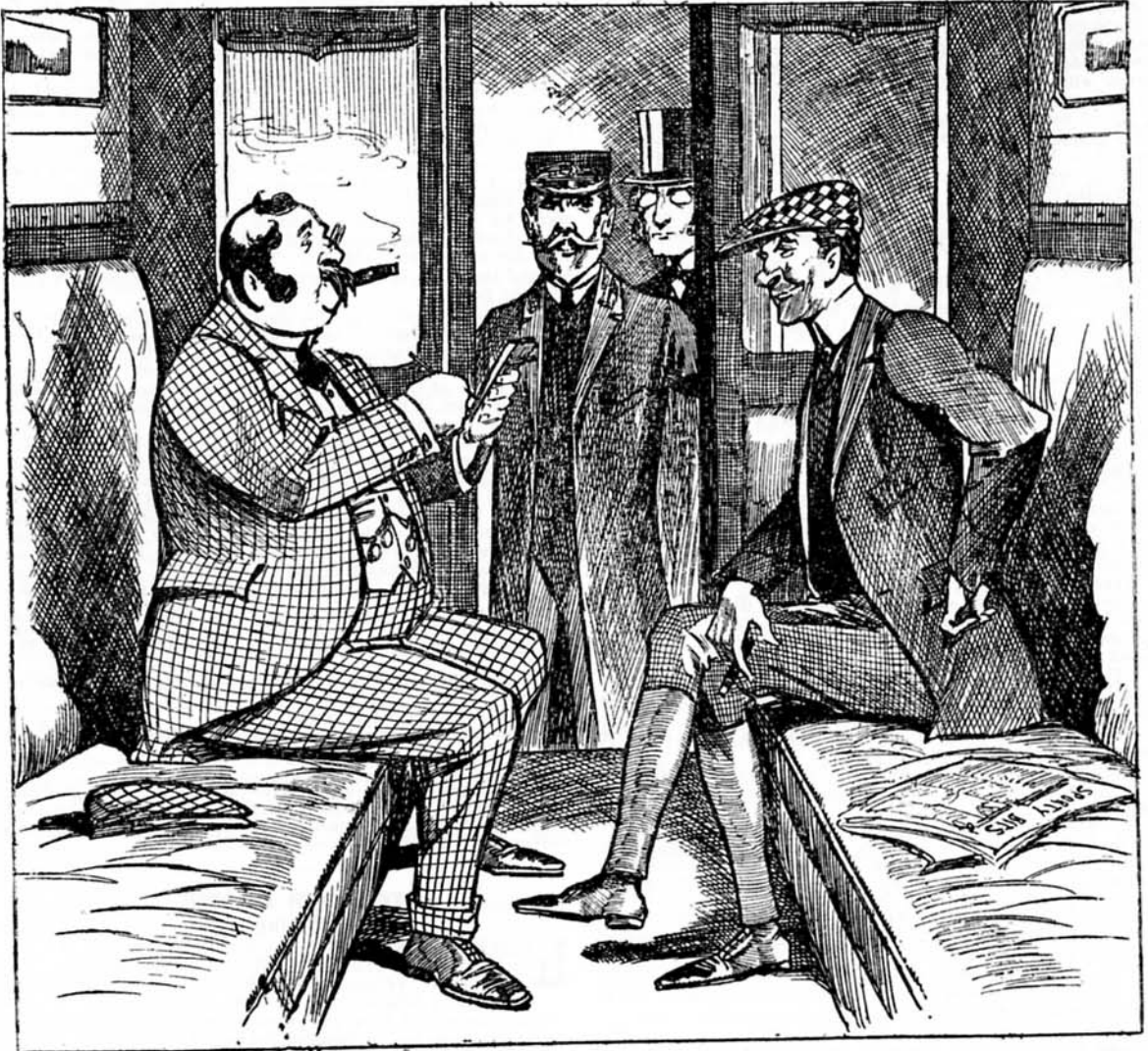
A low, heavy groan—and Loder dropped on the study floor. The Bounder panted, and gripped the cane handle of the bat for another blow, if it was needed.

But it was not needed.

Loder of the Sixth lay stretched upon the carpet—motionless.

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A reverend-looking gentleman, with the station-master at his elbow, looked into the carriage. "Look here, Mister Station-master, ain't this 'ere train going to start to-night?" growled Spoiff. (See Chapter 7.)

The Bounder, breathing hard, looked at him. Skinner, whose eye was glued to the keyhole, felt his very heart turn sick within him. He had seen the blow—he had seen the fall—he saw now the still form of the prefect stretched at the Bounder's feet—still—terribly still.

The Bounder leaned one hand on the table, feeling strangely giddy. Why didn't Loder move? He lay crumpled as it were, and without a motion—why didn't he move? The bat dropped heavily from the junior's hand, and clumped dully on the floor.

"Loder!" Vernon-Smith's voice was low and husky. His anger and hatred were gone now, a strange and terrible feeling of fright was coming over him. "Loder! I—I know you're only pretending! Get up, you rotter! Do—do you think you can frighten me? Get up!"

There was no sound.

Vernon-Smith bent down over the motionless form; he raised Loder's head in his hand. A thin stream of red trickled down under the dark hair. The eyes were closed; the face was waxy white. Vernon-Smith shuddered, and allowed the heavy head to fall—it dropped with a soft, dull thud upon the carpet. And Loder did not move.

The Bounder, his eyes fixed upon the senseless form with a strange terror, rose to his feet, and backed away—his eyes still fixed upon Loder. He scarcely breathed.

"Loder!" His voice was broken and husky, almost in-

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tulate. "Loder! Why don't you speak? I'm sorry I hit you so hard—why don't you speak?"

But Loder did not speak; and upon the Bounder's dazed mind was forced the fearful conviction that Loder of the Sixth would never speak again.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### The Flight of the Bounder!

"WHARTON! Nugent! For mercy's sake, come!" Skinner panted out the words as he staggered into No. 1 Study.

Wharton and Nugent were at work at their preparation. They jumped up from the table at the sight of Skinner's terrified, bloodless face.

"What's the matter?"

"What's happened?"

"It's Loder—Smithy—he's killed him!" panted Skinner incoherently.

"What!"

"He's killed him!"

Wharton and his chum stared blankly at Skinner. The latter held on to the door to support himself; he was almost fainting.

"Killed him!" stammered Wharton. "Whom?"

"Come and see—they're in his study—he's dead!"

Harry Wharton shoved him roughly aside, and ran out of the study, with Frank Nugent at his heels. The Bounder's door was closed.

Wharton flung it hastily open, and ran in.

He stopped with a cry at the sight of the still form on the floor, with the black bruise on the forehead, the trickle of blood under the hair. Vernon-Smith was gazing down on his victim with wide, terrified eyes, as if bereft of the power of movement or speech.

"Good heavens! What have you done?" panted Harry.

He grasped the Bounder by the arm, and shook him, to rouse him from his lethargy. Vernon-Smith turned dull, unseeing eyes upon him.

"Smithy!"

"He—he came for me!" muttered the Bounder thickly.

"He was going to lick me with that stump. I warned him!"

"Good heavens!" muttered Nugent.

"I warned him—then I hit him. It was his own fault."

Wharton's face was white with horror.

He threw himself upon his knees beside the motionless form of the prefect and thrust his hand under Loder's jacket, to feel the beating of his heart.

Then he looked up with scared eyes.

"He's dead!" groaned the Bounder. "I know that!"

"He—he can't be!" exclaimed Nugent, horror-stricken.

"Oh, you ass, Smithy! But—but it can't be. I—I'll get Mr. Quelch—"

"Ask him to telephone for the doctor," said Wharton.

"Right!"

The Bounder gave a sudden start, and pulled himself together with an effort.

"A doctor!" he said, or rather whispered. "A doctor can't do him any good now. He brought it on himself. I warned him."

Wharton felt almost sick.

A crowd of fellows were round the open doorway by this time. They stared into the study with white, scared faces. All the Remove knew now that something terrible had happened in Vernon-Smith's room.

"The doctor—and the police!" the Bounder went on, his very lips white as chalk now. "Good heavens! What does that mean for me—"

Wharton did not reply. It was only too clear what it meant for Vernon-Smith.

"Prison—a reformatory, at least!" the Bounder muttered. "But—but it was his fault! He—he came for me, you know!"

Wharton could not speak.

"I—I didn't mean to hit him so hard!" The Bounder made another effort; some of his old coolness seemed to return. "But I'm not going to stay here till the police come. I'm not going to be arrested."

He made a movement towards the door.

"You'd better stay, Smithy!" muttered Wharton. "Better stay and face it that!"

"I'm not such a fool as that!" Reformatories are not in my line," said the Bounder, in quite his old manner. "I'd rather get clear till I know how it's going to turn out."

"But—I tell you—"

Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, looked quickly in at the doorway. Mauleverer's usually calm and serene face was white now, and full of horror.

"Quelch's coming!" he muttered.

The Bounder uttered an exclamation, and sprang into the passage. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was hurrying along the passage, followed by Nugent.

His stern eye fell upon the Bounder.

"Vernon-Smith, go to my study and remain there till I come!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir!" said the Bounder quietly.

He went downstairs.

But he did not go to the Form-master's study. He walked quickly to the door, and went into the quad. There he put on his cap, and he crossed the Close with hurried steps, almost running.

The gates were locked. Gosling, the porter, had closed them at dark. Vernon-Smith did not make for the gates. He hurried to the school wall, and clambered over it hurriedly, and dropped into the road outside.

Then he ran.

Sudden and terrible as the happening had been, the Bounder of Greyfriars had recovered his coolness after the first few fearful minutes.

If Loder was dead—and he believed that the blow had killed the bully of the Sixth—then Greyfriars was no place for him. A charge of manslaughter, at least, long years in a juvenile prison, if no worse—that was what the Bounder had to expect now. He had come a "mucker" in his school career—and he had come a mucker with a vengeance. There was nothing for it now but flight.

At all events, ruined as he undoubtedly was, he could yet escape the penalty of his rash and terrible act—if he kept his wits about him and wasted no time.

He ran along the road in the dusk, heading for Friardale—the railway-station his destination. The millionaire's son had plenty of money about him—ample to pay his way until he could communicate with his father. That his father would stand by him he knew. Samuel Vernon-Smith, financier, moneylender, millionaire, hard and unfeeling to all others, was devoted to his only son. To get to a place of safety, beyond the reach of the police, that was Vernon-Smith's only thought now.

He ran on swiftly in the darkness, towards the distant lights of the village. There was terror and something like despair in his breast; but his brain was cool and clear.

He knew that the local train for Courtfield was almost due to leave at that hour, and if he could catch it, he would have the start of his pursuers—for that he would be pursued there was not the slightest doubt.

The lights of the village came into sight; he ran on through the old High Street. Strange enough it seemed to him to think, as he did at that moment, that this was the last time he would look upon that quaint old street. There was the Cross Keys—the disreputable haunt he had once frequented in his wilder days; there was Mr. Snook's estate office; there was old Mr. Penfold, standing at the door of his little shop and chatting with a neighbour. And here was the station; and he could hear the puffing of the train about to start.

He did not wait to take a ticket. He burst past a startled porter, and reached the platform. The train was on the move.

"Stand back, there!" roared the guard, as the Bounder dashed across the platform.

The Bounder did not heed.

He caught the handle of a carriage door, and swung it open, and leaped into the moving train.

Slam!

The door closed behind him—he lay on the seat, panting. The train whirred on through the darkness, bearing the Bounder swiftly away from the school where his chequered career had so suddenly come to an end.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Missing!

**L**ODER of the Sixth lay in his bed, quiet and still.

Mr. Quelch and the Head were in the room.

Outside, at some distance from the door, were a crowd of fellows, hushed, anxious, waiting.

The doctor had been telephoned for from Friardale, and he was coming, but he had not yet arrived.

What had happened to Loder? Had that hurried, fierce blow from the Bounder's cricket-bat really been fatal? The Greyfriars fellows shuddered at the thought, and they could hardly believe it. And if Loder was dead, what would become of the Bounder?

Many fellows had predicted that the Bounder would go to the bad. But no one had expected him to go to the bad with a crash like this.

Mr. Quelch opened Loder's door, and came quietly out. Harry Wharton came towards him, pale and anxious.

"He's not dead, sir, surely?"

Mr. Quelch shook his head.

"I am glad to say, no, Wharton. He has been stunned, and the injury is certainly serious—how serious we cannot tell until the doctor arrives. But Loder is not dead, and you may tell the others so."

Wharton drew a deep breath of relief.

"Thank you, sir!"

The Remove-master went back into Loder's room. Harry Wharton rejoined his companions, and the news soon spread among the waiting fellows, and it brought relief to every heart. The worst had not happened, at all events. Loder was not dead—the first hurried belief had been a mistake.

"Somebody ought to tell Smithy," said Bob Cherry. "He must be feeling horrible about it, you know!"

"He's waiting in Quelch's study," added Nugent. "Let's go and tell him."

"Right—ho!"

The chums of the Remove hurried at once to the Form-master's study. The room was in darkness as Harry Wharton opened the door.

# ANSWERS

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"Smithy!"  
There was no reply—no sound in the room.  
"Is he here in the dark?" said Johnny Bull, puzzled.  
"Smithy, old man, where are you?"  
Silence.

Harry Wharton struck a match, and lighted the gas. The juniors looked round the room. It was empty.

"He's not here!"  
"Quelch told him to wait here!" said Nugent.  
Wharton's brows contracted.

"He was saying something in his study about bolting, I wonder—"  
"He wouldn't be such an ass!" said Johnny Bull uneasily.  
"Let's look for him. He must be about the school somewhere."

"I hope so," said Harry.  
But his tone implied doubt. It was borne in upon his mind that the Bounder had quitted Greyfriars, in the belief that Gerald Loder was dead.

The Famous Five searched through the House for the Bounder.

Other fellows joined in the search, but it was in vain. They looked through the studies and the Form-rooms, in the library, in the gym, in the cricket pavilion. But there was no sign of the Bounder.

It was pretty clear at last that he was no longer in Greyfriars.

"Then he's bolted!" said Bob Cherry, as they made their way back to the School House at last. "He thinks Loder's done for, and he's cleared!"

"He said he would, and—"  
"And he's done it," said Bob. "He must be feeling horribly rotten. I suppose if Loder had really been done for, it would have been best for the poor wretch to clear off. But as it is—"

"We ought to tell Quelch," said Wharton.  
"Can't now—he's in Loder's room, and the doctor's come. Let's wait and hear what old Pillbury has to say, anyway."

They joined the crowd of fellows at the end of the Sixth Form passage. Preparation had been forgotten. Every usual avocation was set aside now. The shadow of a tragedy hung over the school, and it banished all other thoughts.

"The doctor's there," said Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, as the chums of the Remove came up.

"We'll wait for him to come out," said Harry.  
It was some time before Dr. Pillbury came out of Loder's room. His face was very grave as he went away. The Head was with him, so the juniors could ask no questions. After the doctor had gone, the Head signed to Wharton.

"Do you know anything about this occurrence, Wharton?" he asked. "Does any boy in the Remove know what occurred?"

"Skinner does, sir."  
"Come here, Skinner!"  
Skinner approached. He was still looking pale and nervous.

"Tell me what happened, Skinner."  
"I was in the study with Smithy, sir, when Loder came in raging. Somebody had planted a booby-trap on him, and he thought it was Smithy—"

"Was it Smithy?"  
"No, sir; it was another chap," said Skinner.  
"It was I, sir," said Peter Todd quietly.

It was no time, then, for concealing the fact that he had played that trick on Loder. The fact that the prefect had been about to punish Vernon-Smith unjustly was a point in favour of the absent Bounder.

"It was you, Todd?"  
"Yes, sir. Loder had been ragging Smithy, and I did it to shut him up."

"Very well, Todd. I am glad you have been frank about it. No matter now, however. Tell me what happened in Vernon-Smith's study, Skinner."

"I watched them through the keyhole, sir!" stammered Skinner. "Loder took a cricket-stump to thrash Smithy—"

The Head frowned.  
"You are sure of that?"

"Yes, sir; he hadn't brought a cane with him. He didn't ask Smithy whether he had done it or not—about the booby-trap, I mean. He just went for him, and Smithy picked up his bat and warned him to keep off."

"And then?"  
"Loder went for him just the same, sir, and Smithy hit him a cosh—I mean, he hit him with the bat, and he fell down. That's all, sir."

The Head's lips were tightly set.  
"Very well, Skinner. I am glad there was an eye-witness of what occurred. I will see Vernon-Smith himself now."

The juniors exchanged glances. The Head evidently did not suspect, so far, that the Bounder had left Greyfriars.

"May we know how Loder is, sir?" asked Harry Wharton diffidently.  
"He is in a very serious state," said Dr. Locke gravely.

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"It is feared that concussion of the brain may result. In that case, I fear that the matter cannot be kept out of the hands of the police, and Vernon-Smith will be wanted by them. I understand that he is now waiting in Mr. Quelch's study. Go and fetch him, Wharton!"

"He—he isn't there now, sir!"  
The Head raised his eyebrows.

"No. Where is he, then?"  
"I—I think he has gone, sir!" Wharton faltered.

"Gone! Gone where?"  
"Gone from the school, sir."

Dr. Locke started.  
"Do you mean to say that the foolish lad has run away from Greyfriars?" he exclaimed hastily.

"At least, we can't find him anywhere, sir."  
"The foolish boy! This is very serious. His running away may give his act the appearance of having been deliberate, instead of an unfortunate accident!" the Head exclaimed. "He must be found immediately!"

"We've looked for him everywhere, sir. He's not in the school."

Dr. Locke compressed his lips.

He hurried away to his study, followed by Mr. Quelch. The Head stepped to the telephone, and took up the receiver. He rang up the stationmaster at Friardale.

His inquiries were short and sharp, and to the point.

"Can you tell me if a Greyfriars boy has appeared at the station during the past hour? Yes, a boy has run away. Have you seen anything of him?"

"Yes, sir. Master Vernon-Smith—"  
"That is the name."

"He left by the local train for Courtfield, sir—jumped into it while it was going."

"What time did it leave?"  
"Seven o'clock, sir."

"It reaches Courtfield at half-past seven, I think?"  
"Seven thirty-five, sir."

"Thank you very much."  
Dr. Locke hung up the receiver.

"Vernon-Smith caught the seven train for Courtfield, Mr. Quelch," he said rapidly. "His intention is undoubtedly to get on the express there. There is a long wait, however, between the arrival of the local train and the departure of the express. The wretched boy is evidently under the impression that Loder is dead. For his own sake, if for no other reason, he must be brought back without delay. I shall make as much haste as possible to Courtfield—"

"I understand, sir. You may catch him before the express goes," said Mr. Quelch.

"Please order the car at once."

Five minutes later the Head was speeding along the Courtfield road in the car, and all Greyfriars saw him start and wondered whether he would succeed in capturing the fleeing Bounder.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### In the Express!

VERNON-SMITH jumped from the train as it stopped at Courtfield Station.

He crossed rapidly to the platform from which the London express was to start.

He knew that there was an express that evening, but he did not know what time it would leave Courtfield Junction; and as yet there was no sign of it in the station.

He was in time for it, certainly, but the thought of pursuit was in the Bounder's mind. It was probable that he had been missed from Greyfriars before this; and as soon as he was missed, he knew that the pursuit would begin. Believing the matter to be more serious than it really was, he expected that the police, as well as the Greyfriars authorities, would join in the pursuit.

If the telegraph were set to work, he might be stopped in the station before the express started; or the Head might drive over from the school in time to intercept him, for it would easily be discovered that he had left Friardale by the local train.

"When does the express leave for London?" Vernon-Smith asked the first porter he saw.

"Eight o'clock, sir."

"Twenty minutes to wait!"  
Vernon-Smith drew back into the shadow of the buffet, and reflected.

He had no ticket, but it was not advisable to take one. There would be an inquiry at the booking-office, of course, as to whether a Greyfriars junior had taken a ticket there.

And if there was a telegram to the stationmaster, or if the

Head came, the train would be searched for him before it started, and he would be hauled out and taken back.

It was clear that if he was to go by the express at all, he would have to conceal himself in the train, and that he decided to do.

He waited anxiously.

A few minutes before eight the express came puffing into the station, and stopped.

A number of passengers alighted from it, and Vernon-Smith, crossing the platform quickly, stepped into the nearest carriage—a second-class one.

The carriage was empty—he had noted that before he entered. There were a good many people waiting for the train, however, and it was not likely to remain empty very long.

But the Bounder acted quickly. He closed the door of the carriage, and slipped down under the seat, lying there at full length.

There he remained, invisible, and keeping perfectly quiet, his heart beating hard, but his brain perfectly cool and steady.

The carriage door opened again, and Vernon-Smith saw a pair of large tan boots and the lower part of a pair of loud check trousers. The tan boots and check trousers settled down within a few inches of his face. The passenger had taken his seat without a suspicion that there was anyone else in the carriage.

Another passenger followed, and sat down opposite the tan boots.

The carriage door was closed.

Vernon-Smith's heart beat hard.

In a minute, or less, the train was due to start, and there was not much time for him to be run down now.

"Tommy Dodd has been scratched, after all!" said a voice with a strong Cockney accent, proceeding from the owner of the tan boots and check trousers.

"I knew he would be," replied the gentleman opposite. "He wasn't never intended to run."

"What was your fancy, Spoff?"

"Highland Mary for my money."

Vernon-Smith grinned a little. The two gentlemen above him were evidently of the sporting variety. One of them had unfolded a pink paper. The gentleman with the tan boots emitted a chuckle.

"Highland Mary, Spoff?"

"That's my selection," said Spoff defiantly; "and I bet you—"

"Not an earthly!"

"You're talking out of your hat, Stuckey! I tell you, Highland Mary is going to win!" said Spoff excitedly.

"Bet you!" said Stuckey.

"I'm your man. What figure?"

"Three to one!" growled Spoff.

"Fivers?" asked Mr. Stuckey.

"Fivers if you like, and blow you!"

"Done!"

Vernon-Smith heard the scratch of a pencil. Mr. Stuckey, of the tan boots and check trousers, was evidently making a note of the bet in a little book.

"Anything in the paper?" asked Spoff, a little crossly. Evidently he was not pleased by his companion's contempt for his selection.

"Yes," chuckled Stuckey; "somethin' that will interest you. Listen 'ere. Highland Mary has lately been very much out of condition, and it is not likely that she will run in the Pinkerton." How does that strike you, Spoff?"

Spoff muttered something under his breath.

"Looks like a snip for me," chuckled Stuckey. "Got them three fivers about you, Spoff?"

"Look 'ere, that bet's off!" said Spoff.

"Wrong; it's on!" said Stuckey. "Didn't I say 'Done'?"

"But I say—"

"You'll owe me fifteen quid to-morrow, Spoff," said Mr. Stuckey cheerfully. "I could 'ave told you all along that Highland Mary was no good. I know a man—"

Mr. Stuckey was interrupted by the sudden opening of the carriage door.

The two sporting gentlemen looked round, to see a reverend-looking gentleman, with the stationmaster at his elbow. The stationmaster was looking cross. He did not like delaying the express, and it was turned eight now.

"Look here, Mr. Stationmaster, ain't this 'ere train going to start to-night?" growled Spoff, who was extremely irritable over his unfortunate bet with his astute companion.

"Excuse me, gentlemen. Is there a boy in this carriage?"

"Don't look as if there was, does there?" growled Spoff.

"I am sorry to trouble you, gentlemen," said the Head of

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Greyfriars courteously. "A boy has run away from my school, and he has probably taken this train—"

Spoff sniffed.

"Didn't you give the kid enough to eat, or did you give him too many whackings?" he asked, in a decidedly disrespectful manner.

Dr. Locke coloured.

"I am looking for this boy—"

"Well, look for 'im, and don't worry me," said Spoff. "You ain't any right to delay an express train, looking for your runaway boys. Do you think I've got the young codger 'idden in me weskit-pocket?"

"He has not been in this carriage?"

"Yes, 'e's been 'ere, and 'e vanished out of the winder when you come along!" said Spoff, with biting sarcasm.

"He is certainly not here," said the stationmaster. "I am afraid I cannot keep the train back any longer, sir."

The Head cast a glance round the carriage.

Vernon-Smith held his breath.

He could not see the Head, but he knew his voice, and he was trembling. If the Head should glance under the seat—Mr. Stuckey's big tan boots and check trousers were in the way, certainly, but if the Head looked for him he could not fail to see him. Would he be discovered?

"May I ask you whether you have seen a schoolboy about here, gentlemen?" asked Dr. Locke, still speaking with calm courtesy.

"I ain't!" growled Spoff.

"And I ain't!" said Mr. Stuckey. "He ain't 'ere, old gentleman."

"Unless, p'r'aps, he's under the seat, or up there on the luggage-rack!" said Mr. Spoff, still heavily sarcastic.

And Mr. Stuckey chuckled.

"I am afraid, sir—" began the station-master again.

The carriage door closed.

Vernon-Smith breathed again.

But the train did not start. The Head was evidently looking in the next carriage, with the impatient and worried station-master. The Head of Greyfriars was too great a personage to be refused; but the station-master was not happy.

"Silly old donkey!" growled Spoff, as he settled back into his place again. "Why don't he treat his bally kids decent, and not make 'em run orf, then? Lookin' at a bloke as if he was a haimal, too!"

"Lofty old gent, and no mistake!" agreed Mr. Stuckey.

"If the kid was 'ere, I wouldn't say a bally word," added Spoff.

"Same 'ere!" agreed Mr. Stuckey. "Let 'im find his blooming kids 'imself!"

Mr. Stuckey's pink paper fluttered to the floor. He stooped to pick it up, and as he did so, he gave a sudden jump.

"Crikey!" he ejaculated.

"Wot's the matter with you?" growled Spoff, still out of temper.

"There's sombody under the seat!"

"My word!"

Mr. Stuckey stooped lower, and gazed under the seat. His eyes met the scared gaze of the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"My hege! It's the kid they're lookin' for!" he exclaimed. And Mr. Spoff ejaculated again:

"My word!"

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### A Narrow Escape!

**V**ERNON-SMITH felt almost sick for a moment. He was discovered—though fortunately the Head of Greyfriars had gone along the platform, and the carriage door was closed. But the train had not yet started—and a word from the sporting gentlemen would bring Dr. Locke hurrying back.

The Bounder put his head out from under the seat.

"Don't give me away!" he gasped.

The two sporting gentlemen stared at him blankly.

"So you're 'ere?" said Stuckey.

"Better call the old gent," said Spoff.

"Don't!" panted Vernon-Smith. "Don't! Give me a chance!"

"You've run away from school, 'ave you?" said Stuckey.

"Yes, yes; but—"

"It's agin the law to 'elp runaway schoolboys!" said Spoff. "Better call the old gent. 'Tain't any bizney of ours, that I know on."

"Wot did you run away for?" demanded Stuckey.

"I—I've been badly treated," gasped Vernon-Smith, drawing on his imagination in the hope of moving the sympathy of the sporting gentlemen. "I've been starved, and—and flogged, so I—I bolted!"





Three or four lighted windows were gleaming across the Close, as the Famous Five and Peter Todd wheeled their machines away. But there was no alarm. "Safe!" murmured Wharton. "Now to biz!" (See Chapter 10.)

"Rotten shame!" said Spoff. "He looked a stern old gent—as well as lookin' at another gentleman wot's as good as 'imself as if the other gent was a hanimal!"

"He's an awful beast!" said Vernon-Smith, glibly. "You don't know how he treats the boys—a regular slave-driver. I only want to get home, you know, that—that's where I'm going now."

"Oh, you're goin' 'ome?" asked Mr. Stuckey.

"Yes, if I can get to London. Look here, I can make it worth your while, if you like to help me," said Vernon-Smith eagerly. "I've got plenty of money!"

Stuckey and Spoff exchanged glances.

"I'll stand you a couple of quid each, if you stand by me," said Vernon-Smith quickly. "What do you say?"

Another exchange of glances.

"You say you're goin' 'ome?" asked Mr. Stuckey, after a pause.

"Yes, yes!"

"Not runnin' away to sea to become a pirate, eh?" asked Spoff humorously.

"No, no; I'm going home!"

"Git back under the seat!" said Mr. Stuckey finally. "We ain't saying nothing!"

"Thank you!"

"My word! 'Ere comes the old gent agin!" said Spoff, looking out of the carriage window. "This 'ere train won't never git off, I know that!"

"Don't let them see me!" panted the Bounder. "You've given me your word now."

"We'll stick to you. Git out of sight!"

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Vernon-Smith squeezed himself as far as he could under the seat. He could not help feeling that the promise of the sporting gentlemen was a somewhat frail reed to lean upon; but he had nothing else between him and discovery. His heart thumped as the carriage door opened again.

The Head of Greyfriars looked in, with the station-master, looking more worried and cross than ever, just behind him. Spoff fixed an insolent stare upon the reverend gentleman.

"Come back, 'ave you?" he demanded. "Want to look in my weskit-pocket for your bally runaway schoolboy, what?"

"I have learned from a porter that a schoolboy inquired when the express was to start," said the Head quietly. "It was certainly the boy I am in search of. The other carriages have been searched for him."

"He ain't here!" said Spoff. It was clear that Mr. Spoff had not been trained upon the same lines as the respected and lamented George Washington.

"I ain't sittin' on him, you know," added Mr. Stuckey.

"I'll look on the luggage-rack, if you like," said Spoff, rising to his feet, "also under the seat. Anything to oblige!"

"Thank you!" said the Head. "If you would kindly glance under the seats, I should be perfectly satisfied, and I apologise for troubling you."

"Oh, 'tain't no trouble, it's a pleasure!" said Spoff, and he stooped down and carefully surveyed under the seats. His eye met Vernon-Smith's, and he winked pleasantly.

Then he rose to his feet.

"He ain't 'ere!" he said. "P'r'aps, though, you'd better git in and crawl under the blooming seats yourself to make

sure, and then, p'raps this 'ere train will git off afore mid-night!"

"Thank you, I am quite satisfied," said Dr. Locke quietly. "I am sorry to have troubled you, gentlemen!"

"Oh, don't mench!" said Stuckey. The carriage door closed once more.

Vernon-Smith gasped. He could hardly believe in his good luck. The Head had taken Mr. Spoff's assurance that there was no one under the seats, without the slightest suspicion, and he had not troubled to enter the carriage and look for himself. That a complete stranger would deceive him on the point naturally never occurred to the Head; and he was not of a suspicious nature.

"Innocent old gent, if you like!" chuckled Spoff. "Never thought of lookin' for himself. Pity there ain't more like 'im, it would be a good thing for gents in our line of business." Mr. Stuckey laughed.

There was a loud whistle, and the express moved at last. The Head of Greyfriars stood upon the platform, watching it glide out of the station, with a troubled brow.

That the runaway junior had come there, he knew; and he could not help feeling that the boy was concealed somewhere on the train. There was nothing to do now, however, but to telegraph to London, so that Vernon-Smith could be looked for when the express arrived.

Vernon-Smith remained under the seat till the train was fairly out of the station, and speeding through the dark countryside.

Then he crawled out, dusty and breathless. The two sporting gentlemen surveyed him curiously.

"Well, you've got off!" said Mr. Stuckey.

"Yes, thanks to you!" said Vernon-Smith, dusting down his clothes.

"There'll be somebody waitin' for you at the terminus," said Spoff, with a sage shake of the head. "That old gent looked a werry determined cove."

The Bounder nodded.

"I know that, but I sha'n't keep on till London. I shall change at Lantham."

"I thought you was goin' home?" said Mr. Stuckey suspiciously.

"Yes; but I shall take another train. There's another train from Lantham," said the Bounder, sitting down. "I don't want to be nailed at the London terminus, you know."

"You owe us a matter of two quid," said Spoff.

"I'm ready to settle that!"

Vernon-Smith opened a little leather purse, and extracted four sovereigns, and handed them over. He had plenty of money, and he considered that he had bought his escape cheaply enough.

The two sporting gentlemen received the sovereigns with great satisfaction. Although they talked in an airy manner of fivers, their general appearance seemed to indicate that mere sovereigns were not very plentiful with them.

"Well, we've stood by you like sportsmen," said Mr. Stuckey, as he slipped the sovereigns into his waistcoat pocket. "I 'ope you'll get safe 'ome. You seem to have a lot of the dubs for a schoolboy. I 'ope you ain't been robbing the school, what?"

"My father's a millionaire," said the Bounder.

"Is he, by gum?" said Mr. Stuckey, with a quick look at his comrade. "Strikes me that it's a good long run to Lantham, ain't it—arf-an-hour?"

"About that!" said Vernon-Smith.

"Then wot do you say to a little game to pass the time?" suggested Mr. Stuckey. "I 'appen to have a pack of cards in my pocket—not that I generally do, only I 'appen to 'ave them now. Do you play nap?"

The Bounder grinned. It was curious how his escape, and the sense of freedom, seemed to have "bucked" him up. The thought of Loder lying so still on the floor of his study at Greyfriars was fading from his mind. He was an outcast now—a fugitive from justice. That feeling brought all that was blackguardly in Vernon-Smith's nature to the surface. In for a penny, in for a pound, was his idea. He knew that he was in the presence of a couple of cardsharps, but he knew, too, that cardsharps had often tackled him before, and had had reason to repent it. In Vernon-Smith's wilder days, the sporting circle at the Cross Keys, who had expected to make an excellent thing out of the millionaire's son, had more than once found themselves "skinned" by their intended victim. The gull had turned out to be a hawk.

"Wot a good idea!" said Spoff. "A little game of nap will pass the time bee-yutifully. I don't play much myself, but I jest know that game. That's about all."

"I'm on!" said Vernon-Smith.

Mr. Stuckey produced his pack of cards. Vernon-Smith required only one glance at the patterns on the backs to know that they were marked. To an uninitiated eye the patterns looked all the same. But to one "in the know"

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there was an easily detected difference. The pattern was in large scrolls, and the scrolls were slightly different on the aces and the court cards. With a practised eye and a practised hand it was scarcely possible for the dealer to get bad cards.

Vernon-Smith's eye and hand had had much practice in that peculiar line in his unregenerate days. He took the pack and shuffled them with a careless air, but in those few moments he learned almost as much about the cards as Mr. Stuckey knew. That very pattern of marked cards had been "worked" on him before, and he had turned it to his own advantage.

"Arf-crown points, eh?" asked Mr. Stuckey.

"Right!"

Mr. Stuckey dealt, and went nap, and won easily. Mr. Spoff's turn came next, and again Mr. Stuckey went nap and won. As the two sporting gentlemen were to divide the plunder afterwards, it did not matter to them which won. Then Vernon-Smith dealt.

Mr. Stuckey and his comrade had to chance it that time. Vernon-Smith shuffled the cards with a careless air, and gave them to Spoff to cut.

"What's the good of fooling about with half-crowns?" he said suddenly. "We shall be at Lantham soon, and I've got to clear. Make it half-quids."

Mr. Stuckey and his companion exchanged a greedy glance. If the young swell was anxious to be relieved of his money in lumps, there was no reason why they should not oblige him.

"'Arf-quids it is!" said Mr. Stuckey promptly.

"I'm game!" said Spoff.

Vernon-Smith took the cut pack and brought the two halves together just as they had been before they were cut, but so skilfully that the two card-sharps had not the slightest suspicion of the trick.

Then he dealt.

Both Mr. Stuckey and Mr. Spoff received good hands, and their faces expressed their satisfaction. They were glad they were playing for half-quids. Their hands were not good enough for nap, but Mr. Spoff went three, and the Bounder, after some apparent hesitation, declared nap.

"Get it!" said Mr. Stuckey, with a grin.

And Vernon-Smith, much to the astonishment and dismay of the card-sharps, proceeded to "get it."

When he had taken the five tricks, Mr. Stuckey and Mr. Spoff stared at him blankly.

"Luck changes, doesn't it?" said the Bounder pleasantly.

"This is where you pay up!"

"Is it?" said Stuckey.

"Is it?" said Spoff.

Mr. Stuckey calmly took the cards and slipped them back into his pocket.

"I didn't know as 'ow I was dealin' with a young gent in our own line of business," he said deliberately. "I ain't paying anything."

"Same 'ere!" said Spoff.

"And I've 'arf a mind," added Mr. Stuckey, "to call the station-master at Lantham and tell 'im that there's a runaway schoolboy in this 'ere carriage."

Vernon-Smith bit his lip. It had been a keen pleasure to him to beat the sharps at their own game, but in his keenness he had forgotten that he was in their power. He was not likely to get any cash out of Messrs. Stuckey and Spoff.

His eyes glittered for a moment, but he calmed himself. He knew his danger, and he did not intend to run risks for the sake of "slanging" the two swindlers.

"All serene!" he said lightly. "I don't want the money. It was a joke, that's all. I spotted the cards at once. I've been there before, you see. You've scoffed a good many of my half-crowns, anyway, and you've got nothing to complain about."

Mr. Stuckey burst into a laugh.

"Well, you're a game young gent, and I 'ope you'll get clear," he said. "Strikes me as 'ow that old gent at Courtfield orter be jolly glad to get you out of his school, sir, instead of trying to get you back into it. Seems to me as 'ow we've done him a good turn."

The train slowed down, and lights flashed along the train. "Lantham!" said Spoff.

Vernon-Smith rose.

"Good-night!" he said. "Mum's the word, you know."

"Not a bally syllable!" assured Spoff.

"Not a blooming whisper!" said Mr. Stuckey.

Vernon-Smith opened the door and stepped from the carriage and vanished. As the train started again, Mr. Stuckey and his comrade exchanged a curious look.

"Got the makings of a pretty swindler in him, has that young gent!" said Mr. Stuckey sententiously. "I fancy he'll end up inside the stone jug one of these days, Spoff."

And Spoff heartily concurred in that opinion.



THE NINTH CHAPTER.

After Him!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. saw the Head of Greyfriars when he came in.

Dr. Locke's brows were contracted, and he came back alone.

It was evident that the Bounder had not been caught.

"He's given the Head the slip," Bob Cherry remarked. "I rather thought he would; he's an awfully slippery customer. You remember the time he bolted, to play the match at St. Jim's, when he was under detention? Quelohy was after him, and the Bounder dodged him all the way. He's up to snuff."

"The up-to-snuff-fulness of the esteemed Bounder is terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the catchfulness to-morrow is also certain."

Harry Wharton looked grave. "I'm not so sure about that," he said. "The trouble is that Smithy thinks he's settled Loder, and he'll try every dodge to get away. And we know how deep he is. And—" The captain of the Remove paused.

Bob looked at him curiously. "You've got some idea what he's thinking of doing?" he asked.

"I think so. He won't go to London; he can't go home, when he thinks the police are looking for him. The Head will have telegraphed to London for the train to be watched, I suppose, but the Bounder won't arrive there."

"Then where—?" "My idea is that he will cut across country and try to get to Dover or Folkestone," said Harry. "You know, he speaks French as well as he does English, and he has travelled abroad before. He's got time to catch the morning boat for Calais or Boulogne."

Bob Cherry whistled. "You think he's got an idea of getting out of the country?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Begad!" said Lord Mauleverer. "It's about the best thing he could do, when you come to think of it—from his point of view. If Loder hadn't got such a jolly tough nut, old Smithy would be in a bad box if he were caught."

"Lucky that Loder's nut is so tough," said Bob. "The latest report is that he isn't hurt so very badly after all. Old Pillbury was talking about concussion and things, but it turns out that he was only stunned. He will be in the sanatorium for a week or so, that's all."

"But Smithy doesn't know that," said Wharton quietly. "He's running away under the impression that he's committed manslaughter. My idea is that he will try to get across the Channel."

"The ass!" said Bob Cherry. "Well, if what he thinks were true, it would be the best thing for him to do."

"I suppose so; but—" "But as it is he's clearing off to somewhere where he can't hear the real facts, and he mayn't find out for weeks or months that Loder's all right," said Harry. "He must be in a rotten state of mind about it."

"If he gets to Lantham he can reach Dover," said Johnny Bull. "He may be in France by to-morrow. He ought to be stopped somehow. If we could go after him—"

"We could manage it better than the masters, you know," remarked Nugent, with a sage shake of the head. "But I suppose we can't expect them to see that."

Bob Cherry chuckled. "They'd hardly see it," he agreed. "Somehow or other headmasters don't ask the Lower Fourth for advice. It's silly of them, but they don't do it, and there you are!"

"Ha, ha ha!"

The Remove went to bed soon afterwards, the Famous Five still turning the matter over in their minds. What steps the Head was taking they did not know; but of course, he would be doing all that he could, according to his lights, as Bob put it. And certainly it never occurred to the reverend Head of Greyfriars to ask the Remove for their opinion on the subject.

Harry Wharton did not go to sleep. Wingate of the Sixth saw lights out in the dormitory. It was Loder's duty that week, but Loder was in bed in the school hospital, and would not be attending to his duties for some time to come. The bully of the Sixth was paying very dearly for his persecution of the Bounder, but it seemed that the unfortunate Bounder would pay more dearly still. When he was caught and brought back to Greyfriars, it was pretty certain that he would be expelled from the school. The Head was not likely to take a merciful view of the matter, though there were certainly many points in Vernon-Smith's favour.

The more trouble the fugitive gave the less likely he was to receive mercy when he was finally recaptured and brought back. Wharton knew that if his flight was successful and the aid of the police had to be invoked, the affair would creep into the papers, and the Head would never be able to forgive the boy who had brought the horrors of a scandal

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upon the old school. The good name of Greyfriars was as dear to the Head as his own, and a newspaper case would harden his heart irrevocably against the Bounder.

Wharton and the Bounder had never been friends—until lately. They had been enemies—and the Bounder had served the captain of the Remove many a bad turn. But of late Vernon-Smith had shown a strong desire to shake off his old bad ways, and to pull better with Wharton and his friends. It seemed too rotten for words that he should get the "boot" just when he was trying hard to lead a better life. Harry Wharton felt that keenly; and as he lay sleepless in bed, he was thinking of it—of the wretched boy flying through the night, under the belief that he had a crime upon his soul—and of the ruin and disgrace of the expulsion that would be his lot when he was recaptured—unless the Head was merciful.

For his own sake, Vernon-Smith must come back at once—and yet Wharton felt assured that the pursuit was taking a wrong direction, and that the Bounder would escape it.

For the juniors to request permission to go in search of the fugitive would simply be asking for a curt refusal. But at the same time, Harry Wharton felt that they would have a good chance of being successful, where the masters were at a loss.

Why not take French leave? The captain of the Remove realised clearly enough what a serious step that would be—for the juniors to absent themselves from the school without leave. But the object would be a good one—and would count in their favour. The Head would hardly blame them for being anxious about their Form-fellow. If they failed to find the Bounder, they would certainly be severely flogged when they came back after their escapade—but if they succeeded in bringing him back, probably they would be pardoned. In any case, it was only a flogging to be risked—and it was worth it, to save Vernon-Smith from the results of his reckless folly.

Wharton thought it over, while the rest of the Remove were dropping off to sleep. He came to a decision at last. It was "up" to him to do his best for the Bounder.

He sat up in bed, and called out softly: "Are you asleep, Bob?"

"No," came back Bob Cherry's voice. "Same here," said Johnny Bull. "What's on?"

"I've been thinking about the Bounder," said Harry, in a low voice. "So have I," said Frank Nugent. "I can't think of any way of helping him, though."

"I've thought of a way!" said Harry. "If you fellows care to take the risk, we'll try it together—if not, I'll try it alone."

"You jolly well won't try it alone," said Bob Cherry promptly.

"Rather not!" said Johnny Bull; and a sleepy voice from Hurree Singh's bed announced that the rather-notfulness was terrific.

"What's the wheeze?" asked Nugent. Wharton stepped out of bed, and began to dress himself as he talked.

"I'm going after him!" he said. "You fellows can come if you like."

"Going after him!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Yes. I believe he's making for Dover—and I think we've got a good chance of intercepting him there. I think we ought to do it. We'll leave word where we're gone, and what we're gone for—so that Quelohy won't be alarmed about it."

"I fancy we shall feel rather alarmed, when we come back," said Bob, with a chuckle. "Why, it will raise Cain!"

"I think we ought to do it. The Head may go easy with Smithy if he comes back at once. If there's a lot of fuss, and paragraphs in the papers, you know what he will feel like. Smithy won't have a chance."

"That's so—but—" "It's a risk for us—but we'll run the risk. But don't you fellows come if you don't care to. I can do it alone."

"Rats!" said four voices at once. "Then buck up and dress," said Harry. "No need to waste more time."

"But—but how are we going?" exclaimed Nugent. "There are no trains in the middle of the giddy night, and Smithy is hours ahead of us, anyway."

"We can't go by train, of course." "You're not suggesting walking to Dover?" asked Bob Cherry humorously.

"No; we shall bike it." "Bike it! My hat!"

"I know it's a jolly long run," said Harry. "But, dash it all, we're not made of fluff! We can stick it out."

"Bike it to Dover!" murmured Nugent. "Oh, crumbs! It's a big order. I don't know how many miles it is, but I should say a hundred or so!"

NEXT MONDAY— "HARRY WHARTON'S DIPLOMACY!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early!

"We've got all the night before us, and the morning, too," said Harry. "We're pretty tough, you know."

"Oh, I'm on!" said Bob Cherry, getting out of bed. "Anything for a quiet life! If we fall down dead on the road, we shall expect you to pay the funeral expenses, that's all."

"The bike-shed's locked up—padlock, you know," said Johnny Bull.

"I've got a key that fits it," said Harry. "How are we to get the jiggers out? We can't wake up Gosling and ask him to open the gates. He really wouldn't do it, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "We can lift them over the wall," said Harry. "That's all simple enough. The chief thing is to get away without being spotted."

"My sainted aunt! If we were spotted sneaking bikes out of the school after lights-out—" murmured Johnny Bull.

"We mustn't be spotted, that's all." The Famous Five dressed themselves quickly. Several other fellows were awake in the Remove dormitory, and there were remarks proceeding from many of the beds—not all of a complimentary nature. The general opinion seemed to be that Harry Wharton & Co. were playing the giddy goat. But that made no difference to the heroes of the Remove. The Famous Five were accustomed to taking their own line, and to turning a deaf ear—or ten deaf ears, to be exact—to all criticism.

"You'll get lagged, and brought back," Bolsover major declared. "And you won't find Smithy, anyway. Better get back to bed."

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "It's a jolly-risky bizney," said Peter Todd, sitting up in bed. "Rather above the weight of you fellows, as a matter of fact."

"More rats!"

Peter stepped out of bed.

"You'll make a muck of this, if your Uncle Peter isn't there to look after you," he declared. "I think I'd better come."

"Better stay where you are," said Skinner. "They'll get lagged to a cert."

"I'll look after them."

"Oh, rot!" said Wharton. "You can come if you like, but none of your gas, you know."

Peter Todd chuckled, and dressed himself quickly. Whatever might be the result of that reckless adventure, he was determined not to be left out of it. No. 7 Study was bound to have a hand in anything that was going on—according to Peter Todd.

"My dear Peter," came the gentle voice of Alonzo Todd, "are you really going?"

"Yes, fathead!" said dear Peter.

"It is a very reckless proceeding, Peter, but I think my Uncle Benjamin would approve of doing all that is possible for our unfortunate schoolfellow."

"How lucky!" murmured Peter.

"And really, I think I had better come, too," said Alonzo, putting a long, thin leg out of bed. "Perhaps I shall be able to prevail upon Vernon-Smith, if we find him—"

"You jolly well won't come, you ass," said his cousin.

"My dear Peter—"

"You duffer—twenty miles on a bike would crumple you up!" said Peter Todd. "Stay where you are! If you get out of bed I'll thump you!"

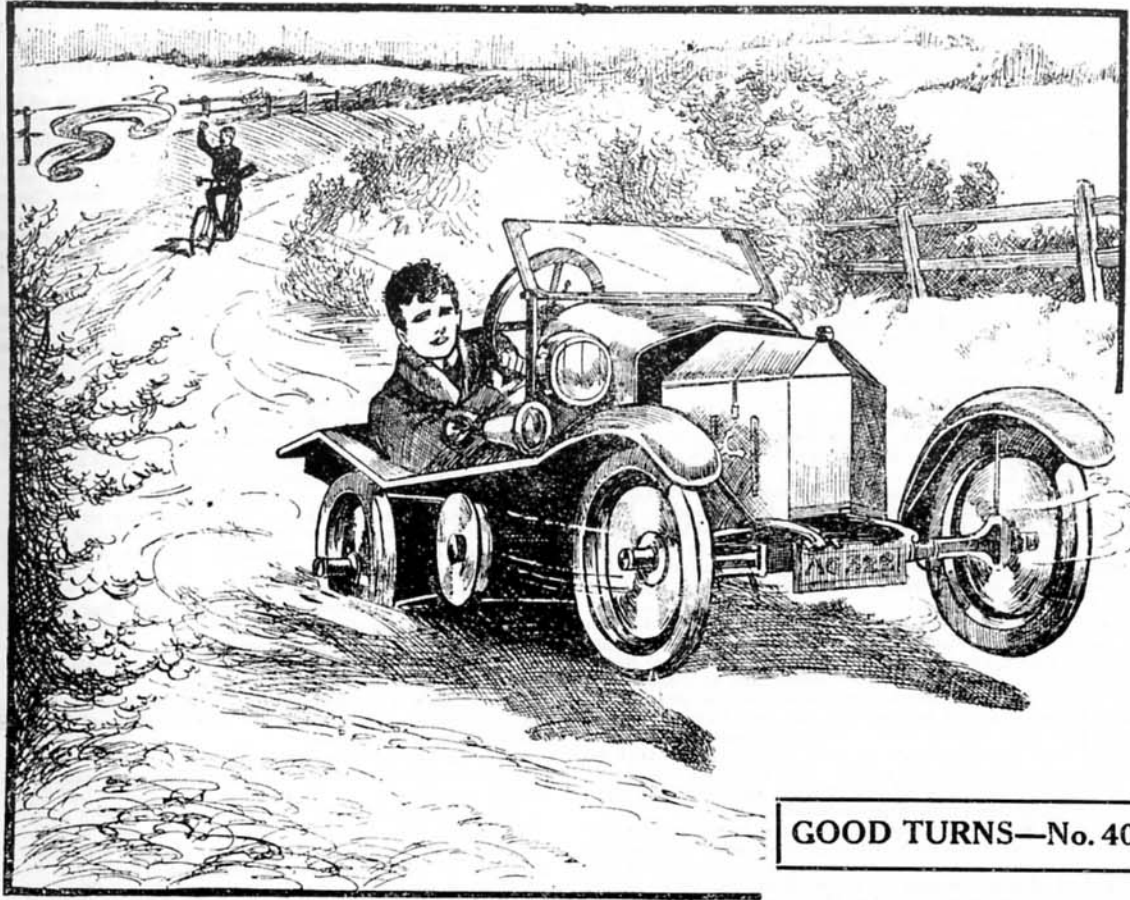
Alonzo, thus gently dissuaded, slipped back into bed. Six juniors finished dressing themselves in the darkness.

"Ready?" whispered Wharton.

"What-ho!"

"But I say!" exclaimed Nugent. "I've just thought—"

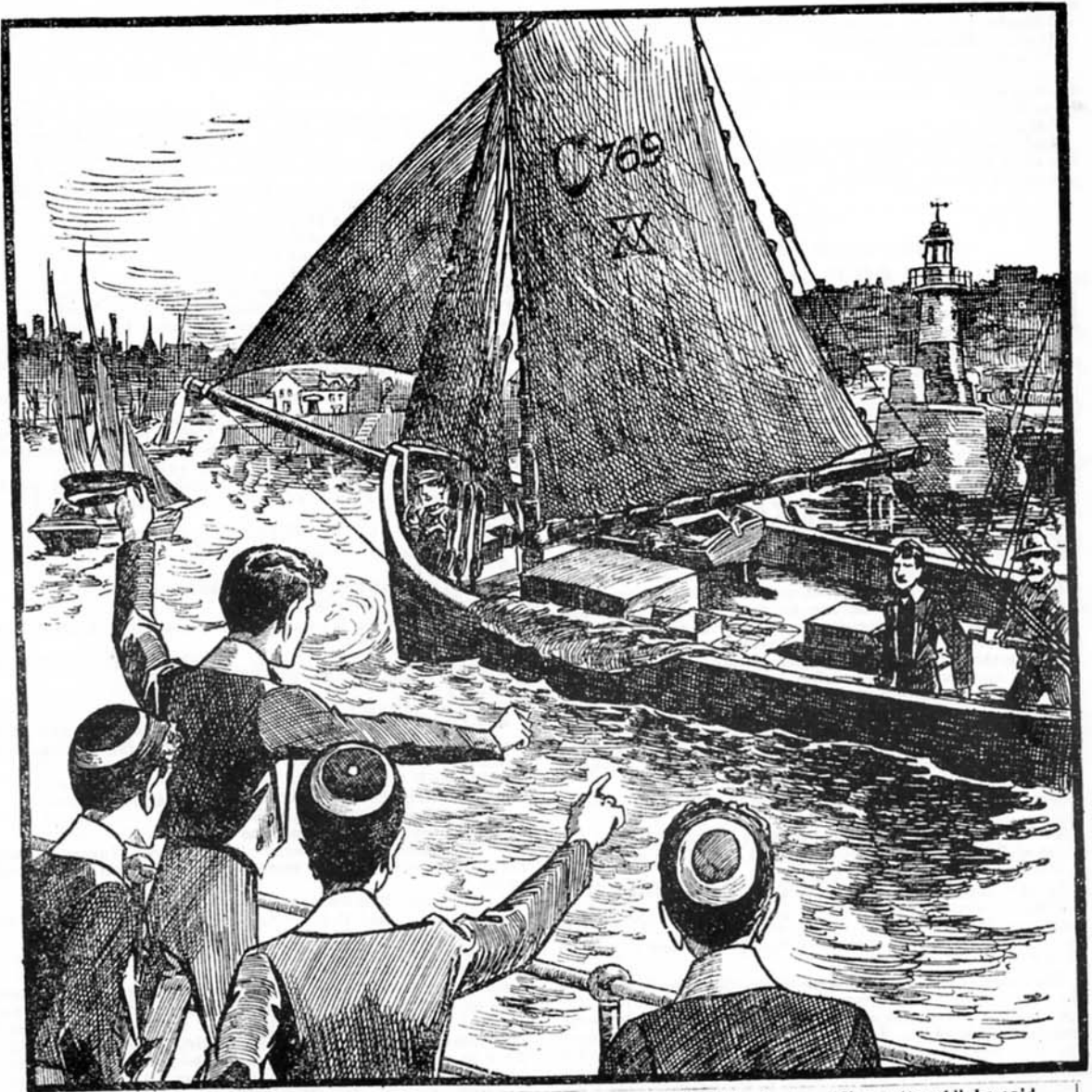
"Never mind about thinking now. Come on!"



GOOD TURNS—No. 40.

A motorist, whilst "rushing" a hill in his speedy little cyclecar, loses his cap and muffler. This gives a Magnetite, who is cycling along in the rear, the chance of doing a good turn by picking up the motorist's belongings and riding after their owner with them.





"Smithy!" Vernon-Smith looked at the four juniors on the quayside with alarm. "You rotters!" he said between his teeth. "So you couldn't let me alone! You had to come after me!" (See Chapter 14.)

"Yes, but—"

"Buck up—"

"About tin!" said Nugent.

"Tin!" repeated his comrades.

"Yes. We may want money on the road—especially if we have to leave the bikes, you know. I've got eighteen-pence."

"My hat!" said Wharton. "I didn't think of that, I confess. Something may crop up—well, I've got half a quid."

"Borrow it of Mauly!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, good! We can settle with Mauly any time. Mauly! Are you awake?"

Lord Mauleverer, the slacker of the Remove, was not awake. He was sleeping the sleep of the just. But Bob Cherry soon altered all that. He grasped the schoolboy curl by the hair and shook him, and Lord Mauleverer came out of his balmy slumber with a start and a gasp.

"Begad! Whurrer murrer? Ow!"

"Money or your life!" said Bob.

"Eh—what?"

"We want you to lend us some tin," said Harry Wharton. "You shall have it back next week. Have you got any?"

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"Yaas!"

"Hand it over, then"

"I'm sleepy!"

"Get up, you lazy boulder!"

"Tired!"

"Have him out," said Wharton.

"Hold on!" gasped Lord Mauleverer. "Groogh! Hold on! I'll lend you the money with pleasure, but I'm not going to get up. Can't you get it for yourselves, you slackers?"

"Where is it, fathead?"

"There are some banknotes in my trousers-pocket," said Mauleverer drowsily. "Six fivers, I think—no, I changed one to-day. There are five of them, and some quids. Take the lot if you like, only for goodness' sake let a chap go to sleep!"

And Lord Mauleverer turned his head peacefully upon the pillow again, and closed his noble eyes.

Harry Wharton laughed, and caught up the schoolboy millionaire's trousers, and extracted the banknotes and the sovereigns.

"Mauly!"

No reply.

"Mauly, you ass! We've got twenty-seven pounds!" Lord Mauleverer breathed deeply and peacefully.  
 "Tell the silly ass!" said Wharton.  
 Bob Cherry bent over the dozing earl, and chirruped in his ear:

"Mauly, you ass, we owe you twenty-seven quidlets!"  
 "Groo! Wharrer marrer?"  
 "Twenty-seven quids!"  
 "Lemme go to sleep!" howled Lord Mauleverer. "Blow the silly quids! Go and eat coke! Why can't you let a chap go to sleep?"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

And leaving Lord Mauleverer to go to sleep, and most of the other fellows to talk in whispers, the six juniors tiptoed out of the Remove dormitory.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER. A Ride in the Night!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. proceeded with great caution. The hour was late, and most of the Greyfriars fellows were in bed. But some of the Sixth were still up, in their quarters or in the senior Common-room, and the masters were not yet in bed.

In case of discovery, the expedition would be nipped in the bud, and the juniors would be sent back to bed with heavy impositions as a punishment, they knew that. The impots they would not have minded, but the failure of the expedition would have hit them very hard. They tiptoed down the passage, carrying their boots in their hands. Wharton had left a message with Bulstrode to be delivered to Mr. Quelch on the following morning, when the juniors would be missed. He could imagine how Mr. Quelch's severe brows would contract when he received that message. But it was no use thinking of that now. The present business was to get out of the school undiscovered.

In the dark box-room the six juniors put on their boots. Then they descended from the window, by way of an out-house roof, a somewhat risky proceeding in the dark. But they were active, and had plenty of nerve—and they had done the same thing before, as a matter of fact, more than once. In a few minutes they were safely on the ground, in the dark shadow of the buildings.

"So far, so good!" murmured Johnny Bull.

Keeping in the shadows, they made their way silently to the bicycle-shed. Wharton's key clicked in the padlock, and he opened the door. A match was struck, and six machines were taken off the stands.

Wharton relocked the door when the bicycles were wheeled out.

Three or four lighted windows were gleaming across the Close as the half-dozen juniors wheeled their machines away. But there was no alarm.

In the Head's study Dr. Locke and Mr. Quelch were sitting, in anxious discussion of the means that should be employed for recapturing the truant Bounder. They little dreamed of the means that were being even then employed by the heroes of the Remove.

The machines were wheeled up to the school wall, and then the more difficult business of transporting them into the road began. Wharton and Bob Cherry climbed the wall, and sat astride of it. Johnny Bull and Peter Todd dropped over into the road. Then Hurree Singh and Nugent handed up the machines one by one to the two juniors on the wall, and they in turn handed them down to the fellows in the road.

There were some loud clinks of metal on stone, and two or three muffled exclamations as one or another of the juniors received unexpected knocks.

But the machines were transferred to the road at last, and a minute later the half-dozen juniors were there too.

"Worked like a giddy charm!" said Bob Cherry, venturing to speak above a whisper now. "I wonder what the Head would think if he could see us?"

"One word before we start," said Harry. "The idea is to catch Smithy. All of us—or, some of us—have got to reach him, wherever he is. If there's any accident—punctures, and things—the chap with the bad luck will have to stay behind. There won't be a minute to waste waiting for anybody."

"That's understood."

"Excepting that," added Wharton as an afterthought—"that as I'm leader, if my jigger should play any tricks, one of you chaps can resign in my favour."

"Ahem!"

"It will be up to Toddy to do that," Bob Cherry remarked.

"Only Toddy won't do it!" remarked Peter calmly. "As head of Study No. 7 I regard myself as leader of this expeditious."

"Now, don't be funny."

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"It's a really good idea, having Toddy along, in case we need his bike," said Johnny Bull approvingly.

"Why, you silly ass——" began Peter, in great wrath.

"'Nuff said! Get a move on!"

"But I say——"

"Don't say anything, old chap. It's superfluous. Come on!"

"If anybody wants to borrow my bike there will be trouble!" roared Peter.

"Shush!"

The juniors mounted and started, Peter breathing wrath. They did not light the lamps till they were a safe distance from the school. When Greyfriars had quite vanished in the darkness behind, there was a halt for lighting, and then the juniors rode on again. Eleven o'clock rang out in deep tones from the church steeple as the juniors swept through the dark, deserted old High Street of Friardale.

They left Friardale behind, and followed the dark, scarcely-lighted lane that led to the Lantham road.

The night was clear and fine and fresh. It was a strange experience to the juniors to be riding hard on the lonely road at that hour instead of being fast asleep in their beds in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars. But they felt the thrill of the adventure, and they would not have changed places with the other Removites who were comfortably and safely in bed.

The Lantham road stretched long and level and dark before them. Riding two abreast, the juniors pedalled on at a fast, steady pace, keeping up a good speed, but not pumping themselves. It was no use starting a long and hard ride with a spurt. The miles glided under the swift machines.

They rode in silence, with an occasional muttered word. The silence was broken at last by a loud snort from Peter Todd.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter?"

"Something up! Wait a minute!"

They stopped.

Peter Todd jumped off his bike and examined the tyre.

"Well?" said Wharton.

The juniors were leaning on their machines, making the most of the brief rest.

"Puncture!" growled Peter. "Flat as a pancake! A giddy old wound broken out again, I think."

"Sorry!"

Wharton put his foot on a pedal.

"Hold on!" said Peter. "Look here, there's no time for the whole party to stop while I get rid of this confounded puncture——"

"Exactly! Good-bye!"

"But I think Nugent had better lend me his bike——"

"Think again!" suggested Frank.

"Well, suppose Inky lends me his——"

"The supposfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh softly, and he remounted his machine and started again.

"Look here, Bob Cherry——"

"No time!" said Bob. "So-long! Pleasant walk back!"

"Wharton, as leader of this party——"

"Rats!"

"Well, suppose Johnny Bull——"

But Johnny Bull was already out of hearing. Five cyclists rode on, leaving Peter Todd standing in the road holding his disabled machine, and snorting. The quintette disappeared into the night, and Peter Todd snorted more emphatically. Then he resigned himself to his fate, and wheeled his machine back to the nearest road-lamp, and there settled down to the enjoyable task of attending to the puncture, after which he had a solitary ride back to Greyfriars before him.

The Famous Five rode on swiftly through the night. Peter's accident was unfortunate, but they could not help feeling that they were in luck. It might have happened to one of themselves.

The pace slackened as they laboured up a steep hill on their lowest gear. The hill once negotiated, there was a long and joyous slope before them—three or four miles freewheeling. They swept down the hill with their feet at rest at a terrific pace.

At that hour of the night there was little fear of meeting traffic on the road, save an occasional market-cart or motor-car. They swept down the long slope at a breathless pace, lighted by the infrequent lamps, their lanterns gleaming ahead into the darkness. They had reached the foot of the hill when disaster came. A loose stone in the road—invisible in the dark—that was all; but there was a crunch, and a yell from Johnny Bull.

"Oh, crumbs!"

The Co. jammed the brakes on and jumped off their machines. Johnny Bull was sitting in the grass beside the road, his machine curled up at his feet.

"Hurt?" exclaimed Wharton anxiously.



"Ow! Yes."

"Anything broken?"

"Yes; my bike."

"Ass! No bones broken?" asked Wharton.

"Blow the bones!" groaned Johnny Bull. "I've got a whole collection of bumps, but that don't matter. But look at the bike—just fit for the scrap-heap!"

"What rotten luck!"

It was not quite so bad as Johnny Bull stated—the bike was not exactly "scrapped." But the front wheel was twisted out of shape, and the pedals were bent, and the lamp was smashed. The cycle required much attention in a repairing shop before it could be ridden again.

Johnny Bull rose to his feet with a discontented grunt, and picked up his machine.

"No go!" he said. "I can't ride the beastly thing. You fellows get on!"

"We passed a village a mile back, and I noticed a cycle shop," said Wharton. "You'd better wheel your jigger back there and wake the man up. You may get back to Greyfriars before the rising-bell and get into the dorm. You'll want some tin—take some of old Mauly's quids."

And Johnny Bull dismally wheeled away his clanking, reluctant bike, and four cyclists rode on again towards Lantham.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Run Down!

**V**ERNON-SMITH stood on the platform at Lantham, and watched the London express disappear in the darkness down the line, bearing away from him his two peculiar acquaintances, the sporting gentlemen, Messrs. Spoff and Stuckey. The sporting gentlemen had done very well out of him, but the Bounder did not regret it—they had saved him from recapture—and they would hold their tongues about having seen him in the train, and about his having alighted at Lantham. He was safe.

There were many stations on the line, of course, at which he could have alighted. Search and inquiry at all of them would not be an easy task. The Bounder felt that he had baffled the pursuit, for the time at least.

But his difficulties were by no means over. He was dressed in Greyfriars clothes, and if his description was circulated, as doubtless it would be, he would be easily recognised. And he could not slip quietly out of the station, for he had travelled without a ticket, and he was certain to be stopped at the barrier.

The ticket-collector would certainly notice him, and remember him, and would give information as soon as inquiry was made at Lantham. But by that time the Bounder hoped to be far away. He remained on the platform while the crowd moved towards the exit, and reflected, and then called a porter.

"Is there a train for Dover to-night?" he asked.

The porter shook his head.

"Nothing till six-thirty in the morning, sir."

The Bounder set his teeth.

To wait at Lantham till half-past six in the morning was to give his pursuers another chance; but there seemed no help for it.

"Station's closing up now, sir, now the express 'ave gone," the porter added, as a hint to the young gentleman to make himself scarce.

Vernon-Smith nodded and walked towards the exit. There he had to stop—he had no ticket, and he had to pay. But he did not give Courtfield as the station he had started from—he gave his starting-place as Dalton, a place fifty miles farther back on the line. He had to pay, of course, for the distance, but the fabrication would help to puzzle his pursuers when they inquired at Lantham.

Then he walked out of the station.

The town of Lantham was mostly asleep. Vernon-Smith knew the town well—he had played there in the football season for the Lantham Ramblers, at a time when he was on bad terms with the Remove team at Greyfriars. He stood in the shadow of the station entrance and reflected. There was only one way of proceeding directly upon his journey—by hiring a car at the garage. But it was quite possible that he would be refused—suspicion was almost certain to be excited by a junior schoolboy, travelling alone in the middle of the night, without even an overcoat—the fact that he was running away from school could hardly fail to be evident. And his object was to catch the morning boat for Calais—and the morning train from Lantham was booked to catch the boat.

In spite of his impatience to be on the move, he realised that he had little choice but to remain in Lantham for the night, and catch the six-thirty in the morning.

Having come to that decision, he turned into the entrance of the Station Hotel, and a sleepy porter showed him to a room.

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NEXT  
MONDAY—

"HARRY WHARTON'S DIPLOMACY!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of the  
Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early!

The only refreshment he could obtain took the form of railway sandwiches—these fearsome contrivances that defy any but the strongest teeth and the most powerful digestions. But Vernon-Smith was hungry after his journey, and he negotiated the sandwiches with satisfaction, and turned in, leaving instructions that he was to be called at half-past five sharp. The hotel porter was regarding him with great curiosity, and he was careful to make the visitor pay for his room in advance.

The Bounder went to bed—but he did not sleep easily.

The excitement of the flight had kept him up so far—but now that he was resting the reaction set in.

In the darkness of the room he seemed to see again the colourless face of Loder of the Sixth, with the dark bruise on the forehead, and the little red trickle under the hair.

The Bounder shuddered at the mental picture.

What had he done?

The haunting vision refused to leave him, as he turned and turned restlessly upon the hard, comfortless bed.

What a fool he had been!

If he had only played the game straight from the start this would never have happened. It was hard—very hard—that this catastrophe should come, just when he was turning over a new leaf—when he had made up his mind to play the game straight. It was the punishment for all his old reckless deeds—the punishment had been delayed, that was all.

He had gone to the bad—with a crash.

Greyfriars would forget him—his old place would know him no more. The brilliant career that might have been his—that was all over—for ever. His talents—and he had many talents—would be wasted now. What was he going to be? At present a fugitive from justice—and afterwards?

He groaned at the thought of the folly that had brought him to this pass.

Those midnight excursions—the card-parties—the reckless visits to the races, all the more exciting because of the danger of discovery—were they worth what they had cost him?

For those childish excesses he was to pay with the ruin of his life.

And Loder?

The fellow had been a bully and a brute—but the Bounder knew only too well that nothing could justify that mad, savage blow which had stretched Loder at his feet, and the terrible result of it.

The wretched junior slept at last.

His sleep was troubled with ugly visions—he dreamed of Loder, lying so still and white on the floor of the study—of the stern headmaster in grim pursuit—of the police, whom he believed to be searching for him at that very moment.

When a knock came at his door, with the first grey gleam of dawn, he started out of a dream, in which a policeman had been placing a hand upon his shoulder. So vivid had the dream been, that in the first moment of wakefulness he thought that it was real, and he cowered back in the bed.

Knock, knock!

The Bounder shivered—was it the police at the door?

He collected himself with an effort.

"Who's there?" he called out, as naturally as he could.

"'Arf-past five, sir!" came the voice of the hotel boots.

Vernon-Smith breathed again.

It was only the boots, calling him. He jumped out of bed.

"Thank you!"

The boots passed on.

Vernon-Smith had slept in his underclothing. It did not take him long to dress. As a rule, the Bounder was very particular in his toilet. Now he contented himself with a hasty wash in the cold water in his room, and a hasty towel-ing. That finished, he looked from his window—with curious, anxious eyes. He would not have been surprised to see a constable in the road watching his window—he was prepared for anything.

The window gave a view, on one side, of the railway track winding away past the station—on the other of the Lantham road. There was a dull sound of shunting from the railway track, but no other sign of life there. But on the road?

A cart lumbered into the town—a motor-car buzzed and zipped by. It left a trail of dust behind it. Through the dust four cyclists were riding, slowly and wearily, towards the town.

The Bounder's gaze became fixed.

Distant as the cyclists were, he knew them. He recognised the handsome face of Harry Wharton, now clouded with dust. Nugent's slim, easy figure—Bob Cherry's sturdy frame—and the dusky features of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanpar!

The four cyclists rode on, unconscious of the haggard gaze

bent upon them from the little window, lost among fifty others.

The Bounder's face was white—his teeth hard set. His eyes had a gleam like diamonds in them.

He was run down.

Not the Head—not the police—as he had feared. His own Form-fellows were taking part in the chase—and they had run him down!

All the old bitter hatred of Wharton, which had begun to die away in his breast, which he had almost forgotten, surged up now with renewed fierceness.

So that was what Wharton's friendship had meant—now that he was down, his old enemy was the first to strike at him.

Harry Wharton had run him down!

The Bounder's hands clenched till the nails dug into the palms, but he did not even feel the pain. Rage and hatred, the fury of a hunted animal, possessed him. He ground his teeth as he watched.

Run down!

He glanced at his watch. Six o'clock. Half an hour yet before the train started. Half an hour! They would be in Lantham in ten minutes—they would be at the station. They would inquire first of all, of course, at the Station Hotel, as to whether a schoolboy had been seen there.

And here he was shut up in his room—an easy prisoner! There were four of them, but one would have been enough. A call for aid in seizing him would have been promptly answered. Thirty long minutes before the express started. And he would never set foot on the express. He had thrown the Head off the track, and he was run down by his old foes of the Remove.

The cyclists vanished among the buildings. The Bounder turned from the window and paced the little room, his hands clenched, his eyes burning.

He would escape them yet!

Even in his rage and fear he felt a thrill of satisfaction at his own caution. Had he not looked from the window then he would never have known that they had come. He would have walked down from his room to his early breakfast right into their arms! That, at all events, would not happen now. He still had a chance of eluding them. His door was locked. They could not get at him for the moment, anyway. He went to the window again and looked out.

There was no one about. A couple of feet from his window a rain-pipe descended to the ground, old and rusty, clamped to the wall. To reach it was difficult; to descend by it was deadly dangerous. But not a thought of hesitation came to the Bounder. He would escape that way while they were wasting time inquiring after him. There was not a second to lose. When they knew he was there, when they discovered which room he occupied, one of them would be posted to watch the window—he knew that.

He broke into a dry chuckle.

His whole nature was on the alert now; the presence of danger brought all his faculties to their sharpest. The haunting visions of the night—remorse, terror, regret—were gone as if by magic. He was once more the cool, self-possessed, unscrupulous, iron-nerved Bounder—fighting for his liberty.

He opened the window wide, and climbed out on the narrow window-sill. He knew what he meant to do, and he knew that he had time for it. Let them watch his door, let them place a watch under his window—when he was gone! They could not know that he had seen them; they could not suspect that he knew of their presence. Let them keep watch and ward on his room, ready to seize him as soon as he came down—let them, while he was in the express and speeding away towards freedom!

Fifty feet of blank wall stretched below him, and hard stones underneath—instant death if he fell. But not a nerve quivered as he climbed out; and he clung on the sill with steady hand, closing the window after him. If they saw it open they might suspect. The Bounder forgot nothing.

With one foot on the sill, one hand holding to the rough brickwork, the Bounder reached out for the rain-pipe and gripped it. He gripped an iron clamp with his left hand, and swung himself away from the window-sill.

If he lost his nerve now—

But he did not. He swung away, and his right hand came, too, upon the clamp; and he hung there, fifty feet above grim death!

Then he slowly descended the pipe.

At that early hour in the grey dusk of dawn, there was no one in sight. In three minutes the Bounder stood at the foot of the wall, his clothes soiled, his hands black, his heart beating hard, his breath coming thick and fast.

One minute more and he was in the railway-yard and concealed behind a truck there waiting till the express should be in the station. At the last minute he would rush for the train—until it was too late to stop him he would not show

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himself. As he crouched there in hiding he thought he heard a distant sound of bicycles clattering to a halt outside the hotel. And again he chuckled that dry, mocking chuckle. He would baffle them yet!

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Baffled!

FOUR dusty cyclists dismounted outside the Station Hotel. Harry Wharton & Co. had arrived.

They were tired with the long ride through the night, but the dawn had found them pedalling on; there was no halt until they reached Lantham. There they intended to inquire for the Bounder. There, Wharton believed, the fugitive would change for Dover, probably not in time to catch a train that night.

It was more than possible that they would get on the Bounder's tracks at Lantham, and if they missed him there they would keep on to the seaport. The juniors had not wasted time, but there had been delays on the road. A market-cart, lumbering along in the darkness as they swept at a reckless speed down a steep hill, had led to a smash.

There had been no light on the waggon, and they had not seen it till they were right upon it. They had turned their machines into the steep bank beside the road just in time; but the result to the machines had been disastrous.

The juniors had been bruised and severely shaken, the bicycles severely damaged. Not one of them had escaped uninjured. And the juniors, anathematising their cruel luck, spent weary hours at repair work by the glimmering light of a roadside lamp till they were able to take the road again.

The dawn was lightening the east when they rode into Lantham.

Harry Wharton had hoped to arrive there in the small hours, and push on directly towards Dover if no trace was found of the fugitive. The accident on the road compelled him to give up that idea. His plan now was to leave the machines in Lantham, and to take the first train in the morning if it was necessary to continue the journey. Hours had been lost, but if the Bounder had been forced to stay the night in Lantham it would make no difference in the end.

Harry Wharton entered the Station Hotel, which had just opened. The sleepy boots came to see what he wanted. Wharton extracted a half-crown from his waistcoat-pocket.

"I think there's a friend of mine staying here," he said.

"Did a chap—a schoolboy—put up here last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"What was his name?"

"Master Jones, sir."

Wharton smiled. He did not suppose that Vernon-Smith would have given his right name, if he gave a name at all.

"Very well; a chap about my age and size, with dark eyes, and a cap like mine?"

Boots looked at the Greyfriars cap and nodded.

"Just the same, sir."

That settled it. No schoolboy with a Greyfriars cap could have come to Lantham the night before excepting Herbert Vernon-Smith.

Wharton slipped the half-crown into the greasy hand of the lad.

"Thank you! He's the chap I want. When did he come—by the express from Courtfield, I suppose?"

"He came in just after the express, sir."

"Good! He's here now?"

"I called him at 'arf-past five, sir—they was his orders."

"When does the train leave for Dover?"

"'Arf-past six, sir."

Wharton looked at his watch. It was ten minutes past six.

"Did he intend to go by it, do you know?"

"I s'pose so, sir, as he was called so early."

"Is he down yet?"

"Not yet, sir. His breakfast's ready for him in the coffee-room, but he ain't come down yet."

"Show me to his room," said Harry. He reflected a moment. "By the way, is there any other way out for him?"

The boots stared.

"Only the winder, sir, and that's fifty feet 'igh. But didn't you say as he was a friend of yours? What has the young gent been doin'?"

"He's run away from school, and we're his friends come to take him back and to prevent him getting into trouble," Wharton explained. "He'll be glad to see us when he knows what we've got to tell him; so that's all right. Is your employer down?"

"He don't come down till eight, sir, he don't."

"Well, show me the room, and then show me the window of the room outside," said Harry. "The young ass may



try to bolt again. It's all right, kid. We're his friends, and we're here to keep him out of trouble."

Wharton's tone and look, and perhaps the half-crown, inspired confidence, and the boots, who had hesitated, nodded his shock head.

"All right, sir."

The juniors followed the boy upstairs. The boots pointed out the door of Vernon-Smith's room.

"You fellows stay here," said Harry. "Nail him if he comes out. Tell him it's all right about Loder at the start, and then he'll see reason."

"Right-ho!"

"I'll keep an eye on the window outside. If he should dodge you he might try the window. You never know what the Bouncer might do."

"Good egg!"

Harry Wharton followed the boots out of the building. The window was pointed out to him, and he noted the rain-pipe, and was glad that he had thought of watching the window.

The boots went back into the hotel, and Wharton waited. Boots had stated that Vernon-Smith had not come down, and Wharton did not doubt for an instant that the Bouncer was still in his room. Not for a second did it occur to him that the Bouncer had spotted the four dusty cyclists riding into Lantham.

Wharton's heart was lighter now. They had found the Bouncer. He could not get away from the three juniors waiting for him outside his room, and when he knew the truth about Loder he would not want to get away.

The chums of the Remove would take him back to Greyfriars with them, and the fact that they had succeeded in bringing him back would make their peace with the Head. All was plain sailing now. A few minutes more and all would be well, for it was evidently the Bouncer's intention to catch that early train, and he could not do so, of course, without coming out of his room.

A summons at his door would probably only send him scurrying to the window, in a frantic endeavour to escape, before any explanation could be made that there was no need for flight. He would be caught then, certainly; but after risking his neck. It was better to wait quietly till he came out of his room. That he was no longer in his room was the one unfortunate circumstance that made Wharton's arrangements useless.

The minutes crept by.

Bob Cherry and Nugent and Hurree Singh, in the passage outside Vernon-Smith's door, waited with growing impatience.

For the door did not open.

It was close now upon the time for the train, and the Bouncer showed no sign of coming out. Bob crept to the door and listened. There was no sound in the room.

He tiptoed back, and rejoined Nugent and Hurree Singh. "He must have gone to sleep again," he murmured. "There isn't any sound of his moving. Bet you he's still in bed."

"Then we won't wake him up till the express is gone," said Nugent, suppressing a chuckle. "It will be a good time before the next train, and we shall have lots of time to talk to him."

"We'll talk to him like a whole family of giddy Dutch uncles," said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "I don't suppose he'll want to skip when he hears that Loder's all right. But, in any case, we nail him."

"The nailfulness will be terrific, my worthy chum."

The juniors waited.

Half-past six rang out from somewhere, and still there was no sound from the room. Five more minutes! The juniors heard the clattering of the express in the station, the scream of the whistle, and the rush of the train as it left.

The six-thirty was gone!

Harry Wharton came up the stairs, a smile on his face.

"He's missed the train," he said.

"Looks like it," said Bob, with a chuckle.

"It's gone now," said Wharton. "I suppose he's gone to sleep again. We may as well wake him up."

"Right you are!"

The juniors moved along to the door, and Wharton tried it. It was locked on the inside, as he expected. He knocked. There was no reply—no movement.

"Smithy!" called out Harry through the keyhole.

No reply.

"I'll cut round to the window again, in case of accidents," said Harry. "You fellows make him open the door. Call the hotel-keeper, if necessary."

He hurried out of the building.

Bob Cherry pounded on the door with his heavy fist. He made noise enough to wake the Bouncer, if his slumber rivalled that of Rip Van Winkle, to say nothing of the other guests in the hotel. But Bob did not think of them just then.

"Smithy!" he shouted. "Wake up, you duffer! The train's gone, and we're here to see you. It's all right about Loder. He's coming up smiling."

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Silence!

"Smithy! Wake up, you ass!"

Bang, bang, bang!

But there was no reply from within, and the juniors began to look and to feel uneasy. The boots came hurrying along the passage.

"You mustn't make all that there row, young gents!" he exclaimed. "You'll wake up the 'ole blooming 'ouse!"

"Can't make our friend hear," said Bob. "Did he answer you when you called him?"

"Yes, sir. He was awake then. He's missed the train, and his blooming breakfast is stone cold now."

"Never mind his brekker," said Bob. "We want to get at him. Can you get that blessed door open?"

"The gov'nor can, sir," said Boots doubtfully. "But—" "I'll give him one more call," said Bob.

He thumped on the door, and shouted again through the keyhole.

"Smithy! Let us in, you ass! I tell you it's all right about Loder, and you can come back to Greyfriars."

But the stillness in the room was unbroken. There was no sound of scurrying feet towards the window—no sound at all.

"Blessed if I don't think something must have happened to him," muttered Bob uneasily. "The ass thinks he's done for Loder. He can't have—" He did not finish, but his ruddy face went very pale. What was it possible that the Bouncer, in his fear of pursuit and arrest, might have done?

"We've got to get in," muttered Nugent.

Harry Wharton joined them again.

"Hasn't he come out?"

"Can't make him answer," said Bob. "Either he isn't there, or something's happened to him."

"My hat, if he's dodged us!" Wharton turned quickly to the boots. "Get me a chisel, or something, and I'll get that giddy door open. We'll pay for the damage. Buck up!"

Boots disappeared; and returned with a chisel, and also a fat and very surprised hotel-keeper. To the latter Wharton hastily explained, and then the lock was forced. The juniors ran into the room.

"Smithy!"

The room was empty!

Harry Wharton & Co. looked round the deserted room in dismay. The bird was flown—the quarry they had run down had vanished.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great pip!"

"Skipped!"

"The skipfulness is terrific!"

The hotel proprietor rubbed his sleepy eyes.

"He has gone," he said. "He must have come down. It is very odd."

"He got out of the window, more likely, and bunked before I was watching it," said Harry. "He must have spotted us somehow. What rotten luck! And, my only sainted aunt, he's taken the train after all!"

The juniors gazed at one another in dismay. Vernon-Smith had slipped through their fingers, after all. The express had been gone a quarter of an hour—had carried away the elusive Bouncer? It seemed only too probable.

"Come on!" panted Wharton.

"What about this damage, young gentleman?"

Wharton thrust one of Lord Mauleverer's sovereigns into the landlord's fat hand, and the juniors ran out of the hotel. They rushed into the station. A sleepy-looking booking clerk came in a leisurely manner as Wharton rapped sharply at the little opening.

"The six-thirty express!" panted Wharton.

"Gone, sir."

"Yes, yes; but did someone take a ticket for Dover—a kid?"

The booking-clerk looked him over carelessly. Evidently he did not relish being catechised in this way by a schoolboy.

"Really—" he began.

"It's a chap run away from school, and we're looking for him," Wharton explained hastily. "Tell me whether he's been here?"

"A boy about your age took a ticket for Dover," drawled the man. "He came in just before the express started. He seemed in a hurry."

"Did he wear a cap like this?"

"Yes."

"And he got the train?"

"I suppose so."

"Thanks."

The juniors hurried to the platform. Wharton collared the first porter he saw.

"We're looking for a chap. Did you see a kid get into the Dover express at the last minute?"

"Yes, sir; just when the train was on the move."

The porter trundled on a trolley. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another with blank faces. There was a long silence.

"He must have spotted us somehow," said Nugent at last. "And bolted before we got to the hotel," said Bob, with a snort. "We watched a giddy empty room, while Smithy—"

"Caught the express!" groaned Wharton. "Well, we couldn't foresee all that. We've done our best—only—Smithy's gone!"

"He's as slippery as a blessed eel."

"Well, we're going after him," said Harry Wharton resolutely.

Bob Cherry whistled.

"We can't bike it in the time, Harry; and the jiggers are awfully groggy after that spill. And that train catches the boat!"

"We'll leave the jiggers here, to be sent back, and take the next train."

"But the boat will be gone."

"There's another boat!"

"My hat, but—but—"

"We're after Smithy," said Wharton quietly. "We'll have him, if we have to cross the Channel for him. In for a penny, in for a pound. We shall get into pretty bad trouble at Greyfriars, anyway, if we don't take Smithy back with us. We're going to take him. I'll find out the time of the next train, and then we'll see about the bikes."

There were three hours to wait for the next train. The juniors booked the no-longer-needed bicycles for Friardale, and then breakfasted at the hotel. And when the second train started, Harry Wharton & Co. were passengers in it—still on the track of the Bounder!

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Across the Channel!

THE Bounder of Greyfriars leaned back in his comfortable corner seat and grinned. The express was tearing along through the countryside in the growing light of the sun.

His heart was throbbing in unison with the leap and throb of the train.

He was free!

His device had succeeded perfectly.

He had emerged from his hiding-place at the last moment, he had scurried into the station, taken his ticket, and boarded the express, while the chums of Greyfriars were vainly keeping watch and ward over his deserted room.

Now he was speeding as fast as the express could carry him towards Dover—towards the sea; towards the sheltering coast of France.

Black care hung over the Bounder. He could not forget Loder; he could not forget his ruined career, his dashed hopes—all he had lost, all he was resigning by his flight. But the love of excitement, of dare-devil venturing, was stronger within him than any other feeling. He had baffled his pursuers; he had escaped recapture by the skin of his teeth. And he grinned with triumph and satisfaction as the express tore swiftly onwards through fields and meadows and quiet towns.

Would Harry Wharton & Co. follow him further? He did not know, and he did not care very much. At all events, they would not catch him. The express was timed to catch the morning boat for Calais. If they followed, they would only be in time for the afternoon boat. Before they could reach Dover, he would be safe on French soil. There he would disappear. In Calais he would have time to look about him, and obtain a change of cloths. He could speak French like a native. Once on French soil, he would baffle all attempts to find him. From some place of concealment there he would communicate with his father, when it was safe to do so.

Then a sudden thought struck him with a chill, and the smile of satisfaction died away from his face. The telegraph!

That the Head of Greyfriars had used the telegraph to cause the Courtfield express to be watched when it arrived in London, he was sure. The Head did not suspect his real line of flight.

But Harry Wharton knew.

A wire from Lantham, or from any station along the line giving his description and the facts of the case to the stationmaster at Dover—and he would step from the train simply to fall into the arms of a policeman.

Had Wharton telegraphed?

Perhaps it would not occur to him to do so at Lantham, but during the train journey south the thought was certain

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to come into his mind—as a sure means of stopping the fugitive from taking the Channel boat.

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

Just as liberty seemed opening before him, he realised that he was not yet safe—that he was rushing on at the full speed of the express to arrest.

There was the Folkestone boat to Boulogne; he could get to Folkestone as easily as to Dover. But he dismissed the thought as it rose in his mind. If Wharton telegraphed to one place, he would telegraph to the other also, to make sure. Both the boats would be watched for a runaway schoolboy attempting to cross to France.

The Bounder's brows contracted, and his eyes grew almost haggard.

His old enemy had him upon the hip, after all. The escape at Lantham was only a postponement of the inevitable.

For he still looked upon Wharton as an enemy; he had no suspicion of the good news the juniors were trying to bring to him. They were after him to take him back to arrest and punishment—that was his belief. Ignorant of the fact that Loder was not, after all, seriously hurt, the Bounder could not possibly guess with what intentions the juniors were following him.

He glanced from the train window, and looked at his watch. The last stop before Dover had been passed. He had to go on to the terminus now, unless he jumped from the rushing express.

And the station—or, if not the station, certainly the entrance to the Channel boat—would be watched for him. He was certain now that Wharton would have telegraphed. He was waited for in Dover—he knew that!

He ground his teeth in helpless rage. His scheme of crossing to France had to be abandoned now. He would never reach the Channel boat.

But the Bounder was not at the end of his resources yet. The train would stop in the town before it went on to the boat station; he could slip from it there, and escape into the town. Somewhere on the shore he would find a boatman to take him across the Channel—some fishing-craft would take him. He had plenty of money to pay for that. His heart lightened again at the thought.

The train stopped at last in Dover Town.

Vernon-Smith looked out along the platform. Perhaps both stations were watched for him, but it was not likely. No; there was no sign of a policeman in sight.

He stepped from the train, gave up his ticket, and hurried away.

At every step he dreaded to hear a sharp voice calling, to hear the heavy foofalls of a constable, to feel a detaining hand upon his shoulder.

But it did not come.

He left the station, and plunged into the town. He mingled in the crowd in the streets, and drew a deep breath with a sense of renewed freedom. Let them watch for him at the boat station and on the boat; he would never come there, and they would watch in vain.

He did not delay in the town. There was no time to lose. With swift strides he made his way out of the town and along the cliffs.

He was free once more.

And now to find a craft to take him across the Channel. That was not difficult. There were plenty of craft to be had for a run on the Channel that fine spring morning; and the boatman he accosted was not surprised that the young gent, down there on a holiday, as Vernon-Smith explained to him, had a curiosity to run across and see the coast of France before he returned to London. The boatman named a high price, and Vernon-Smith did not demur; he was only too anxious to get away.

His heart beat with exultation as he stepped upon the little sailing-craft. Mainsail and jib were shaken out, and the boat danced on the blue waters of the Channel. Vernon-Smith, with a grim smile, watched the great Channel steamer forging by in the distance. There was the steamer he should have taken, but he was crossing the narrow seas just as surely.

He laughed aloud as he watched it disappear in the distance, and the boatman looked at him curiously.

The wind was variable, and long after the steamer had disappeared the little sailing-craft was tacking its way across the Channel, covering many times the distance in long loops to east and west.

The keen wind blew through the Bounder's thin clothing—he was by no means clad for a sea voyage—but he did not heed it. The fresh sea air invigorated him. He ate with a keen appetite a bundle of stale sandwiches he had purchased on the train. Freedom lay before him—on the cliffs that



rose to view in the southern distance, white over the blue of the sea.

But the time was passing, and the passage was slow. Again the light died out of the Bounder's face as he heard the throb of engines in the distance, and saw a great steamer bearing down from the North. For noon had long passed, while the sailing-craft was tacking for the wind, and the afternoon Channel steamer was passing the little speck that danced on the waters.

Vernon-Smith watched the steamer as it passed. Were the Greyfriars juniors there? he wondered.

The steamer passed close—so close that the smaller craft danced and spun on the heavy wash she made.

Vernon-Smith watched the faces over the rail, and his brows came blackly together as he saw a well-known face looking over the sea.

It was the face of Harry Wharton!

The junior was gazing idly at the little craft, and he gave a sudden start. Vernon-Smith crouched down—too late.

He had been seen!

He peered over the gunwale. Harry Wharton was staring hard at the boat; and now the faces of Bob Cherry and Nugent and Hurree Singh could be seen at the rail beside him. He had been seen.

The wind was freshening. The little craft was fairly flying over the waters now, in the wake of the great steamer as it plunged on.

Vernon-Smith set his teeth, and called to the boatman.

"Get back to Dover! I've changed my mind. I don't want to go to Calais. Get back to Dover!"

But luck was against him. The boatman stared at him, and shook his head, and the two other seamen in the boat grinned at the landsman's ignorance.

"Can't get back in this wind, sir. We have got to run right on to Calais now. Can't get back till the evening now."

Vernon-Smith's teeth came together again with a savage click.

"You must! I tell you I don't want to go to Calais!"

"Can't be done, sir!" said the boatman gruffly. "Ain't you got any eyes, sir? Look at them seas—and look at the wind! If this 'ere wasn't the best-found craft on the Channel, sir, we'd be lucky even to get into Calais at all."

Vernon-Smith realised the truth, and he flung himself down into a seat in silence.

The game was up! The steamer would reach Calais first, and the chums of Greyfriars would be waiting for him there. The game was up!

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER. A Close Finish!

**H**ARRY WHARTON & CO. stepped from the steamer on the pier at Calais.

Harry Wharton had not telegraphed to Dover. His intentions were, of course, quite different from those the Bounder supposed. It was as a friend, not as an enemy, that he was following the fugitive. From Dover he had telegraphed to the Head of Greyfriars, in explanation, and then the four juniors had taken the boat. They landed in Calais, knowing, from what they had seen in the passage of the Channel, that the Bounder had not yet arrived.

He would not be long after them, and they would be ready for him.

"We've got him at last!" Bob Cherry remarked, as they sauntered on the quay in the windy, sunshiny spring afternoon. "The duffer! If he knew what we've got to tell him, he'd be as glad to see us as we shall be to see him!"

"The gladfulness would be terrific!" Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh remarked. "But I wonderfully reflect what the esteemed Dr. Locke is thinking of our honourable escapade at this blessed minute."

"Picking out his thickest cane, very likely," said Frank Nugent, with a grimace. "Six each for us, and a dozen for the Bounder—groogh!"

"Well, he's bound to be pleased if we take Smithy back," said Bob Cherry, "and even if we get licked, it was a giddy adventure. We don't get across the Channel every day, do we?"

"Beats grinding Latin in the Form-room hollow," said Harry Wharton. "And here we are in France—quite a giddy adventure."

"Parley voo Frongsay?" grinned Bob. "Wee, wee!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Co. were in high spirits. They had run down the fugitive, and they were certain of success now. All they had to do was to watch for the incoming sailing-craft, and nail the Bounder when he came ashore. That was not difficult.

"You look wiz glass, isn't it?" wheezed a voice close beside them.

It was one of the cheery merchants who hire out binoculars for half a franc a time to the visitors. Wharton nodded, and the Magnet Library.—No. 723.

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took the glasses. He swept the harbour with them, and spotted the fishing-craft as it came dancing in.

"There she is!"

He kept the glasses till the craft was closing up to the quay. Then he handed them back to the binocular-merchant, with a few shillings; and the juniors hurried along the quay to the spot where the boat was making fast.

"Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith looked at them from the boat.

The four juniors stood on the quay-side, looking down at him, standing between him and the freedom he had hoped for.

The Bounder's face was black with rage and hatred.

Caught at the finish—after his long flight! The thought of a struggle was in his mind, his eye wandered to a boat-stretcher close at hand.

But there was a gendarme only a few yards away—that was hopeless.

A bitter, desperate look came over the Bounder's face. In his present mood he was fit for anything.

"You rotters!" he said, between his teeth. "You couldn't let me alone! You had to come after me!"

"You don't understand!" said Harry Wharton quietly. "We came after you as friends, Smithy, to do you a good turn."

The Bounder sneered.

"To take me back to Greyfriars?"

"Yes; but—"

"Well, you shall never take me back!" The Bounder spoke slowly and deliberately. "I'll never go back, least of all with you!"

"I tell you—"

"Loder—" began Bob Cherry.

But the Bounder did not listen. He was running along the boat.

It flashed upon Wharton's mind what was his purpose, and his face went white.

He made one desperate leap into the boat, far down below the level of the quay, and landed in it, and rolled over.

He was up again in a second.

"Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith was at the stern of the boat now, leaping! Splash!

There was a shout from the boatmen, a cry of horror from the juniors on the quay. They understood now what the desperate Bounder had meant, when he said that he would not be taken back.

Wharton ran furiously along the boat—a head dotted the water—he leaped in, and grasped the Bounder as he was sinking.

"Smithy!" The water bubbled in his mouth as the Bounder struggled, and choked his utterance. But his grasp was like iron, and he kept the infuriated boy afloat.

"Smithy, you're mistaken!" His mouth was close to Vernon-Smith's ear as he panted out the words. "Loder's alive—he's all right! Don't you hear?"

The Bounder's fierce struggle suddenly ceased.

"What?"

"Loder's alive—he wasn't badly hurt after all! It's all right!"

The Bounder was treading water now. He understood. His white face looked wildly into Wharton's.

"Loder alive!" He stammered the words. "Then, then—"

"And recovering!" said Harry.

"Oh! I—I thought— Then you—you came—"

"We came to tell you so!"

"Oh! I thought—I believed—"

"You were mistaken!" said Harry. "Thank goodness I stopped you in time, you awful ass! It's quite safe for you to come back to Greyfriars—and if you come at once, you mayn't even get sacked. Don't you understand?"

"I understand now!" muttered the Bounder.

"Help, here!" called out Wharton.

They were dragged into the boat.

"It's all right—only a little lark!" Vernon-Smith explained airily to the astounded and alarmed boatmen. "I was giving my friends a little surprise, that was all."

"Blessed if I didn't think it was a bloomin' soocide!" gasped the boatman.

"Well, it wasn't!" said Vernon-Smith calmly. "Only a lark. It's all right. We'd better go ashore and get some dry clothes, Wharton. I'm going back in the next steamer, my man—but I'll settle with you now."

And Vernon-Smith paid the boatman, and went ashore with Wharton. Bob Cherry gave him a thump on the back.

"You silly ass!" he said.

"The sillinessfulness is terrific!"

NEXT MONDAY—

**"HARRY WHARTON'S DIPLOMACY!"**

A Splendid Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early!

"If Wharton hadn't been so quick——" said Nugent, with a shiver.

The Bounder shivered, too, for a moment.

"I suppose I was a bit off my rocker just then," he said apologetically. "But it's all right—Wharton was quick, you see. But—it's all square about Loder?"

"Yes; you couldn't crack his cocoanut so easily as you thought," said Bob Cherry. "He's safe and sound, and getting well."

"Thank goodness for that!"

"And after that experience, I fancy he'll let you alone in the future," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

The Bounder laughed too. He could laugh now heartily.

"But it means the sack——"

"I hope not. The Head knows that it was Loder's fault in the first place, and we shall let him know how the brute was down on you, too. We'll get some dry clothes, and then telegraph to the Head, and take the next steamer home," said Harry.

And they did.

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Home Again!

THERE had been great excitement at Greyfriars that day, while the Bounder was fleeing to a foreign soil, and the chums of the Remove were hot on his track.

When the rising-bell clanged out in the morning, four beds were empty in the Remove dormitory, as well as that of the Bounder.

Peter Todd and Johnny Bull had succeeded in getting back to the school during the night, and they had gone back to bed, tired out. They were very sleepy when the rising-bell clanged, and they had to turn out with the rest of the Remove.

Bulstrode had an unpleasant task before him. He had to take Harry Wharton's message to Mr. Quelch, explaining that the four were absent. He could imagine what effect that information would have upon the Remove-master.

It was with reluctant steps that Bulstrode sought Mr. Quelch. The Form-master's keen eyes looked over him, noting his hesitation.

"What is the matter, Bulstrode?" he asked.

"I—I've got a message for you, sir," the junior faltered.

"Well, what is it?"

"It's from Wharton, sir!"

"From Wharton!" Mr. Quelch raised his eyebrows. "Indeed! Why cannot Wharton come to me himself, if he has anything to say to me?"

"He—he isn't here, sir!"

"Not here?"

"No, sir!"

"I fail to understand you, Bulstrode," said Mr. Quelch, with asperity. "You do not mean to state that Wharton has left the school?"

"Yes, sir; and Nugent and Cherry and Inky—I mean Hurree Singh!"

"They have left the school?" said Mr. Quelch, his eyes opening very wide.

"They've gone to look for the Bounder—for—for Smithy, sir!"

"What!" Mr. Quelch's voice resembled the rumble of distant thunder. "Do you mean to tell me, Bulstrode, that four juniors have left the school, in the night, without permission, to look for Vernon-Smith?"

"Yes, sir! Wharton thinks he can find him, and he thought he ought to go!"

"Did he?" Mr. Quelch's jaw set grimly. "Wharton has very peculiar ideas of the duty of a junior in the Lower Fourth Form, then. I shall see that his ideas on this subject are corrected. You may go, Bulstrode!"

Bulstrode went. Mr. Quelch repaired to the Head, to inform him of the absence of the four enterprising members of the Remove. Dr. Locke was both astonished and angry.

"It is extraordinary!" he said. "Unexampled! They will, of course, be severely punished when they return. I have no doubt they will come in soon, Mr. Quelch. When they come in, pray send them to me!"

And the doctor's eye wandered to his cane.

But the Head was mistaken in thinking that the errant juniors would come in soon. They did not come. And the telegraph informed the Head that nothing had been seen or heard of the missing Bounder in the London terminus.

Five places were empty in the Remove Form-room that

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morning, and the rest of the class were in a state of suppressed excitement, which rendered it difficult for them to absorb the valuable instruction emanating from Mr. Quelch.

Meanwhile, Loder of the Sixth was progressing well.

Dr. Pillbury, after many solemn shakings of the head at first, had announced finally that Loder was not suffering from anything worse than shock, and a terrific bump on his head, and it was only a question of days before he mended entirely.

Dr. Locke was much exercised in his mind on that subject.

For such an attack on a prefect there was only one possible punishment, according to ordinary rules—flogging and expulsion from the school.

But there were other circumstances in the case. Dr. Locke went into the matter thoroughly. He questioned the Remove fellows, and the juniors, anxious to make things as easy as possible for the Bounder, told him all they knew about the matter. And what he learned from them modified the Head's views considerably. As soon as it was possible to interview the injured Sixth-Former, he had a talk with Loder, too.

There was no doubt that the prefect had been "down" upon the unlucky junior. He had been about to thrash him for a trick that had been played by Peter Todd, and which Vernon-Smith had known nothing about. Peter's confession made that quite clear.

Nothing, of course, could justify the Bounder's action. The results might have been so terribly serious that it was impossible to find excuse for him. But—there was a but. The junior had been stung to fury by unjustified punishment—he had been acting in self-defence, and certainly he had not meant to hurt Loder so much.

Dr. Locke discussed the matter earnestly with Mr. Quelch, and he came to the conclusion that a flogging would meet the case, but for the circumstance that the Bounder had run away. If he came back at once he might be given another chance, but if he stayed away—if the aid of the police had to be invoked to find him—if the matter crept into the newspapers, and a scandal came of it, then it would be impossible to forgive him.

The Head, in his mind's eye, could see the startling headlines, the racy paragraphs—"Outrage in a Public School!" "Bullied Schoolboy Stuns the Bully!" and so forth—and he shuddered at the thought. For the boy who should bring such publicity and disgrace upon the old school there could be no pardon.

If it came to that—and the Head realised that it must come to that—unless he smiled at the thought—unless Harry Wharton succeeded in finding the fugitive and bringing him back. That was not likely to happen—the juniors must be punished themselves for their reckless escapade. And the Head was thinking that, when a telegram was brought to him. It was dated from Dover:

"Seen Vernon-Smith. Hope to catch him to-day. Please excuse us.—WHARTON."

The Head stared at the telegram.

Then they were really on the track of the fugitive—in a direction he had never thought of! The Head found himself feeling glad that they had gone, after all; and if they succeeded in their quest, certainly he would not punish them. He was more likely to thank them instead.

He waited for more news, and it came, late in the afternoon, in the form of a telegram from Calais. The Head and Mr. Quelch read the telegram together, and then they looked at one another, and smiled. For the telegram ran:

"Vernon-Smith found. Coming back with us. Arrive Greyfriars to-night.—WHARTON."

That was the message.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, after a long silence.

"They have found him, and they are bringing him back!" said Mr. Quelch. "Really, really, sir, this is—is really very good news! There will be no occasion for the police to interfere in the matter."

"There will be no scandal—no publicity!" said the Head, with a deep breath.

Mr. Quelch nodded.

"I was very angry when their escapade was reported to me," said the Remove-master. "But I must say, sir, that I am glad now that they followed him. They have performed a really important service."

"Undoubtedly!"

(Continued on Page 27.)



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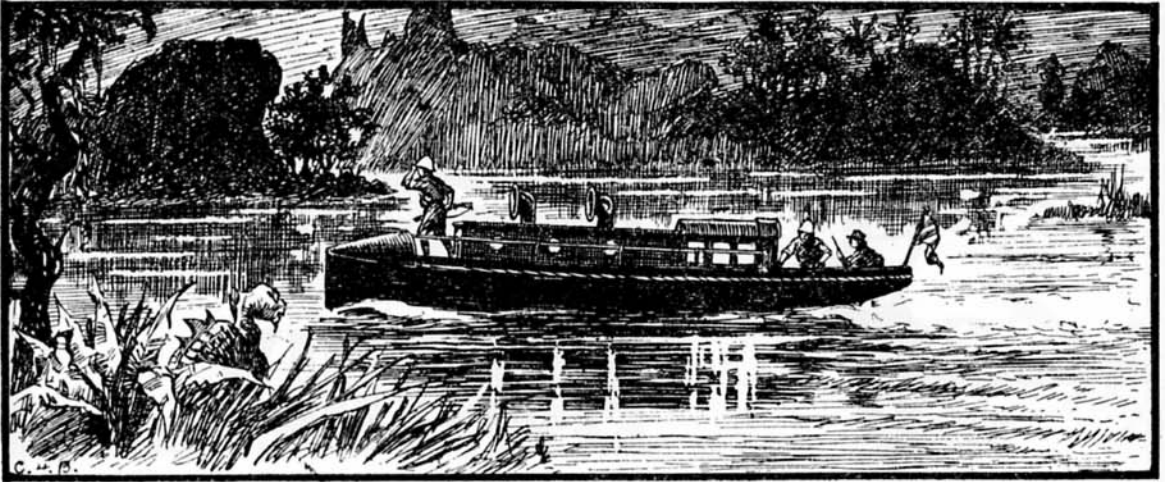
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# THE BLUE ORCHID.



Grand Story of Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung & Co.

By **SIDNEY DREW.**

~~~~~  
**READ THIS FIRST.**

Ching-Lung (Prince of China), Rupert Thurston, and Gan-Waga (the Eskimo), with Front, Maddock, and the rest of the famous crew of the Lord of the Deep, the marvellous submarine belonging to Ferrers Lord, the multi-millionaire and adventurer, find themselves on board the Philomel, a little paddle-steamer which is puffing up the broad bosom of the mighty Amazon River. Ferrers Lord himself is in command of the expedition, and he tells them that he is in search of a "field" of blue orchids, the secret place of which was mapped out and given to him by a dying man. A rascally German millionaire, named Hausmann, determines to secure these plans, and pursues the Philomel in his magnificent yacht Medea. A storm comes on, and the flashes of lightning reveal the position of the Philomel, and a shell is sent hurtling towards her from the Medea. The Medea collides with a Brazilian warship, and the small but fast little launch which the former was towing is captured by Ferrers Lord. The Philomel's cargo is transferred to the launch, which has been renamed the Blue Orchid. After an uneventful voyage the Blue Orchid is anchored at the edge of the trackless Brazilian forest, and Rupert Thurston, with Ferrers Lord, Ching-Lung, and Barry O'Roonoy, set out for a trip in the forest. The millionaire meets Vasco, the son of a native chief whom he had formerly befriended. Vasco joins Ferrers Lord's party. Ferrers Lord and his companions return to the Blue Orchid, and no sooner are they safely on board than the look-out sights the Medea. Steaming at full speed, Ferrers Lord manages to gain the shelter of a lagoon. A moment later Ferrers Lord notices that the water is gradually getting lower and lower. He comes to the conclusion that it is dammed somewhere, and he is about to get into a boat to examine the lagoon when a sudden roar breaks out. The dam bursts, and Vasco is swept overboard. Ching-Lung manages to rescue him, but not before the Indian has been struck senseless by a floating tree. The Blue Orchid is swept out of her hiding-place, and the Medea gives chase. Vasco, when he regains consciousness, tells Ferrers Lord of a rivulet where they would be safe from pursuit. Although three men short, they make the rivulet in safety. A party of riflemen in ambush fire on them, but are put to flight. Ching-Lung agrees to cook, and Gan-Waga decides to help. But the prince manages to get him out of the galley, and locks the door. When Gan returns, he kicks upon the door in rage. "Let's me ins, Chingy!" he cries angrily.

(Now go on with the story.)

**Locked out!—Gan-Waga Has His Revenge.**

"Yo' not no pals, Chingy!" shrieked Gan-Waga, so hard that the dough fell from the ventilator. "Yo' only a bad 'nough ugliness wid a pigtaile! Yo' a yaller faces! Yo' morer uglifuls dan Prouts! Yo' a spitefulness, Chingy! O-oh, yo' a bad 'nough awfuls spitefulness! Why I lookses outs? Yo' wants to eatse de stuffs, an yo' 'fraidses I tells! I kills yo', Chingy! Yah-h-h! I lookings! Yo' stealse the jam!"

Thud!  
 Ching-Lung hurled a lump of dough at the door, which again closed up the ventilator. Gan yelled a few more compliments and threats, and then departed. Suddenly he glanced down, and his little black eyes sparkled, for in his hand he held the key of the cold-room.

"Ho, ho, hoo! I lockses mineself in, and den he nots gets notings to cooks!" gurgled the Eskimo. "Oh, I tickles him ups dis times! Why I laffs, hunk? Gots no meat in the galleys. Ha, ha, ha! He comes, and I not lets him in! O-oh, butterfuls! Haves to break de doars down fo' suppers! Ho, ha, ho, hoo! O-oh, lovelifuls!"

Gan held his ribs as he rolled away, and his face was purple with bliss. He stepped into the little refrigerator, and turned the key in the lock. The stores of chilled meat, taken from the Philomel, would, with due precaution, last a long time even in the torrid regions of the Amazon, for cold storage has developed into a great and wonderful science. And Gan liked the atmosphere in spite of its meaty smell. "I getses my own backs!" he gurgled, as he dug his knife into a keg of frozen butter. "O-oh, lovelinesses!"

The Eskimo wore nothing except his silk pyjamas, and  
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the thermometer was standing at thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit—that is, at exactly freezing-point. But Gan did not feel at all cold.

Still Ching-Lung did not come, and the men were supposed to have their supper at six. Gan had already explored the galley, and he knew there was no meat in it. Joints cannot be cooked in a few minutes, and unless Ching-Lung had a sirloin of beef of a leg of mutton concealed about his person, Gan knew that he must soon put in an appearance. He waited for quite another half-hour.

Then he jumped up and hit himself several hard blows. All the time he had never noticed the boiled beef, though he had seen Joe boiling it. Gan snorted, and took out his knife.

"I nots tink I can eats yo' all," he said, stabbing his knife into the round, "but I have a butterfuls try. Ho, ho, hoo! Dis make Chingy madders dan breakings de door down. Why I laffs, hunk? Ho, ha, ho-o-oo!"

Gan-Waga did nobly and well. Few could do better in the eating line, and the frosty atmosphere of the room had put an edge on his appetite. But the beef was an easy winner.

"If I nots catse yo' all, yo' bad 'nough rascals, I pinch yo'," said Gan.

And he did. The galley door was open, for Ching-Lung had gone above for some fresh air. Gan-Waga replaced the key on its proper nail, and with the comforting feeling that he had done his duty, he retired to the bath-room and to bed, locking the door after him.

The sky over the tree-tops was a glorious purple, and fire-flies in myriads were dancing about the yacht. It was



dangerous work to go on in the deepening darkness, but it was almost as dangerous to anchor.

They must get ahead of this remorseless and tireless pursuer.

"Ow's that supper goin', sir?" inquired Mr. Thomas Prout. "I've been tryin' to smell it, but I can't."

"Cold boiled beef, roast spuds, pickles, and a jam-duff, Tommy. How's that?"

"Ger-lorious, by honey!" said Prout longingly. "Just say when!"

"Now, if you like, Tommy."

Prout had not very long to wait before Ferrers Lord relieved him. The light failed, and, after one glance into the black gloom, the millionaire ordered the anchor to be let go until moonrise.

"Bedad," said Barry O'Rooney, "that manes two hours of blessed litherly, not to mention the cold beef and spuds and pudden. Oi'll write a poem about thim same. Poor ould Ben Maddock just telled me he was hungry as a horse fed on shavings, and Joe's fainting wid famine!"

Joe had already fixed up and laid the table, for when the carpenter stopped working he was generally asleep. He bore in the dish of potatoes and the jar of pickles.

"The mate—the mate!" shouted Barry O'Rooney. "Sure, Oi've took me belt up four holes, but ut's aching Oi am insidelo like a holler tooth. Run all the way, and kape whistling, Joey my darlint! Bring the mate!"

"Go hon, souse me," added Maddock, who was on his legs again. "I've got an ache down below, too."

The carpenter hurried off, and, to save time, Ching-Lung served out the potatoes. Joe returned, and the look on his face told of calamity.

"There ain't no beef!" he gasped. "It's gone!"

"What? Gone, man!" howled Ching-Lung. "You're asleep and dreaming!"

"But it are gone, sir!" said Joe.

They all glared at the prince, and Prout and O'Rooney clenched their fists.

"On my word of honour, lads," said Ching-Lung, "this isn't one of my jokes. I'm as hungry as any of you, and I was relying on that beef. I thought it was there."

"Gan-Waga, souse him!" shrieked the bo'sun. "He's done it, the reptile!"

The next moment there was a rush for the bath-room on the part of several gentlemen who wanted the beef and Gan-Waga's life. It was a very narrow door, and in an awkward corner. Prout got there first, and hammered at it. Except for Joe the enraged steersman would have tried to burst it open, but the carpenter had to make the damage good, and he objected.

"Where's that beef, blubberbiter?" bellowed Prout.

"Turn it up, by honey, and we'll let you orf!"

"Go aways and barks at the dog-watch!" said the Eskimo. "I busyfuls. Ho, ho, hoo!"

Barry tore his hair and danced. They pleaded, argued, and threatened, but only mocking jeers and laughter answered them and drove them to desperation.

"Steady, boys!" said Ching-Lung. "I'll make the little rascal open the door. He can't have eaten a quarter of it, and he wouldn't spoil it. Heat a shovel, Joe, and bring some cayenne and a sheet of paper. Gan," he added, raising his voice, "are you going to give these poor chaps their supper?"

"Yo' go and see the times by the starboards watch, Chingy, yo' uglifuls!" piped the triumphant Eskimo.

"Oi'll hang for the spalpeen, as sartin as me name is—"

"Oh, dry up, Barry! Stand back a bit. I'll soon make him sing another song!" said the prince. "Be patient."

But Prout could wait no longer. He put his huge shoulder against the door. With a crash it gave way, and far too soon for the steersman.

Unable to pull himself up, Prout went into one bath, and Joe, who was close behind, trod on something that shot away as if alive. He fell backwards into Barry's arms, bringing down the Irishman, and pretending that he had been kicked. Ching-Lung clutched his ankle, and danced on one leg, getting greatly in Maddock's way.

The wet figure of Gan-Waga flashed out of the darkness and vanished. There was only one refuge for him, and that was the water of the river.

Gan sought it, and, holding on by the cable, chuckled joyous chuckles as he listened to the angry men.

The beef was wet, and Joe had not improved it by stepping

on it. But they cut off the outside, and demolished the rest. Heedless of alligators and the nasty things his comrades were going to do to him, Gan-Waga blinked himself to sleep watching the fireflies, and dreaming that he had discovered a large island composed of tallow candles, with a lake of melted butter in the centre, and blubber-trees growing round it.

### How, in Trying to Escape One Danger, Ching-Lung and Rupert Thurston Found Another, Doubly Perilous.

Gan-Waga slept so soundly that he was very nearly forgotten and left behind. Guessing where he was, Prout yelled to him. Several feet attempted to kick the dripping figure when it crawled aboard, but the wily Eskimo was on the alert, and nimbly dodged these tokens of affection. With a clear white moon shining down and forming a silver pathway on the water, the Blue Orchid began to creep along once more.

Presently Ching-Lung's keen eyes detected something dark ahead, and promptly signalled to Joe to slow down.

"We gots to de stations, hunk Chingy?" asked Gan-Waga, who had been snoring in the bows. "Why yo' stops the bloater-cars, hunk?"

"'Cos there's a brick wall in the way, thickhead!" answered Ching-Lung. "Scrape the mud out of your eyes and look what it is."

Gan inspected the shadowy obstacle, but the darkness obscured it.

"I goes and sees, Chingy. Tink him plenty of trees, Chingy."

"Stop where you are, silly," said Ching-Lung. "What's the good of wetting your collar and cuffs? Come here and fetch this, and mind you don't burn your fingers."

The Eskimo took the hissing flare and held it up. Its powerful light showed a whole jamb of logs wedged from bank to bank, and firmly lashed together by an accumulation of weeds. Where it ended the light did not show, but it was very deep, and probably very thick.

"That'll take a bit of climbing over, Eski-motor-car," was Ching-Lung's comment.

"I sooners climbs over than saw through hims, Chingy," said Gan wisely. "We wants the mud-hooks downs, Chingy, or we floats away."

"Go and do it, then, only don't give a lot of cable. A bent pin and a bit of cotton ought to hold us in this fishpond. Then you can go and tell the chief we've sailed into a timber-yard."

"Ho, ho, hoo! If I say thats, he tink we collisoned wid Prout's heads, Chingy," grinned the Eskimo. "Ole Prout's head a timber-yards, hunk!"

Ching-Lung sat on the rail and whistled while Gan-Waga carried out orders. The millionaire came without delay, fully dressed and ready, as he always was, for any emergency.

"Is it a big one, Ching?" he asked quietly.

"Too big for this thing to reveal all its beauties," said the prince, lighting another flare. "I can see where it begins, but I can't see where it ends. I fancy it's a whopper."

Ferrers Lord grasped the cable, and, exerting his strength, pulled the little yacht forward several yards.

"It's a big one," he said, "but small ones are often more troublesome."

After a little manoeuvring the Blue Orchid was brought alongside the barrier. The trunks and branches that composed it were so firmly knitted together that it was quite easy to walk on them. Occasionally burning a flare, Ferrers Lord and Ching-Lung advanced to the end of the log-jamb.

"Thirty-three paces, Ching," said the millionaire, who had counted  $\frac{1}{2}$  steps.

"That's thirty-two paces too much," said Ching-Lung. "Let's send Gan-Waga down to see how thick it is. It's all afloat, if that's any comfort."

As is always the case for those who watch and wait, the dawn seemed very long in coming. How far away were Hausmann and his myrmidons? Ferrers Lord walked over the barrier again, Vasco hobbling after him with the aid of a stick. Slowly the millionaire came back.

"There's the key," he said. "Cut that log clear, Prout."

"I never knew you were a lumberman before," said Thurston.

"I am everything," answered the millionaire, smiling. Prout threw off his coat. Those wonderful American lumberers and log-rollers can glance over a jamb containing thousands of trunks and pick out at a glance the particular log that must be started to set the whole mass in motion.

Ferrers Lord proved that he, too, was skilful in such matters. Prout hacked away, and the log drifted free. Seizing axes and poles, Joe, Rupert Thurston, Ching-Lung, and Barry set to work with a will. The current was so slow that the yacht ran little risk of being damaged.

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NEXT MONDAY—**"HARRY WHARTON'S DIPLOMACY!"**

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Suddenly the whole barrier began to split up gently. The millionaire called them aboard. Pushing away the trunks that threatened danger, Ferrers Lord steered her through.

"They're wedging up again below," said Thurston, looking back.

"All the worse for Hausmann!" grinned Prout gleefully. "By honey, I 'ope they'll stick as tight as wax, sir! Mind your heye, Barry! That's a big 'un. Phew! By honey, stabbing trees makes you 'ot!"

"Dey makes yo' butterfums morer hot if yo' sets fires to them and sits on thens, Tommy," said Gan-Waga. "Dears, dears! Yo' neck gettings awfuls redder. When yo' paint hims blue, hunk?"

"Arter he's painted your 'ide black and blue wi' a rope's-end, that's when, and not afore, souse me!" put in the bo'sun. "And I'll 'elp him!"

Gan replied by putting his fingers to his snub nose and advising Benjamin to go and chase cheesemites.

The ground everywhere was flatter than the deck.

"This is all under water when the rains come, I suppose?" said Thurston.

"For hundreds and hundreds of square miles," answered Ferrers Lord. "The niggers take to the trees like monkeys. The way this wretched stream twists is heart-breaking," he added. "Look at the compass! Our friend the enemy, if he found a good guide, could intercept us by sending a party through the forest on foot. We have lost quite a mile in the last three."

"You forget that they would have to cross several streams, though," said Ching-Lung. "I've counted five myself, and they all needed swimming. Get ready, Gan, with the shrimp-net!"

Whir-r-r! A cluster of wild duck that had been feeding rose in alarm. Four of them fell as the prince sent two charges of shot after them. Barry and Gan-Waga, using nets tied to long poles, fished up the slain, and Thurston neatly picked off another couple before they were out of range.

It was a welcome addition to the larder, and Gan hummed merrily as he made the feathers fly.

"I'm jolly well sick of this, gentlemen," said Ching-Lung suddenly. "It's too slow."

The river had made another backward sweep.

"You may go ashore if you like," said Ferrers Lord. "It is very dull, I admit. Will you go, Rupert?"

"Me, too?" chimed in Gan-Waga. "Nots forgets me, Chingy."

Unfortunately for the Eskimo, bare feet and pyjamas did not appear suitable for a tramp in the forest, and Ching-Lung and Thurston had no time to spare. The yacht was brought close to the bank, and the two sprang ashore, not waiting for Gan-Waga to change his clothes.

"Yo' a pair of bad 'nough uglinesses!" roared the Eskimo. "Yo' two bad 'nough meanness!"

"Tut, tut! Naughty, naughty!" said Ching-Lung, blowing a kiss. "Use more soap and less rude remarks, my fair, fat fairy, and you'll get on better. Wear more clothes, and be respectable, and then we'll take you out a nice tata with us. You can't expect us to associate with low rascals who don't wear boots."

Gan made an attempt to leap after them, but the millionaire checked him.

"Steady!" he said. "Snakes, ants, and thorns don't agree with bare feet, Gan."

"Den I putes on mine bootses," said Gan-Waga wrathfully, "and I kickses dems. Not likes Chingy just nows. He nots a pals. I makes hims sits ups. He tink his hims the bossos, but hims nots. Yah-h! I gives him snuffs! Oh, bad 'nough—bad 'nough! I killses hims!"

Prout took the indignant Eskimo sympathetically by the arm and whispered the sweetest of sweet nothings in Gan's left ear. At last Gan smiled, and Thomas Prout's wooden face expanded a little as he winked back at the Irishman.

With their rifles on their shoulders, Thurston and the prince plunged into the forest. It was fairly thin, and, therefore, walking offered little difficulties. They could only guess at the extent of the bend, so, taking their bearings by Rupert's compass, they struck across at an angle. They walked for about a mile, the forest as silent as a grave, and the soft moss drowning their footsteps.

"What ho! Here's a stopper," said Ching-Lung, "unless we can circumvent it."

A stream about thirty feet wide stopped the way. It was choked with weeds, and very uninviting.

"Beastly!" said Rupert. "I don't relish the idea of having to swim through that."

"Ugh! Same here," said Ching-Lung. "It's sure to be full of leeches the size of eels. Hallo! Here's a bridge! Get on my back, and then haul me up."

Thurston crawled along the branch, and then dropped to the ground on the other side. Ching-Lung was quicker, though he started later. There was a sudden shaking of leaves as an anaconda dropped its head to see what creatures had dared to invade its resting-place.

"Don't shoot!" said Thurston. "It hasn't done us any harm."

"Can't help that, old man," said Ching-Lung. "Those reptiles are no good to man or beast. If it hasn't harmed us, it will harm somebody sooner or later. Come down!"

He drove a bullet through the snake's skull, that swayed to and fro within six feet of the ground. The writhing body lost its hold and slid into the water.

"I expect you're right, Ching," said Thurston. "They ought to be exterminated."

"Ask Mr. Benjamin Maddock his opinion, Ru, and he'll tell you," laughed Ching-Lung. "He likes 'em. What did I tell you about leeches? Look at your boots!"

The soaked moss was crowded with loathsome creatures, and many were clinging to their boots and leggings already. They scraped them off with the backs of their hunting-knives.

"What's that noise, Ching?" Thurston asked.



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# THE RUNAWAY!

(Continued from page 22.)

"Under the circumstances, sir, perhaps they could be pardoned for their reckless conduct."

The Head smiled.

"I was just thinking so, Mr. Quelch."

"And Vernon-Smith—"

"I shall flog him, and pass the matter over," said the Head.

"I am glad to hear you say so, sir."

All Greyfriars knew soon that the Co. had succeeded, and that they were bringing the Bounder back to the school. But it was late at night, and all the fellows were in bed when the party arrived. Harry Wharton & Co. came in tired from a long journey, and Mr. Quelch brought them at once to the Head's study.

The juniors entered that dreaded apartment with very dubious looks. Mr. Quelch's expression had reassured them somewhat, but they were very doubtful of their reception. The Head's severe eyes regarded them as they came in.

"So you have returned," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Wharton; "and we are sorry—ahem!"

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, honoured sir!"

"And—and if you're going to lick us, sir, we don't mind!" said Bob Cherry heroically.

The Bounder stood silent.

"I shall not punish you four juniors," said the Head quietly; "I thank you instead for having done the school and myself a service."

"Oh, good!" murmured Nugent.

"As for you, Vernon-Smith," said the doctor, and his eyes fixed upon the Bounder, "what have you to say?"

"Only—only that I'm sorry, sir!" faltered the Bounder.

"I cleared off because I—I thought that Loder was—"

"I understand," said the Head. "I can excuse your running away, considering what you believed you had done. But that act—"

"I don't excuse it, sir," said Vernon-Smith, humbly enough. "Only Loder was down on me for nothing, and I hadn't done what he was going to lick me for—and I'd just had an awful licking. I've got the marks still, and—"

"Would you act in the same manner again?" demanded the Head sternly.

"No, sir! I'd take the licking if it happened again, of course! I shouldn't be likely to forget what I've been through in the last twenty-four hours," said the Bounder, with a shudder. "If you knew how it haunted me—"

His voice trailed off.

The Head's stern face softened a little.

"I think I understand, Vernon-Smith. I have inquired into the matter carefully, and I find that there are circumstances in your favour. To-morrow morning I shall flog you before all the school, and there the matter will end. You may go!"

The Bounder drew a deep breath.

"I deserve that!" he said. "I suppose I deserve more; but I'll try to prove that your kindness isn't wasted, sir. That's all I can say."

"That is enough," said the Head kindly. "I believe you. Good-night, my boys!"

"Good-night, sir!"

And the heroes of the Remove went to the dormitory in a state of great satisfaction. They did not get to sleep soon, however. They found all the Remove wide awake, waiting to see them, and they had to give a full account of their doings; and it was at a very late hour that night that slumber came to the Remove dormitory.

Vernon-Smith was flogged the next morning, and the flogging was a severe one. But he bore it with his usual hardihood; he knew that he had escaped cheaply.

And when Loder reappeared in the school he was very careful to leave the Bounder severely alone. He, as well as Vernon-Smith, had had his lesson. And there was an unusual cordiality between Vernon-Smith and the Famous Five in the days following the exciting episode of the fight of the Bounder.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long complete tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled "HARRY WHARTON'S DIPLOMACY," by Frank Richards. Order early.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 323.

NEXT MONDAY—

"HARRY WHARTON'S DIPLOMACY!"

EVERY MONDAY,

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ONE PENNY.

Ching-Lung whistled gently, and looked at Rupert with a queer expression, half-serious and half-comical. Through the dim arches of the forest came a subdued snorting, between a succession of squealings and gruntings.

"What's the pluckiest thing alive for its size bar a dog or a bantam cock, Ru?"

"What do you mean?"

"Answer the question, sonny," said Ching-Lung, glancing quickly round him.

"A cornered rat."

"Perhaps, when it's cornered," said Ching-Lung. "But when it isn't cornered it's a peccary. And those are peccaries. They're enough to make a man tear his hair. Lord was chaffing me the other day about an adventure I had on the Amazon years ago. He didn't give me away; but a pack of those little beasts treed me, and kept me there all night. If they scout us, we're in for a warm time."

"Whew!" whistled Thurston. "I've heard yarns about them, but it seems too silly."

"Does it? You can't frighten them, and they've got tusks like razors. If you fell, they'd carve you into pieces the size of postage-stamps. I have a deep and lasting respect for peccaries, Rupert. Stand still, and speak low. You don't know the gentlemen, and I do. That's the— Oh, Jupiter! Don't shoot!"

Thurston turned sharply. One of these fierce little members of the pig tribe was gazing at them with his tiny red eyes. The animal raised its snout, and uttered a warlike squeal.

"What gorgeous luck! That's done it!" said Ching-Lung. "Scoot, and scoot hard!"

Barry O'Rooney, after a narrow escape from death, once remarked that the thing he liked best about a shark was that he didn't know how to climb aboard a boat. Rupert was making for the nearest tree when Ching-Lung prodded him with his rifle.

"No," he said; "do a bolt, unless you want to sit on a branch all night. I'd sooner swim a mile than do that. Chase away, my son. I'm having no trees while there's any earthly chance left. And you'll have to run, for the beggars are little motor-cars!"

A flock of the fierce little brutes over two hundred strong came flying through the trees like a pack of hounds in full cry.

Ching-Lung and Thurston had a long start, and they ran well, for Ching-Lung did not want another experience of being treed by peccaries if he could escape it. They seemed to be able to hunt by sight as well as by scent. Snorting and grunting and squeaking they followed.

"Fit for a swim?" panted Ching-Lung.

"Yes!" said Thurston. "Will that stop them?"

"I hope so," began Ching-Lung. "If it doesn't, I don't— Down, down!"

The water flashed brightly through the trees. Ching-Lung dropped to his knees, dragging Thurston with him. Floating on a wide lake was something a thousand times more perilous to them than all the peccaries of South America.

It was Hausmann's yacht, the Medea!

(Another magnificent instalment of this grand serial next Monday.)

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# My Readers' Page

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The Editor is always pleased to hear from his Chums, at home or abroad.

H. Aldred (Australia).—Thanks for letter, and pressed flowers. Your idea of a league for distributing your back numbers among poor people is an excellent one, and I wish you every success.

C. Fly (Canada).—Very many thanks for your interesting letter.

G. Shipobottom.—I believe the "Pink Mauritius" stamps are fairly valuable. You cannot do better than write, sending your stamp for inspection, to Messrs Stanley Gibbons, 391, The Strand, London, W.C.

R. Uren (Australia).—Send your storyettes written exactly the same as though you were writing a letter.

**FOR NEXT MONDAY:**

**"HARRY WHARTON'S DIPLOMACY!"**

By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

This grand long, complete story of the chums of Greyfriars centres round a new master who comes to the old school. Mr. Lascelles, whose duty it is to teach the juniors mathematics, possesses a striking personality, and he is very popular with Harry Wharton & Co.

He also bears a remarkable resemblance to a well-known figure in certain sporting circles, and it is this likeness which leads to so much speculation in the Remove.

Bunter and Skinner fancy they "smell a rat," and give their prying instincts full play. Skinner at last catches a Tartar, and his cool proposition to Mr. Lascelles meets with a warm reception.

In the end Mr. Lascelles' prowess in the gentle art of fisticuffs stands him in good stead, and his position at Greyfriars is made secure, thanks largely to

**"HARRY WHARTON'S DIPLOMACY!"**

**"THE CORINTHIAN!"**

Many of my chums who read and thoroughly enjoyed Brian Kingston's sporting serial, "The Corinthian," which appeared in "The Gem" Library some months back, urgently requested me to re-publish this fine story in book form. This I have accordingly done, and "The Corinthian" appears as one of this month's volumes of "The Boys' Friend" 3<sup>d</sup>. Complete Library. As a rattling yarn of the old-time prize-ring, "The Corinthian" is already in great demand, and my chums are advised to take the earliest opportunity of obtaining this popular book.

**"MAGNET" CLUB NOTICES.**

Master D. Green, of 10, Bloomfield Avenue, Dublin, Ireland, wishes to form a Dublin "Magnet" Club, and will be pleased to hear from any fellow-readers interested in this project.

Master Lawrence E. McDonell, of 383, Gloucester Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, wishes to hear from a number of boy readers living in the British Isles or the Colonies with a view to forming a "Magnet" Club for correspondence, etc.

**REPLIES IN BRIEF.**

"A Reader."—I am very sorry to hear your father is a sufferer from neuralgia. Neuralgia is often due to too much work and not enough exercise and sleep. Quinine, taken in the form of tabloids, will considerably ease the pain. Your father has my deepest sympathy, and I sincerely trust the pain will have disappeared by the time you read these lines.

J. M. (Herts).—Yes, Billy Bunter has parents and relations like other boys, but they are not all "titled," as he tries to make out.

**THE SEASON'S WISH.**

**A Happy Eastertide and Lots of Holiday Fun for all "Magnet" Chums.**

**THE EDITOR.**



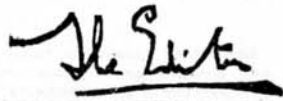
pupæ, or larvæ, centipedes—but not millipedes—and spiders. Some of them also require small fruits, such as grapes, elderberries, red currants, or raspberries, to keep them in good health.

The crows, including those amusing cage-birds—the jay, magpie, and jackdaw, need—in addition to soft food, fruit and nuts—a small piece of minced raw beef, about once a week, or the more natural substitute of mice, young sparrows, and sparrows' eggs. Starlings also are all the better for a little minced meat occasionally.

Of British finches best suited to cage-life, are the goldfinch, siskin, linnæ, chaffinch, brambling, the bullfinch, if hand-reared, and taught to pipe (the adult bird when caught and caged is often short-lived), the girl-bunting, yellow-hammer, and reed-bunting. As vocalists, none of these equal insectivorous birds, the siskin having the most sustained song, that of the goldfinch being scrappy, and that of the linnæ sweet but wooden in tone. For beauty the goldfinch certainly carries off the palm.

In grace of form and action no British birds equal the wagtails, nor, when hand-reared, can any approach them in intelligence; as house-pets they make admirable playmates, readily entering into the fun of simple childish games, and exhibiting perfect fearlessness even in the presence of strangers.

(Next Week: Another Article on Cage Birds.)





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