

THE FORBIDDEN MATCH!

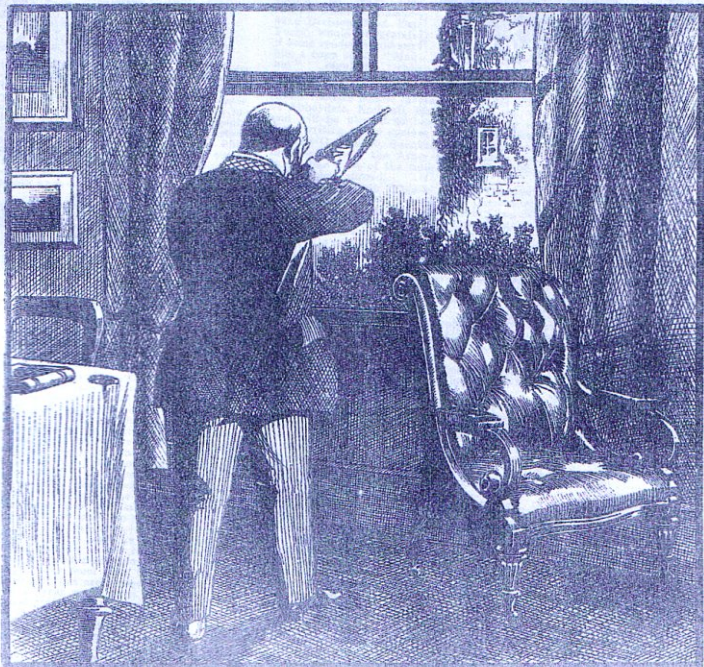
A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



The **Magnet** 1st Library

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MAY 8th, 1916.



MR. PROUT PROVES HIS PROWESS!

(A Thrilling Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale in this Issue.)

MAY 1916

MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," id., Every Monday. "THE GEM LIBRARY," id., Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 3d., COMPLETE LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," id., Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price 3d., Every Saturday.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in any difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, "The Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

For Next Monday:

"THE HERO OF GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards.

The brilliant author of the Greyfriars stories is at the very top of his form in the grand, long, complete story which appears next week. Bob Cherry, who is the established favourite of many thousands of readers, and Billy Bunter, the most genuinely comic character of all Mr. Richards has drawn for our delight, play the principal parts. The genial Bob is in danger of serious trouble for cutting detention. Something highly creditable to him has taken place while he was illegally absent. Bob keeps this dark, partly out of modesty, and partly because he does not want to incur the wrath of Mr. Quelch. This gives the Owl of the Remove his chance. It becomes known that the brave deed was done by some Greyfriars junior, and Bunter comes forward to take the honour and glory of it. Bob will not speak out at first, and his chums think it quite unlike him to decry Bunter's supposed heroism; they are all looking to see the fat junior prove himself a worthy member of the community now that he has once made a fair start. But at length, though Bob suffers a good deal through his refusal to disclose it, the truth is discovered by means of the evidence of someone outside the school, and then Bob Cherry, not William George Bunter, is shown to be

"THE HERO OF GREYFRIARS!"

THAT MISGUIDED FOREIGNER!

One of my readers writes to say that as he was returning from business the other day, and reading a copy of the "Magnet" on the way, a foreigner sitting next him asked, "Vot vos reading—a penny shocker?" "Nothing of the sort!" was the prompt and highly correct answer. "I am reading the 'Magnet,'" "Vell, an is not zat a penny shocker?" I am surprised zat all ze Engleesh boys do seem to read ect!" My loyal supporter was very indignant, and asked why he did not take the trouble to try the paper for himself before condemning it. "But non, non!" he said, "I would not so lowair myself!" My chum is rather worried about this, and wants to know whether something cannot be done to put a stop to it. I don't quite see what can be done. I should not for a moment think of taking the opinion of one Frenchman—if that can be called an opinion which was really no more than a foolish prejudice—as the opinion of France in general; but even if it could be so taken, anyone who resents it may find comfort in the reflection that the Companion Papers are intended mainly for British readers, though I am pleased to hear from time to time of many readers who are not British, but are none the less keen. I dare say there will be a great many more of them as time goes on, for the biggest war in all the world's history will assuredly draw closer together the people of all the nations which fought on the side of right and justice. Even now the study of English is quite common both in France and Russia, and after the war it will be still more so in those great countries, and also in little Belgium. Why, some day my reader may again encounter the foreigner who wounded his loyal feelings, and may be told that that gentleman is now getting the "Magnet" every week to help his boys in their English studies! I have known far more surprising things than that to happen.

NOTICES.

A. J. Lewis, A Cottage, R.M. Barracks, Stonehouse, Plymouth, wishes to form a "Magnet" League, and would be glad to hear from readers in his neighbourhood interested.

C. Marshall, 47, Teddington Road, East Southsea, wants to form a "Magnet" League in the Portsmouth district, and will be glad if readers who wish to join will write to him, enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope.

Private E. Fellows, 100827, R.A.M.C., attached 1/1 East Lancashire Field Ambulance, 42nd Division, Med. Exp. Force, would be grateful if some reader would send him a copy of the "Magnet" regularly each week.

F. Bell, 211, Western Road, Sheffield, wishes to organise a junior football league (average age 14-16) from districts such as Abbeydale, Ecclesall, Hunter's Bar, etc., for next season, and will be pleased to hear from anyone interested. Will those writing please enclose stamped, addressed envelope?

Harry George, 20, Burnham Road, Tiverton-on-Avon, Bath, invalided out of the Army some months ago, and confined to his bed most of the time since, would like to correspond with readers abroad.

H. Higgins, 230, Thistle Street, Glasgow; D. D.; and Charles McBride, 44, Park Street, Cambuslang, are forming a "Gem" and "Magnet" League in Glasgow, and would be glad if readers interested would write them, enclosing stamped and addressed envelope.

Driver J. Constable, 1204, attached 146th Infantry Brigade Headquarters, B.E.F., France, would be glad of a few old pairs of footer-knickers (not too small for himself and his chums, who are going in for cross-country running).

Private A. Newstead asks the Editor to thank for him all the readers who made so generous a response to his appeal for reading matter.

Frank Wheeler, 50, Nightingale Road, Southsea, wants to form a cricket club in his neighbourhood for boys about 14. He would be particularly glad to hear from any who have outifts of their own.

B. Daitz, 143, Brooke Road, Stoke Newington, N., will be glad to arrange cricket fixtures, home and away, for his club. Average age 17.

James Parkes, 90, Church Street, Derby, wishes to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, with the chief object of sending gifts to soldiers, and will be glad if any reader interested will send him a stamped and addressed envelope for particulars.

Private H. J. Peach, 11841, 9th Batt. Leicestershire Regiment, 37 I.B.D., Section 17, care of A. P. O. B.E.F., France, will be glad if some reader will send him the "Magnet" each week.

W. Wood, 190, Manchester Street, Oldham, is thinking of starting an amateur magazine, and would be glad to hear from readers who would contribute.

A. Hoy, 3, Ward's Place, Kilmarnock, wishes to form a "Magnet" League, open to all readers, with as a special object the helping those on active service in the way of forwarding them reading matter, etc. He will be glad to hear from anyone interested.

H. Hindson, 1246, 25 Dormitory, R.N. Barracks, Shotley, would be glad of correspondence with readers.

A. G. Fowler, 53, Kennington Road, Wollaton Road, Nottingham, wishes to start a "Magnet" and "Gem" League for readers anywhere in the United Kingdom, and would be glad if those who write him will enclose a postcard for particulars.

G. W. Jaram, H.M.S. Powerful, wishes to thank the many readers who were kind enough to send him back numbers in response to his request.

B. Brownson, 19, Townley Street, Cheetham, Manchester, wants to join a "Magnet" League in his neighbourhood, and will be glad if any reader will introduce him to one.

Wesleyan Athletic C.C. require home and away matches for the coming season. Average age 16. Apply R. G. A., 17, Hassett Road, Homerton, N.E.

A. E. Smith, 97, Lancaster Street, Newington Causeway, S.E., would be glad to correspond with "Magnet" readers.



Upon Editor

A Complete School-
Story Book, attrac-
tive to all readers.

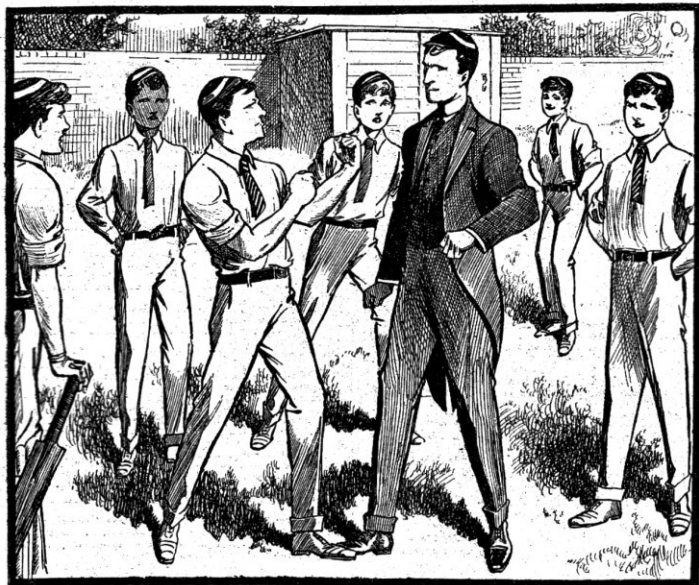


The Editor will be
obliged if you will
hand this book,
when finished with,
to a friend. . . .

THE FORBIDDEN MATCH!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Loder rushed at the burly Removite, who sprang back a couple of yards and put up his fists.
(See Chapter I.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. King Cricket!

CRICKET was in the air. Everybody at Greyfriars was discussing the grand old summer game, and Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove Form, were already at practice. The nets had been rigged up, and Wharton himself was at the wicket, smiting like

♣ Trojan at everything which came his way. For nearly eight months the Friars had wallowed on miry footer-grounds, as Bob Cherry expressed it; and the newly-mown turf of the cricket-field, harmonising with the

azure sky overhead, made the juniors feel that life was indeed worth living, albeit the nation was at war.

Excepting slackers like Billy Bunter and Lord Mauleverer, the entire Remove Form was at practice; for on the following Saturday came the match with St. Jim's, who were renowned rivals of long standing, and every fellow was keenly anxious to win a place in the eleven.

"Aren't you ever coming out, you bouncer?" asked Bob Cherry, in desperation, as he sent down a swift ball to Wharton for the ninety-ninth time.

Harry Wharton grinned, and squared his shoulders. The

next moment the leather went soaring away, far beyond the reach of the fieldsmen, to alight on the extreme outskirts of the ground.

"Hurrah!"

"Well hit, sir!"

"Harry's in topping form!" said Frank Nugent. "If only he does this sort of thing in the match we shall win hands down. He's a W. G. Grace and a giddy Trumper rolled into one!"

"I'll jolly soon shift him!" growled Johnny Bull. "Here goes!"

But Johnny, though he bowled swiftly and forcefully, found Wharton indomitable. Harry's defence was as upon a rock. He timed each stroke with wonderful accuracy and precision, and treated Johnny Bull's swifts and Nugent's slows with scant mercy.

"Get him out, somebody, for goodness' sake!" growled Peter Todd. "I'll be time for tea in an hour, and we shan't have had an innings. What's up with you, Inky? Has your dusky hand lost its cunning?"

Hurree James Ram Singh, the Nabob, of Bhamipur, grinned cheerfully, displaying to good advantage a set of white, pearly teeth.

"I am as good bowfully as I was last season," he said, in his weird and wondrous English. "But the esteemed Wharton has improved batfully."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hurree Singh gathered up the ball, and took his preliminary run. He seemed to suddenly curl himself up like a wizard, and the sphere travelled down the pitch with a truly amazing velocity.

All eyes were glued on Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove leapt out of his crease, there was a sharp crack at the moment of impact between bat and ball, and then the leather went soaring away into space, while Hurree Singh's jaw dropped, and he looked decidedly glum.

"I cannot bowl him out stumpfully," he sighed. "His form with the esteemed batfulness is—"

"Terrific!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Never mind, Inky! It's a treat to know Harry's such awfully hot stuff. If he plays like this on Saturday the Saints will be sent home with their tails between their legs, I'm thinking!"

Harry Wharton came forward with a smile.

"I don't want to rob all you fellows of an innings," he said. "You can take my place, Bob."

"Not a bit of it!" retorted Bob Cherry. "We're going to get you out, my son, or know the reason why!"

"If you want a bit of encouragement, here goes!" said Harry.

And, taking a sixpence from the pocket of his blazer, he placed it on the middle stump.

"That's for the first fellow who bowls me out!" he exclaimed.

"Good!"

The bowlers bustled round with a will. The sum of sixpence would materially assist them in getting their tea, and they resolved to move heaven and earth in order to shift the indomitable batsman.

Bob Cherry bowled, and then Inky, and Peter Todd and Vernon-Smith followed. In each case the ball was knocked flying.

"Who is this man?" gasped Peter Todd. "It doesn't seem real to me, somehow. He must be a blessed giant!"

"Buck up!" shouted Wharton. "It's getting fearfully monotonous having to slog every ball goodness knows where. Send down some stiff ones for a change!"

"Isn't that what we are doing?" hooted Squiff. "We're bowling our level best, but it's simply no good!"

"Look here," said Bolsover major, thrusting his way to the fore. "Gimme that ball, young Field, and I'll show you some fireworks!"

The Australian junior grunted, and tossed the ball to the bully of the Remove. Bolsover took a hop, skip, and a jump, and the sphere whizzed from his hand with the velocity of a Chinese cracker. Unfortunately, it shot off at a tangent, heading straight for Gerald Field, the unpopular prefect, who was striding across the turf.

Loder saw the danger, but not before it was too late. The ball gave a sudden vicious jump into the air, and cannoned violently against Loder's shin.

"Yaroooooh!"

The Sixth-Former uttered a wild howl of anguish, and danced about on the greensward like a dervish. The Removites gurgled and chuckled incoherently. They could have fallen on Bolsover's neck and hugged him at that moment.

Loder caressed the injured part, and then hobbled towards the bully of the Remove.

"You cheeky young cub!" he hissed, his thin, sallow face

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distorted with fury. "How dare you deliberately hurl a cricket-ball at one of your superiors!"

Bolsover stared at Loder coolly, without removing his hands from his pockets.

"How dare you deliberately get in the line of fire when I'm about to bowl?" he mimicked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder choked and spluttered as if he were on the verge of an apopleptic fit.

"I—I'll jolly well slaughter you!" he snarled.

"Slaughter away, then," said Bolsover insolently. "I'm not afraid of a long-legged, smoky-boulder like you!"

Loder wasted no more time in words. He rushed pell-mell at the burly Removite, who sprang back a couple of yards and put up his fists.

"Mum—mum—my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, drawing a deep breath. "Am I dreaming? Carry me home to die, somebody! The mad idiot! Bolsover's actually going for Loder!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Champions of the Oppressed!

THERE was no mistake about it. Bolsover major, his big fists circling through the air, was pummelling the lanky prefect for all he was worth.

So sudden, so unexpected was the attack, that Loder was thrown completely off his balance. That a cheeky tag in the Remove would have the unwarranted audacity to enter into a bout of fisticuffs with him had not entered into Loder's calculations at all.

"Go it, Bolsover!" shouted the Removites, when they had sufficiently mastered their astonishment. "Give him a jolly good lammung!"

Under ordinary circumstances Bolsover would not have stood a dog's chance against his powerful adversary; but the surprise attack counted largely in his favour. He rushed in again and again, and Loder received a punch in the chest that fairly doubled him up.

"Well hit, sir!" roared Bob Cherry, prancing about in an ecstasy. "Oh, well hit!"

But Bolsover hadn't finished yet. Following up the advantage already gained, he shot out his left, and it crashed against Loder's chin in a delightful uppercut.

The prefect reeled for one giddy second, and then, to the unbounded amazement of the onlookers, he fell like a log.

"There!" said Bolsover. "If you want some more you're welcome to a second helping!"

Loder lay prone for a moment; then he leapt to his feet like a Jack-in-the-box. There was an expression on his face so brutal, so revolting, that the juniors instinctively shuddered.

Then, almost before the spectators divined what was happening, Loder shot out his right foot, and kicked the Removite with all his force. Bolsover gave one short moan of pain and rolled over in the grass.

There was a silence, almost terrible in its intensity for a moment, and then a roar of rage went up from the assembled throng of juniors. As if moved by the same uncontrollable instinct, they surged towards the prefect in a menacing mob.

"Oh, you cad!" exclaimed Wharton. "You beastly cad to kick a fellow when he's down!"

"He deserved it!" snarled Loder.

"And you deserve this!" said Bob Cherry.

And Bob rushed upon the rascally prefect, smiting him in between the eyes with such vigour that Loder crashed to the ground.

He staggered blindly to his feet, but the Removites were upon him like a herd of wolves. Maddened by the sight of Loder's cadish conduct in kicking Bolsover, they hit out recklessly, regardless of possible consequences.

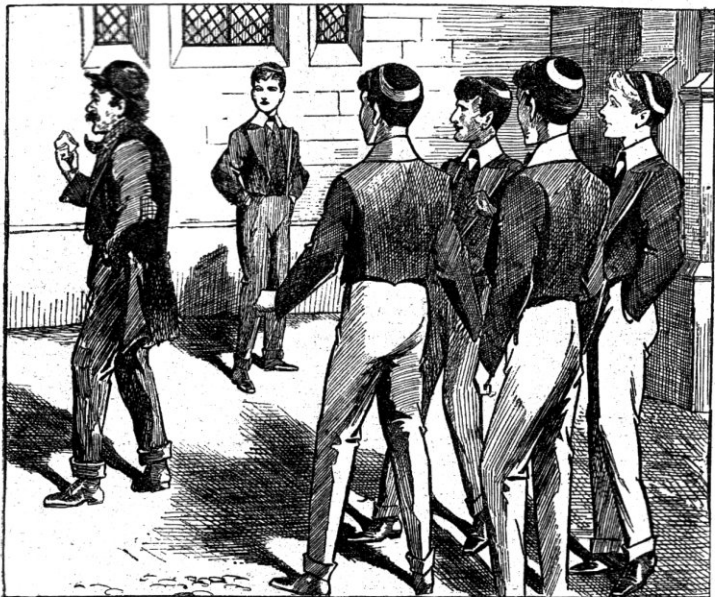
"Yooop!" yelled Loder, as he found himself the target for all sorts and conditions of blows. "You shall suffer for this, you young hooligans! Help! Wingate! Courtney! Save me from these young sweeps!"

Wingate and Courtney, who had been walking round the cricket-field deep in conversation, looked up on hearing Loder's frantic shout, and hastened upon the scene. The captain of Greyfriars almost fell down as he saw what was happening. He could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes.

"Wharton! Cherry! Nugent! Bull! Have you gone mad?" he thundered. "How dare you presume to lay hands on a prefect! Leave Loder alone at once! Leave him alone, I tell you!"

The Removites heard, but were too angry to heed. They continued to pummel Loder with unabated fury.

Wingate and Courtney sped away with their respective studies, and returned a moment later with stout asphalts.



A few minutes later the juniors were surprised to see a revolting-looking wretch come out of the school building into the Close. (See Chapter 6.)

Swish, swish, swish!

The two seniors wrought tremendous execution, and the juniors scattered before their fierce onslaught like chaff before a cyclone.

"Ow, ow, ow!" roared Bob Cherry, who had sustained numerous casualties.

Wingate paused, panting.

"Now, you kids," he said sternly. "I demand an explanation at once, or things will go hard with you!"

"There's the explanation!" flashed Harry Wharton, pointing to Bolsover, who had risen to his feet, his face drawn with the pain of Loder's vicious kick.

"Great Scott!" gasped Wingate. "It seems that there is some justification for your conduct after all. Have you been up to your confounded bullying tricks again, Loder?"

"Mind your own bizney!"

"It is my bizney," said Wingate warmly. "Tell me exactly what happened, Wharton!"

"Bolsover happened to bowl a wide," said Harry, "and the ball struck Loder on the shin. He went for Bolsover baldheaded; and when he found he was getting the worst of the argument, he kicked him!"

"Lies!" said Loder savagely.

Wingate's lip curled contemptuously.

"You are the more-like'ly liar, Loder," he said. "I've never found Wharton out in a falsehood yet. You have bullied and tyrannised once too often, and now the worm has turned. I haven't an ounce of sympathy for you. In THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 450.

fact, had not these juniors taught you a lesson, I should have felt sorely tempted to thrash you myself!"

"So you encourage this—this defiance of authority!" barked Loder, beside himself with passion. "Very well! I will lay the entire facts before the Head, and see what he has to say about it."

Wingate shrugged his shoulders.

"That threat does not terrorise me," he said. "You can go your own way, and be hanged! Come along, Courtney! I sha'n't be able to keep my hands off the beast if I stay here."

The two seniors strode away, and Loder strode after them. He went direct to the Head's study, with hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness in his heart. He was ever at loggerheads with the chums of the Remove; and congratulated himself that, on this occasion at any rate, he would succeed in his endeavours to make things decidedly warm for Harry Wharton & Co.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Driven to the Wall!

IN Study No. 1 in the Remove passage all was merry and bright. Hurree Singh was bustling about frying sausages, and Johnny Bull had sentenced a huge cherry-cake to be drawn and quartered. The Famous Five were in the best of spirits, and did not seem to be sharing the ancient preacher's views on life—namely, that all was vanity.

Harry Wharton & Co., in their eager desire for the cup that cheered, had forgotten all about Gerald Loder for the moment. True, the obnoxious prefect had babbled about reporting them to the Head; but the juniors believed this to be all moonshine. They little dreamed that Loder would put his threat into effect, because the Head, inquiring as to the source of the trouble, might have discovered Loder's brutal treatment of Bolsover Major.

But the Removites had reckoned without their host. Loder was in so savage a mood that he was obsessed by one thought only—to put a halter round the necks of the Famous Five.

Just as these cheery youths were commencing tea, with the keen, healthy appetites that only vigorous exercises can give, there came a knock at the study door, and Trotter, the page, looked in.

"Which the 'Ead wants to see all you young gents in 'is study at once!" said Trotter.

"Oh, my excited aunt!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Loder's reported us after all, the beast!"

"Looks like it," growled Johnny Bull. "Keep a stiff upper lip, my sons, and we shall come through all serene!"

The juniors strolled along to the Head's study, and entered in response to his command.

Dr. Locke sat at his writing-table, the thunder-clouds gathered on his brow. Beside him, his face pale with a passion that had not yet exhausted itself, stood Gerald Loder.

"Now for the giddy fireworks!" murmured Bob Cherry.

The Head rose majestically to his feet.

"Loder has come to me with a very serious complaint," he said, sternly. "It appears that, less than half an hour ago, you assaulted him on the public playing-fields without any provocation whatsoever. This is a most serious charge, and unless the matter can be explained to my satisfaction, I shall have no alternative but to visit heavy and condign punishment upon each of you. Other members of the Removite Form I am given to understand, took part in the outrage; I will deal with them later."

Harry Wharton stepped forward, his eyes gleaming.

"Loder has grossly misrepresented the case to you, sir," he said. "We attacked him, I admit, but under great provocation. He was using Bolsover Major as a sort of football, and kicked him savagely on the shin."

"Is that so, Loder?" asked the Head severely.

"Of course not, sir! These infernal young reprobates are born liars!"

"Silence, sir!" raved the Head, stamping his foot angrily.

"Moderate your expressions, please! I will not tolerate such language in my presence!"

Loder bit his lip.

"I prefer to accept Wharton's statement as being a true representation of the case," continued the Head.

"You take his word before mine?" hooted Loder.

"Silence, I repeat!—Senior and prefect though you are, I will box your ears rather than have you speak to me in that disrespectful manner!"

Dr. Locke then turned to the assembled juniors.

"I realise that you are not very far in the wrong, after all, my boys," he said. "But it was very wild and heinous of you to indulge in fist-cuffs with a prefect of my appointment. You will apologise to Loder here and now, or take the consequences!"

"We cannot apologise, sir, for something we're not sorry we did," said Harry Wharton stoutly.

"Very well, I will leave your punishment in Loder's hands. But you are not to flog these boys, Loder. You understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Loder. "And what about the other young scoundrels—I mean boys—who took part in the attack upon me?"

"I leave them also at your mercy."

"Thank you, sir. I will deal with them as I think fit."

And Loder, followed by the Famous Five, left the study.

The Head had made a grave mistake in thus letting Harry Wharton & Co.'s fate pass into the hands of the unpopular prefect.

He knew Loder, but he did not know him well enough. Had Dr. Locke known what a bully, tyrant, and rank outsider Loder was, the latter's prefecture would not have held good for another instant.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, as the little party passed out into the passage, "I suppose you're going to lick us, Loder, in spite of what the Head says!"

"The lickfulness will be terrific!" groaned Hurree Singh ruefully.

Loder gave a grim chuckle.

"I shan't lay my hands on you," he said. "You're not worth it!"

"Oh, good!" said Frank Nugent.

"Instead, I sentence you all to stay in on Saturday afternoon."

"What!"

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MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FOR READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1D. OUT TO-DAY.

Startled cries came from the lips of the Famous Five. The same thought struck them at once. Saturday was the day of the match with St. Jim's!

"I—I say!" gasped Harry Wharton. "We must have Saturday free, at all hazards! We've got a fixture with St. Jim's on!"

"I know," said Loder, with a wicked grin. "That's why I'm telling you to stop in—you and the rest of the fellows who were making asses of themselves at the nets this afternoon."

"Then you're a bigger cad than ever!" stormed Bob Cherry.

"Better language, please," said Loder, "or I'll take you before the Head again; and you'll find he won't be so lenient with you next time!"

Bob Cherry had sufficient sense to subside. He did not wish the situation to be made blacker than it was already.

"Now, you understand?" said Loder, rejoicing in the knowledge that he held all the trump cards. "You're to remain in your Form-room from two to six on Saturday afternoon, and occupy your time by writing me a thousand lines from Virgil. I shall be knocking about myself, to see that my orders are obeyed; and if they're not, woe betide you!"

And the prefect at once wended his way to the nearest bath-room for a much-needed wash and brush-up after the rough handling he had received.

He left Harry Wharton & Co. staring at each other in the passage, utterly crestfallen.

"That's done it," said Johnny Bull at length. "Loder's got the pull over us, and the St. Jim's match is mucked up! It's ghastly!"

"Simply sickening!" groaned Nugent.

"The beautiful Loder wants his ludicrous eyes smitten blackfully!" said Hurree Singh.

"We can't touch the skunk!" said Wharton wretchedly.

"It would only mean storing up further trouble for ourselves. Come on! Let's get back to the study and finish tea."

And the Famous Five, much less chirpy and cheery than usual, made tracks for No. 1 Study.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Deep, Dark Plot!

THE repast which was spread out on the study table seemed to have lost all its charm. The sausages, fried with that superior skill possessed only by Hurree Singh, had grown cold and unappetising.

The sardines seemed dry and tasteless, and the tea itself appeared so weak as to be unable to stand up in the pot. Everything seemed dismal and depressing to Harry Wharton & Co. just then. Like Rachel of old, they mourned, and would not be comforted.

"It's rotten!" said Bob Cherry.

"Simply abominable!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I haven't the heart to write to Tom Merry and cry off the match," said Harry Wharton. "It would look as if we were in a state of blue funk."

"Quite so," assented Nugent. "We don't want our reputation damaged at this end of the season. The match must be played at all costs."

"But how?" asked Wharton helplessly.

Frank Nugent pushed his plate away from him, and looked up with an excited gleam in his eyes.

"We must get rid of Loder!" he said.

"What!"

"Loder's the only stumbling-block," Nugent went on. "If we can kidnap him and stow him away somewhere while the match is in progress everything in the garden will be lovely!"

Wharton shook his head rather doubtfully.

"It sounds a lot too steep," he said. "And even if we worked the giddy oracle, think of the row there would be afterwards! The Head would come down on us like a thousand of bricks."

"Rats!" said Nugent. "Suppose we shove masks over our chivvies, and smuggle the beast into the tower? Nobody goes there except once in a blue moon, and he wouldn't be any the wiser as to who put him there."

"He'd make a pretty shrewd guess, I'm thinking," remarked Johnny Bull.

"He could guess till he was black in the face. He'd have no proof that we were the giddy kidnappers, and we'd come out top dog, as sure as Fate."

"Hang it all, that's not a bad wheeze!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, with enthusiasm. "I vote we do as Franky suggests."

"But even if we got Loder under lock and key he'd bawl to be let out," protested Johnny Bull. "Then it would be all up."

"There's such a thing as a gag, isn't there?" said Nugent. "We'd make him as maim as a mouse, don't you fret. He'll be sorry he ever crossed our path."

"Why not kidnap him to-night to be on the safe side?" said Bob Cherry. "Two or three days' confinement in the tower ought to bring him to his senses. One of us could sneak up with some grub occasionally, and entertain him with polite and chatty conversation."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The scheme took the juniors' fancy. It would be a fine score over their old adversary to stow him away for a period of two or three days. The more they thought of it the more strongly it appealed to them.

"Is it a go?" asked Nugent.

"Rather!"

"The grolfulness is terrific!"

The Famous Five leaned over the table and grasped hands in solemn compact. Then Bob Cherry gave vent to a sudden sharp exclamation.

"Who's that snuffling like a blessed bull-pup?" he inquired. "Listen!"

A distinct sound of snuffling came to the Removites' ears. Then, whilst they listened, a loud and distinct sneeze burst forth:

"Atishoo! Atishum-yum!"

"What the merry dickens—" gasped Wharton.

Then, with a startled expression on his face, he dived under the table. There was a muffled cry from beneath—a familiar cry which made the juniors gnash their teeth with rage.

"—I say, you fellows—"

Bunter gasped everybody.

Harry Wharton groined about underneath the table, and his hand came into contact with Billy Bunter's anemic-looking mop of hair. He gave a violent tug, and hauled the fat junior forth into the light of day.

"You fat toad!"

"You rotten eavesdropper!"

"You burbling great bladder of lard!"

Billy Bunter struggled and squirmed in Harry Wharton's iron grasp, but he might just as well endeavour to free himself from the tenacious clutches of a Polar bear.

"Now, you spring worm," said Wharton, "we're going to put you through it properly, without any half-measures."

"Two—ow!" squeaked Bunter, like a stuck pig. "I—I haven't heard a single word of what you've been saying—honest! I didn't hear you plotting and planning to kidnap Loder—I didn't really!"

The Famous Five looked daggers at the fat, unwieldy Owl of the Remove. Bunter was always getting in the way at the least desirable moment, and this time he had fairly exceeded the limits of endurance.

"It's all up!" said Nugent dolefully. "Now that Bunter knows, the whole school will know. It'll be common knowledge in next to no time!"

"I won't split!" yelled Bunter. "Lemme go, Wharton, you beast! You're wrenching my hair out by the roots!"

"And serve you jolly well right!" said Harry. "What were you doing in this study, you fat forager?"

"I dropped in to see if there was any chance of a little snack," explained Bunter.

"You thieving rotter! What shall we do with him, you fellows?"

"Roast him on the fire," suggested Nugent.

"Give him a broadside with a cricket-stump!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Flay him alive!" was Hurree Singh's humane comment.

"Don't you dare!" screamed Bunter, in great alarm. "I'll tell Loder and Quelch and the Head! I'll give you away to everybody if you so much as lay a finger on me!"

"You worm!"

"He's got us in a cleft-stick, and no mistake!" said Nugent. "And there's no stopping Bunter's confounded jaw! It's like the brook—goes on for ever!"

"I won't say a word if you'll make it worth my while," said Bunter. "Look here, I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I'm expecting a postal-order from one of my titled relations shortly—"

"Titled cork!" growled Johnny Bull. "We've lived long enough to know that the postal-order yarn is all moonshine! Still, I suppose we shall have to advance you something to keep your confounded rat-trap closed! Name your figure, you beastly blackmailer!"

"Five bob, please!" said Bunter promptly.

Harry Wharton produced a two-shilling piece, and Hurree Singh added another. Frank Nugent managed sixpence. Johnny Bull fivepence, and Bob Cherry made up the amount with a battered and ancient-looking coin of extremely doubtful extraction.

"There!" said Wharton. "If we find that you've breathed a whisper about our designs on Loder to anyone else we'll rend you limb from limb!"

Billy Bunter giggled, and waddled out of the study. He

EVERY MONDAY, **The "Magnet"** LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

was not likely to betray the Famous Five so long as he could blackmail them at his pleasure.

As for Harry Wharton & Co., they were feeling distinctly annoyed and exasperated. But they felt that they must give Bunter a regular supply of hush-money until after the match with St. Jim's, when they would be able to give the only, contemptible Owl of the Remove the licking of his life.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Spirited Away!

"TUMBLE IN, there!"

Gerald Loder put his lean, cadaverous-looking face in the doorway of the Remove dormitory whilst the Remove were undressing. It was easy to tell from Loder's impatient, excited manner that he was going "on the razzle." Pub-hunting had not been frequent among the Greyfriars blades since the great European conflict began; but occasionally the black sheep of the Sixth dropped in at the Cross Keys for a smoke and a game of cards with the amiable landlord, Mr. Cobb, and on this particular evening he was about to renew his nocturnal excursions.

"Buck up, Bunter!" said Loder tersely. "Get a move on, Cherry! You fags are as slow as a wet week! Is everybody in bed? Right! Good-night all!"

"Good-night, Loder!"

The dormitory door slammed, and the prefect hastened down the stairs.

When he had gone, Bob Cherry leaned over towards Harry Wharton's bed.

"To-night's the night!" he muttered. "We'll wait up for Loder, and nail him on his return from the Cross Keys. Five of us ought to do the trick—what!"

"Yes, rather!"

One by one the other fellows sank into the arms of Morpheus; but the Famous Five propped themselves up on their pillows and remained awake.

Ten o'clock chimed out from the old clock tower—the self-same tower which, in two hours' time, if fortune favoured the Famous Five, would harbour that king of tyrants, Gerald Loder.

By eleven o'clock Hurree Singh and Frank Nugent had fallen into a doze; by half-past Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry had found that, though the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak. But Harry Wharton remained on the alert, and the first stroke of midnight saw him slip from his bed—and commence to dress. Then he proceeded to Bob Cherry's bed, and thumped him.

"Wharrer marree?" murmured Bob, in drowsy tones.

"Time for the dreadful deed!" said Wharton briskly.

"Turn out, my son!"

"Yaw—aw—aw!"

After a little more persuasion, in which a wet sponge played a prominent part, Bob Cherry rose. The others, however, denuded a good deal, and Wharton and Bob had to literally yank them from their respective beds.

"Dud—dud—don't you think we might put it off till another night?" shivered Nugent.

"Rats!"

"Or leave it till the daytime!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"More rats!"

The slackers saw that Harry Wharton was in deadly earnest, and made no further demur. Noiselessly they slipped on their garments, and then crept down the stairs and along the passage to the box-room window. Loder invariably returned by this route from his unsavoury excursions.

"Buzz off and get the masks, Franky!" said Wharton. "You know where they are—with the theatrical clobber in the study!"

Nugent sped away through the darkness, returning a moment later, with the necessary items. The Famous Five fastened the black crapo masks over the upper portion of their faces, so that they were totally unrecognisable. Then they slipped back into the deep shadows and awaited events.

Loder was not long. The waiting juniors heard his tread in the Close, and his muttered voice exclaiming:

"Cleaned out, hang it! It's always the way! I never get any luck!"

Bob Cherry chuckled softly.

"He won't get any now!" he muttered.

Loder unfastened the window, and commenced to clamber through. Little did he dream that five masked juniors lay in ambush for him on the other side.

Suddenly Harry Wharton, in a deep, unnatural voice, zapped out his command:

"Collar him!"

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And like arrows from a bow five figures sprang upon the unsuspecting prefect.

So sudden, so unexpected was the attack, that Loder was thrown completely off his balance, and could offer no resistance. Bob Cherry produced a stout length of cord, and the juniors trussed their victim up like a fowl, Johnny Bull ramming a gag in the prefect's mouth as he did so.

Then Nugent and Hurree-Singh clambered out into the quadrangle, and the other three bundled Loder's helpless form to them through the aperture.

The scheme had succeeded beyond the juniors' expectations. They had expected a stern struggle at least; but Loder had submitted as tamely and quietly as if it had been prearranged that he should do so.

"This is great!" murmured Bob Cherry, sotto voce. "In with him!"

The kidnappers bore their unresisting burden through the old porch, and ascended the old stone stairs.

Everything worked like a charm. Within ten minutes of his return to Greyfriars, Gerald Loder was lying, bound and gagged, in the topmost recesses of the tower.

The Famous Five did not speak again in Loder's presence, lest their voices should betray them. They left him chafing at his bonds, and gurgling spasmodically through his gag; and then, with manly chuckles, the daring band of kidnappers clattered down the stairs and made tracks for the Remove dormitory.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Lost, Stolen, or Strayed?

WHERE was Gerald Loder?

Everybody was asking that question of everybody else next morning. Even the Famous Five asked it, for the sake of avoiding possible suspicion.

Morning chapel was over, breakfast was over, and there wasn't a sign or a shadow of Loder. He had vanished as completely and unaccountably as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

There were no fears shed at Loder's disappearance. It was rather the other way. Those fellows who frequently fell under the ban of his bullying hailed the news with ill-concealed delight, and fervently hoped that the prefect's absence would be permanent and not temporary. Life at Greyfriars without Loder would be the nearest possible approach to an earthly paradise.

Wingate and the rest of the seniors made an extensive search. They ransacked the studies and the dormitories, and made inquiries in the school sanatorium; but, naturally enough, they did not dream of searching in the old tower. The prevailing idea amongst the seniors was, not that Loder had been kidnapped, but that he had absented himself of his own accord. But though they hunted high and low they failed to find anything in the nature of a clue.

Many and various were the opinions and theories expounded amongst the juniors. Skinner was persistent in the morbid belief that Loder, returning home from his nocturnal visit to the Cross Keys, had lost his footing on the towing-path, and was now lying amongst the reeds and rushes of the Sark, his sightless eyes turned up to the sky.

The idea of Loder being drowned struck awe into the minds of many of the more timid fellows such as Alonzo Todd, but it was not given general credence. The more popular view was that put forward by Bolsover major—namely, that Loder, having got into debt up to his ears through gambling, and seeing no prospect of being able to pay, had run away from Greyfriars, never to return.

"Talk about a giddy mystery!" said Vernon-Smith, as he chatted with a number of Removees in the Close. "It beats me altogether! I don't believe Skinner's theory, and Bolsover's sounds a bit feeble. If Loder was heavily in debt—and it's quite probable—he'd hang on in the hope that something would turn up. What in thunder can have happened to him?"

Bob Cherry gave a chuckle. "I should have thought a cute chap like you, Smyth, would have been able to ferret things out," he said. "It's as easy as falling off a form to an amateur Sherlock Holmes."

Vernon-Smith gave a jump. "Do you mean to say you fellows know where Loder is?" he exclaimed.

"We do—we do!" grinned Nugent. "Shall I tell him, Harry?"

Harry Wharton cast his eyes over the assembled juniors. They were all members of the Remove eleven.

"That's all right," he said.

Nugent gleefully explained how the cad of the Sixth had been kidnapped, and where he had been hidden. Vernon-Smith gave a gasp of astonished incredulity.

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"My hat!" he muttered. "You've stowed him away up in the tower?"

"Not half!"

"But—but there'll be the dickens to pay after the match! Loder will tell the Head who it was who collared him."

"He'll have a job," chuckled Johnny Bull. "We were in deep disgrace, my son. We sported masks which are the property of the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society, and had some old coats on, so that we must have looked more like burglars than anything else."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" exclaimed Dick Fenfold. "You fellows have got nerve enough for fifty!"

"The worst of it is," said Wharton dolefully, "that Bunter knows exactly what's happened, and he's extorting hush-money from us."

Vernon-Smith whistled.

"If the fat cad blabs it out before Saturday, the match will be probably knocked on the head. Still, we must hope for the best."

Frank Nugent suddenly dashed into the building, saying he was going to fetch something from the study. A few minutes later the juniors were surprised to see a revolting-looking wretch come out of the school building into the Close.

"What the merry dickens—" began Mark Linley. "It's our serene, young gent," said the tramp, with a grin. "I'm a goin' hup to the tower to feed the dorg."

"Nugent!" gasped Harry Wharton.

Frank Nugent burst into a chuckle. He had performed a lightning transformation scene, and carried a packet of sandwiches in his hand. He could not have chosen a more opportune time to feed Loder, because the masters were still discussing the senior's disappearance in the Head's study, and the prefects, with Wingate in command, were hunting for Loder in the vicinity of the gym. The coast was clear, and Frank's chums were ready to warn him in case of emergency.

Nugent was inside the tower and up the steps in a twinkling. He found Loder writhing under his bonds, which were considerably loosened, for the prefect had made a rare struggle for liberty.

"Good-morning!" said Nugent in a thick voice. "'Ad a pleasant night—work? 'Scuse me a minnit, an' I'll truss you up a bit tighter. Wot's that? You can't eat no food wiv a gag in yer mouth? Orlright. Just you lay quiet a jiffy, an' I'll feed yer."

Loder had been mumbling frantically through his gag, which had not been thrust very tightly into his mouth. Nugent removed it, and began to feed the prefect with sandwiches. Loder was so ravenous that he did not speak until the last of the sandwiches had been devoured. Then he fastened his eyes on Frank Nugent's with malicious hatred.

"You scoundrel!" he hissed savagely. "Why have you stowed me up here? And who are you, anyway?"

"Shut that there rat-trap o' yours!" said Nugent. "Wot 'ave you got to grumble at? A nice 'ard stone floor to sleep on, an' good, nourishin' food brought up at least once a day! You order to be 'appy en' satisfied, like the bloke on the recruitin' poster."

"How long am I to be kept in this ridiculous position?" panted Loder.

"Till Saturday afternoon—if you're a good little boy, that is. An' now I'll jist put this 'ere bit o' rag in yer mouth agen, to keep you from shoutin' the 'ous down. There! That's right! Good-bye, Bluebell!"

And Frank Nugent, with many chuckles, descended the steps, whipping off his disguise as he did so. Just as he rejoined his chums, who had been keeping strict watch and ward in the Close, the bell clanged out for morning school.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Wheeze That Worked!

MR. QUELCH was looking considerably worried when he swept into the Form-room.

"You boys have doubtless heard of the strange and inexplicable disappearance of Loder?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Bob Cherry; "and I was going to suggest—"

"Well, Cherry?"

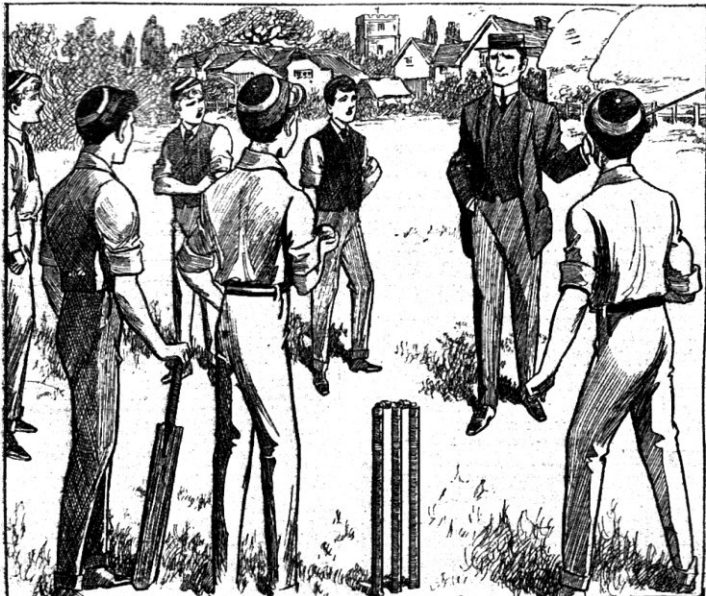
"Ahem! Don't you think it would be a good idea if we formed search-parties, sir, to scour the district?"

"To the detriment of your Form-work?"

"Oh, no, sir! We should pile in like Trojans afterwards!" Mr. Quelch reflected for a moment.

"I will ask Dr. Locke's opinion," he said, and left the room with rustling gown.

A great brain-wave had occurred to Bob Cherry, and his



The Remove-master strode towards the players with fury in his face.
(See Chapter 8.)

communicated it in an undertone to Harry Wharton, who sat next to him.

"This'll give us a chance to put in some cricket practice!" he murmured.

"My hat! What an awfully deep bouncer you are, Bob!" said Wharton. "I wondered what you were getting at when you asked Quelch about forming a search-party. But, hang it all, we can't play on the cricket-pitch, in full view of anybody who comes along!"

"Of course not, fathead! But there's such a place as Courtfield Common; at least, there was when I was a boy."

Harry Wharton understood, and grinned. It would be quite a relief from Virgil and Euclid to improve the shining hour at the wickets.

Mr. Quelch returned at that moment, and smiled benignantly upon his charges.

"You are all excused from lessons, my boys," he announced. "It has been deemed advisable by Dr. Locke, before calling in the police to trace Loder's whereabouts, to make a thorough search of the neighbourhood. The poor fellow may have lost his footing somewhere, and become incapacitated from walking."

"I don't think!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "You will search in different directions," Mr. Quelch went on, "and report to me at one o'clock any discoveries you may be fortunate enough to make. I rely upon you to leave no stone unturned in order to find Loder. The clats will now dismiss."

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter. "What a cunning wheeze of yours, Cherry!"

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MONDAY—

"THE HERO OF GREYFRIARS!"

"Shurrup, you rapping porpoise!" hissed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, you know," said Bunter peevishly, as the Removites fled out into the passage, "I've no intention of giving the game away, if that's what you're thinking. If you want me to keep mum till Saturday night, though, you must make it worth my while."

"Here you are, you worm!" muttered Wharton.

And he thrust a shilling into the fat, greasy palm of the Owl of the Remove.

"Here, I say!" protested Bunter, in shrill tones. "What's the good of a measly bob?"

"You'll get no more," said Wharton.

"Really! Then I'll go and have a nice little chat with Quelch on the subject of Loder. I might be able to give him a clue."

"Come back, you blackmailing beast! Here you are! Take this half crown, and if you dare breathe so much as a murmur about Loder, there'll be a dead porpoise found about Greyfriars!"

Bunter pocketed the coin with a chuckle. He was making hay while the sun shone with a vengeance! So long as he had access to a horn of plenty, the fat junior was in the seventh heaven of delight. He rolled away at once to the school tuck-shop, totally regardless of the fact that he was supposed to be assisting in the search for Loder.

Harry Wharton & Co. armed themselves with a couple of bats and half a dozen stumps, and Johnny Bull dropped a brand-new cricket-ball into his capacious pocket. The juniors were proceeding thus to the gates when they were suddenly halted by Wingate of the Sixth.

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"What's the little game?" asked the captain of Greyfriars, looking puzzled.

"We're going to search the land for Loder," explained Bulstrode.

"Indeed! It looks precious much as though you're going to a cricket tournament."

"Stumps and bats are very handy weapons," remarked Bob Cherry sagely. "Who knows that Loder hasn't fallen foul of a gang of roughs? If he has we shall require the necessary instruments for wiping up the ground with them."

Winkate frowned rather doubtfully, but did not question the juniors further, greatly to their relief.

"Gee-whiz! That was a close shave," said Bob Cherry. "Now, are we all here?"

The members of the eleven responded. Besides the Famous Five, there were Peter Todd and Bulstrode and Squiff and Vernon-Smith and Penfold, and Mark Linley and Russell were also with them.

The rest of the Form, under Bolsover and Skinner, went in a totally different direction. Not knowing the truth with regard to Loder, they took the search seriously, and resolved to discover the whereabouts of the missing prefect by hook or crook.

Harry Wharton & Co. proceeded to the wide expanse of common which skirted the little country town of Courtfield. They did not go direct, lest such a proceeding might excite suspicion, but struck off through the woods, eventually coming out on the main road, a couple of miles from Greyfriars.

"Now for a glorious game of cricket!" said Nugent, when the common came in sight. "This is a ripping change from lessons, and no mistake! We ought to be able to make hay of the Saints on Saturday, if only Bunter doesn't split."

"If!" said Wharton doubtfully. "It will require nearly a term's pocket-money to keep that cad from splitting."

"And Wharton was right.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER. The Chopper Comes Down!

"PLAY!" Peter Todd swung the ball in the air, and it whizzed down the pitch towards Harry Wharton, who was batting. The juniors were playing six-a-side, the Famous Five and Vernon-Smith tackling the remainder.

Harry Wharton showed the same convincing form that he had displayed the day before. He smote in the approved style of Johnny Hobbs, and the runs mounted up at an amazing rate. Frank Nugent was batting at the other end, and he contented himself with occasional hits, leaving his more experienced chum to do the lion's share of the run-getting.

It was a glorious day, and the sunshine flooded the common with its beauty. The bare notion of grinding out Latin verbs in the Form-rooms made the juniors shudder.

Half an hour passed—an hour—and Wharton and Nugent remained unseparated. They had amassed no less than eighty runs between them, and were enjoying themselves immensely.

Then, just as they were at the zenith of their powers, there came a sudden, sharp command which made their hearts stand still.

"Quickly!" gasped Nugent, the bat falling from his nerveless grasp. "Oh, my hat. That's done it!"

"About-giddy-lutely!" said Peter Todd.

The Remove-master strode towards the players with fury in his face. He had felt very concerned on the subject of Loder's disappearance, and had decided to take a walk himself in order to make personal inquiries in the various villages. He had been almost flabbergasted at the sight of

a dozen of his pupils, who were supposed to be conducting a vigorous search for Loder, calmly playing cricket!

"Do my eyes deceive me?" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Wharton! Nugent! Todd! How dare you! How dare you, I repeat!"

"We—we were just having a little game to—ahem!—to pass the time away, sir!" said Wharton feebly.

Mr. Quelch almost fumed at the mouth.

"You are supposed to be searching for Loder!" he said angrily. "The poor fellow may be lying mutilated in the roadway, or helpless in the grip of a gang of ruffians; and yet you, with unexampled callousness, coolly occupy your time in playing cricket! I feel sorely tempted to castigate each of you with my walking-cane, but on second thoughts I will not do so."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Bob Cherry.

"Instead, I shall take you before Dr. Locke!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The faces of the juniors fell. The Head would not be likely to take a lenient view of their conduct; and it was quite on the cards that he would order them to remain under detention on Saturday, in which case their elaborate kidnapping of Gerald Loder would avail them nothing.

Gathering up the stumps and other impediments, the Remove players tramped off towards the school in the wake of Mr. Quelch.

It was a very mournful procession that streamed in at the gates of Greyfriars half an hour later, and had anybody played "The Dead March" en route, Harry Wharton & Co. could not help thinking it would have been most appropriate.

The morning was still at a comparatively early stage, and Dr. Locke was seated in his revolving-chair, thinking deeply, and trying to solve the deep problem of what had happened to Loder. He looked up in astonishment at the army of intruders.

"Why—what—Bless my soul! What is the meaning of this extraordinary influx of juniors, Mr. Quelch?"

"I have to lodge a very serious complaint against them all," said the Remove-master. "By your sanction, they left the school under the pretence of making a search for Loder, instead of which they have been playing cricket on Courtfield Common, where I stumbled across them by accident. Such conduct surely merits a sound flogging!"

"I quite agree!" said the Head. "You boys have been guilty of grave wrongdoing, and I will endeavour to bring home to you the enormity of your offence. Wharton, hold out your hand!"

The captain of the Remove obeyed. He received four stinging cuts on each of his palms, and bore the terrific castigation with Spartan fortitude.

"Now, Cherry!" snapped the Head.

Bob Cherry was not a fellow to make a fuss about anything. He took his gruel calmly, and was even smiling when the ordeal was over.

Then the Head proceeded to dole out the same dose to the rest of the offenders. His arm ached when he had chastised half a dozen, and Mr. Quelch was called upon to complete the innings, so to speak.

Some of the cricketers, who were not made of such stern stuff as the others, gasped and squirmed as the cruel-looking cad descended. But they went through with it all the same, and were vastly relieved to find that the Head made no mention of Saturday's match.

"You will now proceed to your Form-room!" commanded Dr. Locke sternly. "And if you transgress in this way again, I shall administer a public flogging in Big Hall!"

Gladly enough the juniors quitted the scene of their punishment. They had had it pretty stiffly, and, unlike the celebrated Oliver Twist, were not exactly pining for more.

Mr. Quelch had a very short way with them in class for the remainder of the morning. He came down heavy on those who failed to give him complete satisfaction; and Harry Wharton & Co. felt that—for a time at any rate—life was scarcely worth living.

Shortly before dinner-time Bolsover major and his fellow-searchers returned footsore and weary to the school. They were hailed by an inquisitive crowd.

"No luck!" said Skinner. "There ain't a sign of Loder anywhere. Every barn, ditch, field, and haystack within a four-mile radius has been searched, but it's N.G. Goodness knows what's happened to our tame tyrant!"

"He seems to have disappeared off the face of the earth!" growled Bolsover. "No more searching for me! I'm fed up!"

And neither Skinner nor Bolsover could for the life of them understand why the Famous Five and their friends would persist in chucking. Had they known the truth—namely, that Gerald Loder was lying concealed in the old tower—there would have been much tearing of hair and gnashing of teeth.

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SATURDAY dawned at length—a clear and cloudless day, with the breath of premature summer in the air. The members of the Remove cricket eleven rose from their beds in high spirits.

Loder still lingered, undiscovered, in his barren prison. Frank Nugent, always wrapped in an old coat, and wearing a crape mask, had fed him regularly; and Billy Bunter, by threatening to expose the whole business, had extorted sufficient hush-money to last an ordinary individual two or three terms.

But Harry Wharton & Co. consolated themselves with the knowledge that they would deal with Bunter afterwards; and if the facts leaked out then, they were ready, every man jack of them, to face the music.

Shortly after breakfast the Saints arrived. They were looking remarkably fit and virile in their red-and-white striped blazers, and Harry Wharton & Co. extended them a cordial greeting.

"We're going to have your scalps this journey!" said Tom Merry. "Nothing like setting the ball rolling in style. Prepare yourselves for a first-class wallop, my sons!"

"Yaas, watahni!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the immaculately-dressed swell of St. Jim's. "Talbot an' Tom Mewmy are wearably hot stuff, to say nothin' of me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys! I see no cause whatevah for wibald laughin!" protested D'Arcy. "I have been described in the 'Weekend' as bein' a second edition of Vietah Trumpah!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I considah—Hallo, heah's our old friend, Buntah!" Billy Bunter rolled up to the cricketers, and dashed a fat elbow into Wharton's ribs.

"Ow!" gasped Harry.

"Look here!" said Bunter, blinking through his big spectacles. "I feel it incumbent upon me to perform a very grave though necessary duty."

"What!"

"In short, I am about to release poor old Loder from his Black Hole of Calcutta!"

Harry Wharton gripped the fat junior by the scruff of the neck, and shook him like a rat.

"Yarooohoo! Buntah, off, you beast! If you don't leggo of me at once, I'll go to the Head and tell him where Loder is, and how he got there!"

"Oh, you fat bargee!"

"Lemme go!" screamed Bunter. "And if you want me to be a party to your beastly secrets any longer, my price is ten bob! Not a penny less!"

The Removites eyed each other dolefully. They knew that Bunter would have to be humoured, or their whole scheme with regard to Gerald Loder would come tumbling about their ears.

"We must raise the wind, somehow!" muttered Nugent. "I've got five bob. Had a remittance this morning."

"Here's half-a-crown!" growled Johnny Bull.

"And here's the esteemed bobfulness!"

Harry Wharton also produced a shilling, and Bob Cherry appeared. The silver coins were bundled into the fat, greedy palm of the Owl of the Remove, who waddled away with all speed to the tuck-shop.

Tom Merry & Co. had witnessed the extraordinary scene in amazement, and their politeness precluded them from asking any questions. Harry Wharton, however, hastened to explain the position.

"Great Scott!" gasped Monty Lowther. "You mean to say Loder's lying bound and gagged in an old tower?"

Wharton nodded.

"And he knows who kidnapped him?"

"No; but Bunter does, and he's making as much capital out of the affair as he can, you bet. We simply had to put Loder away, or this match couldn't have been played. And that would never do!"

"Of course not!"

"No danger of Loder getting loose, I s'pose?" said Talbot.

"He's pretty safe where he is," answered Wharton. "The only alien who knows where he is is Bunter, and we're making him keep mum, though it's costing a small fortune."

"Well, I wish you luck," said Tom Merry. "You've certainly got tons of nerve. Now we'll get on with the washing!"

"Call to this!"

"Tails!" said Wharton, as the coin descended.

Harry Wharton hesitated a moment, then a smile flitted across his face as he caught sight of Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevelyan, and Phyllis Howell, the Cliff House charmers, who were crossing the cricket-ground.

"We'll bat!" said Wharton promptly. "That'll keep Gussy and the rest of the lady-killers in the field, and they won't be able to make silly asses of themselves!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Oh, weally, you know!" protested Arthur Augustus, in shrill tones.

"Dry up!" said Tom Merry. "Wharton's right, and you know it. This is a cricket-field, not a sort of matrimonial agency. Come on, you image, and field like the very dickens. It's up to us to win this blessed match, or die in the attempt!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Playing to Win!

HARRY WHARTON and Frank Nugent, their faces ruddy with anticipation, opened the innings for the Friars. They stepped on to the turf together, swinging their bats in perfect harmony, and smiling at the storm of cheering which hailed them from the pavilion.

Figgins and Fatty Wynn took up the bowling. Both were good men and true, but Fatty Wynn was a living marvel. Despite his ample overweight, he knew how to run, and his deliveries, dead on the wicket, were a sight to see and wonder at.

Wharton and Nugent were careful to play themselves in before taking any risks. They plodded along stubbornly for twenty minutes, and then Wharton suddenly electrified the game by leaping out of his ground, and smiting Fatty Wynn clean over the railings for six.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Wharton!"

"Stick it, Remove!"

The game continued at a brisk pace, but Wharton, in trying to duplicate his previous big hit, was caught in the long-field by Redfern. He retired to the pavilion with 20 to his credit, and was loudly cheered.

"Who is this coming forth now?" said Fatty Wynn. "Bull, or me old eyes deceive me. I'll see if I can't send him back again in double-quick time!"

And the Falstaff of St. Jim's flashed down the best ball he knew. It took instant effect, Johnny Bull's middle-stump being completely uprooted.

"Blow!" said Johnny, making a vicious swoop with his bat at an imaginary sphere of leather.

"Don't let the sun go down on your wrath, my little man," said Monty Lowther pacifically. "Yours won't be the only duck's egg, by a long way!"

Johnny Bull snorted.

"I sincerely hope you get one yourself!" he said. "And if you get a pair of spectacles, you funny monkey, I shall jump for joy!"

"There was once a man who insulted me," said Monty Lowther. "They buried him in the Wayland Cemetery. Take care, friend Bullock, that you don't share the same sorry fate!"

After this brief but exciting assault-à-arms Johnny Bull strode back to the pavilion.

Bob Cherry came in next, with a do-or-die expression on his sunny countenance. Bob was a batsman of real skill and daring, and never suffered from nerves, as is the case with most fellows in the first big match of the season.

Fatty Wynn, flushed with his previous success, sent down a hurricane delivery. There was a sharp crack as the bat came into violent contact with the ball, and the leather soared away and away, far beyond the reach of the fieldsmen, to bump into the boundary bank at the lower end of the field.

"Well hit, sir! Well hit, indeed!"

The sound of the applause sent a thrill through Bob Cherry's breast, especially when he recognised, among the rest, the joyous tones of Phyllis Howell.

A period of splendid play followed. Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent took the score to 50 before being separated, a smart catch at short-stop dismissing Bob Cherry, who had scored 15 in as many minutes.

Then a change came o'er the spirit of the game, to put it in poetic parlance. Hurree Singh's stumps were spread-eagled, and in the next over Frank Nugent succumbed to the exasperating rule of l.b.w. Nugent received quite an ovation, for he had been at the wickets over three-quarters of an hour, putting up a rock-like defence against all the wiles of Fatty Wynn.

The batting broke down completely after his departure. Men came and men went, and the score was not materially added to. Penfold and Mark Linley remained in partnership for twenty minutes towards the end, putting on a dozen runs; but the Remove was eventually dismissed for the fair-to-moderate score of 72.

"We seem to be going strong," remarked Tom Merry, as the Saints streamed off the field.

"Thanks to our prize porpoise!" said Figgins. "Fatty, you were a rod in pickle for them, old man!"

"Who's talking about pickles?" demanded Fatty Wynn. "I must say I'm jolly hungry—ravenous, in fact. What time's lunch?"

"Not for another hour," grinned Manners. "You must possess your peckish soul in patience, my son!"

Fatty Wynn grunted, and, sighting Monty Lowther wrestling with a colossal chunk of toffee, rushed up to share the toothsome delicacy.

Tom Merry and Talbot opened the innings for the Saints, and they got off the mark well, too. The captain of the Shell scored a dozen runs in the first over, and then Talbot made things extremely lively by notching three boundaries in swift succession.

The score leapt up alarmingly—for the Greyfriars supporters at any rate. Twenty and thirty and forty were registered in turn, and Tom Merry and Talbot were still going strong.

"This is rotten!" groaned Harry Wharton. "It makes you wonder whether it was worth while to kidnap Loder after all!"

But Hurree Singh had not yet taken a turn with the ball. He was the best bowler among the Greyfriars juniors, and superior, in point of fact, to a good many of the mighty men of the Sixth. At Wharton's command, he relieved Bob Cherry, and Vernon-Smith went on for Wharton at the other end.

The change had the desired effect, but not immediately. The score was at 72, precisely the same score as the Greyfriars total, when Hurree Singh spread-eagled Tom Merry's stumps.

An adjournment was then made for lunch. A cold collation had been prepared, and set out on tables under the trees, and the players sat down to it with willing appetites, though they were careful not to overstuff themselves, save in the meal would have a beneficial rather than a detrimental effect upon his play afterwards.

It was a very gay gathering, and the incessant clash of knife on fork made merry music. But Harry Wharton & Co. could not help realising how terribly precarious was their position. Their rivals had equalised their score for the loss of only one wicket, and everybody agreed that, in order for the Friars to have the ghost of a chance, Vernon-Smith and the Nabob of Bhanipur would have to bowl like demons on the resumption.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Two of the Best!

ST. JIM'S, thanks largely to a spirited display by Redfern, compiled 122 for their first innings, and were thus 50 runs to the good, a most serious state of affairs for the Greyfriars' Remove. Talbot had scored a meritorious 68, and he and Redfern had made hay of the home team's bowling.

Wharton and Nugent looked very grim when they went out to commence their second venture. They were almost appalled by the magnitude of the task with which they were confronted. It would be necessary to score 150, or even 200 runs, to ensure the Remove having a sporting chance of victory.

But misfortune never comes singly. The luck of the Friars seemed to be dead out that day, for they lost Wharton within a minute of the resumption. He stepped forward to slog at a slow ball of Fatty Wynn's, which swerved past the bat and into the wicket-keeper's hands. Harry heard the St. Jim's felders in the slips exclaim "How's that?" and then the umpire's terse "Out!" He was stumped, fairly and squarely.

The order of the batmen had been changed. Hurree Singh was the next man in. He gave Wharton a sympathetic nod as they passed.

"Hard luck, my worthy chum! I feel condolefully sorry for you."

"Never mind!" said Harry, with a rueful grin. "I must grin and bear it, I suppose. These things will happen. When we were at the nets the other day I batted for hours, but in a proper match I seem to be all at sea. Go in and knock their blessed bowling about, Inky!"

"I will do my esteemed best," promised the Nabob. And so he did. A dozen runs stood to his credit, when a fast ball from Figgins sent the balls spinning.

Johnny Bull, who followed in, was bowled first ball, and three more wickets went down with the score only at 22. The situation was almost farcical, and the crowd sat strangely silent. There was nothing to cheer for now. It looked ominously likely that Greyfriars would not only be beaten, but beaten by an innings.

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When Frank Nugent's wicket fell complete chaos reigned. The St. Jim's feldsmen were wild with delight. They thumped each other on the back, walked on their hands, rolled over and over in the grass, and performed many weird and wonderful antics.

"Don't let's get the slaughter over too soon," protested Fatty Wynn, "or we shall have to go back to St. Jim's, and miss our tea!"

"Rais!" growled Figgins. "We've got to win by the biggest possible margin, and leave nothing to chance."

"Yaas, wathal!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! Who evah would have thought we should have such a walk-ovah!"

Bulstrode was at the wickets now. He had been there five minutes, and had not yet broken his duck. When Nugent's wicket fell, Mark Linley took up the running.

"Slog 'em about anyhow!" called Bulstrode. "We can't do any good now. It's all up."

The lad from Lancashire turned upon the speaker almost fiercely.

"What's the good of being chicken-hearted?" he said. "Play up, and if we go under, why, hang it, we'll go under fighting!"

The words brought a gleam into Bulstrode's eyes. He gripped his bat with renewed vigour, and determined to give a good account of himself.

As for Mark Linley, only one word could describe him at that moment—magnificent. He stood erect, a proud, handsome figure in his neatly-fitting flannels, and faced Fatty Wynn fearlessly.

Craek!

The first ball Mark Linley had the pleasure of dealing with went whizzing along the turf, and Bulstrode started to run.

"Go back," said Mark quietly. "It's a boundary."

And that boundary in no wise resembled an oasis in the desert, either. It was succeeded by many more, much to the delight of the Greyfriars supporters. Was there still a chance, however faint, of the Friars avoiding defeat?

Mark Linley seemed to think so. He hit out with delightful vigour and energy, and the score went up by leaps and bounds, until the Removites were quite safe from defeat in an innings, at any rate.

Inspired by his comrade's heroic display, Bulstrode took great heart, and hit out with steady confidence.

In the pavilion, Harry Wharton's face became radiant. No longer did he regard the affair in the light of a forlorn hope. Linley and Bulstrode were simply great.

The score stood at 60 when Bulstrode was caught at cover-point. He had rendered yeoman service to his side at a time when things looked black, and the plaudits of a grateful crowd greeted him on his return to the pavilion.

"Good man!" said Harry Wharton. "You deserve a putty medal for sticking it out like that! Play up, Bob!"

Bob Cherry, the last man but two, went out to join his chum. Mark Linley was resting on his bat-handle. The perspiration was standing in beads on his forehead, and his face was pale and strained with exhaustion, but the light of battle had not yet faded from his eyes.

Bob Cherry went up to speak to him, but he wished he hadn't the next moment.

"I—I'm going to keep on keeping on, so long as I've got a leg to stand upon!" muttered Mark. "You'll back me up, Bob, won't you?"

"Trust me!" said Bob Cherry.

And then he passed on to his own wicket, with a lump in his throat, which was obstinate, and refused to be gulped down. He loved Mark Linley at that moment—loved him as only one boy can love another—and Bob's whole soul was thrilled as he realised how noble and plucky a stand his chum was making for the honour and glory of the Remove.

Then the eyes of the Greyfriars spectators were refreshed by a glorious and exhilarating sight. Bob Cherry and Mark Linley were simply superb. The latter had already mastered the bowling, the former score followed his example. Mark Linley's pulls to leg were triumphs of cricket, and Bob Cherry's drives were likely to impress themselves upon the minds of the onlookers for many a long day.

Half an hour flitted by, an hour, and the score had put on flesh very considerably. When 100 went up the field rang again and again with cheering.

Harry Wharton threw himself into a wicker-chair, and kicked up his heels in ecstasy.

"This is ripping!" he exclaimed.

"Simply divine!" said Vernon-Smith. "Those two chaps deserve the finest spread that money can buy after this!"

"And they'll get it, too!" said Wharton.

"Bob Cherry's a brick!" remarked Phyllis Howell, who was watching the game with fascinated eyes from a seat near by.



Phyllis Howell stepped up to Mark Linley and gave his hand a tight little squeeze.
(See Chapter 11.)

"So is Mark Linley!" avowed Miss Clara. "A stunning, gilt-edged, eighteen-carat brick!"

And Marjorie Hazeldene, instead of pulling Clara up sharply for her slang, promptly added:

"Rather!"

Bob Cherry and Mark Linley, totally oblivious of the flattering esteem in which they were being held by the Cliff House damsels, batted away industriously, and kept Tom Merry & Co. hard at work leather-chasing. Seldom had such a wonderful partnership been witnessed in the history of Greyfriars cricket.

The score was at 155 when Redfern, who had been tried as a change bowler, held a hot return from Bob Cherry. Mark Linley was within half a dozen runs of his century.

Vernon-Smith was next man in, Harry Wharton having adopted the not unwise plan of saving some of the best players till last. The Bounder played with infinite caution, in order that Mark Linley might complete his hundred.

A couple of mighty hits to the boundary, and the Lan-

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cashire lad's fond dream was realised. He had scored the coveted century—the first of the season!

"Hurrah!" came in a tumultuous roar from the pavilion.

"Good old Marky! Splendid, sir—splendid!"

"I feel," said Phyllis Howell, deliberately and emphatically,

"that I should like to hug him!"

"I don't think Marky would mind," was Wharton's laughing comment.

The Greyfriars second innings closed, having yielded 183 runs. Vernon-Smith and Dick Penfold, the last two batsmen, had each made respectable scores, and Mark Linley carried his bat for 110.

The scene which followed baffles description. A vast crowd of Friars, seniors and juniors alike, swarmed on to the pitch, and, hoisting Mark Linley on their shoulders, bore him off in stately triumph.

And when, a few moments later, Phyllis Howell stepped up to Mark Linley and gave his hand a tight little squeeze with her own, the junior's cup of happiness was filled nigh to overflowing.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HERO OF GREYFRIARS!"

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THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

In Direst Peril!

MEANWHILE, Gerald Loder had been experiencing a terrible time in the old tower. In the excitement of the cricket match Frank Nugent had forgotten to fulfil his usual functions and take food to the prisoner. Loder had ravenously devoured a packet of sandwiches in the early morning, Nugent having taken them up by stealth before the ring-bell rang out. Since that time Loder had had neither bite nor sup, and he was naturally getting desperate.

Luckily for the prefect, Frank Nugent had left the gag loose in his mouth, and he was thus enabled, by a big effort, to shake it free altogether.

This step was the beginning of a bold bid for liberty. Loder had felt his imprisonment keenly, and he was a little alarmed by the thought that he was in the grip of a gang of powerful ruffians, for he entertained not the slightest suspicion that the Famous Five had been responsible for his capture.

For hour after hour he gnawed at the cord which bound him, thinning it down by degrees, until he had completely severed the part that tied his wrists.

"Now," he muttered, "I shall be able to get quit of this beastly place at last!"

He was soon entirely free, and stretched his cramped limbs with great relief. The discomfort of his position had been almost maddening, and the chums of the Remove would have hesitated about keeping him captive in the tower had they reflected seriously about the matter. Thoughtless and headstrong, it had not occurred to them that Loder would have to suffer terrible tortures in his strange plight.

But the prefect had shaken off the shackles at last, and could once more breathe the fresh, pure air of freedom. Yet could he? It was a doubtful point, which became more doubtful still as Loder peered around like a caged canary.

The heavy door was securely bolted on the outside, so there was no possible means of exit in that direction. All that remained was the window.

It would be sheer madness to attempt a descent from that precipitous height; but Loder, famished and half-delirious as he was, and fearing that the supposed ruffians might have designs on his life, resolved to make the attempt.

Even a steeplejack would have shuddered at the prospect. It would be necessary for the prefect to clamber out of the window, and pull himself up on to the roof of the tower by means of the projecting gutter. Then he would have to crawl over to the other side of the roof and descend by the ivy, which clustered thickly on the outer wall right down to the ground.

No ivy grew directly beneath the window of the tower, so this plan was the only possible method of escape, and a very precarious one at that.

"I'll do it!" muttered Loder. "There's a chance that I may break my neck, but better that than to wait here to starve!"

Bracing himself up for the fateful effort, the prefect commenced to climb through the window. Had he lost his nerve and looked down, the action would undoubtedly have proved fatal. But with a courage quite foreign to his nature Loder plunged straight into his task.

He reached up and gripped the gutter with tenacious frenzy, and then commenced to pull himself up.

All would have been well but for one unfortunate circumstance. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was enjoying a cigar in the privacy of his study, when, chancing to look up, he caught sight of a tall form clambering through the window of the topmost room in the tower.

Instantly Mr. Prout's thoughts turned to German spies and similar nuisances. He was too far away to recognise Loder's clothes or features, and therefore jumped rather rashly to conclusions.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "It is one of those barbarous alien spies with whom the district is infested! See! He is climbing up on to the roof, where he will doubtless remain until nightfall, and then signal to those demons of darkness, the Zeppelins! But he shall be thwarted in his purpose! And I, Paul Prout, will be the thwart!"

So saying, the master of the Fifth took down his Winchester repeater from the shelf. That repeater repeated a good deal too often for the comfort of most of the fellows, and as a rule they were careful to keep out of range. According to his own account, Mr. Prout had been a magnificent shot when traversing the Rocky Mountains in the 'Eighties; but since coming to Greyfriars his hand had certainly lost much of its cunning.

"I will shoot the infidel!" muttered Mr. Prout. "I will send him crashing to the earth, to wallow in his life's blood! Ah! Now is my opportunity!"

Mr. Prout levelled his weird and wonderful blunderbuss through the open window of his study, and wrenched at the rusty trigger. The weapon was already loaded. Mr. Prout kept it thus, in case of emergency.

Crack!

There was a terrifying report as the bullet was discharged. Luckily for Loder, Mr. Prout's ability as a marksman was of a very doubtful order. The bullet struck the gutter a few inches to the right of the prefect, when he was within an ace of hauling himself on to the roof, and the shock of the report caused Loder to slide down again, and hang suspended as before.

A groan escaped his lips—a faint groan of despair. He knew in his heart that he had not sufficient strength to haul himself up again. Below him was a sheer drop of a hundred and twenty feet. In a few moments his power would become spent, and he would be compelled to relinquish his hold, and then certain death would follow!

Dark thoughts haunted the wretched senior as he hung between life and death. His past, in connection with which there was scarcely one redeeming feature, rose vividly before him.

What a bully he had been to those weaker and less powerful than himself! What a tyrant and an upstart he had proved in the eyes of the entire school! If his body—his dead body—were discovered lying mutilated on the flagstones, there would be no weeping and wailing. Many would be glad—glad they were no longer driven by the prefect who was universally despised and detested.

Loder cried aloud in sheer agony. He lifted up his voice in piteous appeals for help.

Would no effort be made to save him?

As luck would have it, the cricket-field commanded a view of the school tower; and great was the surprise and astonishment of the players when they heard the reverberating report of a rifle. Harry Wharton & Co. were in the field, and glancing in the direction from which the sound came, they saw a sight which riveted them to the ground, their faces frozen with horror.

"Loder!" gasped Bob Cherry, between his teeth. "He's trying to get away, and somebody's fired at him!"

"The mad fool!" muttered Nugent hoarsely. "How did he break away from the cords?"



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"He got the gag out of his mouth, and gnawed 'em through, I expect," said Johnny Bull, in agitated tones.

Harry Wharton was the first to collect his thoughts and come to a definite decision.

"Come on!" he panted. "We must save him somehow! A couple of you go and hold Prout down! It must have been Prout! No one else would have been such an idiot! He's dangerous!"

Johnny Bull and Peter Todd sped away to the Fifth Form-master's study, and effectually prevented any further shot being discharged.

Meanwhile, Wharton and Nugent, with a crowd of fellows at their heels, raced up the old stone steps of the tower, and into the room where Loder had been kept captive. Wharton had a considerable length of stout rope in his hand.

"Hang on!" he shouted to Loder, whose strength was fast waning. "Stick it out, and I will have you safe in a jiffy!"

Then, with consummate daring, the captain of the Remove stepped out on to the narrow window-ledge, and contrived to fasten the friendly rope underneath the prefect's arms. He made it quite secure, and then, stepping back into the room, began to lower the Sixth-Former to the ground with the aid of his comrades.

The manoeuvre was executed most successfully. Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's, were in the Close, and many willing hands received the burden when it was a few feet from terra firma.

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Loder solemnly. "I'd given myself up that time. Wharton, where are you? I—I shan't forget this in a hurry. You've saved my life!"

And then, overcome by the terrible exertions of the last half-hour, Gerald Loder fainted away.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

No Luck for Bunter!

"B LESS my soul!"

Mr. Prout came bustling out into the Close, and gazed in open-mouthed surprise at the prostrate prefect.

"He's fainted, sir," said Wharton reproachfully. "If the shot you fired at him had taken effect, he would most likely have been killed!"

"Dear me! But I—I am amazed!" gasped Mr. Prout. "What was Loder doing at the summit of the tower?"

"Better ask him, sir, when he comes round," said Bob Cherry casually.

"Certainly will! Pray carry him into my room, you boys!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Harry Wharton & Co., devoutly thankful that Loder was still sound in life and limb, bore him away to the Form-master's study. Meanwhile, Mr. Prout had gone to summon Dr. Locke, and they came in together.

Some water was dashed over the face of the unconscious prefect, and he speedily revived.

"How do you feel, my poor lad?" inquired the Head kindly.

"Pretty groggy, sir," said Loder. "I've had an awful time of it for the last few days!"

"Pray narrate to me all that has happened!"

"It was this way, sir," explained Loder. "I was returning from the tower—that is to say, I was in the Close the other evening, taking a brief stroll for the purpose of keeping fit, when I was suddenly set upon by five armed ruffians—awful-looking characters, sir—who carried me up to the top of the school tower. I have been there for three days and three nights, and it's been untold agony. I could write a book about it, sir, describing my awful sensations and experiences!"

"But have you no clue as to the identity of the ruffians?" interposed the Head. "And why should they wish to kidnap you?"

"Goodness knows, sir!" said Loder. "It beats me altogether! They were five of the most repulsive-looking ruffians you could meet in a day's march!"

"Dear me! That is most extraordinary! However, I trust you will be none the worse for your agonising experience. Can you walk all right?"

"I think so, sir."

Loder rose unsteadily to his feet; but the flush of health soon returned to his cheeks, and with the aid of the Famous Five he was able to walk across the room.

"Go to Mrs. Kebble," said the Head. "She will provide you with a hot, nourishing meal. Then you may rest in the sanatorium for a time, until you are quite recovered."

"Thank you, sir!"

It was a very weak and subdued Loder that accompanied Harry Wharton & Co. to the domestic regions.

"I'm awfully grateful to you kids," said the prefect. "But for you I should have been a goner, beyond all!"

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shadow of doubt. If I can make it up to you in any way—"

"You can," said Wharton promptly. "In defiance of your orders, we've started the cricket match against St. Jim's. Have you permission to play it out?"

Loder laughed lightly. He could afford to laugh now.

"Why, I'd clean forgotten about the blessed match!" he said. "You can go ahead and welcome!"

"Hurrah!"

"Loder's a brick," said Bob Cherry boisterously. "Here we are! Mrs. Kebble, you're wanted. Please prepare as stunning a spread as you possibly can!"

"Master Loder!" gasped the dame, starting back as if she had seen a ghost.

"Yes, it's Loder right enough," said Harry Wharton. "The prodigal son has returned, and now you must cook the fatted calf, as Inky puts it."

Mrs. Kebble soon bustled about to provide for the famished prefect, and the juniors made their way back to the cricket field. Billy Bunter met them in the passage. His little round eyes were gleaming behind his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, I hear Loder's got away!" he began, in a shrill voice. "Does the Head know who captured him?"

"Shurrup, you fat porker!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! If you wish me to keep your mouldy secret any longer, you'll have to give me a quid, here and now. Who's going to set the ball rolling?"

Bob Cherry grinned wickedly.

"I will!" he said promptly.

"Oh, good! Hand it over! Ow! Yaroooh!"

Bunter wound up with a wild yell as Bob Cherry butted into him like a bullock and sent him spinning to the floor. Then the humorous Bob commenced to roll the fat junior in the accumulated dirt and dust of the passage.

"There you are!" he said pleasantly. "I make a jolly fine Good Samaritan—what!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Beast! What are you doing?" roared Bunter.

"Setting the ball rolling!" explained Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was rolled right along the passage and out into the Close, yelling at the top of his voice.

"Yarooop!" he roared, sitting up on two flagstones and groping for his glasses. "I'll make you sit up for this, you rotters!" he shouted. "Just you wait!"

The Removites, with many chuckles, went back to the cricket, little dreaming that Billy Bunter would put his threat into effect.

But the fat junior was simply writhing with rage and pain. He picked himself up and waddled away to the Head's study. Dr. Locke had only just entered the room, and was setting some of his private papers in order. He looked up with evident impatience as Bunter knocked and entered.

"Well, Bunter!" he rapped out. "You wish to speak to me?"

"Yes, sir!" said the Owl of the Remove, rubbing his fat hands together with pious satisfaction. "I happen to know who it was who locked Loder in the tower."

The Head sat bolt upright.

"Are you romancing, Bunter?" he said sternly.

"Not a bit of it, sir! It was the Famous Five—Wharton, Nugent, Cherry, Bull, and Inky—who collared Loder and made him prisoner."

Dr. Locke glared at Bunter as if he would eat him.

"How dare you!" he stormed. "How dare you manufacture such a gross fabrication, calculated to injure the reputation of Wharton and his chums? Loder distinctly saw who his captors were! They were powerful ruffians, armed to the teeth!"

Billy Bunter's jaw dropped. He floundered about like a fish out of water.

"I tell you it was Wharton and his pals!" he stammered.

"Silence!" roared the Head. "I will not tolerate such malicious untruths! Hold out your hand!"

"Mum-mum-my hand, sir!" gasped Bunter feebly.

"Yes—at once!"

Swish, swish, swish!

The Head's cane, wielded with great accuracy, bit into Bunter's fat palms, and he howled and yelled sufficiently to awaken the echoes.

"Now, go away!" commanded Dr. Locke. "And never approach me with such a cock-and-bull story again!"

With dire groans of anguish the Owl of the Remove rolled out of the torture-chamber, feeling that life was not worth living.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Sweets of Victory!

"IT'S a case of touch-and-go, you chaps!"

Thus Bob Cherry, as he stood in the slips and mopped his perspiring brow.

The match was at a most interesting stage. St. Jim's required nearly fifty runs for victory, and six of their wickets were down. Moreover, only half an hour remained for play.

Under the exciting circumstances, therefore, anything might happen. The Friars, if they kept up their superb bowling and fielding, might win; the Saints, if their remaining batsmen smote like Trojans, might pull the game out of the fire at the eleventh hour; but the most likely result seemed to be a draw.

Redfern and D'Arcy were at the wickets, and they put up a game fight. The New House fellow, in particular, took all manner of risks, sometimes leaping yards out of his crease in order to dispatch the ball to the boundary.

It was the only game to play now. The St. Jim's fellows were far too sportsmanlike to play for a draw. "Win or lose," was their motto, and they acted up to it nobly.

Arthur Duck-egg in the first innings had made him an object of ridicule, but nobody dreamed of ridiculing him now. He was fighting a great fight against heavy odds, and the Cliff House girls, their sporting instincts fully aroused, chanted his praises without cessation.

Thirty runs had been added before the swell of St. Jim's was run out, Mark Linley fielding and returning the ball like a lightning-flash. Manners took Gussy's place, and, not being over-confident in his own batting abilities, allowed Redfern to do all the hitting.

Reddy got the bowling as often as he conveniently could, but there came a time when Manners had to face Hurree Singh, and then his wickets went down with a crash.

Two more men to bat, eight runs to get, and only ten minutes to go. The excitement round the ground raged at fever-heat.

"Come on, you fellows!" roared Bolsover major. "Strong and steady does it! Play up, Inky!"

Monty Lowther, the last man but one, managed to survive the rest of the over. Then Redfern had to face Vernon-Smith, and he scored a couple of twos, thus bringing his school within four runs of victory.

"Now, Inky!" urged Bob Cherry. "Put your beef into it, my duskyful chum! Sky-rocket Monty Lowther's balls, and half my kingdom is thine!"

The Nabob grinned—one of those wicked grins which struck terror into the heart of the batsman.

The ball whizzed from the bowler's hand, swerved in with a velocity which could only be described as deadly, and sent the batsman spinning into midair.

"Out!"

"Oh, well played, Inky!"

His face drooping and forlorn, Monty Lowther wended

his way back to the pavilion. Harry Noble, the Australian junior, and the last hope of his side, came out to take his place.

Noble was a batsman of the stonewalling type, and it required a bowler of no small skill to vanquish him.

With grim determination in his set face, Noble survived the over. He was tempted on two occasions to hit out, but curbed his impetuosity. Five more minutes remained yet before the drawing of stumps.

When Redfern took his stand against Vernon-Smith the Greyfriars supporters gave a groan. They entertained very little hope now. Vernon-Smith was a good fast bowler, but Redfern seemed to have thoroughly mastered him. He tapped the first ball back to the bowler with easy-going assurance, and scored a couple off the second.

"One to tie—two to win!"

Amid a silence which could be felt Vernon-Smith sent down the next ball.

Redfern smiled slightly, and his bat swept through the air.

Crack!

The sphere went soaring away to the boundary, and the spectators experienced a sickening sense of disappointment. The Friars were doomed!

But suddenly, while the crowd watched spellbound, an athletic figure in white leapt up, apparently from nowhere. A hand shot up, and—smack! The leather was caught and held.

For one moment only there was silence—the silence of a multitude still under the spell of an almost hypnotic influence. Then a mighty volume of cheering rang forth.

"Good old Wharton!"

"Oh, well caught, sir!"

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, pip, pip, hurrah!"

The match was over. After all their troubles, all their disappointments, all their anxieties, the Greyfriars Remove had triumphed right gloriously.

The crowd simply swarmed on to the playing-pitch, and although Harry Wharton dashed away with all speed to escape the congratulations, his schoolfellows overhauled him, and, bearing him shoulder-high, treated him to a demonstration the like of which had seldom or never been witnessed before at the famous school.

There are some moments in the career of a popular fellow at school which deserve to be marked with a red letter, and commemorated evermore by the chums of the elect hero. The junior who saves his side by bringing off a great catch at the eleventh hour ought to be forgiven all the blunders he has made in his past career. Anyway, that was how the fellows felt about Harry Wharton just then. Even Bolsover, who usually hated the captain of the Remove with a deadly hatred, now joined in the general demonstration of approval and applause.

"Congratulations, Wharton, old fellow!" he said quite affectionately, when he was able to make himself heard. "The best catch I've seen, by Jove!"

"This was perfectly correct, for Bolsover major seldom put in an appearance at any cricket match."

"It was simply toppin', begad!" chimed in Lord Maul-e-verer, the languid slacker of the Remove. "I was asleep

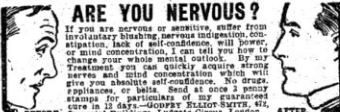
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up till the last minute, but I woke up in time for the catch, dear boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Congratulations were showered upon Harry Wharton from all sides. Fellows who had held aloof from him in the past now pressed forward with words of good cheer. Coker & Co. of the Fifth, Temple & Co. of the Fourth, and even the high and mighty men in the Sixth, who didn't usually take the trouble to associate themselves in any way with a junior match, praised Wharton unceasingly.

As for the delightful young ladies of Cliff House, each of them insisted upon shaking hands with the blushing hero, who bore his honours thick upon him with modest satisfaction. Tom Merry hastened up to the pavilion to get in a word on behalf of St. Jim's.

"Well played!" he said, and there was a ring of genuine sportsmanship in his tone. "That catch was a regular wipph, in the words of our tame aristocrat Gussy!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It was first-shot!" said Talbot heartily. "There's no team we'd rather lose to than Greyfriars."

"Thanks!" said Wharton, with a breathless laugh. "And there's no team we feel more proud of having licked than St. Jim's!"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Affair of the Boats.

ST. JIM'S had lost the great cricket-match against their keenest rivals; but the end of the match was not the end of everything. To the unbounded delight of all concerned, it had been decided to hold a couple of additional contests, in the form of a shooting-match and a boatrace. If the Saints happened by good fortune to win both, they would not be the under-dogs in the day's sport after all, and it was the fixed intention of Tom Merry & Co. to put up the very best fight of which they were capable. They possessed a steady and reliable shooting combination, and their prowess on the river was a byword among the people.

Harry Wharton & Co., too, were hot stuff at rifle-shooting; but since the never-to-be-forgotten occasion when the brutal Sergeant Burrell had made merry on the range they had not put in a great amount of practice.

"We simply must pull it off!" said Bob Cherry, as a move was made to the rifle-range. "What a gorgeous feather in our cap if we can only do the hat-trick by winning the shooting and rowing as well as the cricket-match!"

A huge crowd assembled on the rifle-range, and Wingate of the Sixth had appointed himself master of the ceremonies.

There was a wild burst of enthusiasm as Harry Wharton and Tom Merry lay down side by side to open the firing.

"Play up, Wharton!"

"File 'em on, Tom Merry!"

"Greyfriars for ever!"

And then, none the less feebly, despite their shortage of numbers, the Saints shouted:

"St. Jim's! St. Jim's! Stick it out, Merry!"

Crack—crack!

The two reports rang out as one. Wingate peered through his field-glasses, and smiled.

"A bulls-eye to Wharton!" he exclaimed.

"Ripping!"

"And an inner to Merry!"

"Buck up, Tommy!"

The St. Jim's junior went ahead gallantly, nothing daunted by the fact that his opponent had beaten him at the first shot. Out of a possible 25, Harry Wharton scored 22, and Tom Merry, rallying well at the finish, tied his effort.

Bob Cherry and Monty Lowther took up the running for their respective sides. Both were hot shots, and Bob, hearing the mellow voice of Phyllis Howell somewhere in the background urging him on, put forth his highest endeavours.

The result was most gratifying. Bob Cherry was announced to have scored 24, a really remarkable achievement, and Monty Lowther came close on his heels with a brilliant 23.

The shooting continued at a very even rate. Talbot and Mark Linley tied with 23 points each, and Vernon-Smith, to the vast delight of the assembled throng of Greyfriars juniors, secured the highest maximum of 25. His magnificent effort was loudly applauded by the crowd, the St. Jim's fellows joining in.

The scores were dead level when the two final marksmen, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Hurree Singh, got down to fire. The excitement, naturally, was at fever-heat.

"Good old Gussy!" exclaimed Monty Lowther boisterously. "Show 'em that the aristocracy knows how to handle a rifle, my son!"

"I'll do my best, you may rest assured, dear boy!" responded Gussy, as he loaded his rifle.

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Meanwhile, similar messages of encouragement were being drummed into the ears of Hurree Singh.

"Keep straight on the bulls-eye, old man!" urged Bob Cherry.

"And mind you press the trigger gently," said Wharton. "If you pull it, you'll find yourself all over the shop!"

Hurree Singh nodded his dusky head.

"I will carefully keep in mind your esteemed instructions, my worthy chums," he murmured.

"Good! Fire away!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy essayed the first shot. It was a bulls-eye—dead central.

"Well played, Gussy!" exclaimed the St. Jim's juniors, their faces radiant.

But Hurree Singh, his dusky face very determined, scored a bulls-eye also.

"Topping!" ejaculated Bob Cherry delightedly. "Do it four more times, lanky, and half my kingdom is thine!"

Hurree Singh's second shot was an inner, so was D'Arcy's. The swell of St. Jim's was firing with calm confidence. It was well for his side that he did not suffer from nerves. He was steady as a rock, and at the conclusion of four shots was one point ahead of his rival.

The Greyfriars supporters gave a groan. If D'Arcy obtained a bulls-eye at his final shot all chance of victory would be gone.

Crack!

D'Arcy pressed the trigger and paused breathlessly. He was aware that his last effort had been a good one.

"That," said Wingate, "is an inner—just below the bulls-eye."

"Hurrah!"

The St. Jim's supporters sent up a storm of cheering. It was now impossible for Greyfriars to defeat them.

But Hurree Singh put all he knew into his last shot. There was a tense hush as he pressed the trigger.

"A bulls-eye!" said Wingate, amid profound excitement. The two teams had tied!

"Bravo, lanky!" roared Bob Cherry, slapping his dusky chum on the back. "That was stunning, old son!"

"The boatrace will have to be the deciding factor now," said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned to Tom Merry with a look of distress on his noble features.

"I—I say, Tom Mewwy, you're not angwy with me for only makin' an innah with my last shot?"

"Of course not, you old duffer!" answered Tom cheerily. "You were great, Gussy! If only you perform as well on the river we shall go back to St. Jim's rejoicing!"

The afternoon was drawing to a close, and the sun was beginning to set, illuminating the sky with a haze of splendour.

But there would be ample time for the boatrace to be rowed before dusk wrapped its grey mantle over the silent country.

Bob Cherry strolled down to the river in the charming company of Phyllis Howell, while his chums formed a guard of honour for Miss Marjorie and Miss Clara. Tom Merry & Co.'s only regret was that Marie Rivers and Ethel Cleveland, their girl chums, were not present to witness the great event.

But a grievous shock awaited the merry throng when they came to the boathouse. Every single boat had been methodically bored with holes in the keel!

The juniors stood dumbfounded, unable for some moments either to move or speak.

George Wingate pushed his way forward.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

Harry Wharton pointed to the boats. His eyes were blazing.

"Somebody has done this!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "Somebody who wanted to prevent the race from being rowed! My hat! He'd have a sorry time of it if I laid my hands on him!"

"There's more than one," said Mark Linley quietly. "Look!"

Mark pointed in the direction of the island. Disappearing round a bend in the river were three juniors, whom nobody recognised at first. But when, before vanishing from sight, they turned their heads to assure themselves that they were not being pursued they were identified at once.

"Skinner, Snoop, and Stott!" said Wharton grimly. "After them!"

But Bob Cherry, who had left Phyllis Howell's side to ascertain what was the matter, thrust out his hand and detained his impetuous chum.

"Not now, Harry. Can't commit assault and battery in the presence of our guests, you know. Leave Skinner & Co. till afterwards."

"This is monstrous!" exclaimed Wingate incredulously. "Are you kids sure Skinner was responsible for this outrage?"

"Proof positive!" said Nugent. "This isn't the first time those cads have tried on the same game. They attempted to batter the boats about when we had the sports for Lieutenant Howell's cup, but Miss Phyllis bowled them out before they'd done much mischief."

The Greyfriars juniors told Tom Merry & Co. the news with glum faces. It was humiliating for them to have to admit that Greyfriars harboured such unscrupulous and unprincipled cads as Harold Skinner.

The boatrace was decidedly off. There could be no question about that. For once in a way, the rascals of the Remove had succeeded in their malicious designs; but the Famous Five and their friends at least had the satisfaction of knowing that the culprits' day of reckoning was at hand.

The St. Jim's fellows took the news quite philosophically.

"It's rough luck in a way," said Monty Lowther, "because we'd have won the boatrace as sure as eggs are eggs. Still, we must grin and bear it, even if it's hard to grin."

Then Fatty Wynn, who had said nothing for some time, his mind being occupied with thoughts of the bumper feed which was to crown the day's events, suddenly lifted up his voice and expounded a really brilliant idea, which almost compensated for the damage done to the boats.

"Look here," he said, "there can't be a boatrace without boats. But why not have some other sort of contest just as exciting as a boatrace would be?"

"You're thinking of swimming?" asked Harry Wharton.

"No. What's wrong with the boxing tournament?"

Bob Cherry, who was more partial to boxing than to any other form of sport, straightaway threw his arms round the neck of the Falstaff of St. Jim's, and hugged him with the tenacity of a Polar bear.

"Fatty," he said, "you're worth your weight in silver shakels! A boxing tournament's just the thing! What does old Wingate think?"

Old Wingate, who was hovering near, expressed the opinion that nothing could be much better to wind up the day's events.

And so, much brighter in spirits than they had been a short time since, Friars and Saints trooped back to the school, to witness or indulge in that grandest of all sports—the noble art of self-defence!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Honours Divided.

GREYFRIARS was essentially a boxing school, and as such it bore a record to be proud of. It had sent Dick Russell to Aldershot to compete in the lightweight championship of the great public schools, and Russell had triumphed gloriously. On another occasion, almost equally as great, Bob Cherry had, after a gruelling encounter, defeated the stalwart Tom Merry, though the latter had since revenged himself upon the hard-hitting Bob.

But the prowess of Dick Russell and Bob Cherry was not the be-all and end-all of junior boxing at Greyfriars. There were other great fighting-men, among whom Harry Wharton, Peter Todd, and Vernon-Smith loomed out prominently.

St. Jim's possessed four great stars in the boxing firmament. They were Tom Merry, Talbot, Figgins, and Redfern. Perhaps the captain of the Shell was the best of the bunch, but the others were not far behind him.

It was decided that four juniors from each school should enter the lists, and that they should split up into pairs. Lots were drawn, and the couples came out of the hat as follows:

Talbot v. Wharton; Merry v. Russell; Figgins v. Cherry; and Redfern v. Peter Todd.

Vernon-Smith unselfishly stood down. He considered that others had worthier claims than he. From a cad of the first year the Bouncer had developed into a sportsman thorough and complete.

The first bout, between Talbot and Wharton, was a strenuous affair. The combatants went the whole of the allotted ten rounds, and Wingate, who was referee, awarded the verdict to Talbot on points—a decision which was loudly applauded, for the St. Jim's fellow had certainly got in the greater number of telling blows.

Bob Cherry made short work of the lanky Figgins, stretching him prostrate on the mat in the second round. Short and sweet, also, was Peter Todd's bout with Redfern.

Peter boxed his best, but there could be no denying that he was considerably off-colour. Redfern simply toyed with him, and Peter finished upon his back early in the third round.

The best contest of all, in the preliminary stages, was that between Tom Merry and Dick Russell. Both were stubborn. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 430.

boxers, but their methods were as varied as the two Poles. Tom Merry was dashing and forceful, Russell quiet but wonderfully scientific.

Tom Merry had all the best of the argument in the first half-dozen rounds; then he began to tire, and Russell, who had never once lost his unruffled calm and his serene confidence, singled out his opponent's weak spots and effected a magnificent knock-out, amid peans of applause, in the last round but one.

The semi-final brought Redfern and Russell together, and Talbot and Bob Cherry. If the two winners both hailed from the same school, that school would be adjudged the winners. If one member of each school emerged victorious, then there would be a final. The spectators hoped and prayed that the latter would be the case.

Dick Russell's display bordered on the uncanny. His footwork was unimpeachable, and his guard perfect. Redfern was a fine boxer, but he knew almost as soon as the bout started that he had met his superior. His anticipations were borne out in the third round, when Russell, sailing in with surprising alacrity, shot out his left in a well-directed upper-cut which sent Redfern spinning to the mat.

Wingate counted him out amid a babel of cheering. One Greyfriars fellow had triumphed, and triumphed gloriously.

Then, at the referee's command, Talbot and Bob Cherry stepped up face to face. It was the first time on record that they had met in the ring, and speculation was rife as to what the result would be.

The first round finished in Bob Cherry's favour. There had been much hurricane hitting, and Bob had had the lion's share.

The second and third rounds showed a marked superiority on Talbot's part. The St. Jim's fellow was slightly taller than Bob, and had the advantage in reach.

"Buck up, Bob!" came Phyllis Howell's cheery, inspiring voice.

And Bob Cherry bucked up, but not for long. Talbot, realising that he was the sole remaining hope of his school, was boxing like a Trojan.

From his earliest days Talbot had known how to defend himself. His had been a hard life, lived in one of the vilest quarters of London, and it had often been necessary for him, in his troublous and chequered past, to engage in an assault-arms with some street loafer, or, as likely as not, with a policeman.

The knowledge Talbot had acquired in this way stood him in good stead now. He forced the fighting, flooring Bob Cherry on two separate occasions. The Greyfriars fellow contrived to regain his feet each time, but in the seventh round, when Talbot shot out his right with full and unreserved force, Bob Cherry went down and stayed down.

Wingate solemnly counted him out, and then announced:

"Final! Reginald Talbot, of St. Jim's—"

"Good old Talbot!"

"And Dick Russell, of Greyfriars School!"

"Hurrah!"

"Now we shall see some fireworks!" said Harry Wharton, who, still garbed in his sweater, occupied a seat next to Phyllis Howell.

"I'm afraid I've almost lost interest in the affair," sighed that young lady.

"Why?"

"Because Bob Cherry's been knocked out."

"Oh, rot, Miss Phyllis! Bob's a boxing marvel, we all know, but the greatest experts come a cropper sometimes. There's no disgrace in being beaten by a fellow of Talbot's weight. Most chaps would regard it as an honour."

"Do you think that Russell can avenge Bob's defeat?"

"I hope so, but shouldn't like to say for certain. Talbot's such a Trojan, you see."

"Seconds out of the ring!" said Wingate laconically.

"Time!"

Talbot started off at a great pace, shooting out right and left in swift succession. Dick Russell faced him with smiling serenity. His parrying was faultless, and although Talbot attacked incessantly throughout the first round, the Greyfriars fellow successfully warded off all the really dangerous punches.

Mark Linley was acting as Russell's second. He set a perfect gale blowing with his towel, and the cool breeze freshened the heated face of the Removite.

"Do you think you can lick him?" asked Mark.

Russel laughed.

"That's a bit premature, isn't it?" he said. "One can't judge by the first round, you know. Still, I think I can hold out all right."

The second and third rounds were fought out in a precisely similar manner to the first. Talbot did all the pressing, but was unable to gain any appreciable advantage.

The next round was a bit more lively, and the watching crowd began to stir breathlessly, as if in anticipation of the knock-out that was to come.

But although there were some narrow squeaks on both sides, the knock-out refused to come, and there was a hurricane burst of applause as Talbot and Dick Russell stepped up for the tenth and last time.

"Come on, Talbot! Let's hear from you!"

"Go it, Russell! Right on the mark, old son!"

"Look out for his left!" threw in Mark Linley, by way of a caution.

That round was the brightest and best of the day. It was a fine sight to see two such sterling boxers going for each other like tigers, ducking and plunging and side-stepping, yet each thoroughly good-humoured and sportsmanlike. It was Dick Russell who got to business this time, and he realised that unless he could get in a knock-out blow he would lose, for Talbot had done the lion's share of the attacking throughout, and would be accorded the verdict on points.

Accordingly, Russell hit out with unrelenting vigour; and once, when Talbot went crashing into the ropes, and lay back, pallid of face and pumping in breath, many of the onlookers thought it was the finish of him.

But Talbot's intimate chums knew better. They knew that he would go on fighting while he had a leg to stand on.

Dick Russell was plainly amazed to see his opponent coming for him once more with all his former energy and vitality. He had imagined that Talbot had shot his bolt, and consequently his guard was not where it ought to have been.

Talbot noted this, and came in with a rush. There was a short, sharp thud, and Russell instantaneously threw up his arms and pitched forward, landing in a huddled heap on the mat.

Wingate bent over the fallen boxer, and began to count.

"One—two—three—"

Russell made no motion to rise. Talbot's last blow had taken full effect, and had rendered him powerless—incapable of any sort of action.

"Four—five—six—seven—"

"Buck up, Dick!" roared Bob Cherry.

But Russell lay prone. He was dazed, and could not have responded to any call just then.

"Eight—nine—ten! Talbot wins!"

Then the St. Jim's supporters seemed suddenly to go mad. They surged into the ring, and, lifting their hero shoulder-high, bore him from the scene of his triumph.

The Greysfriars fellows cheered, too, although, of course, it was a big disappointment to them to lose, especially as they were every bit as much a boxing school as St. Jim's. But they accepted the result in a most sportsmanlike manner, and Dick Russell, who had boxed his best, and suffered defeat only by the narrowest of margins, was loudly cheered.

"That puts us level," said Tom Merry, as he approached Harry Wharton with a smile after he had finished showering congratulations upon Reginald Talbot. "You won the cricket, we won the boxing, and the shooting was a tie."

Wharton laughed.

With Billy Bunter's aid, we ought to beat you at golfing," he said. "Grab's the next item on the programme. Gather the clans together, and your fellows shall take part in the grandest spread you've ever seen in your little lives!"

To which Fatty Wynn responded with great equanimity and heartiness:

"What-ho! Trust me to be on the spot!"

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Loder Learns the Truth!

WHAT high good-humour and boundless jollity prevailed in the Rag on that memorable evening!

A long table had been set in position down the centre of the room, the accommodation in No. 1 Study being totally inadequate to the tremendous number of honoured guests. And on that table stood a veritable feast of good things, such as made Fatty Wynn and Billy Bunter hug each other with almost brotherly affection.

Even the Owl of the Remove, like the man depicted on the feast poster, was happy and satisfied for the famous Five had taken care to upon him, and granted him a place at the festive board. Tom Merry & Co. were there in force too, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy created quite a lot of jealousy at first by seating himself next to the fair Phyllis Howell.

But Bob Cherry promptly planted himself on the other side of that fairy princess—to make it equal, as he explained to his intimate chums.

What a stunning spread it was! And how the faces of the participants glowed in the ruddy light! The sausages were done to an esteemed turn, as Hurree Singh expressed it, and the toasted scones stood piled up by the score in most tempting array, jars of jam stood like miniature fortresses at each corner of the snow-white cloth, there were rolls and

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sandwiches and muffins and crumpets in plenty; and in the huge dish in the centre of the table sugary doughnuts flitted with gushing jam-puffs, and stiff eucumat-cakes lorded it over whipped-cream walnuts. Tea and coffee sent up a pleasant odour, and for those who didn't relish hot beverages there was lemonade and cream-soda, and, best of all, foaming ginger-pop, which gurgled its joyous way down many a parched throat on that eventful evening.

Billy Bunter's face was a picture as he did battle with a most delicious rabbit-pie. Fatty Wynn's countenance, too, as he wrestled with a plump leg of chicken, was like as the sun shineth in its strength.

Monty Lowther kept the party in roars of laughter with his jokes, which, although Tom Merry protested that they came out of the Ark with Noah, fell with delightful freshness upon the ears of the happy guests.

The revelry and rejoicing were kept up for over an hour, and when the shades of night had fallen the merry throng dispersed in the old Cloos of Greysfriars and went their several ways, feeling that of all the enjoyable celebrations they had spent within the historic walls of Greysfriars this latest banquet capped the lot.

It had been easy for Harry Wharton & Co. to forgive Billy Bunter for the meanness he had shown in attempting to give them away to the Head; it was not so easy to forgive Skinner, Snoop, and Stott for the dastardly attempt to wreck the boatrice, especially as the attempt had succeeded.

It had been impossible to wreak summary vengeance on the cads of the Remove hitherto, because, firstly, they had been careful to keep out of the way; and, secondly, it would have been bad form to put them through their punishment in the presence of the numerous company of guests.

But when bedtime arrived, and the Removites were shepherded up to their dormitory by Courtney of the Sixth, Skinner and his satellites were in the hands of the Amalekites, and there was no way of escape. They could tell, from the lowering brows of their schoolfellows, that they had fallen into bad odour.

"We have jolly good reason to believe, Skinner," said Harry Wharton grimly, "that you, with Snoop and Stott backing you up, bored holes through all the boats this afternoon, in order that the race with St. Jim's might not be rowed. It was a mean, caddish, and despicable trick, and after lights out you will be tried by me, as Lord Chief Justice, and a special jury under my appointment."

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry heartily. "This is where you get it in the neck, Skinner, old son! You cried for the day, and you lied for the day, and now the day has come, as the war-poet puts it."

"I've done nothing!" said Skinner sulkily. "And nobody's going to lay a finger on me. If you try that game on, you'll find I've got some loyal pals who'll stand by me."

As he spoke, Skinner glanced expectantly at Bolsover. But, for once in a way, he got no backing from that quarter. Bolsover was a cad, but he knew where to draw the line. The affair of the boats had filled him with just as much indignation as Harry Wharton & Co.

"If you're counting on me, Skinner," he said, "I may as well tell you that you're quite offside. I'm not one of your blessed plaster saints, and I don't mind a lark, but yours was an ugly sort of game to play, and I don't agree with it at all. I hope the court finds you guilty, and ladles out the licking you deserve!"

"Not much doubt about that," said Nugent, with a grin. At this juncture Courtney saw lights out, and bade the juniors good-night, blissfully unconscious that anything unusual was afoot.

The juniors allowed half an hour to elapse after the prefect's departure. Then candle-ends were lighted in the gloom, and a score of pyjama-clad figures tumbled out of bed.

"Bring the prisoners forward!" commanded Harry Wharton seated on a lofty pile of pillows which had been stacked up on his bed for the occasion.

As Johnny Bull, the foreman of the improvised jury, was engaged in dragging the wretched Skinner to the fore, a sheet of notepaper fluttered from the pocket of his pyjamas. Peter Todd, who was standing near, pounced upon it at once. He scanned the writing on the paper, and then gave a sudden start.

"Listen to this, you chaps!" he said dramatically. "It's a note from that cad Ponsenby, urging Skinner to wreck the boats."

Peter read the note aloud, and the listening juniors looked grim.

"We'll deal with Ponsenby later," said Harry Wharton. "Meanwhile, let us attend to these precious skunks!"

17

NEXT MONDAY—

"THE HERO OF GREYSFRIARS!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. by FRANK RICHARDS.

Prisoners at this bar, you are charged with having deliberately, feloniously, and with malice aforethought, bored holes in the keels of the boats this afternoon, in order to prevent the contest against St. Jim's. We have the evidence of our own eyes to back us up in the matter, for we saw the three of you disappearing round a bend. Do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

Neither of the prisoners could very well answer that question, for three separate hands were placed forcibly over their respective mouths, rendering coherent speech impossible.

"Very well," said the judge. "Silence gives consent. You are guilty. Is it necessary for the jury to retire?"

"I don't think so, your wash-up," said Johnny Bull. "The prisoners are guilty. Of that there isn't a shadow of doubt—no possible probable shadow of doubt—no possible doubt whatever, as the Johnny in the opera says."

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "Harold Skinner, Sidney James Snood, and William Stott, you are hereby sentenced to run the gauntlet six times right off the reel! Line up, you fellows!"

The Removites armed themselves with pillows, bolsters, boots, belts, and any other available weapons; and the wretched culprits experienced a terrible time of it. Long before the sixth run between the lines had been accomplished they were howling at the top of their lungs for mercy.

But they howled and entreated in vain. Harry Wharton & Co., remembering the grave wrong to which they had been subjected, were entirely lacking in the quality of mercy just then. They were determined to smite and spare not; and by the time Skinner and his confederates had completed their tour of anguish they were as limp as rags, and crawled into bed feeling that life was anything but a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

Gerald Loder speedily recovered from the shock to his nervous system which had been caused by his terrible experience on the roof of the old tower; and he had the surprise of his life the next morning when he opened and read the following note addressed to him:

"No. 1 Study,

"Greyfriars.

"Dear Loder—We dared not tell you yesterday, in case the cricket match was knocked on the head; but we, the undersigned, were solely and entirely responsible for shoving you in the tower out of the way, so that we could go ahead with the game. We were desperately keen on picking St. Jim's, and wouldn't have missed playing the match for worlds.

"We are sorry, honour bright, that you have had such a ghastly time. Had we dreamt for one single instant that you would run the risk of breaking your neck the kidnapping dodge would have gone by the board.

"Can you forgive us?

"Yours repentantly,

"HARRY WHARTON,

"BOB CHERRY,

"FRANK NUGENT,

"JOHNNY BULL,

"HURREE SINGH,

"THE FAMOUS FIVE."

Loder's first impulse on reading the note was to go and expose the whole business to Dr. Locke. But he was restrained from so doing by two powerful influences. In the first place, Harry Wharton, by his promptness and fearlessness, had saved him from certain death; and, secondly, Loder did not care to acknowledge to the Head that he had been trussed up by a gang of Lower School boys, especially as he had painted a vivid picture of five hulking ruffians, armed to the teeth, and sayage as Mexican brigands.

Upon the whole, the prefect deemed it wise to drop the subject. He was very quiet and subdued for many days afterwards; and nothing more came to light concerning the part played by the Famous Five prior to "The Forbidden Match!"

THE END.

(Do not miss "THE HERO OF GREYFRIARS!" next Monday's Grand Story of the Chums of Greyfriars, by FRANK RICHARDS.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 430.

MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FOR READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1st OUT TO-DAY.

BRIEF REPLIES

To Readers of "THE MAGNET LIBRARY."

J. S. (Edinburgh).—Your wish for another story of Bunter and Cora Quetch is likely to be met. As to a "Magnet" and "Gem" 3^d. Library, that is a matter for the future.

T. P. B. H. (Bacup).—Thanks for suggestion, but the drawback to the use of it is this: Would the Remove fellows believe in Skinner's genuineness? I think not.

A. B. (Edinburgh).—If your loss of memory at times is due to too much reading, I should certainly say drop the reading, even if it involves giving up the companion papers. But I don't believe it is. Have you really tried hard to remember things? This is one of the weaknesses that a tolerably strong will generally conquers. You can strengthen your memory by learning a few lines of poetry—or, though it is more difficult—a few sentences of prose every day; or by simple exercises like setting down half a dozen figures, and trying to write them in the correct order without looking at them again. I am no admirer of money-lenders or money-niggling artists in any form, and I quite agree with Wharton. But I did not write the story. Mr. Richards did that. Speculation is certainly not a profession. It is a trade, and not one of the highest trades either.

"A Beggar" (London).—No, I can't tell you where to get the song. "Come to your dear old dad, dad, dad!" and, between you and me, I don't think it sounds as if it would be worth taking a heap of trouble to get. But everybody has a right to his own tastes. Perhaps some reader can oblige?

"An Ardent Reader." (who is past the stage of boyhood) says he cannot understand how anyone can object to the companion papers. "They teach boys to be obedient, faithful, and in every way as a decent boy should be," he writes. Thanks, my friend!

"Dear Old Dublin."—There is no better fighting-man in the world than the Irishman. But I sometimes think that England appreciates the good qualities of Ireland more than Ireland does of England. A bumper Irish number? We'll see!

A. E. S. C.—Mr. Richards has done all his work for my papers, and has never written school stories for publication in the 3^d. 6^d. or 5^d. form.

H. E. N. (Stafford).—Much better see a doctor about it. Other advice is seldom satisfactory.

E. M. and B. P. (Edinburgh).—If your chums will not buy the "Magnet" till we introduce the sickly sweetheating stuff—well, they will have to wait a long time! Not in our line, thank you.

From Johannesburg, South Africa, comes a report of a footer match played between "Gem" and "Magnet" eleven on the famous Wanderers' ground in December. The teams were: "Gem"—B. Lewin; J. Segal and H. Sacks; P. Broudie, S. Skatz, and J. Gerring; D. Myers, B. Lax, H. Slood, B. King, and J. Mendleson. "Magnet"—B. Stein; S. Arcus and B. Friedman; H. Henry, D. Ceilman, and H. Weiner; E. Mendleson, S. Rabinowitz, C. Lewis, J. Fox, and S. Harris. Referee—M. F. Lewis (Jewish Government School). Linesmen—J. Pooler and I. H. Harris (Jepps High School). Gem won by 3 to 1. Slood, Rabinowitz, and Skatz scoring for them. B. Lewin sends the report.

J. J. (Milwall).—Sorry I cannot help you at once, but I do not know of classes such as you want. Does any reader of this know of an evening course on Electric Station Engineering and Wiring in the London, E. district? If so, I shall be obliged by particulars.

"A Loyal Mother."—Many thanks for your letter; and for your praise of the "Magnet." If other parents would only do as you did, and read some of the stories themselves, we should have fewer complaints from readers that father or mother does not like their reading the paper. You have been reading it regularly for four years, you tell me, and I should not ask for a better testimonial.

"Diddle" (Miltonthorpe).—Sorry I cannot answer either question, because I don't know the answers. Shocking confession for an editor, is it not?

"Kiddie" (Miltonthorpe).—Which is the better singer—Fish or Bunter? Sorry again. Ask me another!

"Three Chums" (Swansea).—I don't know of a "Magnet" League in your town, but, even if there is one, you are quite at liberty to form another. Don't know where Rake comes from, but he is not Welsh. There are something over forty boys in the Remove. Can't say whether Rake or Desmond would win in a boxing-match between the two.

Our Magnificent Adventure Serial Story.

START TO-DAY!



The First Instalments Told How

DICK DAUNT and DUDLEY DREW, two chums, discover a letter in a bottle which they have extracted from the body of a shark.

They are informed by its contents that a certain MATTHEW SNELL is marooned on an unnamed island in the Keys, and he offers a substantial reward to any persons effecting his rescue.

On going to the island, however, they are unable to find Mr. Snell.

EZRA CRAY, a moonshiner, and his scoundrelly colleagues then visit the island, and, finding that it contains gold, attempt to kill the two chums.

Having previously hidden their boat, Dick and Dudley seek refuge in a cave.

Leaving the cave in search of food, they are captured by the gang, but eventually succeed in escaping.

Swimming across the bay, they enter a small cave, and are startled by a deep, hoating roar.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Glimmering Light.

"It—it must be a wave!" stammered Dick, who was almost as much scared for the moment as Dudley.

At that instant there came a swishing sound, and then a spray of salt water broke over them in a fine mist.

"I know!" said Dick sharply. "I know! Dudley, d'you remember the hoating that puzzled us so the first days we were on the island—that we heard so plainly when we were in the cave on Crooked Cliffs?"

"I do that," answered Dudley in a puzzled voice. "But—but I don't understand."

"Why, it's plain as a pikestaff, and if I hadn't been an absolute idiot I'd have thought of it long before! It's a blowhole!"

"A blowhole?" repeated Dudley, in a tone which proved to Dick that he evidently did not yet understand. "What's a blowhole?"

"This—is this—is a blowhole! A rock funnel, the bottom of which is below high-water mark, while the top opens somewhere above. I've seen one on the north Cornish coast. When there's any sea on the waves run right up to it, and burst out of the top. I don't quite know why it makes such a row, but it's something to do with the air that's carried up."

Dudley gave a low whistle. "Then we—we are in the pipe of the infernal thing!" he muttered, in a tone of dismay.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE HERO OF GREYFRIARS!"

"That's about the size of it!" returned Dick calmly.

Dudley gave a bitter laugh.

"Then this finishes it! From that first burst, it's quite clear there's a storm working up. Now, I suppose there's nothing to do but wait until we're washed out."

"It's no-use meeting trouble half-way, old chap!" answered Dick, as quietly as before. "Seems to me we were precious lucky to strike this little cave place before the first big wave came. And as that didn't do us any particular harm, perhaps the others won't, either. Remember, it isn't very far off high tide."

He had hardly finished speaking before there came another roar. It was louder than the first. The solid rock seemed to quiver under the shock, and a faint phosphorescence gleamed through the darkness as a great spout of water rushed past them up the rock tube.

Part of the wave sprayed out sideways, washing the floor of the little cavern in which they had found refuge, but the mouth of it was so small that the amount of water which found its way through was not enough to be dangerous or to threaten to wash them away.

For some ten seconds the fierce rush continued; then they could feel it falling back, rolling in a thundering cataract back to the sea from which it came. The noise, the rush, the feeling of the enormous power exerted, together with the impossibility of getting any further away from the spout, was absolutely terrifying, and left them both gasping.

Yet there was nothing to be done. They could but remain where they were, and hope against hope that in the end they might come out of it alive.

And so it went on for over an hour. Sometimes it would be five minutes between the upbursts, sometimes only three. Some rushes were much heavier than others, and once a full foot of water gushed into their refuge, and it was only by clinging to a tiny projection which Dick found in the wall that they were saved from being washed right out and drawn down that roaring pipe into the depths below.

At last, after what seemed an eternity of suspense, the waves began to slacken, and to come at longer and longer intervals. Then one came which failed to reach the cave at all, and fell back before doing so.

Still, they did not dare to move. They almost held their breath, waiting in frightful anxiety to see whether it was only a temporary respite. For all they knew, a heavy gale might be working up, in which case the surf would break higher than the entrance, even at low tide.

But time passed, and the bursts grew less and less frequent. There were still terrifying sounds down below,

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

gurglings and hissings, as if some huge sea monster was writhing in its death agony.

"It's over at last!" said Dick, rising to his feet and beating his arms across his chest to try and restore circulation. The strong draught which had been blowing upon their soaked bodies had chilled them both to the bone.

Dudley scrambled up.

"Then, for any sake, let's get out of it, Dick!" he begged. "I've sure been through some ugly times the last week or two, but that beats all! I'd rather start to swim back to Florida than stick another hour like the last!"

"I'm with you there, Dudley," Dick answered. "It wasn't exactly enjoyable. 'Pon my Sam, I've had enough of caves and darkness to last me the rest of my life. What's it to be? Are we to try to climb up top-side?"

"Top-side or bottom-side, it's all the same to me, so long as we get out of this!" said Dudley. "Let's have one more match, Dick, just to start us on our way."

"Right!" Dick answered, and carefully struck one of his few remaining matches. Its flickering light shone on two soaked, white-faced, shivering scarecrows. Indeed, Dudley's appearance gave Dick a nasty shock. But neither had much time to comment on the other. They were too eager to see whether the upper part of the funnel was or was not too steep to climb.

"It looks all right!" said Dudley, with a sigh of relief, and, worming his way out through the narrow mouth of their "Steady a minute!" came Dudley's voice from above.

Dick dropped his match and followed. The darkness was intense. He could hear Dudley wriggling and writhing on above him, but could see absolutely nothing.

It was desperately anxious work. The inside of the pipe was so smooth that there was no hand-hold. They had to wedge their knees and elbows against the sides and force themselves up by degrees. But the worst was that they could never tell when they would come to some place which was beyond their powers to surmount. In that case, it was more than doubtful whether they would ever be able to get down again to the bottom without slipping and falling the whole distance.

"Steady a minute!" came Dudley's voice from above.

Dick heard him struggling.

"Are you stuck?" he asked anxiously.

"Mighty near it!" answered Dudley, panting.

"Wait! I'll give you a hoist!"

Dick wedged himself as best he could, and, getting hold of one of Dudley's feet, held it firmly. Dudley wriggled himself upwards.

"All right!" he gasped. "I'm over that bit, but it's worse above."

It was, and so bad did it become that Dick was forced to strike another of his cherished matches in order to see the way. The light showed a curve in the funnel which was steeper and—what was worse—wider than below. The extra width made it all the more difficult to prop themselves against the sides.

"We're against it!" muttered Dudley. And then the match went out.

"Shall we try to get down again?" asked Dick.

"No use; we must go on."

Dudley began struggling up again. Dick heard him breathing hard as he struggled for hold, and braced himself, expecting every moment that he would slip. But Dudley stuck to it.

"I'm round the curve!" he panted.

Dick followed, but the way above was no easier. They were both dripping with perspiration, and almost done for by their own feelings. Dick knew how Dudley must be suffering. Their hands were raw and bleeding, their knees and elbows were a mass of bruises. Yet they had to keep going, for there was no place where they could rest for even a minute. Even the little cavern where they had spent that horrible hour would have been a harbour of refuge compared with what they were suffering at this moment.

All of a sudden Dudley gave a sharp exclamation.

"The light!" he cried. "Did you see the light?"

Dick thought that the strain had been too much for the highly-strung young American. He believed that his imagination was playing him tricks. It was, of course, just possible that he was glimpsing the upper end of the tunnel, but, even so, it must be night long ago, so how could he have seen a light?

"I saw no light," he answered. "Can you see it now?"

"No; it was just a flash. It's gone now. But I saw it. I'll swear to it."

Dick did not answer.

"Don't you believe me?" cried Dudley angrily.

"I'm sure you thought you saw it," replied Dick soothingly.

"You call me a liar!" burst out Dudley. And just then a

flash of strong reddish light showed quite plainly at a little distance overhead, then vanished again.

"I beg your pardon, Dudley!" said Dick quickly. "I saw that, anyhow. But for the life of me I can't imagine what caused it. If you hadn't seen it already, I'd have thought I was dreaming."

"You bet your life we're going to find out what it is!" declared Dudley sharply. And by the scuffling sound Dick knew that he was climbing fast.

Dick, too, was so excited that for the moment he forgot his fatigue. He forced himself upwards close behind Dudley.

Once more the light shone out, and its gleam was enough to show that it came from the mouth of another passage opening at right angles of the blowhole.

The latter now became easier. The slope was less acute. Two minutes more, and the pair crouched side by side at the entrance of the side-passage.

There was no light coming from it now, yet the spot where they were was not quite dark. Not a dozen feet above was the open air. There were no stars; it was evidently a dark and cloudy night, yet compared with the utter gloom in which they had been groping so long, it seemed almost light. They could hear the wind rattling the palmetto fronds, they could smell the earth wet with rain.

For some seconds they remained motionless, breathing hard. Dudley was the first to speak.

"Which is it?" he asked, in a voice which quivered a little with excitement. "The tunnel, or the top?"

Dick glanced upwards, measuring the angle with his eyes.

"There's no choice," he answered softly. "This top bit is straight up and down. We couldn't climb it without a ladder."

"Then it's us for the tunnel," replied Dudley eagerly. "Come on, Dick!"

The Hidden Refuge.

Dick seized Dudley's arm.

"Steady a jiffy! Don't go running your head into it! A light doesn't come by itself. There's bound to be someone there."

"Of course there is! But whoever it is, he's not one of Cray's crowd."

"No; I don't suppose it's one of them. But if not, who the mischief is it?"

"How can we tell till we see?" Dudley was getting more and more excited. "Anyway, I'm going to find out. You can stay here if you've a mind to."

He wrenched himself free, and, springing into the cross passage, hurried along it. Dick, in a terrible fright, went after him as fast as he could go. But Dudley had the start, and next moment he heard him wrench something aside—it seemed like a curtain.

Instantly a flood of light shone out, illuminating the whole passage.

"What's that?" came in supernatural tones, as a man holding a rifle sprang forward. "Who are you? Where do you come from?"

Now Dick saw the man. He was tall, upright, and very thin. He had a long, grey beard which came half-way down his chest, and his hair, which hung over his shoulders, was equally silvery, and contrasted strongly with his skin, which was almost the colour of a ripe walnut.

"I'm Dudley Drew," Dudley answered quickly. "And then, with a flash of inspiration: "And you—you are Matthew Snell!"

The old man backed a step and stared at the intruder.

"Drew it is!" he muttered, in a tone of extreme amazement. Then, after a moment's silence: "Where's your partner?"

"Just behind me," replied Dudley, and suddenly laughed. "Come on, Dick, let me introduce you to Mr. Matthew Snell."

"Come in," said Snell gravely.

Dick noticed that he spoke slowly and like a man who is unaccustomed to using his voice. It was just as if his vocal organs needed oiling.

Dick stepped in, and found himself inside a small but most comfortable rock chamber. The floor was level, the roof was high. In the centre was an iron brazier in which a fire of charcoal was burning. The smoke was carried up to the roof by a pipe which disappeared through a small crevice above. There was a cot, with blankets, a couple of stools, and some cases of provisions lay against the walls. The entrance was covered by a rough curtain of heavy sack. It was this which had cut off the firelight. The gleams they

(Continued on page 111 of cover.)

THE GOLDEN KEY.

(Continued from page 20.)

had noticed from below must have been caused by Snell himself raising this curtain.

For a moment or two Snell regarded his two guests gravely.

"Waal," he said at last, "I didn't ever reckon you'd find me, and I haven't no notion how you did it. But I guess—I guess it ain't altogether sorry."

"I'll soon tell you how we did it," began Dudley.

But the old man cut him short.

"I guess I can wait to hear about that, mister. You and your friend look to me to be jest about done in. Set yourselves down by the fire, and I'll fix you some coffee. After that I'll be right glad to hear what ye got to say."

Coffee! The boys had almost forgotten what it looked like. Old Snell opened a tin, piled half a cupful of the brown powder into a tin biller, poured on hot water from a kettle, and set it on the fire to boil up. The fragrant steam that rose smelt more delicious than anything that either of them could imagine.

Next, Snell cut bacon—great thick slices—and set them to sizzle in a pan. From another tin he extracted biscuits and crumbled them to fry in the boiling fat.

He worked very deliberately, and yet it was not more than two minutes before the meal was ready and served out on clean tin plates.

"I reckon this is a shesful occasion," said the old man, speaking for the first time since he began to cook. "This here's the last but one, but I reckon we'll celebrate."

With that he opened a tin of condensed milk and let a goodly portion of the thick, sweet stuff dribble into each mug.

He took a little of the food himself, but ate slowly, and watched with evident enjoyment the way in which his two guests cleaned up every mouthful set before them.

"See here, Mr. Snell," said Dudley solemnly as he finished his portion. "If I live to be a hundred, I'll never enjoy a meal again as much as that."

"Same here!" said Dick heartily.

Snell smiled, and the smile gave his queer, brown old face a very pleasant expression.

"I'm mighty glad I had the grub to give you," he said, as he sipped his coffee.

"And we're mighty glad to find you alive to give it us," replied Dudley.

The words evidently pleased the old man, for he smiled again.

"And now, gents," he said, "I'd be pleased to know how you stumbled on this here cache of mine."

They told him, first one speaking, and then the other, and it was clear by the way he listened that the story was full of interest to him. When it came to their perilous climb up the blowhole, he tugged sharply at his long beard, and his eyes, pale blue, but still keen, glistened.

"Waal," he said slowly. "I've seen enough of you lads to know you had grit; but I'll be damned if I thought as anyone could have climbed up that there pipe in the rock."

"You've seen enbough of us?" repeated Dick curiously.

"Why, of course he has!" put in the quicker-witted Dudley. "Say, Dick, don't you realise that Mr. Snell here has been sort of looking after us all the way through? Have you forgotten the ghost, or the quinine when I was so bad with fever, or the file which you found in the nigger shack? I guess we've got to thank him for all that, and, maybe, more than we don't know of."

Old Snell nodded quickly.

"You're right, Mr. Drew. I've been round a good bit of nights, since you got ashore. I guess, maybe, it was a pity I didn't let ye know I was still on the island. But the fact is, I've been here alone so long I kind of felt I didn't want to have nothing to do with no one else. An old chap like me gets that way arter he's been on his own for years."

"Then why did you chuck those bottled messages into the sea?" responded Dudley instantly.

"Those?" questioned Dick. "We only found one."

"And what did Cray find?" retorted Dudley.

"Mr. Drew, he's right," said Snell. "There was four in all as I put afloat. I'll tell ye. 'Twas in the big storm as my boat was busted up. I wasn't well at the time—had a go of chills and fever. It seemed to me I didn't want to die alone here. I guess I got a regular scare. So I put them there bottles afloat."

"When I got better I began to wish I hadn't have done it, and it was then as I fixed this here place up so as I could go to it if anyone did come. Then one day, going out early, I seed you two on the beach by the creek mouth. I got plumb scared, and just nacherally cleared out."

"Maybe I'd have come round in a day or two when I seed there wasn't no harm in you. But just as I was thinking

of it, this here feller Cray and his crowd o' scallywags landed. Arter that I made up to lie low, and lie low I have ever since, 'cept when I've gone out of nights to try and lend ye a hand on the quiet like."

Dick spoke up.

"You'll lend us a hand openly now, Mr. Snell, won't you?" he begged. "The three of us ought to be able, between us, to drive those ruffians off the island."

Snell winced a little at Dick's quick speech. Then he nodded.

"I guess I'll have to. I guess if we don't get rid of 'em soon, it'll be too late."

Dudley glanced at him sharply.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because," Snell answered, in his quiet, slow voice—"because I ain't got grub left for the three of us for more'n about three days."

Preparations.

For a few moments no one spoke. Snell's announcement had startled the boys badly. Then Dick broke the silence.

"We're not going to sponge on you, Mr. Snell," he said sharply. He turned to Dudley. "It's up to us to do our own foraging," he continued.

"You bet it is!" declared Dudley.

Old Snell raised his hand.

"What's the use of talking like that?" he said quietly. "If the food will last the three of us three days, it will only last me alone for nine days. Now, do you reckon as Cray is any more likely to leave in nine days than in three?"

"No, of course, he ain't," he continued. "And I'll ask you another question. Is it like that an old feller like me is going to be able to put it over Cray's crowd by himself? Have sense, young fellers! The three of us together can, maybe, do something inside of three days, so long as we're fed up proper; but you two without grub won't be no more use than I would be alone at the end o' the nine days!"

Dudley laughed outright.

"You're sure got the rights of the argument, Mr. Snell. Then, so far as I understand, you mean we are to share up the grub, and try between us to get rid of Cray's little lot before it's all gone?"

"That's so!" replied Snell emphatically.

Dick, who had been listening in silence, broke in.

"I've got a scheme," he said. "I don't know whether it will work, but it might. Have you got any dynamite, Mr. Snell?"

"Yes, Mr. Daunt. As luck has it, I've got a dozen or so sticks left. They're right here in the cave!"

"That's good. Well, see here. You know that pool that the creek comes out of?"

"I guess I ought to," replied the old man, with a smile. "I'd a right to, seeing as I built that there dam myself, so as to get water down in the dry season for washing the grub."

"Well," said Dick, "it occurred to me that if we blew it up, there'd be a rare big rush of water down—enough, anyhow, to rattle those sweeps. Then, while they're trying to find out what's up, I thought we might have time to rush the schooner and get away with her."

"You'd use a slow match, you mean?" said Snell.

"Yes, one long enough to give us time to get right down to the bay after we'd lighted it."

"Have to be a mighty long match, I guess!" replied Snell doubtfully.

"Wait! We can do better than that," declared Dudley. "What's the matter with blowing up the dam, like Dick says, only, instead of going for the schooner and running away, laying for Cray and his fellows just outside the cabin? If we did it just about dawn, they'd come running out when they heard the water roaring down, and we could shoot most of 'em before they knew what was up!"

It was a daring scheme, and for a moment the two others stared at Dudley.

"What about rifles?" asked Dick suddenly.

"I've only got one," said the old man. "A .44 he is, and a good 'un."

"There are the two we left at Crooked Cliffs," said Dudley, "just before we took to swimming. I guess they're there yet."

Dick nodded.

"Yes, we could go after those," he said thoughtfully. "We might get them at dawn."

"Get them! You bet we can get them!" declared Dudley. "Any old time we bet! Don't you see, Dick, Cray thinks we're done in! You bet your sweet life neither, he nor any of his crowd have the least notion that we're still alive!"

Dick's face cleared.

"I hadn't thought of that; but I expect you're right, Dudley. I've no doubt they imagine that the sharks have

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THE GOLDEN KEY.

(Continued from previous page.)

got us long ago. They must know there's no landing-places beyond this Point!"

"Then we'll get these rifles first thing in the morning," declared Dudley. He turned to the old man. "But, Mr. Snell," he continued gleefully, "this is going to be a proper surprise-party for Mr. Cray." He hasn't a notion there's anyone left alive on the island but his own little lot. He'll get the shock of his life when the guns begin to talk to-morrow morning!"

"The last shock, we'll hope," added Dick grimly. Snell spoke in his slow, deliberate fashion. "I guess we'll have to postpone this here little outing, young gent. We can't fix it for to-morrow!"

"Why not?" demanded Dudley. "Why, because if you've got to get them rifles first, it's a-going to make it too late for any surprise-party the same evening. See here! We've got to get all across the island in the dark, and it's a-going to take right smart of a time to fix that there dam-did hole, put the sticks in, tamp 'em, and fix the train."

"Anyway," he continued, "you boys her had a mighty hard time lately. It won't do you no harm to rest up for twenty-four hours, and make up some sleep. Ain't I right?"

Dick nodded sagely. "You are," he declared—"quite right. And as for the grub question, so long as we're not enough to last over to-morrow, why, that's all that matters. At least, that's the way it looks to me."

"I reckon that's so," allowed Dudley. He was nothing as he sat on his stool, and Snell saw it. "You get right down on that there cot, Mr. Drew," he said, with unusual quickness. "Pull them wet things off of you, roll up in a blanket, and sleep. You hear me?"

"But it's your bed," Dudley objected drowsily. "It's yours for to-night, anyway," declared Snell. "You do as I say, or I'll get your pardner to put ye there!"

Dudley made no further objection. Indeed, he was far too nearly asleep to make any, and he was hardly stretched on the cot before he was in the land of dreams.

"A good job, too," observed Dick. "The poor chap's had a rotten time the last few days, Mr. Snell."

"I guess you've had much about the same," said Snell drily. "And if you're wise, you'll follow his example. There's plenty of palmetto leaves there in the corner, and a spare blanket on top."

Dick yawned, and took the old man's good advice. He was asleep almost as quickly as Dudley, and never had sleep been more refreshing than in that warm, dry cave, with no fear of any enemy pouncing upon him.

It was Snell who roused Dick. "Five o'clock, Mr. Daunt," he said. "Coffee's ready, and your clothes is dry."

Dick jumped up. "Pon my word, you're an angel, and not very much disguised at that!" he declared, with a laugh.

Then, as Snell was about to wake Dudley, he stopped him.

"Let him sleep," he said. "It's just as easy for me to bring two rifles at one, and he needs sleep, and lots of it. You know, he's hardly over that go of fever yet!"

Snell nodded approvingly. "Right you are, Mr. Daunt. We'll let him lie till he wakes of himself. I guess he'll be all the fitter for the next night's job!"

Dick dressed rapidly, and put away two cups of the delicious hot coffee.

"And now, how do I get out of this place?" he asked. Snell smiled.

"I reckoned that would puzzle you a bit. Come along outside, and I'll show ye the trick!"

The trick was a ladder ingeniously made of one long pole, with cross-pieces fixed through auger holes, and an iron hook at the top. This was hanging on pegs in the passage into the inner cave. It was quite light, and Snell took it down without help, pushed the end up through the top of the blow-hole, and hooked it against the rocky rim of the pit.

Dick ran up it easily, and turned at the top to wave a good-bye to old Snell.

"I'll leave the ladder right here," said the latter. "And mind you don't go a-swing of your way. Tain't the easiest place to find!"

"I'll look out," Dick promised, and, stepping over the edge, found himself once more on the top of the island.

It was for once a dull morning. There had evidently been another storm overnight. He took his bearings carefully, wondering as he did so at old Snell's skill or luck in finding

such a wonderful hiding-place; then started away for Crooked Cliff.

To reach the spot where he had left the rifles, he had to go right up to the head of the ravine, drop into it, and work down it to the cliffs. It was a nasty place, for if any of Cray's men did happen to be on guard he would be absolutely at their mercy. But, knowing as he did that Cray in all probability believed that he and Dudley were drowned or eaten by sharks, he had little fear of anyone having been left on watch.

As it turned out, he was right. There was no one about, and he gained the cliff face in safety. Now he began to fear that perhaps Cray's people might have discovered the rifles, and carried them off. He was hugely relieved when he found them in the cleft where he had left them, somewhat rusty with the rain, but otherwise all right.

He got back without further incident, and it was barely six, and Dudley still sound asleep, when he found himself safe back in the cave.

"You ain't wasted a lot of time," said Snell, with quiet approval. "Ay, they're a right useful couple o' guns, and takes the same cartridges as mine does. You set right down, and get the rust off of them, while I finishes getting breakfast."

"Seems to me you haven't wasted much time, either, Mr. Snell," replied Dick, with a laugh, as he noticed the preparations for breakfast.

"Wal, it's sort of pleasant to cook for folk as can appreciate it," replied the old man. "And I guess you two ain't had enough to eat anyways the last week and more."

"Whether that was true or not, they certainly had no cause to complain that morning. Snell had actually made fresh baking-powder bread, and this, with plentiful fried bacon, and a big pot of coffee, made such a breakfast as neither had tasted since they had been on the island.

The day passed quietly, and, after a splendid supper, they turned in very early, and it was again Snell who woke Dick on the following morning.

"It will be dawn in a little over an hour," said the old man. "I guess we'd better think of shifting."

Dick was on his feet like a flash.

"Jove!" he exclaimed. "This is the day we really start business!"

The three were pretty heavily-laden when they started away from the Blow-hole. They had the three rifles, all their ammunition, a quantity of dynamite, and fuses, and a heavy steel crowbar. They also carried food for the day.

It was still quite dark, and not a star was visible anywhere. It was curiously still, and the air had not the usual freshness of the early morning. Snell sniffed one or twice, and looked around.

"Guess there's something brewing," he muttered. "Seems to me like we've struck a right stormy spell." Then he started at a pace wonderfully rapid for a man of his age, and in almost complete silence the three walked as quietly and quickly as possible towards the other end of the island.

For all the sign of life they came across, there might never have been another soul but themselves on the island. There were certainly no sentries out. As Dudley had said, Cray doubtless felt sure that at last the two boys were polished off, and he and his precious crew safe to raid the gold at their will.

It was still dark when they reached the pool, and there they rested for a few moments before setting to work. Grey dawn was just beginning to glimmer as Snell pointed out the spot for the first charge, and as soon as there was light enough to see their hands, all three went at it.

Snell evidently knew exactly where he was about. Small wonder that he had been mining over half America, from the Yukon to Mexico. He opened up no fewer than four holes, then himself inserted the dynamite, and cut and fixed the fuses.

"I guess that ought to lift it," he said, as he regarded his work.

Dudley clinched softly. "Gee! But Cray'll get a shock when all that water comes roaring down!"

"You better wait till it does before you laugh," said old Snell quietly. "Dams is funny things. They don't always go the way you expects they will."

"Still," he added, as Dudley's face fell, "there ain't no call to worry. This here is fixed mighty nicely, and I've allowed half an hour, as near as I can guess, for the fuses to burn. That ought to be enough, I reckon."

"Heaps," declared Dick.

"Be on ready, boys!" called Snell.

"You bet!" Dudley answered, picking up his rifle.

"Then I'll touch her off," said Snell, and proceeded to do so.

(Another long instalment of this splendid serial story

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