

THE DESERTER!

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



The Magnet 1st

Library

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A MAN, AFTER ALL! (A Dramatic Scene in the Grand, Long Complete Story in this issue.)

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MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d., Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, 1d., Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY. "THE PENNY POPULAR," 1d., Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price 1/2d., 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 difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

For Next Monday:

"LINLEY MINOR!"

By Frank Richards.

In this story Mark Linley's younger brother comes to Greyfriars, very much against Mark's wish. For, though the people in the Lancashire home are better off now than they were, the fees are far more than they can really afford to pay, and Gerald Linley has not won a scholarship, as Mark did. The new boy is a queer mixture of pluck and swank, lacking entirely his brother's stability of character. He distinguishes himself at the outset, but gets into bad company later, and causes Mark no end of anxiety. In the long run he makes Greyfriars too hot to hold him, and the general opinion is that, though the fellow had his points, the school can very well get on without

"LINLEY MINOR!"

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

A Sittingbourne reader writes to say that the letter he sent has not been printed, and adds that this is very annoying. Which is absurd, as Euclid says. For there was nothing in the letter which seemed to me worth printing; and I am the person who is called upon to judge as to this. Moreover, the reader referred to did not send his name and address. I could not answer him through the post, and, though I shall be only too glad when the space available allows of my starting the Replies in Brief again, I absolutely refuse to start them for the benefit of readers who will not comply with a request made time and again that names and addresses should be given. I do not intend to have my hand forced in this way, and it does not follow that, because I print now and then a letter which strikes me—rightly or wrongly—as being of some interest, I can give space to any letter sent along. Why, there would be something like a riot if some week I were to print all the letters that their senders ask to have printed, cutting out the serial and a few pages of the complete yarn to make room for them! Or, if there was not a riot, there would be a slump of the most decided nature in the sale of the next week's MAGNET.

AMATEUR MAGAZINES.

This is a subject on which I have been thinking of writing for some little time. There has been quite an epidemic of attempts at running amateur magazines lately, and in several cases I have seen headstrong youngsters who would not take advice embarking upon projects that were simply bound to turn out failures. You will have seen notices of leagues forming, in which the announcement was airily made that "a monthly magazine would be run in connection with the league," these notices coming from boys who had not, in most cases, the remotest notion of what the cost and labour of running such a magazine must entail.

If all they intended was a small manuscript or typed sheet, to be passed round—well and good! As long as their members were satisfied with that, it would afford some interest and do no harm. But even a duplicated sheet is impossible to run now, except at a loss, and in most cases those who consulted me were quite obviously hopeful of profits.

The hectograph is the easiest way, and the cheapest. But practically you cannot make graphs now, for glycerine, a necessary ingredient, is not to be had. And directly you get into the regions of print you are on the rocks!

Why?

Just because you cannot clear expenses on even a small printed magazine unless you get some thousands of subscribers—at least, some hundreds. Remember that a pound or two does not go far towards meeting a printer's bill. If your printing costs you only a pound an issue—and with paper and labour at the present prices, I cannot see how the very

smallest magazine can be got out for that sum—you will need, say, 250 to 300 subscribers, if the paper is to be sold at 1d. Where are you going to get them? Scarcely among your personal friends—unless you have many more than most people. Certainly not from the general public, for you cannot give it value for its money!

I shall return to this subject in a later issue. I hope you will all understand that nothing I have said is meant to crab honest effort. It is only intended to get some of you to look before you leap. If only one or two of the readers who have lately been running these small magazines will send me their balance-sheets for, say, three months, I shall be glad, without in any way divulging the senders' identity, to take these as illustrations of the hopelessness of the attempt. If they prove, on the other hand, that it has a fair chance, I shall not hesitate to admit myself wrong.

FOOTBALL.

Matches Wanted By:

- ALL SAINTE' F.C. (17½).—C. Ferrey, 1, Erpingham Rd., Putney, S.W.
 THORNWOOD F.C. (15-16)—3-mile r.—J. N. Johnston, 12, Haylyn St., Whiteinch.
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 COMPTON VILLA F.C. (16½)—3-mile r.—J. Jones, 199, Avon Vale Rd., Barton Hill, Bristol.
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 TRINITY F.C.—6-mile r.—A. McWilliam, 8, Peto St., Southampton.
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 A Leeds Club.—I. Steinberg, 17, Meanwood St., Camp Rd., Leeds.
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 ROYAL VIOLET F.C. (15) 5-mile r.—A. McDougall, 103, Main St., Bridgeton, Glasgow.
 GLOUCESTER C.L.B. THURSDAY A.F.C. (16)—9-mile r.—Sec., 3, Napier St., Gloucester.
 WOOD GREEN ROVERS F.C. (13) 2-mile r.—E. J. Bradnum, 99, Maurice Avenue, Noel Park, Wood Green, N.
 ALMA F.C. (14-15).—E. Gough, 13, Marriott Rd., Finsbury Park, N.
 ST. LUKE'S F.C. (15-16) 12 mile r. G. Wilkinson, 105, St. George's Rd., Redditch.
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Your Editor

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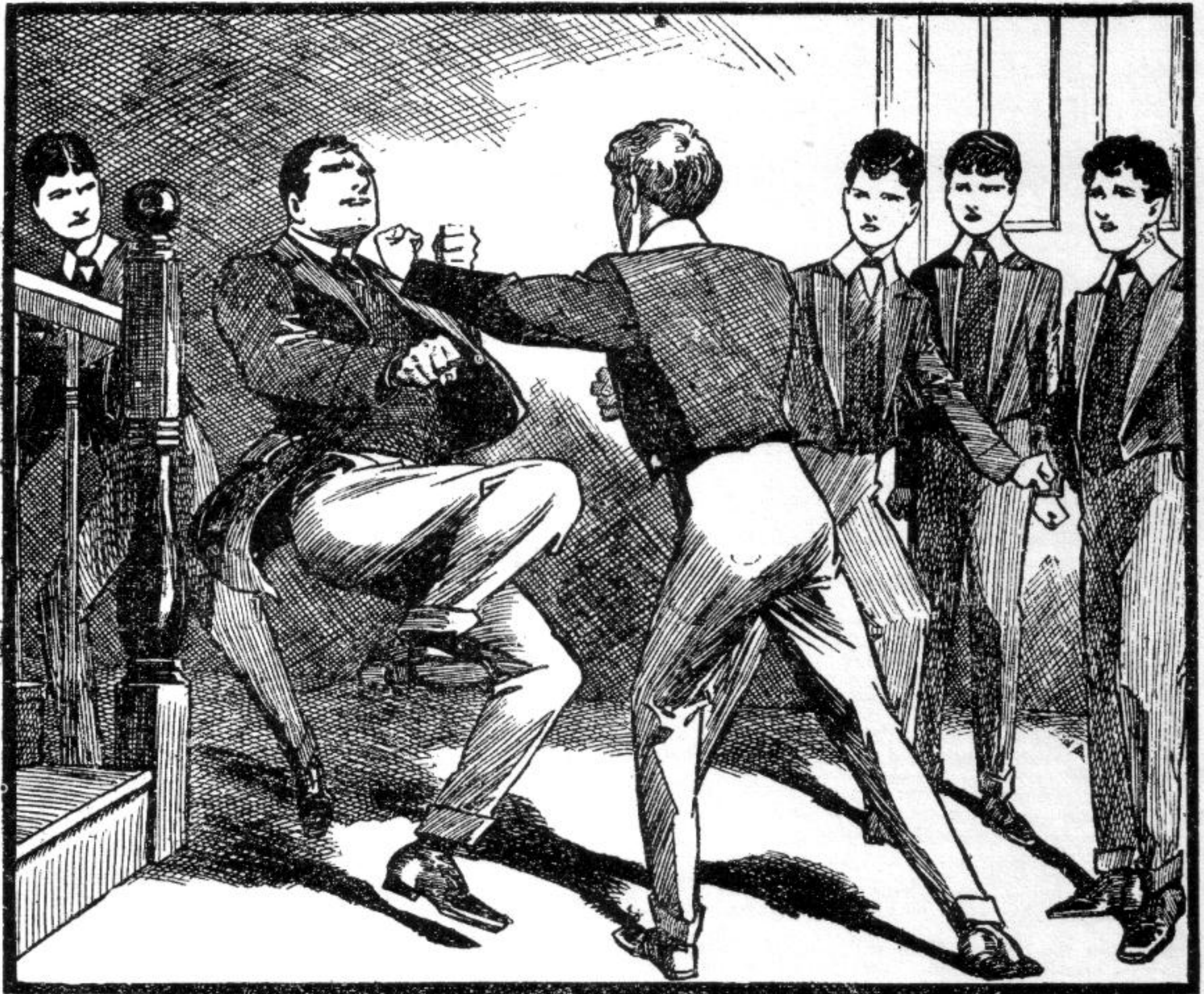


The Editor will be
obliged if you will
hand this book,
when finished with,
to a friend. . . .

THE DESERTER!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



Bob's right and left came home full in the rugged face, and Bolsover major went to the floor with a terrific crash.
(See Chapter 3.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Surprises His Chums!

"THE rotter!"
"Hallo!"
"The worm!"
"Bob!"
"The rotten funk!"
"What the thunder—"
"The miserable, crawling, cringing, sneaking, rotten, white-livered waster!" roared Bob Cherry.
Harry Wharton & Co. stared blankly at their chum.

Bob Cherry was accustomed to expressing his opinions in a somewhat forcible manner. But his chums had never seen him quite so emphatic as this.

The Famous Five of Greyfriars had been waiting at the gate for the postman.

Perhaps, owing to war-time economy on the part of their relatives, funds were low among the chums of the Remove.

Old Mr. Boggs, the village postman, had come along at last, and there was a letter for one member of the Co.—Robert Cherry.

Wharton and Nugent, Hurree Singh and Johnny Bull, gathered round him while he opened it. Billy Bunter joined

the circle. Anybody who received a remittance was sure of polite attentions from Billy Bunter.

But it was soon clear that there was no remittance in the letter. Bob took out the folded sheet, and glanced over it; and then he had gone off in a series of explosions, so to speak. He crumpled the letter in his hand, his eyes blazed, and he stamped his foot as he uttered that eloquent string of adjectives.

"What on earth's the matter, Bob?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"The worm!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Who is it?"

"The waster!"

"Is it from your father, Bob, old chap?" asked Billy Bunter fatuously.

Bob glared at him.

"You silly fat duffer!" he roared.

"Well, you said you were expecting a letter from your father," said Bunter, blinking at him through his big spectacles. "I heard you tell Wharton so. What has your father done, Bob?"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I don't think a fellow ought to speak of his pater like that, whatever he's done. I shouldn't have thought Major Cherry was white-livered. Isn't he at the Front?"

"You—you—you—" stuttered Bob.

"Has he run away from the Germans?" asked Bunter, with a grin.

"Shut up, you ass!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—I say—yaroooh—leggo!" yelled Bunter.

Bob Cherry's reply to Bunter's question was emphatic. He seized the Owl of the Remove by the collar, spun him round, and applied a heavy boot to his person. Billy Bunter roared.

"There!" gasped Bob. "Now clear off, you fat dummy, and if you say another word about my pater, I'll squash you!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter sat down and roared. Bob Cherry looked at the letter again, his brows knitting darkly, and his eyes gleaming. His chums regarded him in wonder. Such an outbreak on the part of the usually good-humoured Bob was amazing.

"Oh, the rotter!" Bob Cherry mumbled over the letter. "The funk! Disgracing the family! The waster! And he's got the cheek to tell me he's dodging away from the Huns! The wastrel! The cad!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Harry Wharton seized his chum by the shoulder, and shook him.

"What's it all about?" he demanded. "If you're not off your rocker, what are you driving at, you ass?"

"Oh, leggo! I've a jolly good mind to tell you! He deserves to be given away! I've a jolly good mind to go straight to the police-station and give him up!" howled Bob Cherry.

"He! Who?" yelled Frank Nugent.

"Oh, the rotter! And to tell me—me!"

"Who's told you what?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"The waster!"

"The mysteryfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Has the esteemed Bob gone off his honourable crumpet?"

Bob Cherry jammed the letter into his pocket. Evidently he did not intend to read it out to his comrades.

"Can't you tell us what the matter is, Bob?" asked Nugent.

"No!" snapped Bob.

"Well, don't bite a fellow's head off, at any rate!"

"Sorry! This has upset me! The sneaking, cringing, crawling—"

"We know the list by this time," grinned Johnny Bull.

"Don't go over it again, Bob. Can't you tell us who it is?"

"No!"

"Well, what about tea?" said Nugent. "It seems pretty clear that there isn't a remittance in that letter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blow tea! Hang tea!" snorted Bob Cherry. "I don't want any tea! I've got to get off!"

"I think you're off already—off your blessed onion!"

"Where are you going?" shouted Wharton, as Bob Cherry strode out of the gates.

"I'm going to see him!"

"Him! Who?"

"That waster! That polcat who's afraid of the Germans!" roared Bob. "That rotten disgrace to the family! That skulking deserter!"

"You howling ass! Whom are you speaking of?"

"Oh, rats!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 467.

Bob Cherry strode down the road.

"Do you want us to come?" called out Johnny Bull.

"No, I don't!" said Bob, without turning his head.

"Short, if not sweet," grinned Nugent.

The chums of the Remove stared after Bob. He was going down the road with great strides, and he disappeared at a bend in the lane. Then they gazed at one another blankly.

"Well, my hat!" said Wharton, with a whistle.

"Off his silly rocker!"

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it!"

"I say, you fellows"—Billy Bunter scrambled up in a dusty and dishevelled state—"I say, that's pretty bad, isn't it? Fancy that, you know!"

"What do you know about it, Porpoise?"

"I think it's pretty clear," said Bunter, with a sniff.

"Bob's pater has shown the white feather, and bunked."

"What!" roared the Co. together.

"You needn't yell at me," said Bunter. "It's plain enough. He won't tell you who it is, but he was expecting a letter from his pater, you know that. You heard what he said—funk and waster and deserter. It's clear enough. His pater's deserted!"

"You silly, frabjous ass!"

"Then who is it that's a disgrace to the family, and a deserter?" grinned Bunter. "It's clear enough! Fancy Cherry's pater deserting in face of the enemy! They get potted for that, you know! Here, I say, wharrer you at?"

The Co. seized Billy Bunter in wrathful hands, and sat him down again, with a bump. Then they walked away. Whatever might be the explanation of Bob Cherry's remarkable outbreak, they were quite certain that Bunter's explanation

The Co. seized Billy Bunter in wrathful hands, and sat him gaped.

"Yow! Beasts! You know it's true!" he yelled.

And Bunter scrambled up again, and scuttled off to the School House as fast as his fat little legs would carry him, with quite an exciting item of news to detail in the common-room.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Row in the Common-room!

"ROT!"

"Dry up!"

"Kick him, somebody!"

Harry Wharton & Co. heard those remarks as they came into the junior Common-room a little later. As the afternoon's post had not turned up trumps, tea in the study was still a problem that remained to be solved. They were looking for Vernon-Smith, or Lord Mauleverer, or Rake, or Squiff, or anybody who could spring a small loan till Saturday.

There were a number of Remove fellows in the Common-room, and some of the Fourth, and they were all gathered round William George Bunter.

Bunter was bursting with news. Bunter prided himself upon always knowing what was going on, and he liked to make impressive announcements. But certainly he had never made so startling a statement as that Bob Cherry's father, the major, had run away from the Germans, and had written to tell his son so. A howl of derision greeted his startling news. Major Cherry had been seen several times at Greyfriars while on leave from the Front, and the idea of the ruddy old major having bunked from the Front was, as Rake remarked, too idiotic for anybody but Bunter to believe.

"You silly cuckoo!" said Vernon-Smith. "You'd better not let Cherry hear you saying anything of the sort."

"It's true!" roared Bunter indignantly.

"Oh, shut up!" said Squiff. "As Bob isn't here, I'll dot you on the nose for him if you don't shut up!"

"Where did you hear it, Bunter?" grinned Skinner.

Skinner didn't believe it, but he was always glad to hear anything against the Famous Five. He did not pull with those cheery juniors.

"I heard it from Cherry himself!"

"What?" exclaimed Tom Brown.

"Only his lies!" said Peter Todd, with a snort. "I keep a stump in the study for Bunter when he Prussianises. Come up to the study, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Toddy, you beast, I tell you it's true! Bob's had a letter from his pater, and he's gone to see him now—"

"His pater's in Flanders, you fathead!" said the Bounder.

"Don't I keep on telling you he's bunked?"

"Shut up!"

"And those chaps know it, too," exclaimed Bunter, as Harry Wharton & Co. came in. "They heard him say so."

"By gum, looks as if there was something in it!" said Skinner maliciously. "Did Cherry tell you so, Wharton?"

Harry Wharton frowned angrily.

"You know he didn't, Skinner," he said. "Bunter's lying, as usual. You ought to know that. In fact, you do know it!"

"The knowledge is terrific, my esteemed, rotten Skinner!"

"Well, there's no smoke without fire, you know!" remarked Sidney James Snoop. "What has Bunter got hold of, then?"

"The wrong end of the stick, as usual, I suppose."

"And he's going to shut up!" said Johnny Bull savagely.

"I tell you, Bob Cherry said so!" howled Bunter. "He was expecting a letter from his pater. Then that letter came, and he called him a funk and a deserter, and said he was afraid of the Germans. These fellows heard him!"

"Did he?" grinned Bolsover major.

"He was calling somebody names," said Wharton reluctantly. "But not his pater, of course!"

"Then who was it?" hooted Bunter. "He said the funk was a disgrace to the family—you know he did!"

The chums of the Remove were silent. Bob's words did, in fact, require some explanation, and they were quite at a loss.

The Remove fellows exchanged very queer looks.

"So that's true, that much?" said Skinner.

"No business of yours, anyway!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Bob hasn't any other relations at the Front—only his father," said Snoop. "I know that. If there's a deserter, and a disgrace to the family, and a funk who's afraid of the Germans, who else can it be?"

"Dash it all," said Bolsover major, "if Cherry said all that, it makes it pretty clear, I think. I've never heard of any other people of his at the Front, only his pater."

"Fancy his pater deserting—a major, too!" said Bunter.

"You lying toad!" roared Johnny Bull. "I've told you to shut up! If you say that again, I'll slaughter you!"

"Oh, really, Bull! You know from Cherry himself that his pater has deserted—Yarooch! Keep him off!"

Bolsover major strode between Bunter and the angry Johnny Bull. The bully of the Remove was quite ready to chip in.

"Hands off!" he said grimly.

"Stand aside, Bolsover!" shouted Johnny Bull. "I'm going to scrag that lying Prussian!"

"You can prove that he's lying first!" said Bolsover major coolly. "It looks to me as if it's the truth!"

"They know it's the truth!" hooted Bunter.

"So you repeat Bunter's idiotic accusation, do you?" exclaimed Johnny Bull savagely. "Then I'll deal with you instead of Bunter, you cad!"

"Come on!" jeered Bolsover.

Johnny Bull did not need telling to come on. He came on with his hands up, and in a moment more they were fighting furiously.

"Go it, Bolsover!" sang out Skinner, in great delight.

"Go it yourself, my pippin!" said Squiff, catching Skinner by the shoulder and swinging him round. "Hands up, dear boy!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 467.

NEXT
MONDAY.

"LINLEY MINOR!"

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



Paul Tyrrell held out his hand to his visitor. Bob Cherry stared at it, and put his hands into his pockets. Tyrrell shrugged his shoulders. (See Chapter 7.)

Skinner backed away promptly.

"I'm not going to fight you, Field, you rotter!"

"Your mistake!" said the Australian junior cheerily.

"You are!"

And Skinner had to.

"You agree with Bunter, too, I think, Snoop?" remarked Frank Nugent, pushing back his cuffs with a businesslike air.

"Nunno—not at all!" gasped Snoop. "Not in the least!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gad, it looks to me as if there's somethin' in it!" remarked Cecil Reginald Temple, of the Fourth Form. "Cherry ought to make some explanation, anyhow!"

"Bob isn't here to make any explanation," said Harry Wharton. "But I'll explain for him, and that's for a start."

And he tapped Cecil Reginald hard upon his nose.

"Yow!" roared Temple. "Here, hold my jacket. Fry! You cheeky Remove cad, come on!"

The third fight was quickly in progress.

Frank Nugent and Hurree Janset Ram Singh looked round, as if in search of victims. But any other fellow who felt inclined to take Bunter's view decided to hold his peace. The absent Bob had valiant champions to stand up for him and the honour of his father. But, as a matter of fact, it was only Skinner and his friends who felt inclined to make any capital out of Bunter's latest yarn. Temple had not meant his remark very seriously.

Skinner was on the floor in a few minutes, holding his nose in great anguish, and Sampson Quincy Ifley Field in vain entreated him to get up and have some more.

But Bolsover major and Temple of the Fourth were made of sterner stuff, and Johnny Bull and Wharton had their hands full.

There was a terrific din in the Common-room as the two

pairs of combatants tramped to and fro, punching and pommelling with great vigour.

"Cave!" called out Mark Linley suddenly.

But the combatants did not even hear. Mr. Quelch strode in at the open doorway with rustling gown. The Remove-master was frowning ominously.

"Boys," he thundered, "cease this instantly! How dare you!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The juniors separated at once. They blinked at the Form-master, dabbing their noses, and gasping for breath. Mr. Quelch eyed them grimly.

"Are you aware that I could hear this din in my study?" he demanded.

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Wharton.

"How dare you fight in the Common-room—or, indeed, at all?"

"Ahem!"

"Kindly tell me the cause of this outrageous disturbance at once!" snapped the master of the Remove.

"Ahem!"

"You hear me?" said Mr. Quelch.

"It—it was—was really nothin', sir!" stammered Temple.

"Only—only a little scrap, you know, sir, ahem—"

"Then you were fighting about nothing?"

"Ahem!"

"Temple, I order you to answer me!"

"Well, sir, Wharton punched my nose!" confessed Temple.

"Why did you strike Temple, Wharton?"

"I—I didn't exactly strike him, sir—only punched his nose!" said Wharton cautiously. "Just a tap on the boke—I mean the nose, sir!"

"And why?"

"He—he was talking too much, sir."

"What?" thundered Mr. Quelch, as some of the juniors grinned.

"Ahem!"

"Bull, you have also been fighting, with Bolsover."

"He went for me, sir," said Bolsover sullenly.

"And I'll go for you again, you cad, if you say you believe Bunter's rot about Bob's father!" growled Johnny Bull.

"What is this?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, it appears that you are concerned in this."

Bunter jumped.

"Not at all, sir! Not in the least! I haven't said a word, and I haven't been fighting anybody, sir! I consider fighting low. Besides, it's true about Bob Cherry's father."

"You have been making derogatory remarks concerning Cherry's father, a soldier now fighting at the Front!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch in a terrific voice.

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I didn't—I wasn't—I never— And he ain't at the Front now, sir, as he's deserted."

"What!"

"I—I mean, sir—that is to say, sir, I—I never said a word—never even opened my lips, sir. All I said was—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Bunter, you have dared to utter such a wicked slander concerning a very gallant officer, now engaged in defending this country against a barbarous enemy! I can scarcely believe my ears! Bolsover, Temple, if you paid any attention to such a statement you are deserving only of contempt! Bunter, you will follow me to my study!"

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "But I never said a word—not a single syllable. I only just remarked that—that—that—Yaroooh!"

Mr. Quelch's grasp fell on Bunter's shoulder, and the fat junior was marched out of the Common-room. Temple and Bolsover looked rather sheepish. Mr. Quelch's sharp tongue had cut them like a lash.

"I—I never said I believed it, you know," stammered Temple.

"I didn't either," said Bolsover major. "Not exactly. But—"

"Oh, rats!" growled Wharton.

"Hallo! Methinks I hear sweet music!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith

There was a wild wail of anguish from the direction of Mr. Quelch's study. It was continued for some minutes. Billy Bunter was receiving his reward for the interesting news he had imparted to the Remove.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry's Reply!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. waited anxiously for Bob Cherry's return to the school.

They were worried about their chum.

Bob's inexplicable words made them uneasy.

They could not put upon them the construction Bunter had put. But what else Bob could possibly have meant was a mystery. And where had he gone? Evidently to meet the writer of the mysterious letter, whom he had characterised as a funk, a waster, a deserter, and a disgrace to the family. It was clear that the unknown person must be a relation of Bob's; and, so far as his chums knew, his father was his only relation in khaki. And if the unknown was not a relation in khaki, how could he be a deserter? Yet it was quite certain that Bob had not been alluding to his father—whatever the major had or had not done. Bob would certainly never have spoken of him disrespectfully. It was simply a mystery, and a worrying mystery.

Most of the Remove were anxious to see Bob as well as his chums. Bunter's yarn found no believers, excepting Skinner and Snoop, but several of the fellows considered that Bob ought to explain. There was something in the wind, at all events, and they wanted to know what it was.

Tea—a frugal tea—was finished in No. 1 Study, and Bob Cherry had not yet reappeared. The early winter darkness had fallen, and Gosling had closed the school gates. Bob was still absent.

He missed calling-over, and Mr. Preat, the Fifth-Form master, who took the roll-call, marked him down as absent.

Billy Bunter had been chiefly occupied with groaning and mumbling since his interview with Mr. Quelch. But after calling-over he had recovered sufficiently to let his fat tongue wag again. Bunter had a most interesting theory to account for Bob Cherry's absence. He surmised that Bob had run away from school, unable to face his schoolfellows after what had happened.

Unfortunately for Bunter's theory, Bob Cherry came in somewhat later, looking tired and muddy and morose. Gosling blinked at him curiously as he opened the gate.

"Which you're to report to Mr. Quelch, Master Cherry," he said.

Bob nodded and strode away across the quadrangle.

The Co. were waiting at the School House door, having postponed their prep in their anxiety for Bob.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Nugent, as Bob loomed up in the misty quad. "So you've got back, you duffer!"

Bob grunted.

"We are delightfully pleased to see you again, my esteemed Bob," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Have you fed tearfully?"

"No."

"Well, you must be hungry," said Wharton.

"Eh? Oh, yes! I'll have some tommy, if there's any going," said Bob.

"Haven't you got to report?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, yes! I forgot."

"Forgot!" echoed Wharton.

Bob Cherry did not reply. He strode away to the Remove-master's study, leaving his chums exchanging uneasy glances. They had never seen Bob in this humour before. His sunny temper was usually proof against any trouble, and it was amazing to see him morose and mum.

Bob tapped at Mr. Quelch's door, his face hard and grim in expression.

"Come in!"

The junior entered.

Mr. Quelch laid down his pen and looked at him. Bob stood cap in hand, his face unrelaxing.

"You were not present at calling-over, Cherry," said the Remove-master mildly.

"No, sir."

"You were out of gates?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you any excuse to offer?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Quelch looked at him sharply.

"I do not quite understand you, Cherry! Where have you been?"

"Out, sir."

"That is not quite definite enough," said Mr. Quelch drily.

"I require to know why you have failed to return to the school before locking-up."

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WEDNESDAY,

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Bob was silent.
"Come, Cherry!" said the Form-master kindly enough.
"I am sure that you have been doing nothing you need fear to acquaint me with. Tell me where you have been."

"In Friardale Wood, sir."
"You remained in the wood after dark?" asked Mr. Quelch, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes, sir."
"For what reason?"
"I was just tramping about, sir."

"A very extraordinary taste," said Mr. Quelch. "Do you find any pleasure in tramping about a damp and dark wood, Cherry?"

"No, sir."
"Then why were you occupied in such an extraordinary manner?"

"I forgot calling-over, sir."
"This is very odd, Cherry."

The Form-master looked very keenly at the junior's dark, almost sullen, face.
Anything like sullenness was amazing in Bob Cherry. It was not surprising that the Remove-master failed to understand him. He did not speak.

"Is anything the matter with you, my boy?" Mr. Quelch asked sympathetically.

"No, sir."
"Surely," said the Remove-master, remembering suddenly, "surely, Cherry, you have not been upset by Bunter's foolish statements, for which I have punished him severely?"

"Bunter?" said Bob vaguely. "Bunter? Oh no, sir!"
"I certainly fail to understand you, Cherry. You will take fifty lines for failing to attend call-over."

"Very well, sir."
Bob Cherry left the study. Mr. Quelch frowned thoughtfully. He liked Bob, as nearly everybody at Greyfriars did, and he could see that there was something amiss with the junior. But it was clear that, whatever it was, Bob did not intend to confide it to him.

Bob found his chums and a crowd of other fellows waiting for him when he left the Remove-master's study. He was the centre of interest in the Remove now, and all eyes were turned curiously upon him. He hardly seemed to notice it.

"We've got some supper in the study, Bob," said Wharton. "Come along!"

"Right-ho!"
"Hold on!" interjected Temple of the Fourth. "Some of us want to ask you something, Bob Cherry."

"Oh, rats!" said Bob, and he followed the captain of the Remove to the stairs.

"Aren't you going to explain?" roared Bolsover major. Bob looked round with a gleam in his eyes.

"Explain what?" he snapped.
"You know what Bunter's been saying?"

"No, I don't."
"Then we'll tell you—"

"You needn't trouble," said Bob, and he turned back to the stairs. "I don't want to hear."

"It's up to you to explain," said Bolsover.
"Shut up!" muttered Squiff.

"I'm not going to shut up!" said Bolsover major, with a snort. "Cherry has a right to know what's being said about his father."

Bob spun round on the stairs.
"My father! What do you mean, Bolsover?"

"There's a yarn going round about your father, and Bunter started it," said Bolsover major. "You ought to explain. I don't say I believe it—in fact, I don't believe it, but you ought to explain."

Bob came down the stairs again, with a glitter in his eyes.
"Well, what is it?" he asked. "If you've got anything to say about my father, you can say it to me."

"Keep your wool on, Bob!" said Vernon-Smith. "It's only one of Bunter's yarns. He heard you say something when you got a letter this afternoon, and he's put two and two together and made five of it, as usual."

Bob did not heed.
"What is it about my father, Bolsover?" he asked quietly.

"You needn't try to bully me!" said Bolsover. "I don't care twopence for your black looks, Bob Cherry, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it! Bunter says your pater has deserted—"

"What?" yelled Bob.
"If it isn't true you can say so, I suppose— Ah, would you?" shouted Bolsover, as Bob sprang at him like a tiger.

It had never been quite settled whether Bob Cherry or Bolsover major was the better fighting man. Bob had had the best of two or three encounters, but the bully of the Remove was always ready to put the matter to the test again. But on the present occasion, the burly Bolsover was mopped up as if he had been a fag in the Second Form.

His heavy fists were knocked aside, and Bob's right and left came home full in his rugged face, and Bolsover major went to the floor with a terrific crash.

He lay there gasping.
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 467.

Bob Cherry looked round at the startled juniors with blazing eyes.

"Anybody else got any questions to ask about my father?" he asked between his teeth.

"You haven't denied it," said Temple of the Fourth. Bob rushed at him.

Temple's hands went up at once, and in a twinkling they were fighting furiously. But the fight did not last ten seconds. Temple went down with a crash, landing on Bolsover, who was still gasping on the floor.

"For goodness' sake, draw it mild, Bob!" exclaimed Wharton, catching his chum's arm. "Keep your wool on!" Bob dragged his arm away.

"Let me alone! Let the cads come on—one at a time, or both together, for all I care! That's how I answer their rotten questions!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Temple, sitting up dazedly. His nose was streaming crimson.

Wingate of the Sixth came along the passage, with his ashplant in his hands and a frown on his face.

"What the dickens is this row?" he exclaimed angrily. "Clear off, all of you!"

Bob Cherry gave the captain of Greyfriars a dogged look; but his chums caught hold of him and fairly hustled him up the stairs and into Study No. 1.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Out of Sorts!

THERE was a grim silence in Study No. 1 for some time. Bob Cherry did not speak, and his chums did not know what to say. Wharton and Nugent silently brought supper out of the cupboard and laid it on the table. Bob made a gesture of repugnance.

"You're hungry?" said Wharton.
"No—yes—I don't want any supper. Thanks, all the same!"

"Look here, you'd better eat something, whatever the matter may be," said Johnny Bull.

"I won't, I tell you!"
Johnny Bull shrugged his shoulders.
"Well, don't, then! And be blowed!" he said.

Bob snorted.
"The esteemed Bob seems a little ratty," murmured Harree Jamset Ram Singh.

Bob rose to his feet.
"I don't want any supper," he said. "I'll get along to my study."

"Hold on a minute!" said Wharton. "Won't you tell us what's the matter, Bob?"

"No!"
Wharton coloured a little. Bob's reply could not be called polite. But Harry realised that something must be very wrong with Bob to cause him to speak and act as he was doing now.

"If you're in trouble, Bob, you know you've got pals here," he said quietly. "I should think you could trust us."

Bob made an irritable gesture.
"I can't tell you. The rotter wrote to me in confidence—like his confounded cheek! But I can't talk about him. I can't give him away—not till I've seen him, at any rate."

"You went to see him?" said Nugent.
Who the person referred to might be was a mystery to the Co.

"He wasn't there!" growled Bob. "I thought I might catch the rotter there to-day, but he wasn't there."

"And you waited, I suppose?" said Harry.
"Yes: I waited. I forgot that confounded call-over!"

"And you don't want us to know where you've been, or why?"
"No."

"Well, it's your own business, I suppose," said Wharton, a little tartly. "I'm not inquisitive, for one."

"The inquisitiveness is not terrific, my esteemed Bob; but your chumful pals would like to help you."

Bob's face relaxed a little.
"You can't help me," he said. "I'm not in any scrape, if it comes to that. It's nothing to do with me, really. I can't talk about the brute, or he'd be in danger; and I can't give him away till I've seen him, at least. I'm going to try to persuade him to do the right thing. If he won't—" Bob broke off abruptly.

"I suppose you know you're talking in riddles?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I suppose so. But I can't explain. Look here, when I got that letter I said some things, and you heard me. I was a fool to say anything, but I didn't stop to think. Of course, you won't say anything about what I said?"

"Rather too late to think of that," said Harry drily. "Bunter heard you, too, and he's spread it all over the school."

"Hang the spying little beast!"

"Look here, Bob, it would really be better to make some explanation, instead of flying out at fellows. I'm speaking as your pal. We know it's a silly yarn about your pater. Bunter jumped to the wrong conclusion, of course. Every chap in the school would take your word if you said so. Why can't you say so?"

Bob's lips curled bitterly.

"My pater's at the Front," he said. "Am I going to let silly cads ask me whether he's run away from the Germans? Don't be an ass!"

"Well, you've said so now," said Harry, with a smile. "If your pater's at the Front, that settles it, and we can tell the fellows you've said so."

"You needn't tell them anything from me!" growled Bob. "I'll hit any chap who asks me! What would you do if they asked you whether your uncle, Colonel Wharton, had run away from the Huns?"

"Well, I think I should hit out," said Harry. "But, you see, there's your own words for them to go on. They know what you said—from Bunter."

"Eh? What did I say?"

"You've forgotten; but Bunter hasn't forgotten, and he's told everybody. You said the man who wrote you that letter was a funk and a deserter, and a disgrace to the family."

"I—I was upset by it," muttered Bob. "I ought to have held my tongue. Nobody but a silly idiot like Bunter could have fancied I could speak of my father like that."

"Well, we know it wasn't your father," said Harry. "That's silly rot, of course. But nobody knew you had any other relation in khaki, you see."

"I haven't."

"You—you haven't?"

"Eh—yes—not near relations, though," said Bob. "Nobody I've heard from lately."

"Then—then— Dash it all, Bob, you ought to explain! How can the chap be a deserter if he's not in khaki?"

"I haven't anything to say. It's my business, anyway."

"That's right enough. But—"

"Well, that's all!"

Bob Cherry quitted Study No. 1 without another word, and went along to his own study. There was a grim silence in the room. It was utterly unlike Bob to make a mystery about anything. He detested anything in the nature of secrecy or mysteriousness. Since he had received that strange letter he seemed to have changed his character.

"Well, we'd better get on with our prep," said Johnny Bull at last. "Prep's got to be done, even if Bob is playing the giddy ex."

And Johnny Bull went along to his own quarters. Wharton and Nugent sat down to their work in silence. They were worried and troubled about Bob. But work had to be done.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh went thoughtfully along to Study No. 13, which he shared with Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, and little Wun Lung, the Chinese. He found Bob Cherry in the armchair, his long legs stretched out, his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a deep line in his forehead.

Mark Linley was regarding his chum anxiously.

"Aren't you going to do your prep, Bob?" he asked.

"No."

"Queelchy will go for you in the morning."

"Let him!"

"The rattiffulness of Queelchy will be terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh. "Better get on workfully, my esteemed Bob."

"Oh, give us a rest!"

"Certainly," said the nabob, with unmoved politeness. "I will not continue my friendly and ludicrous remarks."

"Handsome Bob Chelly in baddee tempee," murmured Wun Lung. "P'laps handsome Bob Chelly hungly. Me gottee labbit-pie in cupboard."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Handsome Bob Chelly likee labbit-pie?" asked Wun Lung.

"No, you ass!"

"P'laps handsome Bob Chelly tellee whatee matter?" suggested Wun Lung. "Handsome Bob Chelly talkee likee Hun."

Bob Cherry rose impatiently to his feet.

"I'll get out if you're going to jaw!" he said.

"Bob!" exclaimed Mark Linley; but Bob Cherry left the study without turning his head.

"Well, my hat" ejaculated Mark, in astonishment.

"The esteemed Bob is upfully set," remarked the nabob.

"Handsome Bob Chelly offee locker!" said Wun Lung. "Nicee labbit-pie—me eattee, if Bob Chelly no wantee. What you tinkee?"

Bob did not return to the study, and he was not seen again till the Remove went to their dormitory.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 467.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover Major on the Warpath!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter blinked into the bath-room where Bolsover major was bathing his nose. Skinner was with him, looking sympathetic. Anybody who was up against the Famous Five was sure of Skinner's sympathy, though, as a matter of absolute fact, Skinner was not sorry to see the bully of the Remove severely handled for once.

"Oh, get out!" snorted Bolsover major, turning a streaming face from the tap.

Billy Bunter grinned at the size of it. Bolsover's face was not handsome at the best of times, but what beauty it had was sadly marred now. His nose seemed almost to have doubled in size, and one of his eyes was growing very shady.

"What are you grinning at, you fat idiot?" roared Bolsover, making a movement towards the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter became grave at once.

"I—I wasn't, you know," he said. "I say, you know, I've got an idea. It was rotten of Cherry to knock you about like that, Bolsover—"

"Knock me about, you fat dummy? Do you think I'm the kind of fellow to be knocked about?"

"Nunno! Of course not! I mean, he didn't knock you about—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"I've been caned, all through him," said Bunter. "It wasn't my fault his pater deserted, was it? I couldn't help hearing him say so."

"He denies it," said Skinner. "He's told the chaps in No. 1 Study that that letter wasn't from his father."

"Then who was it from? Some relation of his who's deserted?" said Bunter. "And he hasn't other relations in khaki. Look here, I think it ought to be proved, to show those rotters up, you know. And I know a way."

Bolsover major towelled his inflamed face.

"Well, what way?" he grunted. "I believe it myself now, and I'd like to prove it and show the cad up to all Greyfriars."

"There's the letter, you know. Ten to one it's still in his pocket," said Bunter eagerly. "What about getting it out to-night, while the beast is in bed, you know? He sleeps like a top."

"By gad, that's an idea!" said Skinner.

Bolsover major gave the Owl of the Remove a thunderous look. He was a little more scrupulous than Skinner.

"You fat toad! Do you think I'm going to spy into a fellow's pockets when he's asleep? Take that!"

"Yaroo!" roared Bunter, as he took it. It was a thump on his fat chest which sent him spinning into the passage.

Skinner remained silent. In Bolsover major's present mood he was as likely to turn upon friend as upon foe. The bully of the Remove towelled his face savagely.

"You're not going to let the matter drop here?" asked Skinner, as Bolsover put on his collar and tie. "I hear that Temple is going to ask Bob Cherry to meet him in the gym to-morrow."

"I'm not going to wait till to-morrow. He's going to settle with me to-night!" said Bolsover major savagely. "He'll come into the gym, or we'll have it out in his study, just as he likes. Come on!"

"Good egg!" said Skinner heartily.

He followed Bolsover major to the Remove passage. Snoop and Stott joined them on the war-path, and the party proceeded to No. 13 Study to look for Bob Cherry. They found Mark Linley and Hurree Singh and Wun Lung there, but there was no sign of the junior they sought.

"Where's Bob Cherry?" roared Bolsover major, glaring round the study.

"He went down some time ago," said Mark Linley, glancing up from his work.

"Hiding, I suppose?" sneered Bolsover.

"You know he's not hiding," said the Lancashire junior quietly. "If you want him, you'll find him easily enough."

"The findfulness will be easy, and the punchfulness terrific!" suggested the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Bolsover major grunted and stamped out of the study. He looked in at No. 1, where Wharton and Nugent were at prep.

"Isn't Cherry here?"

"No," said Harry curtly.

"Do you know where he is?"

"No."

"Skulking away, of course," said Bolsover. "But I'll find him!"

He strode out before the captain of the Remove could reply, and strode along to Johnny Bull's study, where Johnny was at prep with Squiff and Fisher T. Fish. He gave the three juniors a disappointed glare.

"Where's Bob Cherry?" he demanded.
 "Find out!" said Johnny Bull politely.
 "Don't you know where he's hiding?" sneered Bolsover.
 Johnny Bull laid down his pen and rose to his feet.
 "Oh, come on!" said Skinner, pulling the bully of the Remove by the arm. "It's Bob Cherry you want, you know."
 "I'll see you afterwards, Bull," growled Bolsover.
 "Do! If Bob leaves anything for me to mop up when he's done with you!" said Johnny Bull.

Bolsover & Co. descended to the Common-room. A good many of the Remove were there, but Bob Cherry was not to be seen.

"He must have gone out," said Snoop. "It's pretty clear he's keeping out of the way."

"Any of you fellows know where Bob Cherry is hiding himself?" bawled Bolsover.

"Begad! Is he hidin'?" asked Lord Mauleverer.

"Yes, the rotten funk."

"He didn't look much like a funk when he was mopping you up, Bolsover," chuckled Dick Rake. "Are you looking for him?"

"Yes, fathead!"

"Then I advise you not to find him. You may get another eye to match that one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He must be in one of the studies," said Skinner. "Let's make a round of the Remove studies and rout him out."

Up the stairs went Bolsover & Co. again. They started at No. 2, where Bulstrode and Tom Brown and Hazeldene were at work.

"Is that rotter here?" demanded Bolsover, putting his head in at the door.

"Only one rotter here," said Tom Brown cheerfully. "He's just come." And Bulstrode and Hazeldene chuckled.

Bolsover major looked round the study and withdrew without replying to the New Zealander's remark.

In No. 3 he found Ogilvy and Russell; in No. 4 Vernon-Smith was at work; in No. 5 Kipps was doing some conjuring practice; in No. 6 Morgan and Wibley and Micky Desmond were at home; in No. 7 he found Peter Todd and Tom Dutton and Billy Bunter; No. 8 was vacant; in No. 9 Dick Penfold and Monty Newland gave him inquiring looks; No. 10 was his own study; No. 11 belonged to Snoop and Stott; No. 12, which belonged to Lord Mauleverer and Delarey, was empty; and he had already looked into the others. His progress from end to end of the Remove passage was fruitless; Bob Cherry was not there.

"He's hiding away, and no mistake," said Stott.

Bolsover major really began to think so himself. Certainly Bob Cherry did not seem to be in the House at all.

"Well, he will have to turn up in the dorm," said Bolsover, gritting his teeth. "He can't skulk away after bedtime."

"Must be out in the quad," said Snoop. "I suppose he isn't walking about in the mist for pleasure. He's skulking."

The call to the dormitory came soon afterwards. The Remove marched off to their sleeping quarters—all excepting Bob Cherry. But Bob came in just as Wingate of the Sixth was about to inquire after him.

He did not look at Bolsover major. His boots were muddy, as if he had been out of doors, and he looked pale and harassed. The prefect gave him a sharp glance.

"Where have you been, Cherry?" he asked.

"In the quad, Wingate."

"What on earth have you been doing there?" exclaimed Wingate.

"Taking a walk."

"Oh! Well, turn in."

Bob Cherry turned in without another word. Wingate put the light out, and left the dormitory. Skinner & Co. were chuckling. Bob's confession that he had been taking a walk in the dark and misty quadrangle seemed to bear out their theory that he had been hiding from the bully of the Remove.

As soon as the captain of Greyfriars was gone, Harold Skinner's voice was heard.

"Did you enjoy your walk, Cherry?"

Bob did not reply.

"Wasn't it awfully nice in the quad—nice and cold and misty?" chuckled Skinner. "Just the place for a pleasant prom!"

"He, he, he!" came from Bunter.

"Nice place for a walk when there's somebody you don't want to meet!" chortled Snoop.

"Shut up!" rapped out Bob savagely.

"He, he, he!"

"You're in a hurry to go to sleep—what?" sneered Bolsover major. "Well, you're not going to sleep yet, my pippin! There's something to be settled first. You've been dodging me all the evening, but you can't dodge me here. See?"

"Dodging you?" said Bob. "Why should I dodge you, you fool?"

"Because I was looking for you, you funk!"

"How should I know you were looking for me, you silly ass? Shut up, and let me go to sleep!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 467.

NEXT
MONDAY.

"LINLEY MINOR!"

"I suppose you've forgotten that you billed me over?" said Bolsover major sarcastically.

"Eh? Yes, I had."

"Then I'm going to remind you!" Bolsover major slipped out of bed. "Are you going to get up, or shall I yank you out?"

"I'll get up fast enough if you want me!" said Bob Cherry savagely. "I warn you that I'm not in a humour to stand your rot, Bolsover!"

"And I don't care twopence what humour you happen to be in!" said Bolsover, groping his way towards Bob Cherry's bed. "If you want something to buck you up, I'll tell you what I think of your pater—a deserter and a funk—"

Bob Cherry was out of bed in a twinkling. The next moment there was the sound of a fierce struggle in the dark dormitory.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Broken Bounds!

HARRY WHARTON jumped out of bed. Half the Remove followed his example; the rest were sitting up, in a state of great excitement.

Matches were scratched on all sides, and candle-ends lighted. In the dim light Bob Cherry and Bolsover major could be seen fighting furiously.

Bob's prompt attack indicated that he had not, as Skinner & Co. charitably supposed, been dodging the bully of the Remove that evening.

"Go it, Bolsover!" breathed Skinner.

"Pile in, Bob!"

"Don't make too much row," grinned Vernon-Smith. "Wingate will be back here in a jiffy if he hears you."

The combatants did not hear or heed. The juniors gathered round in their pyjamas in a circle, looking on at the fight. There were no rounds in that contest, and it was fought with bare knuckles.

Bolsover major was red with rage, but Bob looked more angry than his opponent. His face was pale and set, and his eyes burning. He was hitting out with all his strength, taking no trouble to guard, careless of the punishment he received.

And he received a good deal of it. Bolsover was a powerful fellow, and full of bulldog courage. But Bob hardly seemed to feel his savage drives. The bare feet made no sound upon the floor; the silence was only broken by the quick panting breath and the thudding of heavy blows.

There was a crash as Bolsover major went down at last.

Bob reeled back unsteadily, and Harry Wharton caught him. Wharton looked very anxiously at his chum. He had never seen Bob like this before, and he was a little alarmed.

Skinner helped Bolsover up. The burly Removite stood very groggily on his feet. He could scarcely blink out of his eyes.

"Going on?" muttered Skinner.

"Hang you, yes!"

But Bolsover was staggering as he moved blindly towards his adversary. It was pretty clear that he was done, and only his savage obstinacy enabled him to keep on his feet at all.

The fight recommenced, with the same savage energy as before, but it was finished in less than a minute. Bolsover major went down again, gasping, and lay on the floor quite exhausted.

Bob Cherry glared down at him.

"Have you had enough, you rotter?"

Percy Bolsover groaned. Evidently he had had enough, if not more than enough. He had put up a tough fight; but Bob Cherry had seemed to be possessed of the strength of two or three fellows.

Without a word or look at Bolsover major, Bob turned back to his bed, and plunged in, with a dark and moody brow.

Skinner and Snoop helped Bolsover major up. The Remove bully could not stand alone. Skinner and Snoop were very silent. They were not without anxiety that their turn might come next, and they would sooner have faced a savage Hun than Bob Cherry in his present mood.

Bolsover gasped and groaned as his followers helped him into bed. He collapsed there, groaning. Never had the burly Removite received so terrific a licking.

"By gad, there'll be a row to-morrow!" Skinner muttered, as he surveyed Bolsover's bruised face in the candle-light.

Bolsover only groaned. He was not thinking about the morrow. The present was quite enough for him to think of.

Harry Wharton & Co. returned to bed, the candle-ends were blown out, and the Remove settled down to slumber.

Not a word came from Bob Cherry, and he did not join in the chat that ran from bed to bed for ten minutes or so before the juniors fell asleep.

But Bob was not sleeping.

His eyes remained open, staring into the gloom, sleeplessly. One by one the juniors dropped into slumber.

Midnight was chiming out when Skinner awoke.

Bolsover major had received Bunter's suggestion of searching for the mysterious letter very roughly; but Skinner took a different view of the matter. Skinner intended to see that letter, and ascertain what it contained. It was not only that his curiosity was excited, but he was very keen to get a handle against the Famous Five; and if the letter contained proof of Bunter's assertions, Skinner intended all the Remove to know about it.

It was almost pitch-dark in the dormitory. There was neither moon nor star in the wintry sky without, and thick blinds were over the windows. But Skinner knew his way about the dormitory in the dark well enough.

He slipped out of bed and stood listening for some moments. He heard only the steady breathing of the juniors and the deep, unmusical snore of Billy Bunter.

Satisfied that his Form-fellows were asleep, he felt his way to Bob Cherry's bed, and groped over the chair by the bedside, where Bob had placed his clothes, neatly folded as usual.

He gave a start then. The chair was bare. There were no clothes under his hand.

Skinner breathed quickly in the darkness. He had seen the clothes there when the candles were blown out.

Had Bob suspected some such attempt, and removed them? It would have been easier to take the letter from his pocket and place it in safety.

There was only one explanation—the clothes were no longer there, because Bob Cherry had dressed again. In other words, he had broken bounds!

Skinner's eyes gleamed. He crept closer to Bob's bed and listened intently. In the darkness he could see nothing. But there was no sound of breathing from the bed, and he ventured to grope over it with his hand. The bed was empty!

Bob Cherry was gone.

"My hat!" murmured Skinner. "Gone out, and it's past midnight! One of that spotless gang of Good Little Georgies breaking bounds at midnight! My hat!"

The discovery pleased Skinner more than the sight of the mysterious letter would have done. Bob Cherry was fairly caught out!

Skinner crept away to Snoop's bed and shook him.

"Yaw-aw!" came from Snoop. "Wharrer marrer?"

"Wake up!" whispered Skinner. "Bob Cherry's broken bounds."

"Great Scott!" mumbled Snoop. He sat up in bed. "At this time of night! What's the time?"

"Past twelve!"

"Sure he's gone?"

"Yes. His bed's empty and his clothes gone."

"My hat!"

The juniors blinked at one another in the darkness.

"Where the dickens can he have gone?" muttered Snoop.

"He can't be playing any game like—ahem!—like our little game?"

Skinner chuckled.

"Who knows? Those rotters are so jolly careful to keep up appearances, I've often thought there must be something behind it. Anyway, you know what Cherry's said to us often enough for getting out at night for a little razzle at the Cross Keys? Now he's at the same game himself. I can't stand hypocrites. I think they ought to be shown up, don't you?"

"Yes, rather," chuckled Snoop.

"He must have got out of the box-room window, Snoop."

"Most likely. What have you got in your head now?"

"Easy enough to sneak out and fasten the window."

"He, he, he!"

"Shush! Get along, old chap, and do it!"

"I'll wait here while you do it!" grinned Snoop.

"It's easy enough—"

"Well, why don't you do it, then?"

Skinner growled under his breath. Like the monkey in the fable, he preferred a catspaw to pull his chestnuts out of the fire.

"It's a good idea," murmured Snoop. "The rotter is a bit too handy with his fists! I expect he'll be going for us to-morrow. If he's caught out of bounds, it will give him something else to think about. Go and fasten the window!"

"Well, you come with me, Snoop."

"Too jolly good!" said Snoop. "You don't want my help. Cut off!"

Skinner grunted discontentedly, but he made up his mind to do it. The opportunity was too good to be lost. He quitted the dormitory silently, and crept along to the box-room.

As he expected, he found the window unfastened. He

carefully closed the catch, so that it could not be opened from the outside.

"I fancy that settles you, my pippin!" murmured Skinner. And he crept back to the dormitory satisfied.

"All serene?" whispered Snoop, as he heard Skinner tiptoe cautiously back to bed.

"All serene!" muttered Skinner.

"He, he, he!"

And the two young rascals settled down to sleep again in a very contented mood.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Absentee!

BOB CHERRY was tramping away through the dark, wet lane, while his comrades were sound asleep in the Remove dormitory.

The blackness of the night was broken only by the sudden white flashes of the searchlights from Wapshot Camp, vigilantly searching the skies for Zeppelins.

It was a black, moonless night, a real "Zeppelin" night; but Bob was not thinking of the German air-raiders as he tramped on through the mist and the keen wind from the sea.

He passed no one in the lonely lane. He turned off at last into the footpath through Friardale Wood.

He tramped along at a great rate through the wet under-woods, and anyone observing him would have been puzzled to guess his destination at that hour of the night.

But for his thorough acquaintance with the wood and its paths, he would certainly have been lost in the darkness. But the Greyfriars Scouts had learned every nook and corner of the old wood, and Bob Cherry tramped on his way without a pause.

He came out of the wood at last, where the ruined Priory lay beside the lonely lake, embosomed in trees.

Great masses of masonry, the remains of ancient walls and buttresses, rose dimly to view in the gloom.

Bob tramped on through the shattered gateway, and entered the ruins. He did not pause there, but kept on to the dark opening which gave access to the old vaults under the Priory.

In a vaulted room, open to wind and rain, a gap yawned in the stone floor, where stone steps led downward. Just within the room the junior halted.

"Are you here?"

He called out loudly.

His voice echoed and re-echoed among the ruins. There was a sound of a movement at the bottom of the steps, and a light gleamed.

"Is that you, Bob?"

"Yes."

"Come down!"

"Where are you?"

"Camped in the vault. Come down!"

Bob Cherry granted, and groped his way to the stairs, and tramped down them.

He found himself in a stone vault with an arched roof. A lantern was burning upon a slab of stone, casting dim light through the vault. The rays fell upon a bag, a rug, and several blankets, and other articles, showing that the vault had been used for camping-out.

A man had risen from the blankets and lighted the lantern at the call of the junior from above. He was a young man, under thirty, with a well-knit frame, and a hard, cynical face and shifty eyes.

If Harry Wharton & Co. could have seen him, they would have recognised a man they had seen before, for it was Paul Tyrrell, Bob Cherry's scapegrace cousin, who was the denizen of the lonely ruin.

He held out his hand to his visitor. Bob Cherry stared at it, and put his hands into his pockets.

Tyrrell shrugged his shoulders.

"Is this a friendly call, Bob?" he asked.

"No, it isn't," said Bob grimly.

"You got my letter, I suppose, as you are here?"

"I got your letter this afternoon. I came here at once."

"I told you I should not be here till after dark, Bob."

"I hoped I might see you. I waited a long time, and missed calling-over at the school."

"I'm sorry, Bob. But I had to be careful. You know the position I'm in—I dare not be seen!"

"No, you don't dare anything!" said Bob bitterly. "I never thought you were a fink before, though I knew you were a rotter!"

Tyrrell's face flushed.

"Is that the way you've come to talk to me, Bob?"

"What did you expect? Why aren't you in khaki?" said Bob savagely. "You've got no excuse to offer. You're

not married, you've got no dependents, you're not over thirty, you're fit as a fiddle, you haven't any good position to give up. You ought to have gone long ago, and you know it. You oughtn't to have waited for conscription, and now it's come you're dodging it. And you think I'm going to help you. Well, I'll see you hanged first!"

"But—"

"You ought to go, and you know you ought to go!" said Bob. "You're wanted out there; every man's wanted. You're just the man they want. They're taking old fellows of forty-one, and you're a chap of twenty-eight or so. And you've got the cheek to think that I'm going to break the law and help you to hide!"

Tyrrell sneered.

"You're afraid!" he said. "If I'm a funk, there's a pair of us, then!"

Bob's face flamed.

"If I were your age, you'd see whether I'm a funk or not. I'm not afraid of the law, either, but I'm not going to break it to help a waster sneak out of doing his duty!"

"Easy enough for a chap of fifteen to be a keen conscriptionist!" sneered Tyrrell. "They're mostly over forty-one, but it's just as safe at fifteen!"

"I'm not a conscriptionist; that has nothing to do with it. You know it's your duty to go. You ought to have gone at the start!"

Tyrrell shrugged his shoulders.

"I've been a bit of a rolling stone," he remarked. "I've never made much since I left Oxford, but I've generally managed to scrape in something better than a bob a day!"

"What has money to do with it? You only want rations and a rifle to fight the Germans. It's sickening enough for Tommies to get a bob a day, while rotten politicians bag thousands a year, I know. But that's no excuse. Do you mean to say that that's why you've not gone?"

"I did have a try for a commission, Bob, honour bright; but—but some things that have happened in my career were against me," said Tyrrell.

"Suppose all the chaps waited till they could get commissions?" said Bob. "I've heard that the Yankee army has more colonels than privates. Do you think a real army could be run on those lines?"

"I know I'm not going into the ranks," said Tyrrell moodily. "I'm not a funk, Bob, and you know I'm not; but I'm not going to rough it in the ranks, while chaps I used to be friendly with are getting into soft jobs!"

"That's all rot! An officer doesn't have a soft job at the Front! He gets a bullet as soon as any Tommy. But perhaps you want a nice soft billet at home?" said Bob sarcastically.

"I suppose this means that you're not going to be friendly?" said Tyrrell.

"I came to have a friendly talk, in a way," said the Greyfriars junior. "Your letter fairly knocked me over. I talked a bit too much, and from what I have said, some of the fellows got an impression that my father has disgraced himself. They don't know anything about you. I've had more than one scrap to-day about that!"

"I wondered what was the matter with your face!" grinned Tyrrell.

"And I can't explain without giving you away."

"Well, if you're not going to give me away, that's something," said Tyrrell, with a deep breath. "You should have been more careful, Bob. I warned you in my letter to be careful!"

"A chap isn't always on his guard, and I hadn't noticed Bunter listening. But never mind that. I wanted to see you, to talk to you," said Bob. "If there's anything I can do for you, I'm more than willing to forget past troubles. I'll ask my pater to help you in any way he can, too—if you do the right thing. Look here, why don't you do it? There's better men than you doing it. Why can't you?"

"I won't, anyway!"

"That won't last long, for under the new law you've got to, whether you want to or not. But you ought to do it of your own accord!"

"I might do it of my own accord, in my own time," said Tyrrell sulkily. "But I'm not going to be driven into it."

"You're a deserter now," said Bob. "Men of your age were called up long ago. You're what they call an absentee." Tyrrell nodded.

"It can't last long. You can't expect to dodge it till the end of the war, I suppose."

"I'm going to try."

"You must be off your chump! You've come here to hide, in this out-of-the-way place. You can't live here for long."

"I could, if you'd help me. I don't want much—food and some clothes. You could come here once a week, if you liked, and keep me supplied. I've got some money. I don't want your dashed pocket-money. Only a little friendly help. I must have supplies to keep me going while I lie low."

"But the war may last for five or six years yet," exclaimed Bob.

"And it may end any time," said Tyrrell. "Something may turn up, too. I may get into other quarters. I've got friends. I may get some job in a certified occupation, and be safe. It's only for the present, just to keep me out of their clutches while I make my plans."

"You might be found any time. Fellows come here to picnic on half-holidays."

"I shall lie low in the vaults when there's anybody about. You can trust me to look after myself. But I can't show up in public. I dare not go to the village for food. I've got to have help. I want you to see me through."

Bob drew a deep breath.

"You want me to break the law, you mean?"

Tyrrell shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I can't do it, and I won't do it," said Bob. "If you had any excuse except slacking, it might be different. Why, I've been thinking of you lately, and I supposed you were in the Army, and I rather thought I might get a letter from you from the Front! I never dreamed for a moment that you were dodging. You can't keep it up, and I won't help you to keep it up. It's like your thumping cheek to ask me. That's all I've got to say, and I may as well go!"

And Bob turned savagely away to the stairs.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Shadow of Shame!

PAUL TYRRELL'S eyes glittered as his cousin turned his back upon him.

Bob's scornful words had brought the colour into his cheeks. But they had roused nothing but obstinacy in his heart. Paul Tyrrell had been a rolling-stone and a slacker all his life; and the bare idea of regular discipline was abhorrent to him. He chose to say that he would not be driven; but, as a matter of fact, it was slackness that was the matter with him.

He ground his teeth as Bob Cherry set his foot on the stone stairs.

"Stop a minute, Bob!"

Bob looked round impatiently.

"What's the good of stopping? There's nothing more to say."

"You won't help me?"

"I can't!"

"Are you going to give me away?"

Bob crimsoned.

"You know I'm not!" he snapped. "You told me your rotten secret in confidence, though it was like your check to do so. I'm not an informer."

"It comes to the same thing, if you don't help me. I've got enough grub here for a few days, and then I shall have to give myself up. I've had two or three narrow escapes getting here. I was questioned by a bobby this afternoon, and tripped him up and ran for it. I shall be nailed if I clear out of here, and I can't stay here without a friend to see me through."

"I'm willing to give you some advice to see you through," said Bob grimly. "I'll tell you the nearest way to the recruiting-office at Courtfield!"

"Oh, ring off," growled Tyrrell.

"That's the best I can do for you," said Bob. "I wonder you've the cheek to ask me such things, when my own father's out there, and might be knocked over any day. I hope you'll decide to take my advice by the morning. In any case, you'd better clear out of here. I don't feel easy in my mind, keeping it a secret that you're skulking here. I don't know whether I ought to keep it dark."

Tyrrell gave him a bitter look.

"I shall clear out of here fast enough," he said. "You were my last hope, Bob, and you've failed me. I shall clear out of here. I've got another hiding-place in mind."

"Better not tell me. I don't promise to keep it dark."

"I'll tell you, and I think you'll keep it dark. It's the old tower at Greyfriars," said Tyrrell coolly.

Bob Cherry jumped.

"At Greyfriars!" he exclaimed.

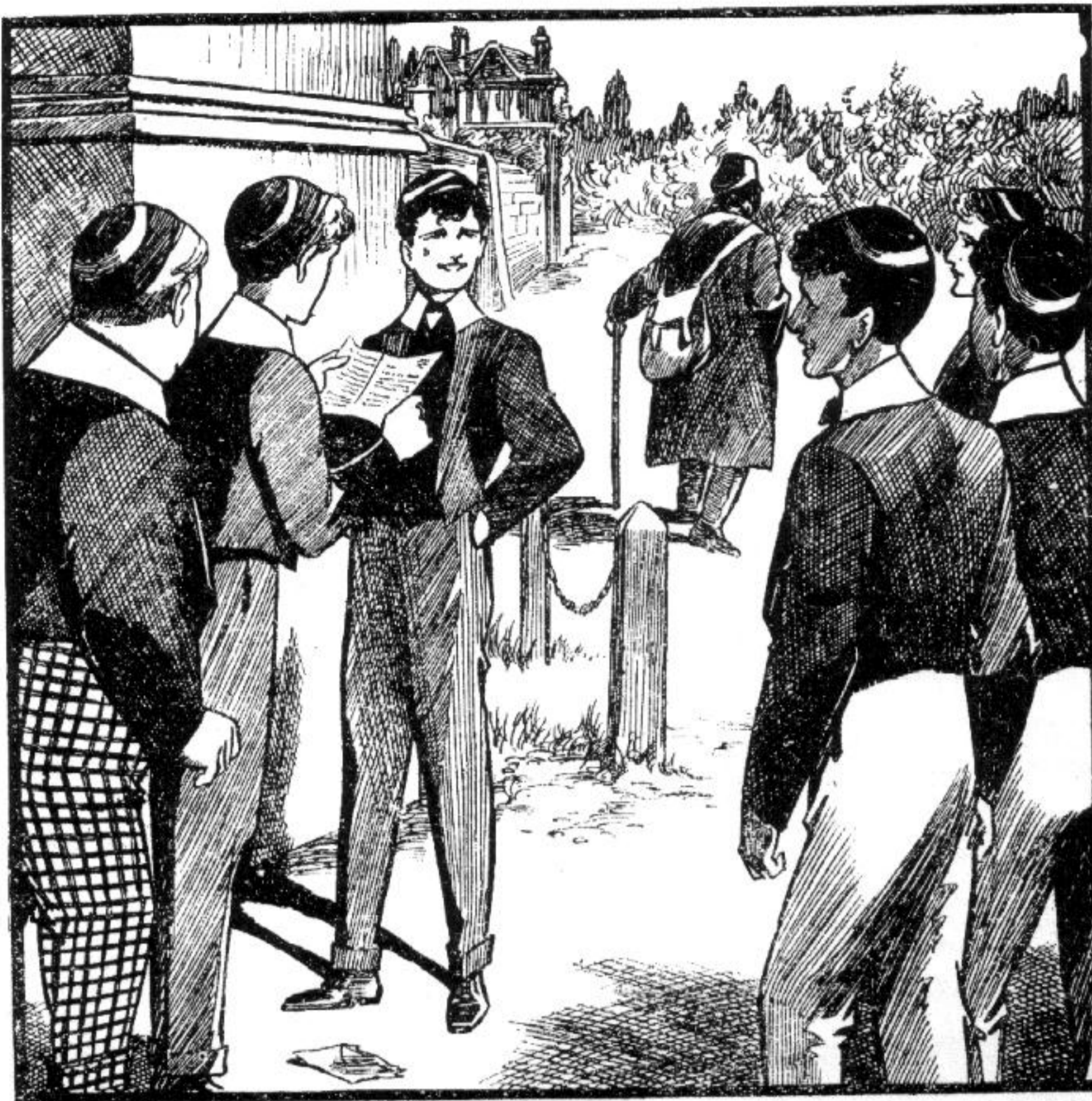
"Yes. I've been over the place years ago, and I remember it pretty well. I can camp out there, I think."

"You'd be found within twenty-four hours. There are some cads who go there to smoke, out of sight of the prefects, and they'd spot it at once if there was anybody hidden in the tower."

"I'll chance that."

"More fool you!" said Bob. "I've warned you. And I'll tell you something more; if you come near Greyfriars, I'll get on to Quelch's telephone, and ring up the recruiting-office at Courtfield, and tell them where to look for you."

"Do, if you choose," said Tyrrell coolly. "If you want



Old Mr. Boggs, the village postman, had come along at last, and there was a letter for one member of the Co.—Robert Cherry. (See Chapter 1.)

to have your cousin arrested as a deserter in the quadrangle, with all your schoolfellows looking on, do!"

Bob Cherry clenched his hands.

"I think I catch on!" he exclaimed savagely. "If I don't help you dodge your plain duty, you're going to disgrace me at Greyfriars!"

"One good turn deserves another, you know," sneered Tyrrell.

"You rotter! How could I hold my head up again at the school if the fellows knew that my cousin was dodging military service," muttered Bob. "Haven't you any sense of shame left?"

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature, I believe," said Tyrrell, with another shrug. "That's my game. If I'm arrested as an absentee, I'm going to be arrested at Greyfriars, and you can enjoy the spectacle, and what your schoolfellows will say to you afterwards!"

Bob Cherry did not speak.

"Haven't you better think it over, Bob? I only want your help for a few weeks, till I get into a safe corner somewhere."

Bob came back towards the wastrel, his eyes gleaming.

"I've said I won't give you away!" he said. "And I won't! But let me find you at Greyfriars, and I'll give you away on the spot, if everybody in the country was looking on to see you collared. More than that, you're not going to stay here! I give you three days to do your duty. After that, I'm going to inquire whether you're in khaki, and if you're not, you can depend on me to put you there. That's what I care for your threats, Cousin Paul!"

And Bob Cherry tramped up the stone stairs, and disappeared from the eyes of his cousin.

Paul Tyrrell called to him, but he did not look back.

He left the vaulted room above, and tramped out into the sharp winter air. He had done with the scapegrace.

Bob strode away homeward through the wet woods.

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He had little real doubt that Tyrrell would carry out his threat, hoping to scare him into giving the help demanded. Bob's mind was made up. But, determined as he was, he could not think without dismay of the fulfilment of Tyrrell's menace. What would the Greyfriars fellows say?

It was not only that Tyrrell was dodging the law of compulsion; there might be two opinions about that. But he was young and strong and fit, he had no ties to hold him back, and yet he refused to do his duty. His present trickery was not the worst; the worst was that he had not gone already, that he did not want to go. By doing his duty in the trenches he could have atoned for a reckless and spendthrift life, and all he was thinking of was to dodge the grim necessity, and continue a life of reckless slacking and wasted opportunities.

What would all Greyfriars say when that scene was enacted, the elusive slacker rounded up at last, and marched off by the police, with the whole school staring at the scene?

Bob's heart sickened within him at the thought.

How could he face the school afterwards? And how could the man do it? Bob had, in his anger, called Tyrrell a funk, but he knew that the wastrel did not lack

courage. What he really feared were the hardship and discomfort, not the danger. An easy, slacking life of self-indulgence had not fitted him to take his part in stern work among stern men. Yet the anxiety and discomfort of incessant dodging was probably far greater than what he would have experienced in the ranks on the hardest duty. Bob's lip curled with contempt as he thought of the wretched slacker skulking in the hidden vault.

The junior reached Greyfriars at last. Searchlights were glimmering white on a sky of black velvet overhead. He climbed the wall and dropped into the quadrangle, and made his way to the back of the School House.

He clambered silently in the darkness upon the leaded roof of the outhouse below the box-room window.

But as he attempted to push up the sash, he found that it was immovable.

He set his lips, and tried again.

He had left the window unfastened for his return, and he had expected it to open easily.

But the sash remained immovable, and he realised that it must have been fastened since he went out.

He desisted in his vain attempts at last.

"Shut out!" he muttered. "Oh, my hat! Who's played that trick on me? And—and what the thunder am I going to do?"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Skinner's Chance!

HARRY WHARTON stirred in his sleep, and awoke. He did not know what had awakened him, and he turned his head on the pillow, and closed his eyes again.

Clink!

Then his eyes opened wide.

A pebble had struck the window of the Remove dormitory,

and slid down into the ivy. Wharton started into broad wakefulness, and sat up in bed.

Clink!

It was another pebble on the window.

"What the merry thunder—" ejaculated Wharton, in astonishment.

"You awake, Harry?" It was Frank Nugent's voice. "Somebody's bunging stones at the window."

"The bungfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Some esteemed rotter has been on the tiles, and is shut out."

Clink!

"Skinner or Snoop, I suppose!" growled Wharton. "Well, they can get in without my help! Rotters!"

"Skinner's in bed," came the Bounder's voice. "I can hear him snoring. Might as well let the chap in, if it's a Remove chap. We all have our little weaknesses at times."

Wharton grunted.

"Like his cheek, whoever it is!" he growled. "I suppose I may as well lend him a hand. It means a flogging if he's caught out!"

"Let him take his chance," came Snoop's voice. "I know you jolly well wouldn't open the window for me, Wharton!"

"Hallo, Snoop's here!" said Vernon-Smith. "It isn't Snoop or Skinner out there. Is it Stott?"

"No, it isn't!" came Stott's growling voice.

"And it isn't Bunter—he's snoring here. Some other fellow's starting life as a merry blade," grinned the Bounder.

Clink!

"Better open the window if you're going to," said Rake. "If that row goes on Quelchy will hear it sooner or later."

Harry Wharton slipped out of bed. It was no business of his to help a belated roysterer escape detection, but he could not quite make up his mind to leave him unaided. He mounted on a chair at the window, and pushed up the heavy sash. He put his head out, and stared below in the darkness.

"Who's there?" he called out, in a low, cautious tone, barely loud enough to reach the unseen fellow on the ground below.

"It's I! Is that you, Wharton?"

"Yes."

"Unfasten the box-room window for me, will you?"

Wharton fairly blinked downward into the gloom. The voice of Bob Cherry from below had astounded him. The last fellow he would have expected to find out of bounds after midnight was Bob Cherry.

"Yes," he gasped.

He drew back, and closed the window.

"Who is it?" asked Wibley. Nearly all the Remove were awake now, but it was too dark to see which bed was empty.

Wharton did not reply to the question. He hurried towards the door.

Skinner sat up in bed and groped for a match. He knew, of course, that it was Bob Cherry who had thrown the pebbles up to the dormitory window, in the hope of awakening his chums. Skinner's amiable project of keeping Bob out all night, to be discovered in the morning, was a failure; but he intended to let all the Remove know, at least, that it was Bob who was out of bounds.

A match flared up, and Skinner stepped out of bed, holding it.

"Now, who's out?" he said. "Hallo, here's an empty bed—two of 'em! Wharton and Bob Cherry—"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Wharton's just got up," said Tom Brown.

"Then it's Bob Cherry who was out!"

"What rot!" said the New Zealand junior.

"The rotfulness is terrific, my esteemed, sneaking Skinner!"

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Skinner?" came Johnny Bull's rumbling voice.

"Look at his bed yourself," said Skinner coolly. "He's out. As Smithy says, we all have our little weaknesses at times. Ha, ha!"

He struck another match, and held it over Bob Cherry's bed. Even Johnny Bull had to admit then that Bob was absent.

Meanwhile Wharton had hurried to the box-room. He unfastened the window, and found Bob already on the leads outside. The junior climbed in through the window, and Wharton closed it after him, and fastened it, without a word.

"Thanks!" said Bob.

"You're welcome," said Wharton rather drily. "I didn't know it was you out, Bob."

"Let's get back to the dorm."

They hurried silently to the Remove dormitory. Skinner struck another match as they came in, so that all the Remove could see Bob Cherry fully dressed.

"Put that light out, you fathead!" snapped Wharton.

Skinner chuckled as the match went out.

"Had a good time, Bob?" he asked. And there was a chortle from Snoop and Stott. "Did you have any luck?"

"Luck!" repeated Bob. "What do you mean, Skinner?"

"Are they keeping it up as late as this?" pursued Skinner cheerfully. "They generally knock off at one at the Cross Keys."

"You miserable worm!" said Bob Cherry, in sulphurous tones. "Do you mean to say you think I've been up to any of your rotten tricks?"



Harry Wharton jumped out of bed. In the dim light, Bob Cherry and Bolsover major could be seen fighting furiously. (See Chapter 6.)

"Where have you been, then?"
 "Find out, you worm!"
 "Dash it all, Bob, this is jolly queer!" said Johnny Bull.
 "Do you think I've been to the Cross Keys, Johnny?"
 "No, you know I don't; but I don't see what you want to break bounds in the middle of the night for, like one of those smoky cads, or what you want to keep it a secret for where you've been!" said Johnny Bull tartly.

"Well, I've been out!" growled Bob. "I haven't been enjoying myself, if you want to know. And I dare say all the Remove will know all about it in a few days. And I don't care a twopenny rap what anybody thinks!"

And Bob, undressing rapidly, turned in.
 "Well, we shall all know what to think," said Skinner.
 "Oh, shut up!"

Harry Wharton went back to bed in grim silence. He was utterly astounded by this escapade of his chum's. If Bob had broken bounds for any harmless cause, there was no reason why he should not state it. Yet it was impossible to think that Bob had taken up any shady pursuits in the style of Skinner & Co. That is to say, it was impossible for Wharton to think so; but there were a good many fellows in the dormitory who began to think so.

Bob Cherry did not speak a word, however, and silence soon reigned. But Harold Skinner did not sleep.

Bob Cherry had returned, and Skinner's kind scheme had been baffled. But Bunter's suggestion recurred to his mind now. The mysterious letter was there, if he could get at it. Skinner was almost devoured with ill-natured curiosity upon the subject, and he guessed that the letter might throw some light upon Bob's amazing action. But he left nothing to chance. It was two hours or more later when he slipped from his bed.

Bob Cherry, tired out by his long tramp, was sleeping deeply, and Skinner could hear his heavy breathing as he approached the bed. With the skill and cunning of a pick-pocket, Skinner went through the pockets of Bob's clothes, thrown carelessly on the chair. He dared not strike a light. But, as it happened, there was only one letter to be discovered in any of the pockets, and Skinner extracted it, hoping that it was the one he sought. If the letter was there at all, this was the letter; there could be no doubt about that.

Skinner returned to bed, and the letter reposed under his pillow. He had to wait till the morning to read it. But he slept very contentedly, with his head over the purloined letter. Bob Cherry slept on, little dreaming of the cad of the Remove or his action. It had never even occurred to Bob that anyone might think of extracting the letter from his pocket; in fact, he had almost forgotten its existence since thrusting it into his pocket that afternoon when he started on his first visit to the old Priory.

Bob was heavy-eyed when the rising-bell clanged out in the morning, but he rose with the rest.

His usual high spirits were lacking, however. He did not jerk Lord Mauleverer out of bed, or use his bolster to rouse up Billy Bunter. He hardly spoke a word before he left the dormitory.

Harry Wharton & Co. joined him in the quadrangle, where he was striding to and fro at a great rate, with his hands driven deep into his pockets. Bob gave them a rather sour look.

"It's no good asking me where I went last night," he said, before Wharton could speak. "I'm not going to tell you!"
 "I'm not going to ask you, Bob," said Harry quietly.
 "For goodness' sake don't get your back up! You've got enough rows on at present without rowing with me."

Bob's face relaxed a little.
 "I don't mean to be ratty," he muttered. "But—but I'm worried, and—and I can't tell you about it. You'll know soon enough, I expect. But a fellow doesn't want to shout about a family disgrace from the housetops, if he can help it."

"Some of the fellows think you're taking up the old ways that the Bounder has left off, Bob. Your clearing off last night wants explaining, you know. Of course, we don't think so. In fact, I believe I know where you went."

Bob started.
 "You—you know——"
 "I mean why you went—not exactly where," said Harry.
 "It was to see the man who wrote to you yesterday—the man you couldn't see in the afternoon. It's not very hard to guess that much."

"Well, it is so," said Bob.
 "The man you've called a funk and a deserter," said Johnny Bull. "What the merry dickens do you want to see him for?"

Bob was silent.
 "Bob," said Harry seriously, "don't you think you might explain something to the chaps? That yarn about your pater is growing, and you're backing it up yourself by the way you act. It's already been suggested that he's deserted, and is hiding near here, and that you went to see him last night."

Bob Cherry clenched his fists.
 "Who's suggested it?" he asked.
 "Never mind that. You've done enough punching, Bob! You can't fight half the Remove, and you've got a fight on to-day with Temple, anyway. But if you'd explain what the matter is, and clear the air, you know! Whoever this man is, he can't have any claim on you, and you seem to be playing the giddy ox, so far as I can see!"

"The giddy oxfulness is terrific, my esteemed Bob!"
 Bob gave an impatient shrug.
 "I'm going to keep it dark if I can," he said. "But, as a matter of fact, I expect it will be all out in a few days—perhaps to-morrow—perhaps even to-day. And when it's out, everybody will know, and Greyfriars will have seen the last of me! I sha'n't stay afterwards. That's all I've got to say now."

And Bob strode away with a black brow, leaving his chums in silence and dismay.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bolsover Major Makes Amends!

MR. QUELCH looked sternly at Bob Cherry and Bolsover major in the form-room that morning. Bolsover's face was a study in black and blue, and Bob looked considerably damaged. Mr. Quelch was a judicious master, and knew when to close one eye at things it was better not to see. But on this occasion he could not allow the matter to pass unnoticed.

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"Bolsover! Cherry! You have been fighting, I suppose?" he exclaimed sternly.

"Yes, sir!" said Bolsover major.

"Without gloves, I presume, from your looks?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Are you not ashamed to appear in public with such faces?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Are you not aware that you are a disgrace to your Form?"

Silence! Certainly neither Bolsover nor Bob Cherry looked a credit to the Form at that moment.

"You will both be detained for two half-holidays, and on each occasion you will write out five hundred lines of Virgil!" said Mr. Quelch.

And, having come down thus heavily, the Remove-master said no more on the subject. The punishment was heavy enough to make Bolsover major wish he had not looked for Bob Cherry the previous evening. Bob did not seem to heed it. Detention for two half-holidays meant keeping out of the footer matches on those occasions. But footer was not in Bob's mind now. He did not seem to care whether he was detained or not.

Harold Skinner was in high feather that morning. When Mr. Quelch's back was turned, there were whispers among Snoop, and Stott, and Skinner, and Billy Bunter. And when the Remove were dismissed, the four of them joined Bolsover major. The latter was in the quad, tramping under the elms with a sullen, savage brow. He was aching and seedy from the terrific encounter in the dormitory, and extremely humiliated by his defeat. He scowled at Skinner & Co. as they came up.

"I've got some news for you, Bolsover," began Skinner, "about Cherry—"

"Hang Cherry!" growled Bolsover major.

"Don't you think he ought to be shown up?"

"Hang him! I think he's shown up pretty well. Everybody now knows that his father is a deserter!" snarled Bolsover major. "He went out to see him last night. It's as clear as daylight."

Skinner shook his head.

"'Tain't his father after all," he said. "I had my doubts all along. It was rather thick to think of a major deserting—rather too thick, you know. I—I happened to come across that letter—"

"What letter?"

"You remember the letter Cherry had yesterday, when he was talking about a funk and deserter and all the rest of it, and Bunter heard him. Well, I've seen the letter!"

"You sneaked it out of his pocket, you mean!" sneered Bolsover.

"Never mind that! I've got it!" said Skinner. "Look here, it's from Bob Cherry's cousin—a chap named Tyrrell. I've heard of him before—a regular waster. He's dodging conscription, and hiding at the old Priory in Friardale Wood."

"Great Scott!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Billy Bunter. "Of course, I never thought of his cousin at the time. I'd forgotten he had a cousin. I thought it must be his pater. I knew it was a deserter, anyway."

"It's in a letter," said Skinner. "The fellow wants Bob Cherry to help him dodge the bobbies. That's why Cherry went, of course. He's helping a deserter keep out of the Army."

"Then—then it wasn't his father after all!" muttered Bolsover major.

"No, as it turns out."

"But it's his cousin," said Billy Bunter, "and he ought to be shown up. He pulled my ear this morning, the beast, just because I asked him whether he had any other deserters in the family!"

"You fat rotter!" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"Eh?"

"You told me it was his father."

"I—I thought—"

"You fat beast! Nice position you've put me in, running down a man who's at the Front fighting the Germans!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"I say, don't begin to rag now!" said Skinner anxiously. "I've got an idea, Bolsover. What about setting the bobbies on to the chap, and getting him lagged? He ought to be lagged, you know. It's really our duty to inform against him."

"Yes, informing is in your line!" sneered Bolsover. "You can do it if you like. I'm not going to play any dirty tricks!"

"I should think you'd like to make Bob Cherry sit up for giving you a face like that," said Skinner tartly.

"I'll give you a face like it if you don't hold your jaw, Skinner! As for you, Bunter, you fat, slandering beast, I'll teach you not to tell me lies about a chap's father!"

"Yow-ow! Leggo!" roared Bunter, as the bully of the Remove grasped him.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 467.

Skinner & Co. promptly backed away. Bolsover major was a rather unreliable fellow. Skinner had expected him to jump at the chance of getting even with Bob by informing against his cousin. But Bolsover, bully as he was, had a rather higher sense of honour than Skinner. The part of spy and informer did not suit him. And he was sincerely sorry for what he had said concerning a brave officer who, as he now knew, was doing his duty at the Front. He could have kicked himself for paying any regard to Billy Bunter's yarns, but it was more satisfactory to kick Bunter, and he proceeded to do so with great vigour.

Billy Bunter fled, yelling, with Bolsover behind him, landing out with his heavy boots, as if he were dribbling Bunter like a football.

"Cherry!" yelled Bunter, catching sight of Bob near the Cloisters. "Rescue! I say, Bob, old chap! Yaroo!"

Bob Cherry looked round savagely. Billy Bunter dodged round him, gasping.

"Keep him off!" he yelled.

"Oh, cut off, you fat fool!" growled Bob. "Let him alone, Bolsover!"

Bunter dashed away through the Cloisters towards the old tower, and Bolsover made a motion to follow him. Bob stepped in the way.

The bully of the Remove stopped.

For a moment his hands clenched, but he unclenched them again.

"I want to speak to you, Cherry—" he began.

"You needn't trouble."

"I—I'm sorry for what I said about your father!" stammered Bolsover major.

Bob stared at him.

"Well, I've done my best to make you sorry!" he said grimly.

"It's not because of that!" said Bolsover, crimsoning. "I'm willing to take you on again, any time you like, with or without gloves. But—but I've found out that it's all lies, and I'm sorry I said anything of the kind. I was taken in. I can't do more than say I'm sorry."

Bob's hard face relaxed.

"Well, if you put it like that, it's all right," he said. "I don't see how you can have found out anything you didn't know before, though."

"Skinner's found it out, and he's just told me it's your Cousin Tyrrell who's a deserter."

Bob started.

"Skinner!" he exclaimed. "How the dickens—"

"I don't ask you whether it's true," said Bolsover major. "It's no business of mine. But I'm sorry for what I said about your father, and that's what I was kicking Bunter for—for stuffing me up. That's all."

Bolsover major strode away. He had made the amende honorable. Bob Cherry stood rooted to the ground. Skinner knew! How did he know? There was only one explanation, and Bob's hand went to his pocket for the forgotten letter. It was no longer there.

He hurried away in search of Skinner. That individual looked very uneasy when he came up with lowering brows.

"You've got a letter belonging to me, Skinner!" said Bob, between his teeth.

"I—I—"

"You stole it from my pocket last night!"

"I—I—" stuttered Skinner.

"Give it to me!"

Snoop and Stott strolled away. But Skinner couldn't stroll away. He had to face the music. There was no help for it, and he took the letter from his pocket and handed it to Bob Cherry. Bob tore it into fragments, and threw them into the fountain. Then he pushed back his cuffs.

"Now put up your hands, you rotter!"

Skinner backed away, his eyes glittering.

"If you lay a finger on me, I'll go straight to the police-station and tell them you're hiding a deserter from the Army!" he said, between his teeth. "I'll—oh—ah—oh—ah—ah!"

Skinner had no time to finish. He was driven round the fountain under a shower of blows till he went down with a crash. Bob, without another word to him, turned and walked away.

Skinner sat on the ground, with his hand to his nose, gasping. He picked himself up at last, with a deadly gleam in his eyes. Without even waiting to bathe his nose, which needed it badly, he hurried to the bike-shed, and wheeled out his machine. In a minute or two more he was pedalling away to Friardale—to the police-station!



"P'i'ap; handsome Bob Chelly tellee whatee matter," suggested Wun Lung. "Handsome Bob Chelly talkee likee Hun." Bob Cherry rose impatiently to his feet. "I'll get out if you're going to jaw!" he said. (See Chapter 4.)

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton's Plan!

SKINNER came in late to dinner, and his face was dark and sulky as he dropped into his place at the Remove table. Bob Cherry gave him one glance. He knew what the cad of the Remove had done, but Skinner did not look as if he had been successful in his revenge.

After dinner Snoop and Stott joined Skinner in the passage.

"You've done it?" asked Snoop.

Skinner ground his teeth.

"Yes; but it was N.G. He's gone."

"Gone!" said Stott. "How could he be gone if he was there? It was plain enough in the letter."

"He was gone, all the same. I took old Tozer to the Priory, and he searched the place from end to end with me," said Skinner savagely. "There were traces of the rotter—he had been camping in the vault—but he's taken the alarm now and cleared off."

"Bob Cherry couldn't have warned him—"

"He must have seen us coming, I suppose, and cleared," said Skinner. "But it was plain enough he'd been hiding there, and the police will be looking for him now. They'll have him sooner or later, and, anyway, all Greyfriars is going to know that Bob Cherry's cousin is a deserter!"

All Greyfriars did know it before afternoon school, but they did not quite believe it. Skinner had no proof of his story. The refugee of the Priory had not been found, and the tell-tale letter was destroyed now. Bob Cherry refused to answer a single question on the subject; indeed, he cut up so rusty at the first question that he was not asked a second time.

Bob hardly knew whether to be sorry or glad that Skinner had failed in his attempt to cause the arrest of the deserter. It came as a surprise to Bob to learn that the refugee was no

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 467.

longer in the old Priory. He knew what it meant—that Tyrrell had carried out his threat. After Bob had left him the previous night, the absentee had quitted the Priory; and Bob knew where he was now—hidden in the old tower of Greyfriars. Tyrrell had threatened it, and the fact that he was no longer in his hiding-place proved that he had carried out his threat.

Skinner little dreamed how near at hand was the hunted man he had sought to give up to the law. He supposed that Tyrrell had fled, and was far from guessing that the deserter was within two hundred yards of the Greyfriars School House.

After lessons that day Bob Cherry walked through the Cloisters, and looked up at the old tower. The tower was in a dangerous state of ruin inside, and for that reason was out of bounds for the Greyfriars fellows, but it was often entered by the juniors, all the same. If the absentee was hiding there, he might be discovered at any time.

Bob's face hardened, and he turned away without entering the tower.

He would have no hand in helping the deserter. He had told him so, and he would keep his word.

"Tea's ready, Bob," said Wharton, meeting

his chum as he came sauntering back into the quad.

Bob nodded, and followed him to No. 1 Study.

The Co. were all there in a very uncomfortable mood. Skinner's story had enlightened them as to the mystery of Bob's strange conduct. They remembered Paul Tyrrell, and they had no doubt that Skinner was telling the truth for once. They did not speak on the subject.

Bob ate his tea silently, and rose when it was finished. Then he spoke.

"You've heard Skinner's latest, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes."

"Well, it's true."

"I thought it was, Bob," said Wharton frankly. "I don't see that you need worry so much about it. You're not responsible for your cousin."

"You went to him last night?" asked Nugent.

"Yes."

"But—but—but you're not helping him?" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"No. That was what he asked in the letter, and I went to tell him what I thought he ought to do," said Bob. "I refused to help him to dodge his duty. And—and he told me he would come here—if I didn't help him."

"Here!" exclaimed Wharton.

"You see, he couldn't stay hidden in the Priory without somebody to bring him food. He wanted me to do it. And—and he told me he'd change his quarters; and, as he wasn't found there to-day, it's pretty clear he's done it. Can you guess where he is now?" said Bob grimly.

"No."

"In the old tower—at the end of the Cloisters!"

"Bob!"

"He told me he would fix himself there; and if he's caught he's going to be arrested before all Greyfriars to pay me out," said Bob moodily.

ON SALE WEDNESDAY,

"LEVISON FOR ST. JIM'S!"

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"We're not afraid, sir," grunted Johnny Bull.

"No fear, sir!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific, honoured sahib!"

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"I am sure that my Form will act in a manner becoming British boys, in case of an alarm," he said.

And he put out the light and left the dormitory. There was a buzz of voices at once.

"That means that Quelch's been warned on the telephone," said Squiff. "I suppose the gasbags have been seen coming over Holland."

"Yow-ow!" came from Billy Bunter.

"I—I guess I'd rather sleep in the cellars to-night," mumbled Fisher T. Fish. "I—I calculate I don't like Zepps."

"Well, you can go down into the cellars, Fishy," grinned Nugent. "It's a bit cold; but you'll have cold feet, anyway."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish grunted. He decided to stay in his warm bed, Zepps or no Zepps. And the possibility of Zeppelins did not keep the juniors awake long. Greyfriars had been visited by the air-raiders before, and no one had shown signs of funk excepting Bunter and Fisher T. Fish.

Skinner & Co. had something more interesting to think of, too, than Zepps. Skinner and Snoop kept up quite a cheery conversation on the subject of conscription and absentees and deserters, for Bob Cherry's benefit. Skinner had had to drop his amiable story about Bob Cherry's pater, but he was almost equally pleased to make the most of the story about Bob's cousin.

But Bob declined to be drawn, and Skinner gave it up at last and went to sleep.

Harry Wharton did not sleep, however.

He remained awake while the hours tolled slowly by. He was not in a mood to sleep. There was business on hand for that night, when the Famous Five were to deal with the wastrel who had brought so much trouble upon Bob, and who was threatening him with disgrace.

Midnight tolled out at last, and Harry Wharton slipped from his bed.

"You fellows awake?" he whispered.

"I am," said Bob.

Johnny Bull and Nugent and Hurree Janset Ram Singh were sleeping, but they awoke at a shake, and turned out.

The five juniors dressed quietly in the darkness.

"Hallo!" came a drowsy voice from Squiff's bed. "Who's that getting up?"

"Shush!" said Harry.

"More breaking bounds, what?" mumbled Squiff.

"We've got to get out," said Harry. "Never mind why, old chap. If you can keep awake, you might see that no rotter fastens the window after us."

"Right-ho!" said the Australian junior. "Anything to oblige. Seen any Zepps yet?"

"No, fathead! We're not after Zepps."

The Famous Five quitted the dormitory silently. The School House of Greyfriars was plunged in darkness and slumber. With noiseless steps they reached the box-room, and Harry Wharton opened the window.

Blackness lay without; but across the velvety sky the searchlights were playing in ghostly beams of white. From the silence of the night there came a sudden sound that made the juniors start.

Boom!

"My hat!" muttered Nugent. "A gun!"

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

It was the anti-aircraft battery on Wapshot Hill. The booming of the guns came eerily through the black night.

"Zepps!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"We're going, all the same."

"Yes, rather!"

The five juniors crept out on the leads, and Wharton drew the window shut. They descended to the ground.

There were sounds of movement in the house now, though not a single light gleamed from the darkened windows. The booming of the anti-aircraft guns had awakened most of the school.

Wharton set his teeth.

"Rotten luck!" he muttered. "We may be missed now. If anybody goes to the Remove dorm—"

"Can't be helped. Come on!"

Boom! Boom! Boom!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry caught his breath. "What's that? Do you hear?"

A buzzing sound in the air overhead came to their ears. They knew what it was—the buzz of rapid engines. And it was not an aeroplane.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 467.

The guns were booming out now with incessant thunder. The air-raider was at hand.

"My hat!" said Wharton, between his teeth. "The beasts are here; they're fairly over the school, by the sound!"

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The juniors hurried on across the dark quadrangle. They were committed to the expedition now. Within the house, everybody was turning out of bed, and to return was to be discovered breaking bounds.

They hurried into the dark shadows of the Cloisters.

Crash!

A deafening explosion filled the air with thunderous noise.

"A bomb!" muttered Nugent, with chattering teeth.

A bomb had fallen—where, they did not know—but not on the school. The fearful explosion drowned, for a moment, the roar of the guns.

It was followed by another.

Suddenly from the darkness of the night came a red flare of light—a dancing tongue of red that blazed out against the black.

It danced, and sank down, and danced again, casting strange lights and shadows. The juniors rushed out of the Cloisters. The skulking refugee in the tower was forgotten now. For they knew that an incendiary bomb had started a fire, and that lives were in danger.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

"It's the lodge!" panted Bob Cherry.

"Old Gosling!"

The flames were leaping and dancing over the porter's lodge, within the gates of Greyfriars.

The Famous Five rushed towards the little building, their hearts throbbing with anxiety, no thought of danger to themselves entering their minds at that moment.

The incendiary bomb had exploded in the building, after passing clean through the roof and the floor below into the cellar.

There was an acrid odour, and red and bluish flames danced about the building, which was already roaring with blaze. The deadly chemicals in the bomb, specially designed for causing conflagrations, had done their work quickly.

"Gosling!" shouted Wharton.

The school porter was in the building. Harry Wharton hammered at the door, but it was bolted within.

"Gosling!" yelled Bob.

But there came no reply. The hearts of the juniors sickened within them. Had the old porter been killed by the explosion? If he was living, why did he not show himself?

"Good heavens!" muttered Nugent, with blanched face. "Poor old Gossy! He—he must be dead!"

"Gosling!" roared Johnny Bull.

The buzzing in the air had died away. The raiding aircraft had passed on, seeking fresh victims.

"We've got to see whether he's alive!" muttered Wharton. "Get something—quick! Bust in the door!"

There were voices in the quadrangle now. Doors and windows were open. All Greyfriars was buzzing with excitement. Harry Wharton & Co. wrenched up the oaken settle outside the porter's lodge, and rushed it at the door. The door shook and groaned under the shock.

"Another, and it's in!" said Bob.

Someone came dashing into the flame-light and joined the juniors, grasping the heavy oaken bench to help them. In the dancing lights and shadows they did not see, for a moment, who it was. The bench was rushed at the door again, and there was a crash as the woodwork went flying inwards.

"There is somebody in there?"

Bob spun round to the speaker.

"You!" he shouted.

"Paul Tyrrell!" muttered Wharton.

A sardonic grin flickered for a moment on Tyrrell's cynical face.

"Yes, I. Is someone in there?"

"Yes; Gosling, the porter. I'm going in—"

Tyrrell caught Bob by the shoulder and swung him back.

"Let me go!" roared Bob.

"Stand back! This is a man's job!"

The next moment Tyrrell had rushed in at the broken doorway, and disappeared into the burning lodge.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not a Shirker!

BOB CHERRY stood spellbound. Tyrrell, the slacker, the shirker, the deserter—Paul Tyrrell—had rushed into the heart of the flames without hesitation, without a moment's thought! Slacker and shirker he was, but evidently not a coward!

There was a sharp voice behind the juniors. Mr. Quelch had arrived on the scene, with a crowd at his heels.

"Stand back, my boys!"
He scanned the juniors sharply. Perhaps he was wondering how they were on the scene so quickly.
"Gosling is still in there, Wharton?"
"Yes, sir," panted Wharton.
"I saw someone rush in. Keep back, Cherry!" Mr. Quelch caught Bob by the shoulder. "You shall not run the risk! If Gosling is still living, one can save him, if he can be saved. Keep back!"

"It's my cousin!" muttered Bob, with a haggard face.
"Your cousin!"
"Paul Tyrrell—my cousin! He's gone in!" Bob's lips were white. "Only last night I was calling him a funk, and now—" He broke off.

"Stand clear, there!" rang out Wingate's voice. The school fire-brigade were at work already. Wingate held the hose, and a jet of water sizzled into the flames. Blaze was bursting from every window now, and from the open doorway. It looked like certain death to venture in. Where was Paul Tyrrell?

Wharton pressed Bob's arm.
"He's a good plucked one, Bob!" he muttered.
Bob gave him a miserable look.
"He can't get out alive!" he groaned. "He wasn't such a bad sort—poor old Paul!—only a slacker. And he was brought up to be a slacker! Look here, I'm going in to help him!"

Wharton's grip tightened on his arm.
"You can't help him!" he said. "You couldn't find him in the smoke! I'd come in with you if it was any good, but it isn't."

"Keep clear, there!"
Splash—sizzzzzz! The water was drenching on the flames, but it seemed to have little effect. Half Greyfriars was gathered round the burning lodge. From the distance the booming of the guns still sounded.

There was a roar as a figure was seen staggering through the doorway, enveloped in smoke, licked by tongues of flame. It was Paul Tyrrell.

He bore a still form in his arms as he staggered out of the burning lodge.

"Paul!" shouted Bob.
"Bravo!"

There was a rush forward. The insensible Gosling was taken in a dozen arms as Paul Tyrrell sank on the ground.

Bob Cherry caught him as he fell.
He lowered him gently to the ground, and supported his head. Tyrrell's face was scorched and blackened, his hair was singed, his eyebrows and eyelashes were gone. He writhed with pain as he lay. But on his blackened face there flickered for a moment the cynical smile Bob knew so well.

"Bob," he muttered, "you—you're surprised—what! You can call the bobbies now and hand me over. I can't run for it."

And he sank heavily upon Bob's arm, senseless.
Bob's face was white.

That deed of heroism had more than atoned for all the wastrel's many faults and misdeeds, and Bob had more than forgiven him.

"Help me with him!" panted Bob. "Get a doctor—quick! Oh, Heaven!"

There were willing hands to help.
Paul Tyrrell and Gosling were carried hurriedly to the school hospital, and while they were being given first-aid Mr. Quelch hastened to telephone for the school doctor.

Meanwhile, the water was swamping upon the burning lodge. The fire was got under at last, though not till the little building was a smouldering ruin. Fortunately, the lodge was isolated from other buildings, and the fire had had no opportunity to spread.

The Greyfriars fellows returned to the house, but not to sleep. Sleep again that night was not to be thought of.

In the Remove dormitory there was a buzz of voices. It was known there that it was Bob Cherry's cousin who had plunged into the burning building for Gosling—who had risked, and perhaps lost, his life.

Even Skinner had the grace to be a little ashamed of himself.

Bob Cherry sat on his bed, his face haggard. He could not blame himself for the line he had taken with the deserter. He had acted rightly. But it was a terrible thought that perhaps at that moment Paul Tyrrell lay at the close of his misspent life, that his first deed of unselfish courage had brought him to his doom!

Mr. Quelch entered the dormitory at last. His face was very grave.

Bob started to his feet.
"Has the doctor—"

"The doctor has seen them, Cherry," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "Gosling is uninjured. He appears to have fainted from the shock when the bomb struck the building. I am sorry to say that his brave rescuer is severely burned, but the doctor hopes that he is in no danger of his life."

Bob drew a deep, sobbing breath.
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"It appears that the man is your cousin, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir," muttered Bob.
"I will not ask you now how he came here," said the Remove-master. "You have reason to be proud of your relative, Cherry. Few men would have faced so fearful a risk for the sake of a stranger. He is asking to see you, Cherry, and the doctor thinks he had better be satisfied. You may come with me."

Bob Cherry followed the Form-master in silence from the dormitory.

In a few minutes he entered the ward in the sanatorium. Paul Tyrrell lay in the bed, his blackened face showing from the white pillow. His eyes turned on Bob.

He grinned faintly.
"I wanted to see you, Bob. The medical johnny thinks I shall get over this—and I know I shall. I'm too tough to be knocked out as easily as all that. Bob, old kid, I'm sorry for the trouble I've given you! I acted like a rotter, and I'm sorry for it!"

"Don't speak of that!" muttered Bob. "You've acted splendidly! I'm sorry I ever had an unfriendly thought about you!"

"About me—the waster, slacker, deserter!" grinned Tyrrell. "But that isn't all I had to tell you, Bob. I've had a lesson to-night, and it serves me right; but I shall get over it. And when I can walk again, Bob, do you know where my first walk will take me?"

Bob's lips opened, but he did not speak.
"To the recruiting-office," said Tyrrell. "I've been a shirker, but after this I'm going to have a whack at those demons! The day after I can get about again, Bob, you'll see me in khaki."

"Good man!" whispered Bob.
He pressed his cousin's hand.

Mr. Quelch made a sign, and he left the bedside. But his face was brighter as he returned to the School House. Paul Tyrrell would live, and he would live down the disgrace he had brought upon himself. That terrible night had opened the eyes of the slacker, and he was a slacker no longer.

It was a long time before Paul Tyrrell recovered from the effects of that severe burning. Gosling, little hurt by his experience, was back at his duties in a few days; but Tyrrell lay for weeks in the school sanatorium, under the best of care. And as he mended, and was able to receive visitors, the Famous Five spent a good deal of time with him—especially Bob Cherry. The scapegrace held to his resolve taken that wild night under the shadow of death. He had asked Mr. Quelch to report to the authorities that he was there, and it had been done. And when he was well at last, and able to go to his duty, the Greyfriars fellows gave him a tremendous send-off, and ringing cheers followed the man who was going to join up after being for so long a deserter.

THE END.

(Don't miss "LINLEY MINOR!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

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17

NEXT MONDAY.

"LINLEY MINOR!"

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

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 4.—PERCY BOLSOVER.



The three Greyfriars fellows so far dealt with Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and George Wingate—are all of the type to make writing about them a pleasure. But there are others who play by no means unimportant parts in the stories of whom as much cannot be said. And one must not have all the whites first, to be followed by the greys, and leave the blacks to bring up the rear.

One would not class Bolsover major among either the whites or the blacks. He is a grey—rather a dark tinge of grey, but certainly not black!

Bolsover came to Greyfriars as a big, overhearing fellow—taller, stronger, and heavier, if not older, than anyone else in the Remove.

George Bulstrode, returning to the school after a brief absence caused by the death of his younger brother, travelled with the new fellow, and quarrelled with him on the way. Greyfriars reached, Bolsover, undaunted by the check administered to him at Friardale by Solly Lazarus, of Courtfield, informs the Remove that he means to be cock of the walk, and starts operations in a way that seems to justify his boast. A feed has been prepared for Bulstrode in No. 1 Study. Bolsover walks in to annex it. Wharton comes in, Bolsover knocks him down and ties him up. Bob Cherry is next, and meets with the same fate. Then comes Frank Nugent, and he fares no better. One after another, Tom Brown, Bulstrode, and Johnny Bull are overcome, and added to the hapless row of victims—captives into the bow and spine of Percy Bolsover, cock of the walk! Then Hazlebone and Fish arrive together, and the burly new-comer proves equal to dealing with both of them at once. Insult is added to injury when he allows Skinner, Snoop, and Bunter to help him to wolf the spread before their eyes!

Harry Wharton fights him, and is beaten. Mark Linley next faces him, and Mark, too, goes down. But Bolsover cannot carry his hectoring ways beyond the Remove. He finds that neither Wingate nor Mr. Quelch has any appreciation of his importance. Both captain and master cane the lordly cock of the walk.

Then something else happens something which pushes Bolsover off the pedestal once for all. In a stand-up fight, no mere sudden scramble, Solly Lazarus defeats him. He may still be formidable—he is still so—but the legend of his invincibility is exploded for ever. What Solly can do, others can do; and after a while they begin to do it.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 467.

Bob Cherry first. But for Bolsover, Bob might never have been the illustrious fighting-man he is. He practises hard with the gloves, is on the top of his form when he meets Bolsover, and thrashes him!

Many a fight has Bolsover had since then, and sometimes he has won the day, but more often he has lost—partly, perhaps, because he is too apt to assume that anyone who has not yet licked him is bound to go under to him. One can easily recall some of these combats—not all of them, naturally.

Monty Newland's victory was a surprise. Who would have expected the—quite unjustly—despised "Sheeny" to thrash Bolsover? Peter Todd created another surprise. When Horace Coker not only thrashed the Remove bully, but finished up by putting him across his knee and slapping him well, Coker did a bigger service to the Remove than he, or they, realised. Esmond—labelled a funk, and not without reason—beat Bolsover after some coaching from Bob Cherry. Jack Holt, the boy from the farm, put him through it. So did Squiff. So did Dick Russell. So did Bob Williams, of the Terrible Two. So did Piet Delarey.

Yet Bolsover remains a terror to the unwilling combatant, and no mere chopping-block even for the doughtiest warriors of the Form. For he is always ready to fight again, and he is never licked until the end comes.

There are worse things recorded against Bolsover than bullying. He is one of the bold, bad blades—the young asses who think smoking and gambling and pub-haunting manly amusements—but his taste for this sort of thing is not really as strong as Skinner's. For all his bluster, Bolsover is easily led by the nose. Vernon-Smith used to wind him round his little finger in the days when the Bounder really deserved his name. Valence of the Sixth took him out poaching. That thorough-paced young rascal, Harold Skinner, still has altogether too much influence over him.

The blackest pages in the record of Bolsover are those which tell of his treatment of his younger brother—lost for years, and found at last in the streets of London. From the first the bully resents Bolsover minor's presence at Greyfriars, feeling that the boy's Cockney speech and coarse manners let him down. He goes very far indeed in his persecution of the youngster; but in the end he repents most thoroughly, and in that way is not likely to err again.

There have been other bad breaks. There was his getting the whole Form punished because he would not own up to his assault upon the master taking Mr. Quelch's place for a time. There were two occasions at least when he showed the white feather—once against the nuts of Highcliffe, once when little Gatty was drowning. But he redeemed that latter slip in the fire at the sanatorium.

He did his worst to make the lives of Mark Linley and Dick Penfold miserable to them. They were "common cads" in his eyes, though by far his superiors in reality.

Yet ever and anon there are real gleams of better things in him. The Bounder has to delude him in order to get him to help in a plot against Linley after Mark has befriended him in his need. And his feelings are genuinely touched when he finds out the truth concerning M. Charpentier's trouble. He has the manliness to apologise when it is proven that he has been in the wrong; and though his apologies are growled out roughly, that does not make them worthless—it is not his fault that he lacks all grace of manner.

He is not a slacker at games. Both at footer and cricket he stands not far outside the eleven. He is too clumsy to be first-class, but, at least, he does his best.

The occasions on which he has found himself in unpleasant and ridiculous situations are many. Form raggings have come his way pretty often. One remembers his demonstration of his powers as a goalkeeper, to the derision of the rest; remembers him caned by the Head for his folly in going to protest against the supposed "workhouse boy," who is really Lord Lovell, being allowed to stay on at the school; his unsuccessful attempt to prove himself the hero who rescued from death the anonymous Colonial; his treading at the hands of the Fifth; his dip into the marmalade-tank at the jam-factory, and many another time when he suffered very considerable loss of face.

A mixed character—bad and good in him, with the bad on top at present—but not an absolutely hopeless rotter, even at his worst.

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THE FOURTH FORM
AT FRANKLINGHAM.

By Richard Randolph.

THE LAST INSTALMENT TOLD HOW

half a dozen juniors from Franklingham School went out by night for some fun, but did not find it so funny, after all! For they saw Granville, the popular captain of the school, in the unexpected role of a visitor to the Crown and Sceptre; and on their way back they had to take shelter in a hedge while two masters stood and talked in the road. Moreover, they are embarrassed by the fondness of Scamp, Mr. Grayson's dog, for Goggs. The dog has joined the boys, but the masters have not missed him as yet. "Scamp has a strong dislike for that fellow you got me to take in exchange for Pennell," said Mr. Hayter, one of the masters, to his companion.

(Now read on.)

More Surprises!

"Has he? I'm not surprised. Perhaps I may be prejudiced, but Cardenden seems to me a specimen of the type that any school is better without."

"I'm not sure that I don't agree with you. How's Pennell shaping in his new job as prefect?"

"Capitally! He's a real acquisition. Don't grudge him to me, Hayter! We needed him. He is helping Granville and Parker to pull the House up, and it's good work for Franklingham, as well as for the House itself."

"Oh, I fully agree! It is not that I mind your having Pennell, but I would much rather be without Cardenden."

The juniors were hearing a great more than they ought to have done. But what could they do? To walk out of hiding and give themselves up seemed quite out of the question. And it was scarcely their fault if their Housemasters chose to stand in the middle of a high-road and discuss matters not meant for their ears.

Moreover, nothing either gentlemen could say about Cardenden would increase their dislike of him. Some of them were wondering whether any reference would be made to the ragging episode. They did not know whether this had leaked through to the masters' ears.

But Goggs was thinking about Granville. And so, it seemed, was Tricks, for he whispered in his chum's ear:

"It may be a jolly good thing that they've stopped here to yarn, after all, old man, for it would be beastly awkward if they ran into that chap coming out of the pub."

The conversation took a new turn. The two masters had both been reading a famous Russian novel, and they discussed it with much interest and at considerable length. Mr. Grayson was smoking a pipe. His companion preferred cigarettes. He lighted and smoked three in succession, and still neither he nor Mr. Grayson suggested a move.

They appeared to have forgotten all about Scamp, who had snuggled down at Goggs' feet, apparently thinking everything all right, and prepared to stay there for the night.

But at last it seemed to strike the two masters that they had been standing there rather a long time.

"Shall we turn back or go on?" asked Mr. Hayter.

The juniors' hearts were in their mouths as they awaited the answer.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 467.

"Oh, I think we might go on!"

At that moment the rumbling of wheels was heard, and through the gloom could be seen the dim lights of a cab.

The two masters had started. Goggs whispered to Scamp, and the old dog bolted after them.

The cab came crawling up. The juniors thought it better to wait until it had passed.

"It's Jarker!" said Tricks. "Wonder who's inside?"

They followed the cab. It was easy enough to keep close up to it, though Jarker's old nag was being forced to make a better pace than usual.

The cab stopped in front of the great gate of Franklingham School. The juniors drew up in the darkness under the wall and watched.

No light showed in the lodge. The masters had their own keys to the smaller gate at the side, and Granville, as captain, also had a key, though it was seldom used.

Jarker got down heavily from his box. Before he had set foot to the ground the door was open, and the purple-nosed stranger appeared.

Then, seeming to come from behind the gate, a voice that everyone took for Cardenden's was heard, and in the same moment Goggs' chums missed him from among them.

"Have you got him there?" asked the voice.

"Is that you, dear boy? Yes, we have got him right enough, and I beg to deliver the goods as promised."

"Look sharp, or you'll have someone coming along! Did I tell you where to find the key?"

"You did, dear boy, and I have it."

Then the other five found Goggs with them again.

"It's Granville inside there," he whispered; "and he's insensible!"

"Do you mean drunk?" asked Allardyce.

"No, I don't! That's what they want to make out, I feel sure; but I don't believe it. There has been foul play!"

"Then Cardenden's in it!" whispered Bags excitedly. "That was his voice just now."

Heavy Trouble!

"What had we better do?" asked Allardyce.

In that critical moment even he turned to Goggs for leadership.

"Cut round and get over the wall as quickly as possible! Don't let them see you. I will stay here, and slip in behind them."

Five light-footed forms stole away through the gloom.

Goggs stayed, to wait and watch.

He knew well how much depended upon his nerve and resource in this crisis, for he saw the whole plot in rough outline.

Granville brought home in a cab, apparently drunk! Not really so, Goggs was sure. Drugged—made to seem drunk—by the purple-nosed scoundrel, acting in collusion with Cardenden!

It was not their game to get the captain safely into his own quarters. No, they meant to leave him where he would be seen, and his seeming condition noted.

To imitate Cardenden's voice and draw a reply from his fellow-plotter had been a bold stroke. But Goggs was glad

he had risked it. The evidence of his chums would help to prove that Cardenden was in the plot. The other scoundrel had answered at once.

"Catch hold of this key and unlock the gate," said Mr. Brighton Fortescue to Jarker.

"'Ere, 'old 'ard! Don't you be in no sich 'urry to order me about! I dunno as I quite cotton to this 'ere job. There's trickery in it, I'm thinkin'!"

Goggs blessed Aminadab. He was not in the plot, evidently; and his natural tendency to be awkward was causing delay. On the whole, delay was welcome. If only Mr. Hayter and Mr. Grayson would come up before that purple-nosed creature departed.

"Trickery be hanged! This young man has taken more than is good for him, that's all. I want to get him safely back without a row. There may be trouble for him, but it won't suit me to be mixed up in it. Stir your stumps, and you shall have a couple of quid for your trouble!"

Jarker was won over by this appeal to his greed. He took the key and unlocked the little gate.

Goggs peered through the gloom up the road to the village. No sign of the masters' return!

Now the two were getting Granville out of the cab. His head hung limply, and he was quite unconscious. It might have been a dead body they carried for all Goggs could tell, and for a moment he felt real fear—such fear as he had never felt before.

But he mastered it, and slipped in after them, wondering where Buswell was, and whether finding him—if he could be found—might be of any use.

"Better put him down here," said Fortescue. His voice was hoarse and shaky, and the boy who heard could guess that he was in a hurry to get his dirty work over and be gone.

"'E might catch 'is death of cold," answered Jarker.

"Oh, no, he won't. Somebody's sure to come along and find him.

"There's somethink above a bit mysterious about this 'ere job," said the cabman. "I don't fancy it too much, myself."

"It's no affair of yours, anyway. You have only to keep your ugly mouth shut," snarled Fortescue.

"Done with you—for double the money!" returned Jarker. The scoundrel was in too much haste to haggle.

"All right," he said. "Now come along, and drive me back to the Crown as fast as that old bag of bones will travel!"

They made for the gate. Johnny Goggs slipped past them, with the key in his pocket. It had been left in, and he had found it, and locked the gate behind them.

"What did you do with that key, you old fool?" he heard Fortescue ask hoarsely.

"No more of a fool than what you be, an' not so much of a rogue!" answered Jarker. "I left the key in 'the key'ole."

"Then you've done us! For the gate's fast shut!"

"Don't say 'us', mister! I dunno as there's much call for me to mind. My 'oss ain't the runnin' away sort, not in general, an' it won't hurt me to wait 'ere till somebody comes along."

"You'll lose your money, you drivelling old idiot!"

"Oh, no, I won't! 'Cos I'm a-goin' to 'ave that now—see? If you don't shell out, I shall yell out. That's po'try, or somewheres near enough, but I mean it!"

Goggs had rejoined his chums.

"Bags," he said, "will you slip in, go to the kitchen regions, and see if cook's got her bobby there? Oh, I know it means a row. We're in for that, anyway. But it's up to us to stand by Granville, and not think of ourselves."

"Hear, hear!" murmured the rest, and Bags went at once.

"Allardyce," said Goggs, "they've brought in Granville—drugged, I believe, for I'm sure he isn't drunk. He's quite insensible. They mean to leave him lying near the gate, and Hayter and Grayson may be along any minute. If you and Bliss stay now, you've got to see the whole thing through, and take the consequences. But if you like to go—"

"If your arm wasn't in a sling, Goggles, I'd punch your head!" hissed Allardyce, hot with rage. "Do you think we're going to slink out and leave you to do it all?"

"Granville is more our concern than yours, you see. But I apologise! I might have known better. Can you think of any way to get him in?"

"We can carry him. It's a hundred to one he will be spotted before we get him up to his den, though. I say, wouldn't it be as well to fetch Tilson and Pennell to help?"

"No! We must put this thing through on our own. I guess. Hallo, there are Bags and Bussy!"

Next moment the tones of Mr. Grayson's voice smote upon the constable's ear.

"Take that man in charge, Buswell, for being upon these premises with an unlawful purpose!"

The other juniors gasped. For a moment they could not realise that it was Goggs, not Mr. Grayson, who spoke. When they did realise it, they were almost appalled by the boldness of the stroke.

"All right, sir!" answered Buswell, hoping to get into the good graces of the Housemaster by prompt obedience. "Where are you, sir? I can't see you. An' where 'is 'e? Oh, I've got 'im!"

But it was Jarker, not Mr. Brighton Fortescue, whom Buswell had collared.

"Let me go, you fat-headed bluebottle!" demanded Jarker.

"Ho, it's you, is it? Waitin' to stick a knife into me as I come out, or some game of that sort, I expect! Jealous rival, eh, Jarker? I'll give you jealous rival, my lad!"

"He's collared the wrong man," said Goggs. "Never mind! The other chap can't get out, and Jarker and Bussy will keep each other amused. Catch hold!"

They had lifted Granville and were carrying him towards Grayson's when the gate opened, and the two Housemasters came in.

Scamp was at their heels as they entered, but a second afterwards he rushed in front of them. He darted past the unconscious captain and his bearers, past Buswell and Jarker, struggling together, and seemed as if he meant to rush right up the wall.

But Mr. Brighton Fortescue was his quarry. That gentleman, though he had no relish for such acrobatic feats, had made up his mind that he would have to go out by the way of over the wall, and only Scamp had stopped his escape.

Bulldogs do not readily let go a hold once taken. Thus Mr. Fortescue may have had cause to congratulate himself that Scamp's original hold on the seat of his trousers was quickly relinquished. But if he did so congratulate himself, it was but for a moment. Then he found himself on his back, with Scamp gripping him by the throat. Luckily for him, his coat was buttoned up high, but he could feel the dog's teeth through it, as he lay still, shaking with fear.

"What does this mean?" asked Mr. Grayson sharply.

All he knew as yet was that the quad, which should at this hour be silent and deserted, seemed to be full of struggling figures.

"Goggles, shall we go on and chance it?" asked Allardyce.

"It would be of no use, I fear. They would catch us before we were half-way."

"I'm holdin' on to the willin, sir!" cried Buswell.

"What villain? What on earth do you mean, man?"

"You told me to yourself, sir!"

"That I certainly did not! I have only just come in."

"Witchery agin!" muttered Buswell, but did not relax his hold of Jarker. In all the muddle, one thing seemed clear to P.-c. Buswell—that, having got his own particular and personal enemy down, it was worth while to keep him down!

"Who is this?" demanded Mr. Grayson, stepping up to the prostrate Fortescue, while his colleague, who had just caught sight of the juniors and Granville, hurried towards them with an exclamation of surprise.

"Call your confounded dog off!" blustered the scoundrel.

"Grayson, come here, will you?"

It was Mr. Hayter who called.

"What's the matter?"

"These juniors are carrying Granville, who is quite helpless. I thought he must have met with an accident, but—"

"He's drunk, that's what is the matter with him!" snarled Fortescue. "I brought him back here out of pure good nature, and the thanks I get for it is to have a demon of a dog worrying my throat."

"Who are you?" Mr. Grayson asked. "And how do you come here?"

"Call your dog off, or I refuse to answer a single question! As it is, I shall consult my solicitors as to this unprovoked assault."

"Come here, Scamp! Do you hear?"

The bulldog obeyed with evident unwillingness. Mr. Grayson, with his firm faith in Scamp's instinct, was not in the least likely to believe too readily the lies Fortescue might tell.

But the purple-nosed adventurer did not know that. He got up, and began readjusting his collar, which had suffered from Scamp's grip.

That could be seen by the light of an acetylene lamp which now appeared upon the scene, carried by Tilson. The head prefect of Hayter's had chanced to look out of a window on his way to bed, and had seen movements in the quad. He had come out to investigate, and found himself at once in the thick of heavy trouble.

Meanwhile, where was Cardenden?

Bags and the rest could not make out what had become of

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

THE FOURTH FORM AT FRANKLINGHAM.

(Continued from page 20.)

him, for they had been sure it was his voice they heard speaking to the stranger.

Goggs alone knew that it was not Cardenden who had spoken. But he, too, wondered where the dark senior was. In the deep game he was playing, his safest course undoubtedly would be to lie low; but it could scarcely have been easy for him to hold back from some attempt to find out what was going on.

Taking Evidence!

"What's wrong, sir?" asked Tilson, seeing Mr. Hayter.

"That's more than I can tell you, Tilson! All I can be sure of is that there is a good deal wrong."

"Hallo! Allardyce, Bliss, Goggs, Trickett, Waters, Blount! Is this another ragging affair, you kids?"

"No, Tilson," answered Goggs gravely. "It is something much more serious."

"What are you doing with Granville? Has he met with an accident?"

"This man says, Tilson, that Granville is drunk!" said Mr. Grayson.

"Then the fellow's a liar!" replied Tilson promptly. He turned his lamp full upon the face of Mr. Brighton Fortescue. It certainly did not look a face to be trusted on its own testimony.

Neither master rebuked the big prefect. If Granville was in the condition he was said to be, the purple-nosed rascal was not guiltless in the matter, they felt sure.

Jarker and Buswell had now ceased to hold one another in loving grip. The cabman, groaning, limped off towards the gate, and no one tried to stop him. Buswell came up to the two masters.

"Is this the man as you told me to take in charge, sir?" he asked of Mr. Grayson, indicating Fortescue.

"I did not tell you to take anyone in charge, you wooden-headed idiot!" snapped the Housemaster. "But you might do worse than see that this fellow does not make off."

Buswell was content to overlook the epithet applied to him. He wanted to bear a hand in this affair, and so make good his footing in Grayson's House.

"Now then, you feller!" he said, and grabbed Fortescue by the shoulder.

"Be careful, constable, or you'll find yourself in the wrong box!" snarled that personage.

"Ho, I'll be careful! An' I guess the result will be as you'll find yourself in the stone jug!" answered Buswell loftily.

Tilson had lifted Granville by the head now. He said nothing about it, but beyond all doubt the captain smelt very strongly of spirits. Between them the prefect and some of the juniors carried him into Grayson's.

"Take him into my study," said the Housemaster.

Then he turned to Mr. Hayter.

"What shall be done with this creature?" he asked. "Isn't there some place where we can lock him up until morning?"

"My dear fellow, personally I should be quite willing to share the responsibility for doing that; but we have the school to consider. The Head is absent, and there can be no reference to him in the matter. An action for illegal imprisonment—"

"Yes, yes; I know all about that! But I don't believe the fellow will dare to bring such an action!"

"Make no mistake about that, my high-handed pedagogue!" said Mr. Fortescue viciously. "I shall most certainly bring it!"

Mr. Hayter, to whom Tilson had handed the lamp, held it up so that it shone full upon the shifty countenance of the adventurer.

"You're right, Grayson!" he said. "I don't know about locking him up until the morning, but I'm convinced that he dare not do anything, even if we went so far. Bring him along, Buswell, and we'll examine him now."

"Look 'ere, an I to be kep' all night, an' my 'oss a-standin' out there in the road all alone?" demanded Jarker.

"Shall we let this man go?" asked Mr. Hayter.

"No. His evidence may also be necessary. We shall have a better chance of getting to the bottom of this if we inquire into it at once. Let him draw the cab up to the side of the road, and bring the horse into the quad."

"Right you be, sir," said Jarker. "If you'll 'and me the key, I'll do that. You needn't have no fear of me doin' a bunk, because that there specimen ain't paid me my doos yet, an' I mean to 'ang on to 'im till I get wot's owin' to me!"

A few minutes later Mr. Grayson's study had taken on something of the appearance of a court of justice.

The two Housemasters sat together behind the table. Granville, still unconscious, was laid back in an armchair. Buswell had penned Fortescue into a corner, and kept guard over him there. Tilson stood upright on the hearthrug, close to Granville. Jarker was by the door. In the middle of the room the half-dozen juniors were clustered together, with Goggs—his arm still in a sling—foremost.

"We will leave till afterwards any questions as to what you juniors were doing out at this hour," said Mr. Grayson, and Mr. Hayter nodded agreement. "What you must do now is to tell frankly all that you know, without keeping back anything that tends to make your own offence graver. You will be punished, of course. But there is one here whose case is far more serious than yours, and to tell all that you know will, in the event, be best for him."

The juniors murmured assent. They were facing the music pluckily.

"Goggs will speak for us," said Allardyce.

"That may save confusion. But you must all prepare to answer any questions asked."

There came a pause. It was difficult to know where to begin.

Tilson took a step or two, bent forward, and spoke in Mr. Hayter's ear.

"Yes, Tilson, I agree. Goggs, will you begin by telling us how much you know of this affair?"

That was the very question Goggs had been dreading. He knew—or believed he knew—so much more than anyone else there did, except Mr. Fortescue. And he did not want to tell yet all that he knew. He believed it best that the prisoner should relate his story first, and give himself away by lying.

"We saw Granville go into the Crown and Sceptre, sir," he said.

"At what time was this?"

"Just about half-past nine."

Mr. Hayter made a note on a scribbling-pad. It had struck him at once as singular that in an hour, or little more, Granville should have arrived at such an advanced stage of drunkenness as he appeared to be in.

"And after that?"

"The cab passed us. We didn't know Granville was inside, of course!"

"I will not inquire what you had been doing between half-past nine and that time," said Mr. Grayson. "But where were you when the cab passed?"

"Somewhere about half-way between the village and the school, sir."

"Humph! We were on the road, but we did not see you."

"No sir. We endeavoured to avoid that," answered Goggs gravely.

He did not say anything about their long and nervous wait within a few yards of the two masters. That was best left untold.

"Let that pass. How soon after the cab got here did you come up?"

"Practically with it, sir. It didn't go very fast."

"And what did you see then?"

"We saw Jarker and that man lift Granville out. Jarker unlocked the small gate. He did not appear to care about the job."

"That's the gawspel truth, gen'l'men, though I didn't expect to 'ear it from 'im!" broke in Jarker, who was feeling anything but comfortable as to his part in the affair. "It didn't strike me as no ways—"

"Hold your tongue!" snapped Mr. Grayson. "You will have a chance to speak later!"

"They came to terms," continued Goggs. "Jarker was promised more money, and withdrew his objection."

"Ho! I might 'ave knowed as 'e wouldn't do me justice!" groaned Jarker.

The other juniors were wondering why Goggs said nothing about Cardenden. Could it be that he had some secret reason for sparing the fellow? They did not understand the part which the dark senior seemed to have played, but all five were quite sure that they had heard his voice. He must have cleared off directly after speaking.

Allardyce whispered in the spokesman's ear. Goggs shook his head ever so slightly.

They were not satisfied, but they held their peace.

"Did you all go in by the gate?" asked Mr. Hayter.

"No, sir. The others went round and got over the wall. I followed those two in, and locked the gate behind them. Jarker had left the key in the lock."

"And then?"

"Bags—Blount, I mean, sir—fetched the constable from the kitchen."

"But how did you know that the constable was in the kitchen?" asked Mr. Grayson, regarding Buswell with no very friendly eye.

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

THE FOURTH FORM AT FRANKLINGHAM.

(Continued from page iii. of cover.)

"Isn't it a very usual place for a policeman, sir?" returned Goggs innocently.

"An' then I 'eard you tell me to take the feller in charge, sir, an' I didn't see this one, an' naturally thought as 'ow you meant Jarker, so—"

"Don't repeat that falsehood, my man! When we arrived you were already at grips with Jarker."

"But I 'eard you, sir, afore ever I went for 'im! There's witchery about, I reckon!"

"I am afraid I must own that it was me, sir," said Goggs.

"What do you mean, boy?"

"I imitated your voice."

"But—the audacity—"

"I know it was cheek, sir! But I was afraid Buswell would not obey if he knew the order came from me."

"Not blamed well likely!" growled the constable. "Young rip! I begin to see 'ow several things 'appened now."

"So you can imitate my voice, Goggs, can you?"

There was a brief pause. The young ventriloquist appeared to be stricken with unusual modesty.

"Jarker, come here at once!"

Jarker moved forward. He did not doubt that the order proceeded from Mr. Grayson. Nor did anyone else there except the master himself and Goggs.

"Yes, sir?" said Jarker.

"I did not speak to you, my man. I am not ready to interrogate you yet."

"But, Grayson—"

Then Mr. Hayter saw the least flicker of a smile on Goggs' face, and he understood.

"It sounded exactly like your voice," he said, "and it seemed to come from you. But it was that boy!"

"Yes, sir," Goggs admitted meekly.

Mr. Grayson was evidently none too well pleased, but he did not care to go into the matter just then.

"That will do for the present, Goggs. Now, sir, will you have the kindness to explain what your part in this deplorable affair was?"

He looked straight towards Fortescue, who came forward blustering.

"I don't like your tone, sir! I demand the treatment due to a gentleman!"

"Then you are making a most unwarranted demand. At the worst, there is strong suspicion against you of doing that for which the law will call you to account. At the best, your conduct leaves something to be explained, and an explanation I mean to have."

"Ask me what you like. I will answer if I think fit. I want to have done with this affair, into which I was led by pure good-nature," said Mr. Brighton Fortescue.

"Before you question this man, sir, isn't there something that ought to be done? I hope you will pardon my suggesting it," said Goggs, in his politest tones.

"And what do you consider should be done?" asked Mr. Grayson, just a trifle snappishly, for he had not relished the mimicry of his voice.

"I think that a doctor should be sent for to examine Granville," replied the boy.

"For what purpose?"

"In order that there may be definite evidence as to whether his condition is due to drink or to his being drugged."

The boy spoke like a man—a man with decision and brains—and the two masters were plainly impressed. So was Mr. Fortescue, who shifted his feet uneasily, and licked his lips as if they had gone suddenly dry.

Mr. Hayter got up, went to Granville, who was still unconscious, and stooped over him.

"There is nothing in his condition that suggests drugging," he said. "But he smells very strongly of spirits."

"I think, sir, that if you feel his shirt and collar you will find them wet," Goggs answered. "It seems to me as though something had been poured over them."

Mr. Brighton Fortescue darted a glance full of malice at the boy.

"Upon my word, I believe you are right!" said the master. "Tilson, will you get one of the prefects to go and fetch Dr. Mordaunt from the village? I don't suggest that you should go yourself, as you will no doubt wish to stay here."

Tilson wasted no time. He was off and back again in a couple of minutes.

"Pennell's going on his motor-bike, sir," he said. "He will lend the doctor it to come back on."

"Now, sir," said Mr. Grayson to Fortescue, "tell us what you know of this affair!"

(There will be another grand instalment of this exciting story in next Monday's issue of the MAGNET Library. Order your copy in advance.)

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