

GREAT NEWS FOR READERS!

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PAGE 2)

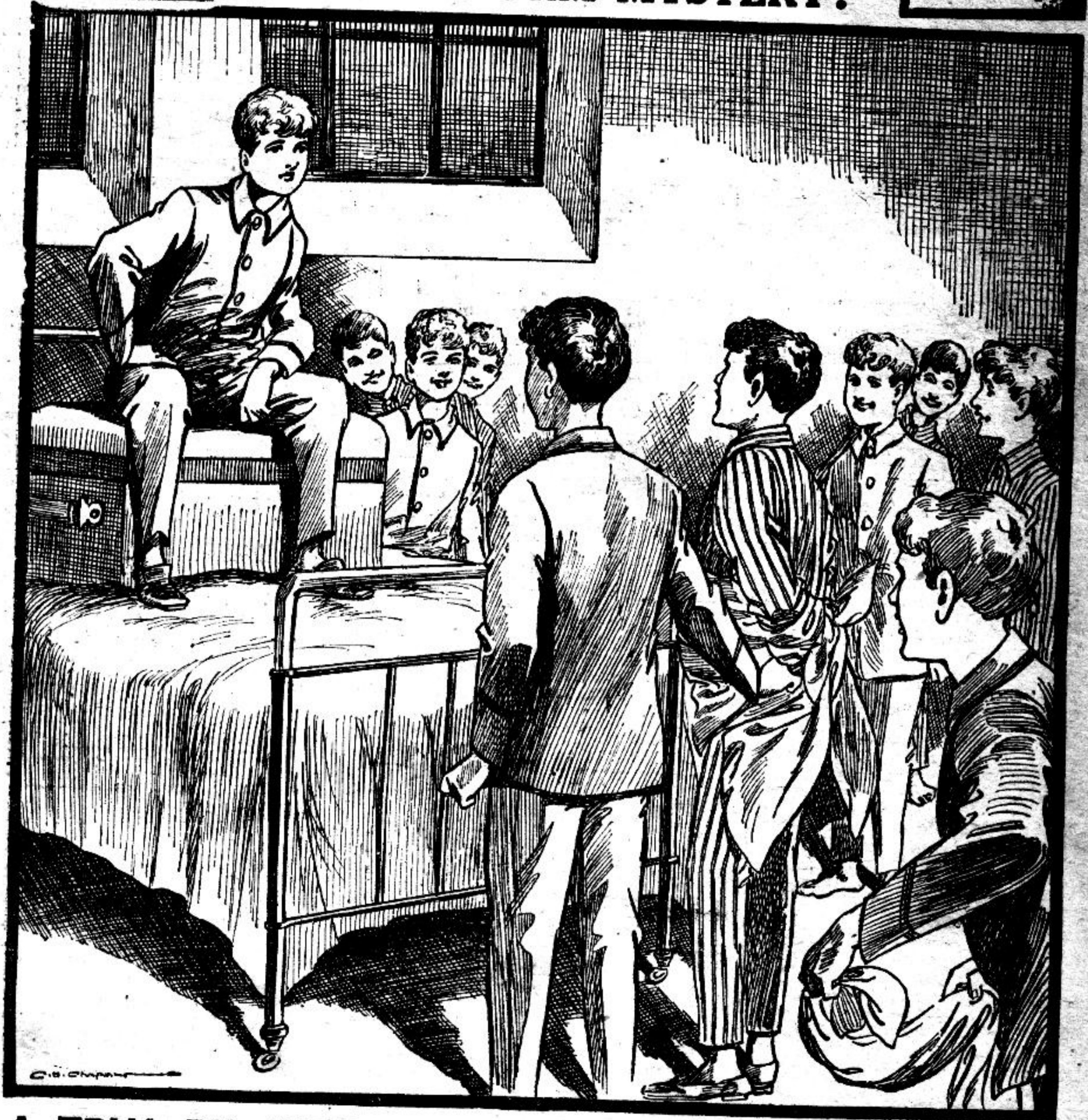


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No. 650. Vol. XVIII.

July 24th, 1920.

"A THIRD FORM MYSTERY!"



**A TRIAL BY JURY IN THE THIRD FORM DORMITORY!
WINGATE MINOR UNDER A CLOUD!**

(A Stirring Scene in the Splendid Long Complete School Tale of Greyfriars in this issue.)



For Next Monday :

"BUNTER'S BLUFF!"

By Frank Richards.

Under the above title Mr. Richards has written quite the funniest story he has ever given us. There is a certain mystery running through the yarn which makes it difficult for me to give you the gist of the story without divulging the secret, so the only thing I can suggest is that you make certain of reading

"BUNTER'S BLUFF!"

by ordering next week's issue of the MAGNET in advance.

There will also be another splendid instalment of

"THE SILENCE!"

By Edmund Burton.

I am anxious to know how my chums like this thrilling serial, so when you write me on any subject, it will be very helpful if you will just add a line or two saying what particular stories have pleased you most.

A MODEL OF GREYFRIARS.

I want all my readers to make a special note of the fact that the first portion of a magnificent model of Greyfriars School will be issued with "Chuckles" of August 7th. When made up, it will be no ordinary model, but one which I know my friends will recognise as the finest and most detailed ever published. Some idea of the size of the whole design will be gathered from the fact that it will take a dozen nine-inch drawings to develop the whole scheme. You all know the

GIGANTIC SUCCESS

which has attended "Chuckles" Model Village, which has been immensely popular everywhere; but there is something extra special—and, incidentally, something that has always been asked for—in a highly-finished representation of Greyfriars School. There will be the beautiful old buildings, the studies, the Common-room, the quadrangle—in fact, a faithful and

ACCURATE COPY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

which has become of world renown. So please don't forget—August 7th is the date—and make sure in advance of obtaining "Chuckles." The model will have a big appeal to all readers of the Companion Papers.

REQUESTS.

Maurice Domp, 109, Caledon Street, Cape Town, asks for correspondents, and Leonard Coupe, 119, Buckstones Road, Shaw, near Oldham, writes to tell me that his Exchange Club deals with all kinds of curios and specimens.—Aby Dickman, 87, Canterbury Street, Cape Town, would like to hear from readers overseas.—S. Cohen, 35, Oakington Road, Maida Vale, W. 9, wants to see a review of amateur magazines in the Companion Papers. Short reviews.—Syd T. Cowan is the secretary of St. Peter's Boys' Club, Adelaide, South Australia. The club has a gymnasium and gives concerts, and buys all the Companion Papers every week.—E. Kader, 72, Tennant Street, Cape Town, wants correspondence, and all present features retained.

THAT POSTSCRIPT.

Many thanks to Miss Margery Jackson, of Warrawee, Warwick, Queensland, for her splendid letter about the Companion Papers, also to her mother for the added message, in which she tells me that Miss Margery's brother is very keen as well. Tom Redwing comes in for his share of praise. It is fellows of Redwing's stamp who help things forward. There is deep thought and sympathy in this letter, and I like the reference to Dickens. Dickens' characters belong to all the world. There are Pocksniffs in Berlin, Micawbers in Paris, Little Dorrits in France.

THE SCIENTIST.

I am thinking specially of the industrial scientist, the man who is out for the immediate application of his knowledge to the prosperity of his fellows. The inventor always tops the bill. He is busy thinking out new schemes while others are quarrelling, or disputing over trifles. The great thing to remember is that what you invent, or work at, is just so much contribution to the public weal. If you are not putting your best into your special bit of work you are cheating somebody, for you are not paying your price, or, rather, contributing your bit for the common good.

Your Editor.

DOUBTFUL!



Tommy: "My word, Pa! It was a size! I don't suppose I ever saw such a fish."

Pa: "I don't suppose you ever did, my boy!"

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VERY (H)ATTRACTIVE!



"Whatever are you wearing, old man?"

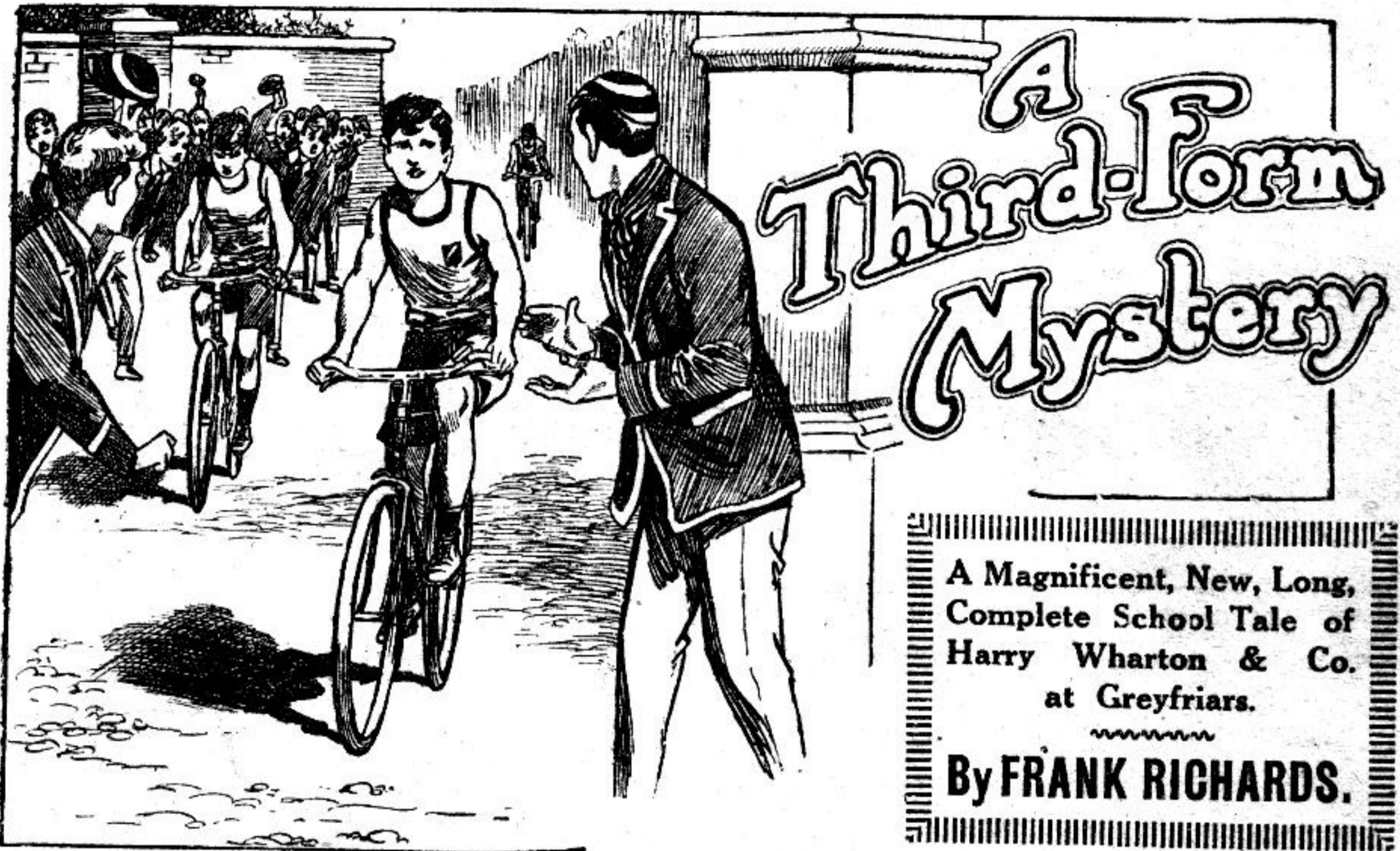
"Oh, a dream of a hat my wife bought yesterday, but discarded to-day. Can't afford to buy myself one, so it comes in quite well."

SEA-SHORE SAUCE!



Longshoreman: "Yes, sir. I've been years and years on the water."

Visitor: "Have you ever been in it?"



A Third-Form Mystery

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Inch by inch Wingate minor drew ahead, and then foot by foot; and then, with a sudden spurt, he widened the gap, and came home a winner by a clear ten yards. (See Chapter 10.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Prizes!

"THERE he is! That's young Paget's pater!" It was Tubb of the Third Form at Greyfriars who spoke, pointing to a gentleman who was crossing the quad.

"Pointing's rude," said Bolsóver minor reprovingly.

"Rats!" replied Tubb. "Go and tell that to your grandmother. It is Mr. Paget, anyway, and he wouldn't mind my pointing at him. I know him all right. I've stayed with young Paget at home before now."

"Why don't you go and speak to him?" asked Simpson.

"I'm going to in a minute," answered Tubb boldly.

"Better wash your hands first," suggested Wingate minor.

Tubb looked at his grimy paws. "They are a bit grubby," he admitted. "Never mind; I'll stick them in my pockets."

"Ruder than ever," remarked Bolsóver minor.

"Do you think you're the only blessed chap who can be rude—I mean, who knows what's rude. Bolsy? Because if you do, you're jolly well mistaken, I can tell you!"

"Bolsóver wasn't making out that he could be ruder than you, Tubby," said Wingate minor. "And you must own his hands are cleaner."

"But he doesn't know Mr. Paget, so he can't go and speak to him, you silly ass!" snorted Tubb.

"Yes, he could. I could. Any of us could."

"Talk about being rude, young Wingate! To go up to a chap you don't know a bit—he's no end of a big pot, too, J.P. and M.F.H., and all that—"

"Got a lot of initials, hasn't he?" put in Bolter.

"They're not initials, you fathead! He's a Justice of the Peace and Master of the Foxhounds, and—"

"That's not what I'm getting at, Tubby. I said I'd go and speak to him without being rude at all," persisted Wingate minor.

"Bet you sixpence you don't!"

"Done!"

"What are you going to say? It would be jolly rude to walk up to him and say, 'I'm Wingate minor, and I know your son in my Form.' You can't do it like that, you know. I sha'n't shell out my tanner if you do it like that."

"I'm not going to. I'm going to ask him to give prizes for that Form bike-race we've been talking about—that's what I'm going to do."

"My hat!"

"Whew!"

"That's the style!"

"Good egg, young Wingate!"

Harry Wharton, and Bob Cherry of the Remove—the Lower Fourth, and the Form immediately above the Third, though every Removite held that there was a great gulf between the two—came up just then.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob cheerily. "What's all the excitement about, kids?"

"Tubb's bet Wingate minor—"

"Dressle—positively dressle!" said Bob, shaking his head solemnly.

"Isn't it, Harry, old sport? If kidlets in the Third bet what will they do when they reach our high position? Tubb—"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Cherry! There's no harm in betting a tanner, and that's all we're doing. You'd better cut along, young Wingate. Bet's off if you wait till Paget comes out, be-

cause then you'll have him to introduce you."

Paget, always something of a dandy, was in the Third dormitory at that moment, making special preparations to go out with his father. In order to do that he had left Mr. Paget unguarded in the quad.

Wingate minor went up boldly. He knew that at least his hands were fairly clean, and he did not think that the distinguished visitor could be offended by his request.

"Better clear, hadn't we, Bob?" said Harry Wharton. "We don't want Paget's gov'nor to see us standing here gaping at him like a couple of kids."

"True, O King!" answered Bob.

"We won't stand here with the infants. We'll just stroll slowly across the quad. That way we shall satisfy our natural curiosity as to how Wingate minor fares without hurting your worship's dignity. It wouldn't have hurt mine to be seen within speaking distance of the fags; but, of course, you're in a different boat."

"I am. I don't feel curious," said Harry.

But that was not quite true, as he realised a moment later.

There was no particular reason why Mr. Paget should snub a quite clean and very nice-looking youngster who announced himself as a chum of Paget junior. But the Third—and the Remove, also, for that matter—knew that grown-up people were queer. One could never tell just how they would behave.

Mr. Paget, being a gentleman, and—for a grown-up person—quite good-tempered, behaved very nicely.

Jack Wingate lifted his cap, and said:

"I hope you won't mind my speaking to you, sir. But I'm one of Pa—of your ki—of your son's pals, and there's something I want to ask you. My name's Wingate—Wingate minor, you know."

"Ah! Younger brother of the school

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captain, I assume?" said Mr. Paget pleasantly.

"That's it, sir. Do you know my major?"

"I have had the pleasure of meeting your brother, and I am glad to meet you. My son has often spoken of you. What is it that you wish to ask me, my boy?"

Now, Wingate minor flushed and felt a trifle confused. It did seem rather cool cheek, after all, to try to rush Mr. Paget for prizes for a bicycle-race just because he chanced to have come along to Greyfriars to see young Paget.

But the Pagets had plenty of money, Wingate minor knew; and he had never heard that the pater of his Form-fellow was stingy.

"We're dead nuts on cycling just now, sir," he said. "And I thought perhaps you wouldn't mind—a race, you know—and—and—and prizes!"

The word was out, and Mr. Paget did not look in the very least annoyed.

There was a very genial smile on his face as he put up his monocle to his right eye and looked through it down upon the eager junior.

"And it occurred to you that I might be persuaded—that I might like to offer prizes, Wingate?" he said kindly.

"Yes, sir; that was the idea."

"And was it entirely your own idea? You are quite sure that my boy didn't suggest it to you?"

"No, sir—honest Injun, he didn't! Nobody did. I thought of it all myself."

"Here comes my boy, looking rather like Solomon in all his glory, I notice. I don't know whence he derived his taste in neckties; but he certainly did not get it from me. We will see what he has to say. That he is keen on cycling just now, I know; I have lately had the felicity of paying for a new machine for him."

Wingate minor reflected that other parents of Third-Formers were in the same boat with Mr. Paget. Tubb and three or four others all had new machines, and were very much inclined to brag about them. He himself had not been able to persuade his people that a new bike for him was an absolute necessity; and Bolsover major had crabbed Bolsover minor's chance of getting one. Bolsover major could be decent on occasion; but he was rather a selfish and grabbing fellow.

"Hallo, dad!" said Paget cheerily. "Talking to Wingate, eh?"

"Yes. Your chum suggests that it would be quite a good idea if I were to offer prizes for a Third Form cycle-race."

Paget's eyes sparkled.

"Oh, good egg!" he cried.

"You approve, Spencer?"

"What do you think, dad?"

"I am inclined to wonder why the idea did not occur to you. I have never known you backward in asking for what you wanted, and this appears to be very much to your taste."

"Never thought of it—that's a fact. We'd talked about a race, but we said then that we couldn't see where the prizes were coming from. And, of course, a race isn't a race—at least, it's only half a race—if there aren't any prizes."

"Ah, I will give the prizes necessary to make it a whole race instead of merely half a one. What would you suggest as appropriate? Money, of

course, is quite out of the question. I must not professionalise young Greyfriars—"

"I know; there's one thing, half the giddy Form—"

"Why 'giddy,' Spencer? Stay, though, you need not reply. On taking thought I perceive that the adjective has its appropriateness. What is it that half—er—the giddy Form wants? It means disappointment for a good many, whatever it may be, for obviously half the—er—giddy Form can't win it!"

"Oh, don't rot, dad! It's a camera—a jolly good camera, you know, not a cheap thing."

"A camera it shall be—and a jolly good camera."

Mr. Paget did not fail to note the eager look on Jack Wingate's face. He was sure that of all the Third-Formers who wanted a camera, none wanted it more than did this youngster.

Jack Wingate wanted anything hard when he did want it, and he did not always want just what was best for him. But the spoiled, wilful boy, who had come to Greyfriars and aroused the hostility of the whole Form, had improved a good deal since his coming.

"And a cricket-bat, dad! Tubb's no end keen on a new cricket-bat. Only if that's to be second prize—well, I dunno! Tubb's so jolly sure he can romp off with first place."

"I have observed that excessive modesty is not among Master Tubb's defects," remarked Mr. Paget drily.

"What did you say for third, Wingate?" asked Percival Spencer Paget.

He spoke as though Jack Wingate was more concerned with third prize than with first or second. And, in fact, that was how he felt. Percival Spencer could see, in his mind's eye, himself and Tubb's dead-heating for first place, and Tubb's taking the bat in preference to the camera. Tubb thought photography "messy rot." There would be no objection at all to young Wingate's being third; and Paget thought it only decent to let him have a say in the question of the third prize.

"Oh, I don't know. A pair of leg-guards wouldn't be bad—not the old-fashioned sort, but the kind that—the sort of openwork kind," replied Wingate minor.

Mr. Paget, himself a cricketer, smiled.

"I know. I use that kind myself," he said.

He took out his pocket-book to make a memorandum of what was expected of him. Then he put it away without using it, and said:

"We might take Wingate out with us, if he can get permission, don't you think, Spencer? Then, as we are going to Courtfield, we may possibly get the required articles there."

"Oh, good, dad! Only—only there's Tubb, you know. Wingate's all right, and we're chummy, all serene, aren't we, Wingate? But old Tubby's my best pal."

Wingate minor nodded. He did not resent that; as the Third Form saw things, Paget was merely showing the loyalty he should show. But it would be rather rough on him if it kept him out of the excursion.

"Tubb, eh? Well, we might take Tubb, too, if it can be arranged. But Wingate must come."

"Right-ho, dad! It's a halfer, so there won't be any trouble. Hi, Tubb! I'll make him wash his hands," Paget added, aside, to Wingate minor.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

At Courtfield!

THE Courtfield expedition was a success on the whole; but it might have been a bigger success had Tubb been more amiable.

It was not the loss of the sixpence that worried the self-constituted autocrat of the Third. It was not exactly the inclusion of Wingate minor in the party. It was not wholly that he felt he had not shown up as well as Wingate in the quad, where he, who knew Mr. Paget quite well, had hesitated to go up and speak to him, while Jack Wingate, who did not know him at all, had gone up fearlessly. It was not that he felt resentful that the visitor should prefer Wingate to him, though it struck Tubb as showing worse taste than he would have expected in Percival Spencer's father.

Tubb himself did not quite know what it was; but he did know that he was not too well pleased with Wingate minor.

They visited the sports emporium at Courtfield, and Mr. Paget had the pleasure of paying for a first-class bat, exactly the weight Tubb liked—Tubb really chose that bat—and a pair of leg-guards of the kind Wingate minor had suggested. In that purchase Tubb took small interest, as he had no notion of finishing third in the race. His plan was to take first place, and to exchange the camera for the bat, and as much more as the second-prize winner—Paget, Tubb rather thought, but it might be Lunn or Wingate minor or Bolsover minor—all the same, in effect, for they all wanted a camera—would give with it. Wingate minor did not show as much proprietary interest in advance in the pads as Tubb would have liked him to show. It struck Tubb that the young swanker had a notion of getting first prize.

And at the big chemist's, where the cameras were on sale, Paget and Wingate minor were both no end keen about the selection. Tubb rather stood aside. He was dreaming dreams of the runs he would make with the bat which he already gripped as though it were his own.

Even to shock-headed, grimy-pawed fags like George Tubb day-dreams will come at times.

The camera was chosen at last, and Mr. Paget, well knowing how short the cash of the junior is apt to be in mid-term, added to it, without any prompting at all, such a supply of the other necessary things for taking photos as made the prize a very handsome one indeed.

It was as they came out of the chemist's that Wingate minor, who was walking with Tubb at the moment, behind Paget and his father, noticed Skinner and Stott.

He nudged Tubb.

"What is it?" growled Tubb.

"See those two? Skinner don't look too happy, but Stott looks as if he had the most frightful pip."

"Well, what's it matter about two bounders like them?" answered Tubb indifferently.

And he went back to his day-dreams. A few minutes later they passed the Famous Five—Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, called Inky by the Remove and by Greyfriars generally.

The five had also seen Skinner and Stott, who belonged to their own Form, but not to their circle of friends. Harold Skinner was the worst young rascal in the Remove, and William Stott was only less black a sheep because he lacked Skinner's crafty brain.

"There's something up with those chaps," said Wharton.

"What's the odds?" grunted Johnny



Tubb pointed an accusing finger at Wingate minor. "There you are!" he cried. "Here's the fellow who was jealous of my having a new bike to ride in the race!" (See Chapter 7.)

Bull. "Don't you worry yourself about them, old sport."

"Harry can't help worrying," said Frank Nugent.

"I'm not worrying," Wharton said, creasing his brows. "Only I've noticed ever so many times that when you see Skinney and Stott going about looking as if they'd lost a pound note and found a bad threepenny-bit there's trouble in the offing, and no telling who'll get dragged into it."

"I'll take jolly good care I don't!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Same here!" agreed Bob. "Let 'em gloom, Harry."

"I'm going to. I can't stop them," replied Wharton.

"But you would if you could, and that's where you're different from the rest of us," remarked Frank shrewdly.

"The tenderfulness of heart of our esteemed and honoured chum is—"

"Disgusting!" finished Bob Cherry for Inky, though the manner in which he finished was unusual and unexpected.

And Bob did not mean it. None of Wharton's chums thought the worse of him for his softness of heart, though there were times when they held that he wasted his sympathy on unworthy objects. It was certainly wasted in their eyes when it was given to such black sheep as Skinner and Stott.

"Shall we go in and have some tea?" asked Bob, a little later. "Inky's flush, I know. I'm not, as it happens—it generally does happen like that some-

how. But I'll stand you all a feed at Inky's expense."

"The esteemed Cherry has expressfully intimated what I had myself the mindfulness to say," said Inky, most generous of juniors. "Let us promenadefully betake ourselves to the best shop in this one-nagful town, and indulgently feast ourselves on the seasonal luxuries."

Courtfield was rather a "one-horse town," but it had at least one good confectioner's. Thither the five repaired, to find themselves seated at the next table to Mr. Paget, Paget junior, Tubb, and Wingate minor.

"Some of our schoolfellows, eh, Spencer?" said Mr. Paget, too low for the five to hear.

"Yes. They're in the Form above ours; but they're no end decent chaps all the same."

"I am glad to hear that there is some virtue in Greyfriars outside the Third," said the visitor.

"Oh, don't rot, dad!"

"Would you care to ask them to join us? They have not yet been served, and we have barely begun."

"Oh, rather! They're the right sort. Shall I ask them, dad?"

"If you wish to, my boy."

Paget arose at once. He came forward to the five, just a trifle nervously, but very joyfully.

"I say, you fellows, we're here with my dad. That's him, next to young Wingate—"

"I thought it must be," put in the

irrepressible Bob. "Somehow, Tubb doesn't look like anyone's dad. Besides, we saw your pater in the quad this morning."

"He says will you join us and have tea with him?" finished Paget, while Wharton frowned reprovably upon Bob.

It was an invitation which could hardly be refused, and the five had no wish to refuse it. There was just room for them at the big table at which the earlier party was sitting, and they moved to it.

Then they heard all about the prizes for the cycle race, which formed for the fags the most engrossing topic of the hour.

"Ripping!" said Bob.

"Who's going to win?" asked Frank.

"I have a dim suspicion that the three who will carry in the prizes rather fancy that they will carry off the prizes," said Mr. Paget, with a smile. "Though I'm not sure that there ought not to be a rule to debar my boy from competing."

"Oh, don't rot, dad!" pleaded Spencer Percival.

"You've got a new bike, young Paget," said Johnny Bull. "So has Tubb. Yours is rather an old creak, isn't it, Wingate?"

"Well, 'tain't new," admitted the captain's minor. "But it's a good machine, really."

"You can have mine for the race if you like, kid," Wharton said. "With

the saddle well down it would fit you all serene."

"Oh, thanks, no end, Wharton! You are a brick!"

Mr. Paget smiled upon Wharton. He read the true good nature behind that offer. Wharton had not thought of showing off—only of giving Wingate, whom all the five liked, a fair chance.

But George Tubb frowned—a majestic frown—the frown of one having high authority.

"I don't know that we're going to allow that," he said. "It's a bit off, really. I'd thought of a rule that every chap shall use his own bike. That's fair enough, seems to me."

"Well, of course, you kids will make your own rules," answered Wharton.

"I should say so!" snorted Tubb, who was not entirely pleased by the accession of the Removites to the party.

Mr. Paget said nothing. He did not even look at Tubb. But Percival Spencer somehow had an idea that Tubb had gone down in his father's esteem; and he was not far wrong.

But Tubb had no intention of being greedy or unfair. He only wanted his own way; and it chanced that Wingate minor was just about the biggest obstacle to Tubb's getting his own way in the Third—a fact which rendered him less keen on Wingate minor than he might otherwise have been.

"I don't mind, really," said Jack Wingate. "It's a matter of what rules we make, I suppose. But it's jolly decent of you, Wharton!"

"Shall you have the Second-Formers in?" asked Frank Nugent.

"What? So that your blessed minor can get a prize, p'r'aps?" roared Tubb.

Frank flushed. He had not even thought of his minor. The question had been prompted by his desire to turn the conversation from what seemed rather a thorny subject.

"No," he replied. And then, with a touch of sarcasm, he added: "I was only trying to get Sammy Bunter a chance."

"That fat young pig!" growled Tubb, who was not very quick at discerning sarcasm.

"We can't have them," said Paget. "It would be rotten if any of them bagged a prize, you know."

Everybody laughed at that ingenuous remark except Tubb, who considered it quite the most reasonable thing which had been said for some time.

Mr. Paget caught a train from Courtfield without going back to Greyfriars. The Famous Five rode back. Paget and Tubb and Wingate minor wished they could have ridden with them. They would have challenged them to race, and so have got practice for the coming event. But they had not their bikes.

At the railway-station they ran across Skinner and Stott again.

Stott looked at them, then looked away, then looked at them once more.

"I've a good mind to see if I could tap young Paget for a quid or two, Skinney," he said irresolutely. "That must have been his pater with him, and he looked as if he had plenty of oof. Sure to have tipped the little beast, y'know."

"No harm in trying," answered Skinner, with his thin-lipped smile that was more than half a sneer.

Skinner knew that if Paget shelled out to Stott the money lent would be a dead loss to the fag, for Stott was not in the least likely to pay back. But that did not matter to Skinner. It would not have bothered him even had he been in Stott's place, for Skinner never paid back unless he had to.

"I—I—look here, Skinney, I've got to

raise the wind somehow!" muttered Stott.

"Sure thing, dear boy," replied Skinner.

"You take it jolly easily!" Stott said resentfully.

"Well, it isn't exactly my funeral, you know, old top!"

"You led me into this mess!"

"That's the way! Put it all on me! There ain't many fellows who would have taken as much trouble as I have to get you out of it—I know that!"

"I don't see that you've done a thing, Skinney!"

"I talked to Solly Lazarus for you, anyway, you ungrateful rotter!"

"That didn't do any good. Solly bars you even more than he does me. I ought to have tackled him myself."

"Only you hadn't the pluck!" sneered Skinner.

"I've sold my bike. I'd pawn anything I'd got, only I've nothing worth pawning. I—"

"If I were you I'd keep off the pawnin' lay, Stott," said Skinner. "You've done too much of that already."

Stott's face went pale at that.

William Stott had got himself into quite a nasty mess. He spoke truly enough when he said that Skinner had led him into it at the outset; Stott generally did get into trouble that way. But he had not been forced to bet with Jerry Hawke; and, when Hawke had pressed for his winnings, Stott would have done better to defy him to do his worst than to have taken the course he did take.

He had sold his bike, and he had pawned someone else's property—a valuable tie-pin belonging to Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of the Remove. It was with a notion of getting back that tie-pin on the deferred payment system that Skinner and Stott had gone to the shop of Lazarus, the Courtfield pawnbroker, that afternoon.

Mr. Lazarus had taken the pin in pledge; but it was his hopeful son, Solly, a shining light of Courtfield Council School, whom the precious pair had seen, Solly's father being out.

Solly himself was on the best of terms with some of the Remove; but he did not count Skinner and Stott among his Greyfriars friends. He told them plainly that he would not have accepted the pin without inquiring whose it was—a formality which his "old man"—thus reverently Solly referred to his worthy sire—had omitted. He made it clear that he doubted Stott's ownership; and he sniffed derisively at the offer of half the sum due down and half in a fortnight.

"I'll try him!" said Stott desperately.

He drew Paget—somewhat unwillingly—aside from his chums.

"I say, kid," he said, "can you lend me a couple of quid?"

Paget stared.

"No, I can't, Stott!" he answered, trying to shake off the older fellow's grasp on his arm.

"You mean you won't, I suppose?"

"Well, I wouldn't, then. But I can't, anyway—I haven't got it."

"Didn't your pater tip you?" snarled Stott.

"What's that to you? If he did I'm not going to hand over the cash to you, so don't you think it!"

"I say, Paget—"

"There's the train, Stott. And I won't—so there! I can't, and I won't!"

Stott saw that it was hopeless, and let him go.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Quarrel!

"MY hat!"

"I say, your pater is a sport, Paget!"

"What a knock-out of a camera! And films and things as well!"

"I don't care so much about the camera, but look at that topping bat!"

The Third Form-room fairly buzzed as the prizes for the cycle race, that had suddenly become an impending event, instead of a mere subject of discussion, were shown.

Tubb took instant exception to Simpson's remark about the bat.

"You leave that bat alone, young Simpson!" he growled. "That bat's no blessed bizney of yours."

"As much as it is yours, anyway, Tubby!"

"Why, I was there when it was bought, fathead! I chose it, you silly chump!"

"Sure, an' Tubby's dead certain he's goin' to win it too," said O'Rourke, with his cheery Irish grin.

"You shut up, Paddy from Cork! Matter of fact, I don't expect to win the bat, because it's second prize. But—"

"He thinks he's sure to win the first!" gibed Lunn.

Tubb glared at him.

"Don't argue," said Paget pacifically. "Let's have a meeting, and settle the rules for the race."

"Hear, hear! A meeting!"

Tubb frowned around him.

"We don't want a crowd like this for a meeting," he said. "Two or three of us will be enough. In fact, I can't see but what Paget and I could settle all that wants settling."

"Not likely!" said Lunn.

"It's for the whole giddy Form, not just for two!" howled Bolter.

"Paget's pater didn't reckon that Tubb was to boss everything, I'm sure," said Bolsover minor.

"And where do I come in?" asked Jack Wingate.

"With the rest of us," said Simpson firmly. "There ain't going to be any meeting at all if we're not all in it. This is a Form bizney."

"Hear, hear!"

Tubb had to give in; but he did it with a very ill grace. Tubb felt rather sulky.

"I'm chairman of the meeting, anyway," he said.

There was no strong opposition to that. Tubb was usually chairman of Third Form meetings.

He signified his seizure of the exalted post on this occasion by taking his seat on the master's desk.

"Now you kids can say what you've got to say, and when you've said it all, I'll tell you how things are going to be," he announced majestically.

"There's one thing first. Is this to be for the Third Form only?" asked Paget.

"Of course it is!" howled Tubb.

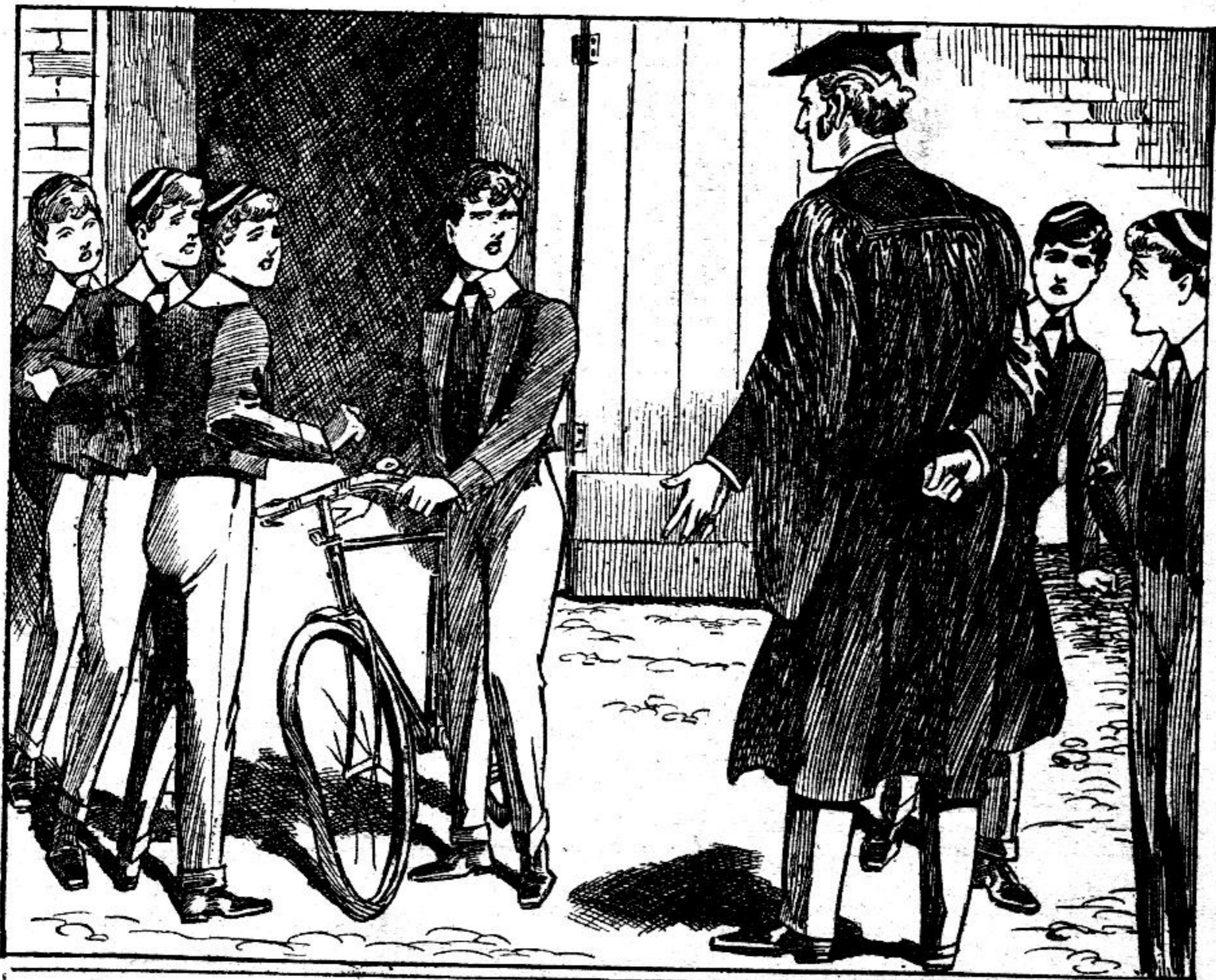
"Well, I think so. But I fancy my pater thought it would be only sporting if we let the Second Form kids in. They're younger than us, and there wouldn't be much risk."

"He didn't say so," growled Tubb.

"I believe he did think so, though," Jack Wingate said. "I agree with Paget. It might be put to the meeting, anyway."

"You're shoving yourself forward too much, young Wingate," said Tubb severely. "It's rather a way you've got."

"Lucky way for the Third, I reckon," answered Wingate minor airily. "We



"How came your bicycle in such a state, Tubb?" asked Dr. Loeke. Tubb was silent, but the accusing glance he gave Wingate minor was more eloquent than many words. (See Chapter 7.)

shouldn't have had these prizes if it hadn't been for that."

"That's all very well, but—"

"Young Nugent can scoot along on his jigger," said Simpson. "And there's Gatty and Myers and Spring. I don't say that we can't lick the kids, but there's no use in taking chances about it."

"Let's put it to the meeting," suggested Lunn.

"Hands up anybody who's silly ass enough to want the Second Form infants mucking up our race!" said Tubb, with a scowl.

Jack Wingate put up his hand defiantly, and Paget put up his doubtfully. But no other hand was raised.

"Hands up those who've got sense enough to object," said Tubb.

It appeared that the rest of the Form was conspicuous for at least that amount of sense.

"There you are, you two silly chumps!" said Tubb. "Now I should think you'll know another time that I know best."

"Rats!" retorted Jack Wingate.

"All right, young Wingate! You'll get 'rats' before you're much older," Tubb said darkly.

Wingate minor did not seem impressed by the threat.

"Now; the question is whether there's to be an entrance fee," Tubb announced.

That notion was entirely his own, and he was rather proud of it.

"What for?" asked Bolsover minor.

"I'll put it to the meeting," said Tubb, scowling.

The proposition was put to the meeting, which turned it down by a majority of ever so many to one—Tubb himself.

Tubb scowled.

"All right!" he said ill-temperedly. "I was going to suggest that the entrance fees should be spent on a feed after the race. Now I sha'n't."

"Just as well not, as there aren't to be any," said Bolsover minor.

"Besides, what's the use? We couldn't have it higher than sixpence, and sixpenn'orth of grub ain't anything. I could wolf five-bobs' worth myself, easy," said Bolter.

"But you wouldn't be in it. It would only be for the winners, and you haven't a dog's chance of winning," answered Tubb, in high scorn.

At that there was an outcry that surprised the masterful Tubb. It was plain to the Form generally that Tubb had tried to wangle them out of entrance fees in order to provide a feed for himself and two others—two of his pals, no doubt. For everyone knew that Tubb quite expected to romp home first.

The storm he had raised only made Tubb feel sorer and more dissatisfied. But he thought it prudent to pass on to the next debatable point at once.

"All right!" he snorted. "I don't care about the giddy entrance fees. But I've got something to say about young Wingate's cheeky idea you bet! It's

only because Wharton has offered to lend him his biko, that's all."

"Well, and what's wrong with that?" asked Bolsover minor. "Jolly decent of Wharton, I call it. But he always is decent. I'd borrow my major's, only it would be too high for me, even with the saddle down, and I don't believe he'd lend me it, anyway."

"That's just it," growled Tubb. "Who else in this Form can borrow a jigger from a chap in a higher Form? Tell me that!"

Jack Wingate's eyes flashed, and he faced Tubb angrily.

"If you're trying to make out that I want to take an unfair advantage, Tubb, you—"

"I didn't say so. But if the cap fits you can jolly well wear it!"

"Come down off that desk, and I'll punch your head!"

Tubb jumped down at once.

But the rest, though at another time they might have appreciated the fight which seemed imminent, did not want it just then. They wanted to get on with the meeting. So they got between Tubb and his challenger; and, after some little trouble, Tubb was persuaded to take the chair again, and the question of whether "own bikes" should be one of the rules was put to the meeting.

It was not settled without argument. Though Tubb had undoubtedly been right when he said that there was little

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Stott's Trouble!

"WELL?" Herbert Vernon-Smith snapped that one word at Stott in a manner that made of it not only a question but one which it was plain he expected Stott to find some difficulty in answering.

"I—I can't find it, Smithy," replied Stott meekly and dolefully.

"Oh, that be hanged for a tale! You don't need to find it—you know dashed well where it is, you rotter!"

"If I did I should hand it over to you," replied Stott, licking his dry lips nervously.

"No doubt you would—if you could!" the Bounder said sardonically.

"But if I knew where it was I could, of course."

"It isn't so much a matter of course, Stott. You're not talkin' to a green head, y'know. I'm up to a thing or two myself, an' I could easily imagine circumstances in which you might know where my pin was an' yet not be able to hand it over to me!"

"You may—I can't!" answered Stott sulkily.

"Don't lie! Suppose it were bein'—shall we say taken care of for you by—shall we say a respectable Courtfield tradesman? Needn't be at Courtfield—might be Lantham, or anywhere almost. Couldn't be Rylcombe, because you haven't a relative there."

"I haven't a relative who's a tradesman anywhere!" Stott returned.

"Not an uncle, Stott? Not a single, solitary uncle?" inquired the Bounder mockingly.

He was playing with Stott as a cat plays with a mouse. There were times when a certain strain of cruelty seemed to be uppermost in the curiously variegated character of Herbert Vernon-Smith; and that strain was apt to assert itself when he had dealings with Stott and Skinner.

And Stott knew that the Bounder was playing with him, and hated the Bounder for it in his weak, sulky way. But he took care not to show his hate.

"You're talking in riddles, Smithy," he said.

"My good fellow, don't try that on with me! I know a bit too much about you, an' I happen to know the company you've been keepin' lately rather well—rather better than was well for me, I may say. When a Greyfriars chap gets into Mr. Jerry Hawke's clutches—"

"Who said I'd got into Hawke's clutches?"

"I say so, an' it isn't any use your botherin' to deny it, because I sha'n't believe you. Why did you sell your bike?"

"My bike was my property, I suppose?" snarled Stott.

"Yes. But my tie-pin wasn't your property—that's the point. I was leadin' up to!"

Stott shuffled his feet, and paused in indecision before replying.

Then he said huskily: "You can't prove that I ever touched your pin!"

"Why, you've admitted it!" "No one but you has heard me admit it. An' what proof have you except what Bunter says? An' everyone knows what that fat crawler is!"

"Yaas, Bunter is a little in that line," said the Bounder. "But I believe him this time. I don't want to be rough on you, Stott. You're goin' the right way to work to get hoofed out of Greyfriars, but I haven't any desire to be the instrument of exit. I mean to have that pin back, though, not so much on moral

grounds as because it was a present from my governor. I'll give you from now till to-morrow—no, we'll say Friday evening—to get it, an' if it's in my hands before bed-time on Friday evening we'll say no more about it. That's my ultimatum."

"But, Smithy—" "No use sayin' another word, Stott!" And the Bounder turned back to his book.

Stott was desperate. "But I say, Smithy—"

"Redwing will be here in a moment, an' you won't be able to maintain your defence—that only those two known liars, Bunter an' Vernon-Smith, can testify against you."

The Bounder's cynical tone ought to have told the miserable Stott that further pleading was hopeless. But he persisted.

"If you'd lend me a fiver, Smithy!" he blurted out.

"What!" "Lend me a fiver," faltered Stott.

"An' what for?"

"To—to—oh, to get the pin back—I mean, to clear me with Hawke!"

"Do you mean to tell me that you've handed my tie-pin—a present from my pater—over to that scoundrel as security for your silly debt, you sweep?"

"Nunno! It's with—there, I may as well make a clean breast of it! It's with Lazarus at Courtfield."

"That's not quite so bad as its bein' in Jerry Hawke's possession. But I certainly will not lend you the cash to redeem it."

"Then—then I sha'n't be able to get it back!" burred Stott.

"That's your funeral. You know what will happen to you if you don't."

"I—I—you—you—you'd never get me sacked, Smithy!"

"Wouldn't I, by gad! You're wrong there, Stott."

And the Bounder looked so grim and merciless that Stott fairly shivered.

Just then Tom Redwing, who shared Vernon-Smith's study, came in. He did no more than glance at Stott, but Stott went at once. Mean and malicious, in his dull way, Stott could not even imagine Redwing, whom he had helped to persecute, doing him a good turn. Yet that Redwing was capable of that was shown the moment the door closed upon the black sheep.

"That fellow looks frightfully down in the mouth, Smithy," said Tom Redwing.

"He looks as he feels, dear boy," replied the Bounder lightly.

"It's no affair of mine, of course, and I don't want to butt in; but what have you got up against him?"

"That, most worthy comrade, would be tellin'," answered the Bounder.

"Well, I know that if it comes to the pinch you won't be really rough on him," Redwing said.

"An' that," returned the Bounder sardonically, "is a dashed sight more than I know!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Stott Finds a Helper!

THE relations between Stott and Sidney James Snoop had often been strained of late. Neither Skinner nor Stott had any sympathy with Snoop's efforts to go straight, and they always chortled when he had a lapse from the straight path, while between whiles they made his progress along it as difficult as possible.

And it was hard enough for Snoop, anyway. He lacked courage and pride and resolution. His sense of honour had been blunted by his long practice of shady tac-

chance of anyone else being able to borrow a bike for the race from any member of higher Forms, it was pointed out by O'Rourke that several of the Second had quite good jiggers, and Bolter wanted a rule made that the Second should be constrained to lend any machine required, whether they liked it or not.

"And bags young Nugent's myself!" he added.

"Young Nugent can lick you!" growled Tubb.

In an ordinary way, the somewhat piratical proposition would have appealed strongly to Tubb, who was nothing if not high-handed. But Wingate minor stood in the way of its favourable receipt by him.

"What's that matter?" answered Bolter. "He may be able to lick me, but he can't lick the Form, I suppose? I'd put Tubb on to him if he kicked!"

"Rats!" snorted Tubb. "I wouldn't lift my little finger to get you young Nugent's bike, Bolter! I don't agree with borrowing. Hands up, those who think the same as I do!"

The vote gave Tubb a victory. It did not mollify him, however. Jack Wingate took the decision of the Form decently enough. He would have liked the use of Wharton's bike; but he did not despair of winning on his own.

The length and route of the race were settled. It was to be roughly ten miles, past Highcliffe and round towards Courtfield, and then back, avoiding the town. And it was to take place on the Saturday of that week.

When the meeting was over Wingate minor walked up to Tubb.

"If you want your beastly tanner, here it is!" said Tubb crossly.

"I don't know that I'm in any hurry for it, but I may as well take it," replied the other youngster.

"And if you still want to punch my head, punch it, that's all!"

"Oh, don't row, old chap!" pleaded Paget.

Jack Wingate looked at Tubb scornfully.

"I was going to say that we might shake hands and stop all this rot," he said. "But if you're on for fighting, I'm not going to dodge you, Tubb!"

"Right-ho! I'll lick you in the race, and after it's over I'll give you a good hiding!" Tubb snorted. "You go and crawl up to Paget's pater—crawling up, that's what it was, and you can't deny it! And then you crawl up to Wharton, and try to score over other chaps by borrowing his bike! And then you think you can boss everything, and—"

"Oh, dry up, do!" exclaimed Wingate minor. "If you were in your right senses you'd see you were talking rot. But I'll fight you all serene after the race is over, and I'm not so giddy sure that you'll lick me in that, either!"

He walked away, as angry now as Tubb.

"What did you want to squabble with him for, old fellow?" asked Paget. "Wingate's all right, and if it hadn't been for him we'd never have had the prizes."

"That's no reason why the young bounder should think he's going to bag them all!" snarled Tubb.

Which was a highly illogical and absurd speech, even for Master George Tubb, self-elected autocrat of the Greyfriars Third!

tics, and he failed at times because he really did not see things in the same light as Wharton or Squiff or Ogilvy, or any of the rest to whom it came naturally to go straight, would have seen them.

But, in spite of occasional backslidings, Snoop had become a far more decent fellow than the Remove had thought it possible he should. And in no way was this more marked than in his lessened selfishness. He was capable of giving others a helping hand, remembering what a helping-hand had meant to him in his extremity.

Stott, though he saw as much of Snoop as anyone—sharing a study with him and Skinner—had not tumbled to this. Stott was rather a dull fellow at best.

It was sheer desperation—combined with the chance absence of Skinner when he returned to his study—that induced him to ask Snoop for aid.

Snoop was at work on an imposition, and he looked up with a frown when Stott spoke to him, which was not altogether surprising, as it was some three days since they had last exchanged civil words.

"I say, Snoopey!"

"Well?"

"I'm in no end of a beastly hole."

"No bizney of mine, is it? Better ask Skinner to help you out."

"He can't. And I ain't so sure he would if he could."

"You can hardly expect me to," said Snoop, bending to his work again.

"Oh, I don't know! We used to be pretty good pals."

"Did we? I can't remember you ever being what I should call a good pal, Stott, though I dare say you were as much that as I was."

"But this is really serious! I shall get the kick if no one will help me."

Snoop looked up again, and in his eyes there was a gleam that was far from being pleasant, as he said:

"Skinner in it, too?"

"I do believe you'd be pleased if we both got slung out!" said Stott, in accents of reproach.

"I shouldn't be sorry. Life in this study hasn't been very jolly for me since—since—"

"Since you reformed?" put in Stott.

"None of your rotten sneers!" retorted Snoop, with a flash of spirit.

"I didn't mean it for a sneer," replied Stott humbly. "Honest Injun, I didn't! I only wish someone would give me a helping hand."

"That's only because you've got yourself into a giddy mess and don't know how to wriggle out," Snoop said shrewdly.

But sympathy stirred within him as he looked at Stott's drawn and haggard face. Plainly something really serious was wrong.

"It's not! Do you suppose you're the only fellow who—who—well, then, who ever saw that he was on the wrong track and wanted to get out of it? That sounds like cant, but I mean it!"

And for the moment Stott really did mean it. He was fed up with Harold Skinner and Jerry Hawke, with "also rans," and banker, with all the dingy blackguardism that he and Skinner called "seeing life."

"What's the row? I don't promise to help you, but I promise that I won't let on to anyone," said Snoop.

Stott made a clean breast of his trouble. Snoop, in his day, had done many things not much better than the pawning of Smithy's tie-pin, and he did not look too shocked. But he did look grave.

"You'd better not count on Smithy's showing you any mercy," he said. "I don't a bit believe he will."

"If I could have counted on that I wouldn't have told you!" growled Stott.

Snoop let that pass. "It's five quid you need, then?" he said. "I'm a fool, I know, for I don't suppose I'll ever see it back—"

"You will, Snoopey! On my honour, I'll pay you before the end of the term!" Stott rejoined eagerly.

Snoop was not impressed by the security offered. Stott's honour was certainly not worth fifty shillings, which was the utmost Snoop could manage for him.

The announcement of the limitation caused Stott's face to fall.

"It's jolly decent of you, Snoopey," he said, half grudgingly. "But I don't know where on earth I'm to raise the other half."

Snoop thought it over for a moment. "Ask Wharton," he said. "I fancy he's in funds!"

"Wharton? Why, he wouldn't lend me a bob if it were to save my life—I know he wouldn't!" replied Stott dismally.

That was wrong, and Snoop knew it. But he also knew that Wharton's chums would oppose strongly any loan to Stott, and Wharton did sometimes listen to the prudent counsels of his chums.

A visit to Study No. 1 by Stott would arouse their suspicions at once. So might a visit from Snoop; but that was not so certain, and there would not be quite the same resistance on the part of Bob Cherry and the others to aid given Snoop.

"I don't half like it, Stott," he said. "But I'll see Wharton myself. If you'll wait here I'll see him now."

"You are a pal, after all, Snoopey!" exclaimed the relieved Stott.

Snoop sniffed as he went out. He had no belief in the depth of Stott's gratitude. It would last till about the time when he handled the money; anyway, it would certainly have faded away before the money was repaid.

Only Frank Nugent was with Wharton, and he cleared out obligingly when Snoop said he had private business with Harry.

"What I'm going to ask you isn't exactly for myself, Wharton," said Snoop.

"Oh! For whom is it, then?"

"For a pal," replied Snoop.

He did not regard Stott quite as a pal. But at least he was treating him as one, and to call him one seemed the only possible way of justifying the request without appearing Pharisaical.

"I'd better know who," Harry Wharton said quietly.

"It's Stott. I'm lending him fifty bob. He wants as much more to get him out of a nasty scrape."

"Is it much good trying to get Stott out of scrapes, Snoop, do you think?" asked Wharton incisively.

"I don't know that it is. But I got help myself when it must have seemed to the chaps who gave it that it wasn't much good, and—well, there you are, Wharton! I wouldn't trust every fellow here to understand what I mean, but I think you will."

And Wharton did. Snoop felt it up to him to do for another what had been done for him. It was a most decided sign of grace in Snoop.

"Am I to know what the mess is?" asked the skipper of the Remove.

"I—I'd rather you didn't ask, Wharton," replied Snoop.

"Right-ho! I won't!" Wharton said. "You shall have the cash."

He had never seen Snoop smile so brightly as he smiled then. But it was not Wharton's consent so much as Wharton's confidence in him that caused the beaming smile.

"Stott may not pay you. You know

what Stott is. But if he doesn't, I will!" said Snoop.

"Hanged if you shall, old fellow! If he doesn't pay me he won't you. There's no reason why you should be a loser of the whole sum."

"I'd rather have it so, Wharton. If I'd had a fiver of my own I wouldn't have come to you at all."

"Well, we'll see," said Wharton, not in the least meaning to give way when the time came.

Snoop hurried off. Stott was pacing the study in evident impatience as he went in.

"I shall only just have time," he said. "It's to-night the Bouncer insists on having it back, you know. I shall have to scoot over to Courtfield and back for all I'm blessed well worth."

He seized the notes Snoop offered him, and bolted, leaving thanks till later. He did not even give time for Snoop to offer him a loan of his bike, for it was not until he reached the bike-shed that he remembered he no longer had a machine of his own.

Near the door stood an almost new bike, evidently in first-class going order. Stott ran it out. He did not know whose it was, and he did not care.

In fact, that machine was the cherished bike of Tubb, autocrat of the Third Form, and but for the fact that Tubb was hard at work on an imposition its disappearance would not have passed unnoticed for as long as ten minutes. But it chanced, through that, that Tubb had no opportunity of visiting the bike-shed that evening.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Friday Evening and Saturday Morning!

STOTT came away from the establishment of Mr. Lazarus with a gibe from Solly ringing in his ears, and making him furious.

Solly Lazarus was very shrewd, and he had no hesitation about speaking plainly when he had to do with such fellows as Skinner and Stott.

He ought not to have said what he did. It was not in the way of business to make such remarks as he made. His father had accepted the tie-pin as a pledge, and now Stott came to redeem it. Mr. Lazarus was out, and Solly was keeping shop, as he had been on the Wednesday afternoon when Skinner, on Stott's behalf, had wasted eloquence upon him.

And yet, after all, it was not much Solly said. Only:

"So you ain't goin' to get thacked thith time, Thott?"

It got Stott on the raw, for he was sure that Solly knew he had had no right with that pin.

He brooded upon the gibe as he pedalled back at his fastest pace, and it may have been in part his preoccupation which led to the catastrophe which occurred.

Slamming round a corner at a fifteen-mile-an-hour gait, and on his wrong side, he found himself within two yards of a big motor-car.

"Ow!" yelled Stott.

What happened next he hardly knew. It was scarcely presence of mind that enabled him to fall clear of the car, while the bike fell right in its path. That was accident, a lucky accident for Stott, though he hardly felt thankful for his narrow escape at the moment.

The car pulled up in a very short space, and both the chauffeur and the gentleman he was driving hurried to Stott's help.

"Hurt, my boy?" asked the gentleman kindly.

"It was your own fault, you know," said the chauffeur. "You came hustlin' round that corner at no end of a pace an' on your wrong side of the road."

Stott replied to the chauffeur's charge, not to the kindly inquiry.

"You can't get out of it that way!" he snarled. "You ran me down. You were going at about fifty miles an hour! And you'll jolly well have to pay for this bike. It's ruined!"

There was no doubt about that last statement. Tubb's beloved bike was no more than a tangled mass of scrapiron now.

But Stott's attitude was a very foolish one. It put up the back of the car-owner at once.

"I decline to accept any responsibility whatever," he said stiffly. "It is quite untrue that the pace of my car was in the least excessive, and the accident could never have happened had you observed the rule of the road."

"I—I— You'll have to pay!" said Stott, in wild alarm. "I can't!"

"I shall certainly not pay, since you take that tone. Here is my card. You can communicate with your father or guardian, and see whether he cares to put the law in motion in a manner that can only mean expense, for which he will never recoup himself. You might give me your name. I see that you are a Greyfriars boy."

Stott hesitated. He had borrowed that machine without asking its owner's permission. Now he had smashed it up completely, and there seemed no chance of getting it replaced. If he gave his own name— But the danger of doing that was evident to him at once. He did not see as clearly as he might have done the danger of giving a name not his own.

So he gave the first that came into his head, and that happened to be Wingate minor's. He had seen Jack Wingate going into the bike-shed just after he came out, and no doubt it was to this fact that the choice of name was due. His mind was so confused that he might have had difficulty in giving his own name; but that of the Third-Former seemed to leap into it.

"Wingate—John. Wingate—Wingate minor," he said dully.

The gentleman—Sir James Rosser, Bart., was the name on his card—gave him a keen glance.

"I think I have met your brother," he said. "In fact, I am sure I have. He played in a visiting cricket team at my place last August, and bowled me for a duck. You are not at all like him."

"Nunno!" gasped Stott.

This was getting warmer than he fancied. He was greatly relieved when Sir James got into the car again, and he and his chauffeur, who had regarded Stott in a most hostile manner throughout, departed.

The miserable Removite picked up the remnants of Tubb's bike, and threw them over the nearest hedge. Then he looked at his watch, gave a gasp of dismay, and ran for the gates as he had hardly ever run before in all his life.

He would have been locked out but for the unpunctuality of Gosling, the porter. As it was, he sneaked past unseen, and arrived in his study pale and panting.

"Hallo! What have you been after?" asked Skinner.

"Been to Courtfield," answered Stott.

"No go, eh? You can't melt the heart of a dashed pawnbroker."

"I've got the thing!" snarled Stott.

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Snoop looked up and smiled. He was glad. It had not often chanced to Sidney James Snoop to do anyone a really good turn, and the glow of pleasure he felt at this one surprised him. It surprised him the more because at heart he had no liking for Stott. But he did not want the fellow sacked.

Stott did not return the smile. Any gratitude he may have felt towards Snoop was swallowed up completely by his selfish anxiety.

"Manage to sneak it while Lazarus wasn't lookin'?" giped Skinner. "No, you couldn't do that. The pledges are put at the back, aren't they? An' you wouldn't have a chance to do it while Solly was about, anyway. He's too keen."

"Shut up!" snapped Stott.

"Oh, never mind about Snoopey! He knows we're not plaster saints, an' he ain't really interested in us these days, since he's turned pi."

"Shut up!" howled Stott.

It was exasperating, for Skinner did not know that Snoop was in the secret. He seemed to think that now Stott had recovered the tie-pin nothing mattered. But Stott felt that keeping the affair absolutely dark mattered a great deal. He wished he had not told Skinner that he had been at Courtfield.

"Look here, my pippin! After all I've done for you—"

"All you've done for me?" cried Stott. "I like that, dashed if I don't! Why, you've come blessed near doin' for me at Greyfriars altogether. That's how much I have to thank you for, you sneerin' cad!"

"Say that again!" hissed Skinner, his face livid.

"Sneerin' cad! Call yourself a pal! Why, you'd give away your best chum, or sell him for twopence-ha'penny!"

"Take that!"

Skinner's hand fell across Stott's cheek.

Stott had never been a great fighting man; but the hot blood rushed to his head at that. He hit out hard, and a

wild and whirling conflict began on the instant.

Stamp—stamp—stamp! Biff—biff—biff!

They fought each other all round the study, while Snoop took refuge on the table, whence he surveyed the combat with some satisfaction, for he had endured a good deal at the hands of both these fellows, and to see them hurting one another was in no wise unpleasant to him.

And they did hurt one another considerably. Their punching made up in venom for what it lacked in science; and when they fell and rolled over one another on the carpet, it was not only punching. Both used elbows, and knees, and boots freely.

"Ow! You're — throttlin' — me!" gasped Skinner.

"Wow! Take your beastly knee out of my stomach!" panted Stott.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" spoke the voice of Bob Cherry, from the doorway.

"What's this little entertainment, Snoop? If you're referee you oughtn't to allow either choking or kicking, you know."

"I'm not—I'm only keeping out of the way," answered Snoop.

"Go it, you cripples!" cried Johnny Bull, from behind Bob.

Others appeared. Squiff and Delarey, Fisher T. Fish and William George Bunter, Bulstrode and Hazeldene, Ogilvy and Russell, Peter Todd and Tom Brown. They barged each other for a sight of the fray; but none of them seemed in the least disposed to intervene.

Then Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, Inky, and the Bounder came up.

"I say, stop that! You can't fight like that!" cried Harry, scandalised.

"Don't trouble, old bean!" said the Bounder. "If it was almost anyone else I should say that eye-gouging and ear-biting were dead off. But as it's Skinner and Stott, what's the odds?"

The combatants had not gone quite as far as the sardonic Bounder suggested. But they had gone quite far enough—so Harry Wharton thought. And so thought others when Harry had given them a lead. Squiff, and Bob, and Ogilvy helped him to tear the two apart and stand them upon their feet.

They stood glaring at one another, their faces dirty and hot, their collars and ties loose, their clothes covered with dust.

"This cad—"

"This rotter—"

Bob Cherry broke in upon their simultaneous attempts at explanation.

"There! There!" said Bob soothingly.

"No need to begin all that over again. Slanging comes before a fight; after it, chaps shake hands."

But Skinner and Stott had no notion of shaking hands. They would make it all up within a day or two, no doubt; but they hated each other mortally at that moment.

No one—not even Bob—cared whether they were reconciled or not, and within three minutes the crowd had faded away, and the precious pair were attending to their injuries in the bath-room.

It was after prep that Stott took the tie-pin to Vernon-Smith, whom he found alone in his study.

"Did you have to fight Skinner to get it?" asked the Bounder, with a grin.

"No," growled Stott.

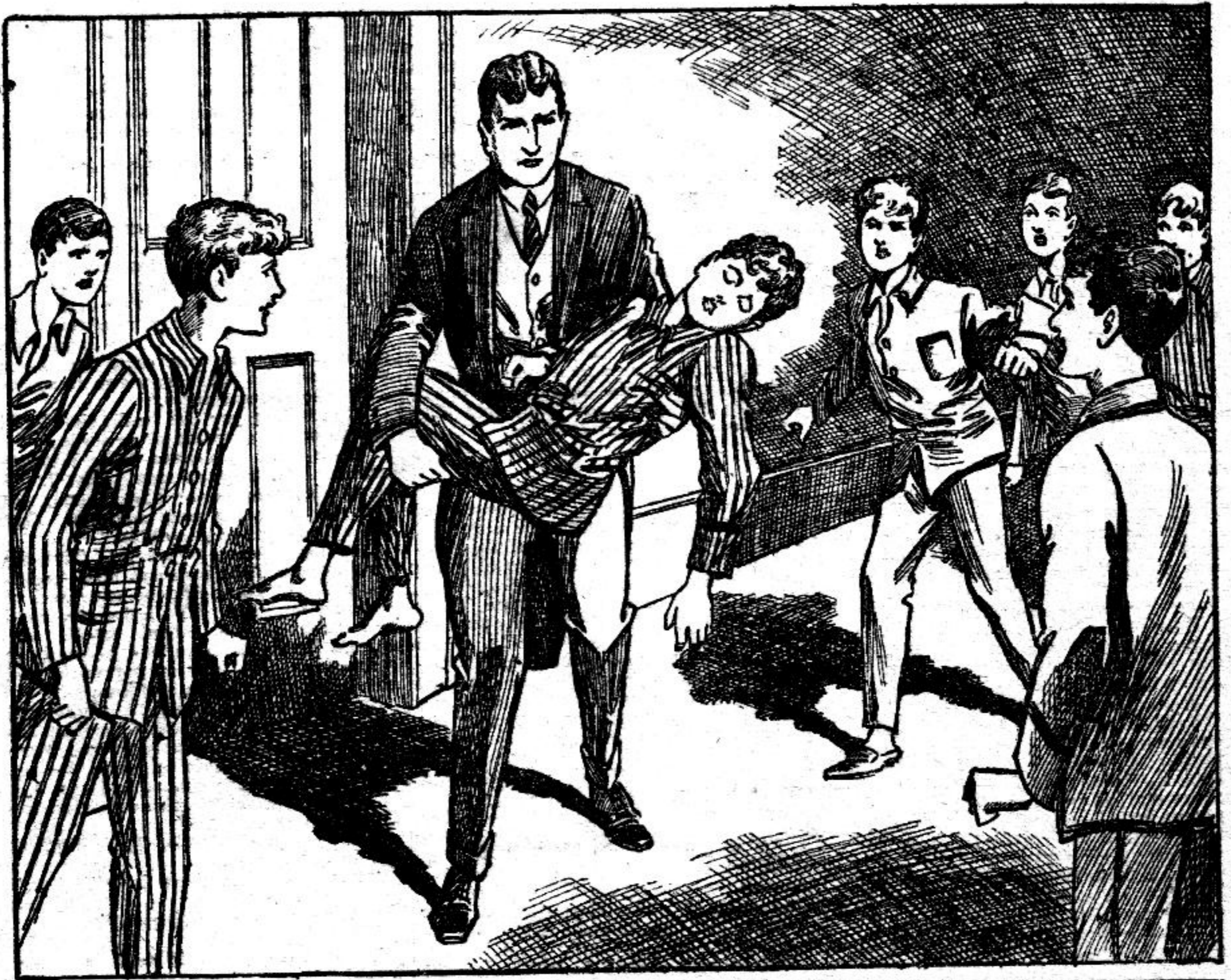
"Oh, that was purely for pleasure, eh? Well, I'm not goin' to ask you any more questions about how you got it back, Stott. I only hope that you haven't sponged on any pal of mine for the cash; I shouldn't like that, an' if

LIGHTING-UP TIME FOR THIS WEEK.



JULY.

19th Monday	- - -	9.35 p.m.
20th Tuesday	- - -	9.34 "
21st Wednesday	- - -	9.32 "
22nd Thursday	- - -	9.31 "
23rd Friday	- - -	9.30 "
24th Saturday	- - -	9.28 "
25th Sunday	- - -	9.27 "



The Captain of Greyfriars picked Wingate minor up in his arms, and his face was very stern as he gazed upon Tubb and Tubb's henchmen. (See Chapter 9.)

I find that you have I sha'n't be so easy with you next time."

"You mean Wharton, I suppose?" growled Stott. "He's the only pal of yours who would lend money to a chap he didn't like, to get him out of a row, I should say. But he wouldn't lend to me, an' I didn't ask him to."

With that he went.

He did not know whose machine he had smashed up, and he did not make any inquiry. It seemed the safest course to emulate Brer Rabbit—to "lie low an' say nuffin."

But before breakfast next morning he learned.

Tubb and Paget were up early, and went to the bike-shed to inspect their machines and give them the last finishing touches before the great race.

But Tubb's bike was not there! "My hat!" gasped Tubb. "Some beast has boned it! It stood near the door yesterday—see, here's the empty place! Someone's going to get it in the neck for this!"

"I don't believe it's been boned," replied Paget. "Some ass has hidden it for a lark, I fancy."

"I'll give him larks!" snarled Tubb ferociously.

Two or three more of the Third came along, and the news spread. In five minutes nearly all the Form had gathered, and sprinkling of early risers from other Forms swelled the crowd.

"What I want to know is who came

in here last night?" howled Tubb. "Who was the mean beast who came, behind my back, while I was doing an impot, and—"

"Tickled you under the chin?" put in Bob Cherry.

"No, Tubb wouldn't mind that," said Frank Nugent. "Kicked him—that's what he means."

"Dry up, you fellows!" said Wharton. "It's rough on the kid if anyone has taken his bike, with the race on to-day."

"I want to know who was in here last night—that's what I want to know!" roared Tubb.

"But that won't prove anything, you know, kid," remarked Squiff.

"Won't it, though? Anybody might have been in here without meddling with my bike; but my bike couldn't have been meddled with by anyone who wasn't in here," said Tubb.

"Which," said Frank Nugent, "is logic, though Tubb may not know it by that name."

"I was here," spoke up Wingate minor.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Barred by the Form!

TUBB turned upon him with tragic face and pointing, accusing finger.

"There you are!" he cried. "The chap who was jealous of my having a

new bike to ride in the race, while he'd only an old crock—the chap who tried to get the rules altered so that he could borrow Wharton's bike—the chap who quarrelled with me because I wouldn't have it—"

"Oh, don't tell lies!" struck in Wingate minor hotly. "I didn't try to get the rules altered, because there weren't any rules until we made them, and the quarrel was more your fault than it was mine! I came in here last night to put my left pedal in order—it works loose sometimes. I never touched your jigger, or thought of touching it."

"Didn't you say that if you couldn't have Wharton's machine you'd jolly well see that I didn't win the race through having a first-class new one to ride?" howled Tubb. "Didn't you say that in the dorm. last night? Why, there are a dozen fellows here who can prove you did, young Wingate!"

A hum of assent followed this speech, and it was plain to the older fellows present that Wingate minor was already an object of suspicion to some of his own Form.

"See here," spoke Wharton, "it makes no end of difference how a thing's said. From what I know of Wingate minor, that is hardly the sort of thing he would say, though he might have said something that might be twisted into that."

"That's just how it is, Wharton," said the fag eagerly. "All I said was that,

though Tubb might brag about his new jigger, and think he could win the race through doing me out of the chance of riding Wharton's, he shouldn't win if I could jolly well help it. I meant that—"

"There you are!" Tubb howled. "Just what I said you said! Oh, I daresay you can make something else out of it, with Wharton to back you up; but I know what the Form will think about you, you sweep!"

"I only meant that I hoped I could win, even if I had to ride my old bike," said Wingate minor, his face paling as he looked round him and saw the hostile countenances of those whom he counted his chums. "Surely you fellows believe that? You heard me, and you know I wasn't threatening to meddle with Tubb's bike."

"We didn't think you were at the time," said Paget slowly. "But—"

"Where's my bike? That's the question you've got to answer, young Wingate!" roared Tubb.

"It isn't, then. I don't know anything about your bike, young Tubb!"

The Famous Five believed Jack Wingate; but as they looked round they saw that his own Form did not believe him.

There was one exception, however.

Bolsover minor came forward, and thrust his right arm through Wingate's left. He did not speak a word, but his action told all that was needed.

Jack Wingate had one chum left in the Third, anyway. And he could not have had a better one. There was not in the whole Form a fellow who was held in more general esteem than the youngster whose early days had been passed in a London slum. Everybody in the Third knew that Bolsover minor was dead straight.

"We'll find it, you bet!" said Tubb. "And if it's damaged, you'd best look out for yourself, Wingate!"

"It will be no affair of mine, if it is damaged," replied Wingate minor stoutly.

"Oh, won't it, though? Whose will it be, then, you young cad?"

Wingate minor let Tubb's insult pass. He was angry himself, but he was not so angry that he failed to allow for Tubb's wrath. If anything had happened to Tubb's bike on the very day of the race, it really was rough on Tubb.

Though, of course, the race could be postponed. Jack Wingate thought of that, and he would have proposed it but that he saw how strong the feeling of the Form was against him, and was too proud to do anything that would look like trying to win the others round.

He took no part in the search which followed. Bob Cherry suggested that the bike might merely have been shifted, and was somewhere in the shed still. But that it most surely was not; and the breakfast-bell was ringing before any clue to what had happened to it was obtained.

Gosling came up at that moment.

"Which I 'appened to notice," he said, "that there was a rare crowd around this 'ere shed this mornin'. When I give you the key, Master Tubb, you said somethin' about cleanin' up of your bike for some race to-day. Is anything wrong with your machine, or any of t'others? 'Cause a village lad what's jest passed the lodge, ses as 'ow 'e saw a bike, all of a wreck-like, be'ind a 'edge 'arf a mile or so along the Courtfield road."

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Tubb.

"That's mine, I'll bet!"

And he rushed off, accompanied by

Paget, Lunn, Bolsover minor, Bolter,

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and three or four others. But Jack Wingate did not go.

Tubb and Paget did not come in to breakfast at all; but the rest arrived, with heated faces, when the meal was nearly half over, and word went quickly round that it was Tubb's bike that had been smashed up.

That was bad enough for young Wingate. But worse was to follow.

Stott, who had only heard of the discovery after he had got to the table, chanced to sit where he could see Wingate minor in his place among the Third. He heard Wharton and some of the rest discussing Tubb's accusation, and he watched Wingate minor pretty narrowly.

He did not want the kid to suffer. He was sorry now he had given his name. He had nothing against Wingate minor.

But this accusation did not arise out of what he had done, and Stott told himself that it was no affair of his.

It might be different if Sir James Rosser wrote to the Head. But the chances were all against that. Why should he write? The natural course for him to take was to await the arrival of a demand from the solicitors of the boy's people. And that demand would never come, so Stott ought to be safe.

But, if Sir James did write, Stott could not confess. Awkward questions were bound to be asked. The whole story of the borrowing of Smithy's tie-pin to pawn it might come out, for Skinner was not to be trusted, after the quarrel of the night before; and the giving of Wingate minor's name instead of his own would be a very serious offence in the Head's eyes—serious enough to lead to the sack, perhaps.

Would Wingate minor remember having seen him come from the bike-shed? It would be very difficult to convince anybody who had suspicions—Skinner or Vernon-Smith, say—of his innocence if the Third-Former told of that. All the Rembeve knew that he had sold his bike.

But it chanced that Jack Wingate did not know that, and he simply never thought about Stott in connection with the matter. If he had seen him—and it was quite possible that he had passed without seeing him, owing to some momentary distraction of his attention—he had forgotten all about it. To find out what had caused the wrecking of the bike was Tubb's business, not his.

Then the bolt fell. As the fellows were filing out from breakfast, Trotter, the page, came up behind him, and said that the Head wanted to see him at once. Wingate minor could not make it out. Surely the damage done to Tubb's machine had not been reported to Dr. Locke as early as this? And even if it had, and he was going to be accused, surely Tubb, and perhaps some of the others, would be sent for also?

But it might be that Tubb was already with the Head. Perhaps that was why he and Paget had not appeared at the breakfast-table. Wingate minor summoned up all his pride and pluck, and went.

The Head did not look very severe, he thought.

"I have had a letter from Sir James Rosser, who lives fifty miles or so from here," Dr. Locke said. "He tells me that you met with an accident on your bicycle, in which he was concerned, yesterday."

"Oh, no, sir!" replied Wingate minor.

But his heart sank even as he uttered the denial. It almost seemed as though there must be a plot against him. Would he ever be able to convince any one of his innocence, if some outsider, of

whom he had never even heard, was going to weigh down the scales of evidence against him like this?

"Really, Wingate minor! Sir James distinctly says that your machine was ruined by his car, though he makes it clear that the blame must be attached to you."

"My machine's all right, sir, and I wasn't out of gates yesterday," answered the fag doggedly.

"But you gave Sir James your name."

"There's some mistake, sir—I didn't!"

The Head began to look angry. He could not be blamed for thinking that the Third-Former was telling him lies.

"I shall have to look into this," he said, pursing his lips. "Sir James has made a very generous offer, but I am not sure that I shall allow you to accept it, in the circumstances."

"I'm telling you the truth, sir. I did not go out of gates at all yesterday."

"It is hard to believe that, Wingate minor. You may go now. No; I will come with you to the bicycle-shed, and you will show me your machine. That will at least prove something."

The fag's heart leaped up. Then he remembered Tubb's ruined bike, and it fell again. He would be convicted of that, he supposed. The letter the Head had received just about settled any chance he might have had of escaping conviction. But how in the world had this titled fellow come by his name?

In the bike-shed a crowd had gathered again. Tubb was showing the remains of his bike to all who cared to see. Tubb was slanging Wingate minor at the top of his voice, too; and the Head had heard him before he was aware that the Head was near.

"Is that your bicycle, Tubb?" asked Dr. Locke.

"Yes, sir, what there is left of it," replied Tubb.

"Where is yours, Wingate?"

"Here it is, sir."

"How came yours in such a state, Tubb?"

Tubb was silent, but the accusing glance he gave Wingate minor was more eloquent than many words.

"When did this happen?" asked the Head.

"Yesterday evening, as near as I can make out, sir," Tubb answered.

"Where were you at the time?"

"I wasn't out of the House after classes, sir; I'd an imposition to do."

"You did not have a collision with a motor-car on the Courtfield road?"

"No, sir. But it was along there I found this."

"Where were you between tea and preparation last night, Wingate minor?"

"Here, sir. My machine wanted some repairs, and I was seeing to them."

"Can anyone prove that you were here?"

"No, sir, because I was alone."

"Think before you answer me, boy! Did you take Tubb's machine, with or without permission, and meet with an accident, and give your name to Sir James Rosser?"

"No, sir, I didn't!"

A hum came from the crowd of Third-Formers. Wingate minor's denial did not convince them. They saw it all now. He was raggy with Tubb, and he had taken Tubb's jigger out, and had got it smashed up, out of spite. A rotten, mean trick, the Third called it.

"The matter cannot be allowed to rest here, Wingate minor. If you are guilty—and I fear there is small hope that you will prove to be otherwise—you will be most severely punished!"

"I'm not guilty, sir! I never touched Tubb's bike!"

The bell for morning classes rang, and

the Third trooped in, two of them with distinct voids where their breakfasts should have been. But Paget felt that more than Tubb did. Tubb was too full of indignation to remember often that he was empty of breakfast.

Classes were an ordeal for Wingate minor. Of all the Forms, only Bolsover minor had faith in him. The rest made it clear by their looks that they held him guilty. And when the end of what seemed an endless period came at last they surged round him and hissed and jeered, till, with one faithful chum aiding, he broke away and made for cover.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Friends in Need!

IT was along the Remove-passageway that Wingate minor, with Bolsover minor, sought refuge. Jack Wingate might have gone to his brother. Perhaps he ought to have gone. He hardly knew why he did not, unless it was that George had been bothered with so many scrapes of his in his early days at Greyfriars.

The two went to Study No. 1. Somehow, they were sure that Wharton would sympathise, and they had some faint hope that he and his chums might help.

On the way they met Bolsover major, who caught his minor by the arm roughly.

"What are you doing with that young cad?" he snapped.

"Who is the young cad? I can't see him," replied Bolsover minor.

"Young Wingate, of course. Look here, I don't like to see you about with a little sweep who—"

"I'm not about with any little sweep, and if you don't like it you can lump it!" answered the Third-Former. "I've never noticed that you troubled much about me at ordinary times."

"You can take care of yourself—"

"I can, Percy, and I'm jolly well going to!"

Bolsover major passed on, scowling.

"That shows what the Remove think about me," said Jack Wingate dolefully.

"Not a bit of it, old chap! It only shows what one silly ass who can't think thinks he thinks."

"I don't think I'll go to Wharton!"

"You're going, if I have to force you there!"

Wingate minor went.

The Famous Five had all gathered in Study No. 1, and they were discussing the case of Tubb's bike when the pair entered.

"We came here because we can't get fair play in our Form, and I think perhaps you fellows can advise us," said Bolsover minor.

"We'll try, anyway," said Harry Wharton genially. "Sit down, young Wingate, and have some of this toffee."

"The Third are silly asses," Bob Cherry said.

"The silly assfulness of the degraded and ludicrous Third is terrific," remarked Inky.

"Buck up, kid!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You didn't do it, of course—we all know that," said Frank Nugent.

"Apart from the fact that you wouldn't do such a dirty trick, no one but a lunatic would have thrown himself in front of a motor-car to muck up another chap's bike, however spiteful he felt."

That was a new notion to Bolsover minor, and he brightened up under its influence. As for Wingate minor, it hardly reached his understanding.

There was a mist before his eyes, and the chunk of toffee he had taken at Wharton's invitation was almost choking him. From Wharton he had expected sympathy; but to find the Famous Five as one man in their faith in him was more than he had dared to hope.

"Question is—who did take Tubb's bike out?" said Johnny Bull, always practical. "The chap's lying low, naturally."

"I don't see that. If he was a decent fellow he wouldn't," objected Bob.

"Oh, I'm taking it for granted that he isn't a decent fellow," replied Johnny. "That really goes without saying."

"I haven't seen anyone about looking damaged, and a fellow would hardly come through that without getting hurt," said Harry thoughtfully.

"Stott's gone to the sanny with a cold," Bob remarked. "But you don't get a cold by trying to smash a motor-car with a bike—at least, if you do you get something else as well."

"Gosling might be able to help us," suggested Frank Nugent.

Wingate minor had not thought of that, either. He had been too badly taken aback to think of anything useful.

"What about the great race?" asked Bob.

"Oh, that's bound to be put off!" answered Bolsover minor.

"Well, you two stay here," said Harry.

"While your nice kind uncles go and set things straight for you," added Bob.

They departed to interview Gosling.

"What jolly good chaps they are!" said Wingate minor fervently.

Gosling could tell the five nothing. But a suggestion came from Vernon-Smith, who met them as they came from the gates.

"I was lookin' for you fellows," he said. "Care for a motor-run this afternoon?"

"What, all of us?" asked Frank.

"Unless any of you are off it," replied the Bounder. "The car I've hired will seat seven all serene. Redwing's coming. If you chaps won't, I may be driven to ask Skinner, Stott, Snoop, Bunter, an' Fish. An', if they enjoyed it, I shouldn't."

"I shouldn't class Snoop with those four," Harry remarked. "He's very decent in some ways now."

"I'll admit that villainy isn't as thick on him as it used to be," said the Bounder quaintly.

"Where are we going?" inquired Bob.

"Oh, you are comin', then?"

"I am, anyway, and I fancy I can answer for the rest."

"I don't know," said Harry undecidedly. "There's young Wingate—"

"He's on your hands, is he?" asked the Bounder, with a grin. "What a thing it is to be a Good Samaritan!"

"Don't rot, Smithy!" returned Harry, flushing.

"I don't mean to, old top. If ever I knew a Good Samaritan you're he! What's this yarn about Sir James Rosser?"

"Do you know him, Smithy?" flashed Harry, with sudden hope.

"No, but my pater does. I say, why shouldn't we run over to his place, an' find out whether he can tell us anythin' about the merchant he had the mix-up with?"

"Good egg!" cried Bob.

"I'd like that better than anything, thought it might seem rather like butting in," said Harry.

"Mind, you may be disappointed,"

said Vernon-Smith sardonically. "I shouldn't think young Wingate is the kind of kid to lie himself out of a scrape. But my natural low opinion of human nature makes me see that it's not imposs."

"He didn't!" Harry cried. "Wingate minor's a self-willed young beggar, but he's dead straight."

"Well, I'm not sayin' he did. In point of fact, I have suspicions of someone else. If the Rosser-bird can describe the chap he saw we may get on to the true criminal. I sha'n't say more than that, except that I don't a bit believe that there was any intention to do Tubb's bike in. A chap might as well cut off his dashed head to cure the toothache as to try to wreck a bike that way."

"If we could find out who was out of gates yesterday evening after tea we might get on to the rotter," said Frank.

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"Twenty fellows may have been," he said. "Now, if we found young Wingate had been, in spite of his denial—"

"I'm sure he wasn't!" put in Harry.

"Yours is the faith that moves mountains, Wharton. Mine wouldn't shift a molehill. There aren't more than two or three people I believe in so firmly that I couldn't credit anythin' against them. Bunter, I may remark is not one of them. If, for instance, someone came and told me that Cherry had—"

"Oh, you can believe anything you jolly well like about me, Smithy," said Bob. "That is, as long as it doesn't cut me out of the motor-run this afternoon. But do you mean that you think Bunter smashed Tubb's bike?"

"No. I feel sure that the Rosser-bird's car did that, old sport."

"But is Bunter the chap you suspect of—"

"For once, Cherry, he is not."

And Vernon-Smith would say no more.

They had a ripping run that afternoon, though it did include a disappointment. Sir James Rosser was not at home; he had gone away for the weekend. But they were entertained to tea by Lady Rosser and her daughter, and the ladies were very sympathetic. Miss Iris remembered George Wingate's visit with a cricket-team, of which her father had spoken to Stott, and said that she couldn't believe any brother of his had done anything so mean as Jack Wingate's was accused of doing.

"I think it impossible that anyone could do such a mad thing out of malice," said her mother. "My husband shall hear about your visit as soon as he gets home, and I am sure he will do all he can to put things right. He was sorry for the boy; he told Dr. Locke that he meant to replace the ruined machine, though it was not his fault it was ruined."

The Head had not told Wingate minor that. And, lest Sir James might change his mind, it was decided by the seven on the way home that nothing should be said about it to the Third-Former.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Trouble in the Third Dormitory!

COME out of that, young Wingate!

It was Tubb who spoke, in accents of concentrated venom.

Not that Master George Tubb was by nature or as a rule at all venomous. He was somewhat rough and ready in his

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ways, and more than a little inclined to boss anyone who would be bossed. But he was quite a decent youngster.

He thoroughly believed that Jack Wingate had played a very low trick upon him, however, and he badly wanted revenge for that trick.

"Yes, come out of it!" echoed Bolter. "You've been skulking all the day!" said Lunn.

"Sure, that's so! But you can't be after skulkin' any longer now," O'Rourke said.

"Might as well leave him alone, Tubb, old chap," whispered Paget.

Bolsover minor did not whisper. He spoke out.

"Let him be!" he said. "He's done nothing. You must be a crowd of silly asses if you can't see that no fellow would chuck himself slap in front of a giddy motor just to muck up another chap's jigger! Why, he might have been killed!"

"There! Now you're owning he did it, Bolsover!" howled Tubb.

"Rats! He didn't do it, and you'll be jolly well ashamed of yourselves later on if you pile in on him to-night! I've been with him all day, so if he's been skulking so have I!"

"But you've nothing to skulk for, except being such an idiot as to back that cad up!" snorted Tubb.

Jack Wingate said nothing. He lay still in bed. But his whole soul was up in arms against the injustice of the Form. They might surely have known him better than to believe that he would be mean and spiteful.

They would have him out, he knew. But he would not come out of his own accord, and if they meddled with him some of them would get hurt.

There was plenty of the fighting spirit in Jack Wingate.

A single candle-end shed a flickering light upon the crowd around his bed. Tubb pulled off the clothes, and a dozen hands seized Wingate minor.

He resisted fiercely. He got home on Tubb's chin and on Bolter's nose. Bolter drew out of the attack to attend to the bleeding, but Tubb yanked more savagely than ever. Wingate minor hit out again, and gave Lunn a promising thick ear, and O'Rourke a jab in the right eye that made him see stellar visions.

Bolsover minor struggled to get to his chum's aid. But a horde held him back. All the consolation he had was the knowing that Jack knew he was doing his best, for Wingate minor called:

"Don't you try to help me, old man! These bounders are too many for us!"

Then he went under, and three of the attackers sat upon Bolsover.

"Tie him up!" ordered Tubb.

Wingate minor was tied hand and foot with sheets from his own bed.

"We're going to give you a fair trial," announced Tubb. "We know jolly well you're guilty, of course; but you'll get a fair trial."

"With you for accuser and judge and jury—I don't think!" scoffed the prisoner.

The court was set. Tubb put a trunk on a bed, and sat upon the trunk, in judicial state. Wingate minor, tied, was stood at the foot of the bed. The rest clustered round.

But the tying up had not been done very efficiently, sheets being rather more troublesome for the purpose than rope. Already Wingate minor was working his hands free.

He was not quite sure what he meant to do if he could rid himself of his bonds. To seek protection hardly appealed to his pride. To do any more punching might be cheering, but could hardly be

profitable. All he was sure of was that if only he could get free he would not stand there to go through this silly rot of a trial.

He stooped, and had his legs clear of the sheets while Tubb and some of the rest were arguing whether a jury was necessary.

Tubb thought not. Wingate minor had not been far wrong when he had charged Tubb with wanting to be everything that counted in that trial.

For a minute or two the prisoner waited.

Then it was decided that there should be a jury. As no one but Bolsover minor supported Wingate, and no one else but Paget had any pity for him, a jury was not likely to interfere with conviction and sentence.

While the jury—Oliver Bolter, foreman—took their places, Wingate minor made ready for a bolt.

Now, with as much impressiveness as he could assume, Tubb, leaning forward, said:

"Prisoner, at the bar, you are charged—"

"Rats to you, Tubby!" yelled Wingate minor.

And he made a rush for the door.

Tubb jumped up and across the next bed in pursuit, tumbling over the foreman of the jury, with Simpson and Lunn, in his headlong haste.

Wingate minor was at the door before him. But he had not time to shut it from outside before Tubb had seized the knob from inside. Wingate minor did not wait to indulge in a tug-of-war with Tubb. He ran on.

Out of the door barged Tubb, with a dozen of the Third at his heels.

Wingate minor stumbled. Tubb pounced upon him. They were locked in one another's embrace upon the landing.

Then the horde rushed them, seeking to grab Wingate minor; and both lost their footing.

Bump, bump, bump!

They rolled down to the next landing, still embracing.

Then Tubb picked himself up. He had finished on top. But Wingate minor lay still where he had fallen, and his face was very white.

"He's shamming!" faltered Bolter.

"No, he's not," answered Tubb. "I'm afraid the young beast is hurt. I know I jolly well am, and he was under me."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's all

this?" asked Bob Cherry from the doorway of the Remove dormitory.

The Removites had heard the noise, and were crowding out to see what was up. Others came from above and below. Then George Wingate appeared upon the scene.

"Why, Jack," he said, "what have they been doing to you?"

He picked the youngster up in his arms, and his face was very stern as he gazed upon Tubb and Tubb's henchmen.

"I've heard about the trouble in the Third, though I haven't interfered, and my minor hasn't said a word to me," he said. "It looks to me as though you young cowards were going in for mob law. But, by Jose, if the kid is really hurt you shall pay for it!"

They cleared off. Wingate ordered the Removites into their dormitory with unwonted sharpness. Then he carried Jack in there; it was nearer than the Third dormitory.

For fully a quarter of an hour they had to wait before the youngster came to, and very anxious most of them were. Tubb and Paget and Bolsover minor, united by their fears, stole in together before the time was up, and stood with the rest.

Then Jack Wingate's eyes opened, and he gave a low moan of pain.

"Crumbs! My napper hurts!" he said. "Hallo, George! Is that you? I'm all right, you know. I tumbled downstairs, that was all."

Tubb gripped Paget's arm. If Tubb had not been a specially obstinate young person he would have recanted his accusation in that moment. As it was, he kept silence; but he had a most uncomfortable feeling that, whatever might happen to Jack Wingate on account of what he had done—if he had done it—there would be very little satisfaction in it for him now.

Wingate minor had "tumbled downstairs," and did not want to say any more about it, though he had been treated so badly, and though his major was the skipper!

Jack Wingate slept in the Remove dormitory that night. But he slept very little, for his head was pretty badly hurt; and on Sunday morning he was taken to the sanatorium, where he had Stott for his only companion.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

All Cleared Up!

"HALLO, Stott!" spoke Harold Skinner, waking Wingate minor from a doze.

"Hallo, Skinney!" replied Stott, in anything but a welcoming tone. "What do you want?"

"Come to see how your cold's getting on, of course," answered Skinner, obviously sneering.

"You might have saved yourself the trouble!"

"But there was somethin' else," said Skinner. "I'm quite interested to know what you're goin' to do about this baronet merchant and Tubb's smashed jigger."

So it had been Stott! Jack Wingate lay there and thrilled. Then a shiver seized him. He had no right to hear this; he could not use knowledge coming to him thus.

"Shurrup! You'll have that kid hear you!" hissed Stott.

"No fear! He's fast asleep," answered Skinner.

He came over to Wingate minor's bed, and the fag pretended to be asleep. He must hear all that he could, he felt, even though honour prevented him from making any use of what he heard.

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The two bad eggs talked for several minutes. Skinner had come to chortle over Stott, to threaten him with betrayal; but he soon changed his mind about that. After all, Stott was the nearest thing to a pal Skinner had; and if he had punched Skinner's head, Skinner had punched his, and being punched by Stott was not like getting it from Wharton or Squiff.

"I'd advise you to stick here for a bit," said Skinner, before he left. "It may blow over now that that kid's got in the casualty-list like this. You'll get the sack if you own up, and it's no use fairly askin' for the sack."

"I'm not goin' to own up!" growled Stott.

For hours that night Wingate minor fought out the question of whether he was justified in telling; and sometimes he thought—quite rightly—that he was, and sometimes—oftener—that he was not. Finally, he made up his mind that he would say nothing unless expulsion actually menaced him.

It was between eleven and twelve next morning when he awoke, roused by the voices of the Head and someone else who had come in with him.

Stott had had his breakfast nearly three hours before, and had groused about its quantity and quality. He also was dozing at the moment.

Wingate minor sat up in bed. He felt sure that the large gentleman with the shrewd, kindly face must be Sir James Rosser. He had dreamed that Sir James had come over to clear him; and now the dream had come true!

"There is the boy," said the Head, nodding towards Jack Wingate.

But his visitor's gaze was fixed upon Stott.

Now, as if stirred by it, Stott also sat up. He gave one look; then he dropped back, and pulled the bed-clothes over his head in frantic alarm.

"No; that is the boy!" said Sir James, pointing to Stott's bed.

"But this is Wingate minor," the Head replied, puzzled.

"No doubt. But the boy who lies there is the boy!"

Then Jack Wingate did a very queer thing—a thing he was ashamed of later, though he had no real reason for shame.

He fainted dead away.

When he came to himself his brother was there; and Vernon-Smith and Harry Wharton and Bolsover minor were there also. But Stott had gone. The Head had ordered him out of bed at once, and out of sanny as soon as he could get his clothes on.

"I am extremely obliged to you boys for coming to my place on Saturday," said Sir James. "I reached home early this morning, by good luck, and came off here the moment I heard. You deserve credit for your zeal on behalf of this youngster. Do you feel better now, my boy?"

He laid a big, kind hand on Jack Wingate's shoulder as he asked that, and the fag had to swallow something in his throat before he could reply, for his brother's arm was round him, and the Head was

looking down at him with any amount of sympathy, and Harry Wharton's face was working with emotion, and even the Bounder seemed moved. As for Bolsover minor, his face was down on the quilt.

"I'm all right, sir," answered Jack.

"I shall replace the ruined bicycle, though I am not sure that Master Tubb deserves that it should be replaced," said the baronet. "And you shall have a new machine to ride in the race, Wingate, as some slight compensation for what you have gone through. And, mind you, I shall be quite annoyed with you if you let Tubb win after all this!"

But Jack felt that he would not mind much if Tubb did win now.

Tubb came in, with Paget, to see him that afternoon.

"I'm beastly sorry, young Wingate!" he said gruffly.

"That's all right, Tubby!" answered Jack.

"We're going to put off the giddy race till you are as fit as a fiddle," announced Tubb. "And I tell you what—if you're second, I'll let you have the camera for the bat, and not ask for anything, to boot!"

It was a generous offer, from Tubb's viewpoint. But the race was not won and lost yet.

A fortnight elapsed before it came off. In its early stages, Paget and Bolter and O'Rourke went to the front. But Bolter's bolt was shot less than half-way, and four miles from home Bolsover minor and Tubb had drawn up to Paget, and at three miles O'Rourke had to chuck it.

"Where's Wingate minor?" asked Tubb, of Bolsover.

"Coming!" answered that youth, with a cheery grin.

Tubb glanced behind him.

Sure enough, young Wingate was

coming, riding hard and well, gaining with every yard.

Tubb pedalled for all he was worth. Paget was left panting behind. But Bolsover minor stuck to Tubb, and Wingate minor drew up.

The last two miles meant very hot work indeed. Bolsover was left in the rear at last, but still sticking to it. Neck-and-neck Tubb and his rival raced for home.

Yells from the gates greeted them as they neared the winning-post.

"Go it, Tubb!"

"Stick it, Wingate!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Come on, Jack!" cried George Wingate, as excited as any fag.

And Tubb suddenly found himself dropping behind.

He held on gamely, dogged, panting, almost done. Inch by inch, Wingate minor drew ahead, and then foot by foot; and then, with a sudden splendid spurt, he widened the gap, and sailed home a winner by a clear ten yards.

He jumped from his saddle, but reeled as his feet touched the ground, and was grateful for the support of the Bounder's arm.

Then a hard paw reached for his, and Tubb's voice sounded in his ears.

"I ain't really sorry," said Tubb breathlessly. "I wanted that bat all along. And you did ride ripping well, young Wingate! I believe you're almost as good as I am, after all! I guess old Rosser will be bucked to hear that the two bikes he gave came in first and second!"

"Old Rosser is no end bucked!" said the genial voice of the baronet, who had driven over to see the race's finish. And Tubb, already scarlet, turned almost purple in his confusion.

Bolsover minor rode third, some way behind Tubb. Paget was fourth, only a very little way behind him, though very nearly at the end of his strength. He had ridden a plucky race, and he was so far ahead of the rest that Sir James added a fourth prize of a very neat little gold scarf-pin, which delighted its always somewhat dandified recipient.

Stott did not get the sack, though it was a narrow squeak for him. He was birched before the whole school, and gated for a fortnight.

Had the story of the Bounder's tie-pin come out, he would have had to go. But the Bounder kept his own counsel. He did not even tell the Famous Five why he had suspected Stott, though he admitted that it had been Stott he had suspected.

Herbert Vernon-Smith was not quite so hard as he made himself out to be, and he thought Stott had been punished enough.

THE END.

(Another grand long story of Harry Wharton & Co. next week, entitled "BUNTER'S BLUFF!" By Frank Richards. Make a point of ordering your copy of the MAGNET LIBRARY well in advance.)

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An unpleasant surprise for Tubb, of the Third!

(See Chapter 7.)

THE SILENCE!

A Strange Story
of the Future.

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□ □ □

OUR MAGNIFICENT SERIAL
STORY. START READING IT
—TO-DAY.—

INTRODUCTION.

A.D. 1924.

Tom Hope, the son of Admiral Sir Headley Hope, a midshipman in the Navy, and Dick Elliott, a keen young inventor in the Flying Force, are great friends, and Dick is very fond of Madge Hope, Tom's Sister.

When our story opens there is tremendous excitement in Great Britain, owing to the fact that the country—in fact, the whole of Europe—is completely out of touch with the rest of the world.

No wireless will work. All cables are out of action. No ships sail into our ports, or are even seen.

Then suddenly a huge airship force arrives over the South of England. The invaders are almost invisible from the ground, and by some secret magnetic power, they are able to affect all machinery.

The ships of the Navy are rendered useless in their harbours. Telegraph circuits are made silent, and all machinery and guns are immovable.

Then, to the amazement of the admiral of the British fleet, a Chinaman lands from one of the airships, and announces that the airships are Chinese, and that they have come for nothing less than the handing over of the British fleet.

Tom Hope and Dick Elliott make a mad dash for London, where Dick has been working for some time on a great invention, known as the Wilton Ray. The two boys gain the Admiralty in Whitehall, and are closeted with Sir Headley Hope, when the invading airships arrive over the capital.

The party gaze up at the spectacle in amazement; but not a gun repels the airships, nor a plane rises to engage them—all movable metal is firmly locked by the uncanny influence. London is in the grip.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Ray.

As the little group at the window took in what was happening outside, they became conscious of a large throng which had clustered round something pasted on a wall near by, and Sir Headley brought a pair of powerful binoculars to bear upon it. The glasses were barely in focus, but he could make them no better—the controlling-screw refused to turn either one way or the other. He, however, by straining his eyes to their uttermost, just managed to make out the wording of the placard.

"Ah!" he muttered, "Listen to this:

"TO THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN.

"This is to give warning that any attempt at hindering our operations will result in what has, so far, been considered unnecessary. It is not our policy

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Dick Elliott's fingers quivered ever so slightly as he pressed the button. For the space of perhaps two seconds nothing happened; then a cascade of shining molten metal poured from the machine overhead! (See page 17.)

to destroy life or property, but we shall not hesitate to do so should the need arise. At the present moment many important portions of this country are under our influence. Every military centre and every naval port being controlled, as well as all fleets and aerodromes. And the influence is being extended hourly to other parts of Britain, as is also the case with Europe. Any attempted armed resistance will prove utterly useless, and any hindrance in other respects will be punished as already implied.

"(Signed) KWONG HO.
"Commander-in-Chief of the Chinese Air and Land Forces operating in Britain."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Tom. "There's cheek, if you like! Evidently Mr. Kwong Ho is pretty sure of his cards."

"He may well be," returned Sir Headley quietly, "for he's shown that he holds a good hand. However, we may have the ace of trumps—Yes, Elliott?"

"We have one trump here, sir," said Dick quickly, "and others not so very far away. Shall I play it?"

"No, not just yet. We must make no blunders. Wait a moment!"

He sat down at a desk and scribbled something rapidly—something which he presently sealed and handed to a messenger, who hurried out at once.

"Listen," he said, turning again to the window, "I've sent word to the nearest factory where the Rays are being made, and ordered a score of men, each with a fully-charged apparatus, to station themselves at various parts of the City, where they are to wait for a signal from here ere commencing operations."

"And that signal, sir—"

"Will be the destruction of the first hostile airship! You, Elliott, will attempt it, and I pray that you may succeed! There must be no hitch; all the Rays must work simultaneously, or those devils will have time to—"

"Destroy half London!" put in Dick. "I see, sir, and I'll do my best!"

He left the room, presently returning with an oblong box-like article—not unlike an ordinary hand-camera of the larger size—attached to a short tripod. Thus he fixed just beneath the open window, and glanced up at Sir Headley.

"All ready, sir! Shall I—"

"No, no! Give them a few minutes longer." The admiral consulted his watch, but could make nothing of it, it was behaving in such an extraordinary manner—the hands perfectly motionless one second, shivering like live things the next. He shook his head hopelessly. "No good! We must judge the time as best we can."

Dick nodded, fingering his "camera" affectionately as he tested it now and again, so that everything should be absolutely right when the fateful order fell from Sir Headley's lips.

The minutes passed slowly. Every eye was fixed on the group of strange machines above—Dick's gaze in particular, being riveted on the large airship hovering immediately over the Admiralty building; but so far no sign of life had been visible on any of the hostile craft within easy vision.

"Now!"

Elliott's fingers quivered ever so slightly as he pressed a button, and a ray of violet light, visible even in the now brilliant sunshine, shot upwards from the lens, broadening out into a wide fan as it travelled.

A faint murmur floated down from the airship, as those aboard evidently noticed what was taking place, and realised, to

their chagrin that the very weapon from which they previously deemed themselves secure was even now being employed against them. But the murmur was cut short as the Ray touched the bottom of the hull, breathlessly watched by the group at the window, and now by the crowd in the street beneath.

For the space of perhaps two seconds nothing happened. Then a cascade of shining molten metal poured from the machine overhead. Her plating, wings, rails, and deck-houses disappeared like snow in the sun, as the deadly shaft swept her from end to end, and she crashed down to the flagstones—a smoking, shattered wreck!

Sir Headley's eyes were bright as he gripped Elliott by the hand. Then he turned again and pointed towards the sky.

"Good lad! We have done well, and shall do better! Look yonder!"

With the fall of the first airship several other shafts of violet light had streamed upwards, each singling out a victim with similar result. A number of the huge airships, partially dissolved, fell at various parts of the City, the others disappearing seemingly to nowhere as they rose to a less dangerous altitude—but not before a series of thunderous reports shook the building from roof to cellar.

"Ah! They've done something; you heard that? And we may expect a lot of trouble still!" exclaimed Sir Headley. "They've been disappointed, and, I should say, amazed, yet—Yes? What? Eh, what's that you say, man?"

A messenger had hurriedly entered, breathless and excited.

"One of the airships has come down, apparently undamaged, in Hyde Park, sir! The police have surrounded it—"

"By James!" The admiral swung round towards Tom. "Take a strong force of men, and hurry along, lad! You go too, Dick—the other Rays will keep things humming for the present, and you may understand that ship better than most. She must be held at all costs!"

"There's an awful smell of gas or something from her, sir," continued the messenger, "and nobody's shown himself yet. Evidently there's been a breakdown, or—"

"Yes, yes! We'll soon know everything. Hurry there, you two! This is a chance that mustn't be missed! Remember that these craft are immune from magnetism—as Chang told Sir Stanford—and if we can only— But that's scarcely to be hoped for yet, though it would be a bold stroke if it could be accomplished."

With these words ringing in their ears the pair set off, accompanied by a strong body, consisting mainly of mechanics. Military would have been of little use, since firearms were about as formidable as walking-sticks; for though the air-fleet had risen, it was of such great strength that the influence was still quite powerful enough to grip the city beneath, and render all resistance futile.

A Strange Capture and an Unexpected Ally.

EARLY though the hour was, all London was astir by now—roused from its rest by the mysterious happenings of that morning—and a great crowd had collected at Hyde Park when Tom Hope Elliott, and the others arrived.

On the way they had learnt that St. Paul's had been partially destroyed, as also was the Tower Bridge, whilst the Houses of Parliament and Woolwich Arsenal had suffered considerably as well—all of which they set down to the thunderous explosions they had heard,

just after the Ray had commenced operations.

The landed airship, when they finally reached her through the cordon of police and the throng of spectators, appeared to be rather smaller than most of those hitherto seen—a scout, in all probability. She was built of the same shining material, upon which the colour of the surrounding grass and foliage was clearly reflected, and her hull pierced here and there with small portholes, the glass in many of which was shattered—in all likelihood, from the concussion of her landing—though, otherwise, she seemed quite undamaged.

Two huge wings spread themselves on either side, their bases disappearing into long slots in the hull; and just astern of them a couple of doors, still tightly shut, revealed the method of entrance. Her decks were double, the lower one, which bore several deckhouses, being enclosed by a metal network reaching more than breast-high. The upper deck was almost bare, only a couple of strongly-formed conning-towers showing thereon; and above all reared the four slender columns, each supporting a circular fan—something like a many-bladed propeller set horizontally.

But what mainly attracted the attention of Elliott's inventive mind, was the curious smell which pervaded the immediate neighbourhood of the fallen ship. It was certainly gas, but of what kind he could form no idea—neither could anyone tell why the craft had descended. She had not been affected by the Rays, and to all appearances was in almost perfect condition.

"Well, it's a queer go," said Tom, as he pushed against one of the doors, "but we'll see what's beyond. Come on, you chaps!—Hustle!"

With considerable difficulty the door was forced, and an entry made. Inside, the reek of gas was much stronger—so powerful, indeed that they started back choking. The shattered portholes had not proved sufficient outlet.

Some minutes were allowed for the air to get clearer, ere a second attempt was made, and then a strange sight revealed itself.

Lying in various attitudes on the floor were the forms of several Chinese, each clad in a curious uniform, not unlike naval, yet with some difference. Their faces were greyish and swollen beneath the yellow skin, and their throats quite black. One by one they were carried out, but a doctor, who separated himself from the crowd, could only shake his head hopelessly.

"Asphyxiated!" he said briefly. "I should say before she fell."

"But what—" exclaimed Tom, and then stopped short. At the far end of the cabin, which was literally filled with strange appliances—wires, dynamos, and such like—a large cylinder had caught his eye. Crossing over, he found that it was shattered at one end, the smell of gas still almost unbearable when close to it.

"Here's the reason!" he cried, as Elliott joined him, "See what's happened? It's a gas generator or retort of some kind, isn't it?"

Dick nodded.

"Yes, that's it. I don't know what it's used for, of course, but—Hullo! What's this? Another of 'em?"

Beyond the cylinder, a great network of wires reached from floor to ceiling, interlaced round a cluster of giant magnets and other contrivances, which puzzled the pair not a little. These, however, had not caused Elliott's sudden exclamation, but something lying on the plates at the far side—the recumbent

form of a Chinese, his yellow hands still gripping a pair of short levers, and his face buried in his bent arms.

"Quick! Bring him out! I'll swear he's not dead, for he stirred slightly just now!" Elliott ran round and endeavoured to loosen the tightly-clenched fists. As he drew them clear, the man uttered a stifled sigh, which was just audible.

"I knew it!" cried Dick. "Look! His face is not discoloured, like the rest. Take his head, old chap, and we'll see what can be done!"

"But—"
"Hush! Let's get him out of this before you ask any questions. The chap may be useful if he can be brought round, though it's only a chance! Likely as not he'll keep as mum as an oyster!"

Outside in the open, the doctor worked vigorously for some little time, and at length the Chinaman opened his slant eyes, looking about him wonderingly. He had been the only one behind the cylinder—below its level—when it burst, and the full blast of gas had travelled the other way. Nevertheless, sufficient had come in his direction to thoroughly stupify him.

"He's coming to!" said Dick. "Now, does the beggar understand English, or—Eh, Simmonds? What—what's that you say?"

One of the mechanics, who had been intently watching the doctor's efforts, suddenly seized Elliott by the arm. His attitude was one of suppressed excitement and surprise.

"Why, sir, I know that bloke! No two men on earth have a finger missing from the left hand, with a tattoo design just like that on the forearm above it, I should say!"

"Great James!" Dick gasped with wonder. "Are you sure, man? It seems strange—"

"Not at all, sir!" replied Simmonds. "It's quite simple, as a matter o' fact. About two years ago, when I chanced to be in Liverpool, I came across a gang o' roughs wipin' the street with a Chink. Bein' seven to one, I couldn't take their view o' the matter, so I put in my oar. We had a tidy set-to, and I was badly mauled before a few coppers arrived an' finished the act!"

"Yes? Go on!"

"Well, sir, the Chink was choke-full o' gratitude—swore all sorts of oaths by his old Confucius, about my certain good fortune for ever on this here earth, and ended up by givin' me this." Simmonds drew out a stained and well-worn pocket-book, and produced a small ornament from its interior—a tiny flower, beautifully fashioned from some golden metal, and bearing a single sapphire in the centre. "Pretty thing, ain't it? He said if ever I wanted help I was to show that at certain places which he named, in Liverpool, in London—even in New York, Chicago, an' elsewhere. However, I didn't need assistance since, but I've kept the thing as a curiosity."

Dick was silent for a few minutes, as Simmonds ceased speaking. Then he turned swiftly, a sudden thought possessing him.

"You say this fellow swore eternal friendship to you—an Englishman. How, then, does he come to be siding with the enemy?"

"Ask me another, sir! What I speak of happened two years ago. From what's occurred since, I don't doubt he'd see me a long way before he'd turn brotherly, if that little tussle took place to-day. Yet

there's no harm in trying, sir, is there? I'll show him the flower an' see how he takes it. Perhaps he's got a white patch somewhere in his yellow carcase, that hasn't quite been blotted out by the idea of conquerin' the world."

Dick conferred with Tom, and presently the three moved forward towards where the Chinaman was now shaking off the last traces of his stupor. He blinked up at them in turn; his face wore a puzzled look as he saw Simmonds.

"Member me, Johnny?" said the latter, in pidgin English. "Member bad debbils in Liverpool? Member de man who savee you one time, eh?"

The Chinese's eyes brightened, and he looked with renewed interest into the mechanic's rugged countenance. Simmonds held out the flower: the effect was extraordinary.

"Ah!" cried the man, struggling into a sitting posture, "Wing Lo member dat, yes—member it well! You keepee it—it do you good? Wing Lo do lots fol de fellow who helpee him one time!"

"That's all right, old chap!" pursued Simmonds, following up his advantage.

"I getee you out of big messec, an' you promise me lots of things, didn't you?"

The Chinese nodded emphatically.

"Yes, but dey could not be fulfilled now," he returned. "De Yellow Flower Brudderhood smashee up since. My countly fightee-fightee yours, Blitisher. I not wantee fight England, 'cause England good. I livee hele long time, but Wing Lo only Wing Lo; he mustee do as he told, an' go when he called."

"Why, chum?" hazarded the mechanic. "If you likee England, an' England good to you, an' owing me someting for what I did, can't you helpee me, as you said?"

The man's eyelids drooped. Whatever was in his thoughts, he made no sign; but, nevertheless, it was easy to see that he was torn between duty to his cause and the desire to assist his rescuer.

"Look here, Wing," resumed Simmonds earnestly, "I swear I tellee you factee. We've just destroyed lots of your ships with a queer ting we've gotee, but which your people thoughtee we hadn't. Savvy?"

Wing Lo's eyes sprang open again; his face stirred from its habitual calm expression.

"You tellee me dat! You not pullee leg, as dey say?"

"It's honest truth, chum! Look upee! There's many wiped out, an' the rest are somewhere up there out of harm's way, but they daren't come downee again for a while."

The Chinaman listened, and evidently believed, for a sudden look of decision crept into his face.

"What you wantee me do?" he asked. "If all dat true, I keepee plomise—I helpee you, if I can."

Simmonds turned triumphantly towards the others, his eyes gleaming.

"Got him, sir!" he said to Tom, in a low voice. "Tell me what you want, and he'll do it, if possible. Wing's a decent chap enough—that is, from our point o' view just now, though I don't doubt his own crowd would think different."

Tom gave swift instructions, and the mechanic again turned to the Chinese.

"Dis is it, chum. You showee us how dat claft works, an' you must comee 'long, too. We're goin' to use her whatever way our leaders think fit. Savvy? If you do dis, you get plentee monee, an' heap good tings from our people. Is dat all lightee?"

Wing Lo hesitated for a further brief minute, and then, nodding assent, he rose to his feet. An ally had been gained in a quarter where they had least expected to find one.

To Save the Fleet.

SECURE from the gaze of the gaping crowd outside, Wing Lo briefly explained the mysteries of the strange capture; and even Dick, used to reading of and seeing curious inventions though he was, had to admit himself astounded at the ingenuity of the contrivance.

The airship carried no armament whatever in the way of guns, nor, as Wing said, did any of the others. They relied mainly on their magnetism, and, for destructive purposes, the powerful bombs which had already demonstrated their efficiency; but of anything beyond these there was no sign.

Motive power was derived from a kind of gas, which was both economical in use and easily generated. Indeed, it was one of these generating cylinders which had shattered and caused the disaster that delivered the ship into the hands of the enemy, Wing confirmed in passing.

Perhaps the most curious thing about these strange craft was the fact that one man could control practically everything connected with the machinery, under the direction of the commander stationed in one of the conning-towers above. All the working parts were governed by a dial-plate, containing a miscellaneous array of switches, buttons, levers, and numbers, connected by wires with the huge magnets and other appliances, which were legion, and travelling to other parts of the ship where the bomb-dropping apparatus were fixed. Thus, a small vessel like this one would not require a large crew, merely a few men to watch the machinery as it worked automatically, and be ready to attend instantly should any hitch occur which called for repair.

In a very short time Dick's alert brain had grasped every detail, and it now only remained for the full story to be sent to Sir Headley. Tom jotted down the particulars, forwarding them by messenger to the Admiralty, and then turned to Simmonds.

"You're quite sure Wing Lo won't play us false? You trust him?" he queried.

"Dunno why he should, sir," replied the mechanic. "He's still grateful to me, an' has a soft spot in his heart for England. What's more, he understands that we've got somethin' that's able to put the kibosh on his friends. See yonder! He's watchin' those violet shafts like a cat!"

Tom turned, looking towards where the Chinese, having replaced the damaged cylinder with another, was staring through a porthole, his slant eyes fixed on the thin ribbands of light which ever and anon swept the sky. Since the rays had driven the airships higher none had reappeared, so that the defenders were in a similar position to the man who looks for a needle in a haystack. Yet a continuous "sweeping" was kept up, which had the effect of preventing the enemy descending any lower.

London was still silent, however, the size of the great fleet giving it power to control the city fairly well even from that altitude. It was a much larger force than that which had swooped upon Seahaven, and had greater advantages; for, in order to grip the fleet, forts, and

town, and prevent a shot being fired from any, the other aircraft had been obliged to descend fairly low, as was explained in a preceding chapter. But London, though requiring a greater and more widespread influence to control it, had not the mighty defences of the new naval base, which necessitated a very close congregation of airships and more directly applied power to cope with.

Wing Lo continued to gaze for some time from the porthole, his face gradually taking on a look of conviction. Presently he turned to the others.

"You Blitish debbils velly wondel-ful!" he said quietly. "You gottee something we thought you had not."

"Ah! Fully persuaded at last, are you?" smiled Simmonds. "But we'll give further proof. Savvy?"

"Wing Lo see enough," was the rejoinder. "If you could not keepe our people away dey would be hele. Dat quite plaine-plaine."

There was no answer to such logic, and further conversation was prevented by the return of the messenger. Tom tore the envelope hastily open.

"Ah! Here's the programme!" he exclaimed excitedly. "We're to hurry to Seahaven, and prevent the home fleet changing hands, if possible. The pater says Sir Stanford was told to prepare to hand his ships over to other crews which were to arrive later, and he suspects they'll come from seaward in extra air-transports. We're to steer out to sea as soon as we reach the danger zone, and hang about, but we must first assure ourselves that the fleet's still there."

"A pretty tall order!" commented Dick. "How on earth are we to tell that, if the other airships are buzzing around? And how does Sir Headley know that the new crews haven't arrived long ago?"

"Wait a second. Listen to this bit: 'New crews scarcely likely to arrive until everything else is quite in order. Imagine taking over of fleet will not be embarked upon until enemy at Seahaven can safely withdraw influence, and release ships so that they can be removed. In this case, I consider it probable that there is still time to deal a blow, though extreme caution will be necessary. The airships themselves are, of course, non-magnetic, and invisible only against sky-vide Chang. Am sending some Ray apparati for your use, and you must leave instantly you are ready. We shall attend to matters here, but it is vitally necessary to save the fleet.'

"See what the pater means?" said Tom, as he slipped the communication into his pocket-book. "We cannot be magnetised, nor can we magnetise the transports, so we must not give them the chance to get above us, when we would be visible, and drop any bombs before the Rays can be worked. That's about the mark; we must fly as high as possible."

Dick nodded, and beckoned to Wing Lo.

"Come 'long, old chappie! Get busy, and don't let's have any waiting when we wantee startee."

The Rays arrived just at that moment, and were taken aboard. Then, with Wing Lo controlling the machinery, eagerly watched by Simmonds and Dick, Tom Hope ascended to the forward conning-tower.

Now, at the very outset, came one of the trickiest stages of the journey. If they passed at a low altitude over the city a Ray might pick them out and destroy them in the twinkling of an eye;

whereas if they shot up to any height there was a chance of arriving amid a cluster of the now-hidden enemy. The latter plan, however, Tom deemed safest. He had acquired a wonderful respect for the new defence by this time, and it was also quite probable that the foe might take the ship to still be one of their own. They could not know what had happened so far below.

He issued a few rapid instructions, and London presently grew small beneath the swiftly-rising machine. No sound was heard save the low hum of the fans, but this was soon added to by the even beat-beat of the great wings as the airship shot forward at a dizzy speed.

By strange good luck they had apparently escaped observation, for no hostile craft was visible; and in a very short time the metropolis was well astern.

They had begun their race to save the fleet. Would they succeed or fail? And what perils lay ahead? That was the burden of Tom's thoughts as he stepped through the glass-fronted tower, issuing a brief command every now and then to the trio below—three only, for since Wing Lo had demonstrated how simple was the working of the ship, the more room in which to operate the Rays the better, if they were eventually called upon to do so.

(There will be another magnificent instalment of this grand serial next Monday. Please order your copy of the MAGNET in advance.)

READERS' NOTICES.

NOTE.—No more notices will be accepted for publication.

R. H. Thomson, 355, Gairbraird Street, Maryhill, Glasgow, would like to correspond with readers anywhere, interested in coins. Age 15-16.

L. Lelliott, 80, Fulwich Road, Dartford, Kent, wants readers and contributions for his amateur magazine, 2d. monthly.

E. Burley, 980, Stratford Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, offers 500 Gems, 40/-, or best offer. Do not send money in first instance.

D. J. McCarthy, 17, Cope Street, Dublin, wants copy of the Holiday Annual. Full price offered. Must be clean. Book not to be sent first instance.

S. W. Lindsey, 36, Chestnut Avenue, London, E. 17.—with readers in U.S.A., Egypt and India. Ages 18-21. All letters answered.

P. Lockey, 109a, Tottenham Road, Islington, London, N. 1., has for sale a 1920 Holiday Annual, 4/6, post included. Also 35 "Gems," 20 "Magnets," and 25 "Penny Populars," at 1/6 per doz., postage included. Do not send money in first instance.

John Hadfield, 95, Sturges Street, Bradford, Yorks, wants correspondents in India, Africa, South America, and Australia, to exchange postcards and newspapers.

Henry Thomson, Shirley, Glasgow Road, Kilmarnock, has for sale "Magnets," "Gems," "Penny Populars," "Greyfriars Heralds"; "4d. Libraries," all perfectly clean. Straight dealing. State wants, with stamped postcard, but do not send money in first instance.

TALES TO TELL

DID THE TRICK!

T-r-r-ring!

The hard-worked doctor turned reluctantly out of bed to answer his night-bell, and was mightily glad to hear that all that was wrong was that Mrs. Mulcahey's new baby wouldn't go to sleep.

He handed the excited father a powder and went back to bed.

Next morning he met Mr. Mulcahey and asked him how the baby was.

"Foine, sir!" beamed the man. "That powther of yours did the trick."

"I'm glad of that. And did the baby get a good night's rest?"

"Sure, an' we don't know," was the reply. "We gave her a dose an' it didn't make a mite of difference; she just went on howlin'. So the wife and I, we took the rest betwane us, and wint straight off to slape an' niver heard the swate pet at all, at all."

A REASONABLE REPLY.

"And now, children," asked the teacher, at the end of the lesson, "can you tell me the national flower of England?"

"The rose!" came in an eager chorus from her youthful pupils.

"And of France?"

"Lilies," was the response, after some hesitation.

"And Spain?"

Dead silence. The pupils looked blankly at each other. Then a hand was waved frantically in the air, and a shrill voice piped out:

"Bulrushes, miss!"

TOO COMPLICATED.

"These yer modern ideas are all very well," growled Farmer Brown, over his pipe one evening, "but not for me! I ain't got time to waste with new-fangled machines and such-like. See that cupboard over there? Well, inside's one of them there typewriter machines that the missus spent a year's butter and egg money on as a present for me, seeing as I ain't over-handy with the pen."

"And don't ye like it?" asked his neighbour, Farmer White, as the old man sat frowning heavily at the harmless cupboard door, behind which lay the offender.

"Like it?" snapped old Brown indignantly. "Why, ye can't even write your name with the dratted thing till you've learned to play the pianner or the church organ!"

SWEETEST SOUND OF ALL.

Two Lancashire schoolboys were arguing as to the merits of their respective fathers in the musical line.

"My father plays the cornet better'n any other man in the town," boasted one of them.

"Does he?" replied the other, quite unimpressed. "When my father starts, every man round about stops work."

The first lad looked quite crestfallen.

"Do they?" he asked, in a meeker voice. "What does he play?"

"He don't play nothin'," was the triumphant retort. "He blows the dinner-hour whistle up at the mill!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 650.

HIS POINT OF VIEW!



Stranger: "How came you to be lost, my little man?"
Boy: "I ain't lost, sir; but my mother is, and I can't find her."

WHAT HE MISSED!



"What struck you as your most wonderful experience in the late war?"
"Well, what struck me most of all was the bullets that missed me!"

GOOD ADVICE!



"Kind lady, can you suggest anything to help a poor fellow who ain't able to raise the price of a shave?"
"Yes, grow a beard, my man!"

THAT "CRABBED" HIS STYLE!



1. Old Hardup couldn't afford a visit to the seaside, so he decided to spend his holiday at home. Billy thought this a good idea.



2. But so as to make the paddling in the salt water bath more real, the dear boy placed a real live crab inside.



3. This upset Mr. Hardup's apple-cart completely, and after telling the boy what he really thought of him, he left the neighbourhood.

ARE YOU SHORT?

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Advertisement for watches and jewelry. Includes images of a pocket watch, a wristwatch, and a ring. Text: "FREE Latest Bargains Lists & Catalogues Post Free. Watches, Alarm Clocks 12/6, 16/9. Jewellery, Gramophones, Mouth Organs 2/-, 2/9, 4/-, 5/-. Useful Goods, Novelties, Etc. Gent's Strong Watch, Oxydised 10/-. Nickel 12/6. Hair Clippers Set 10/-. Gold Shell Rings 1/3.—Send Hole in Card for Size. All Post Free. Satisfaction or Money Back. Pain's Presents House, Dept. 3A, Hastings."



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