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The

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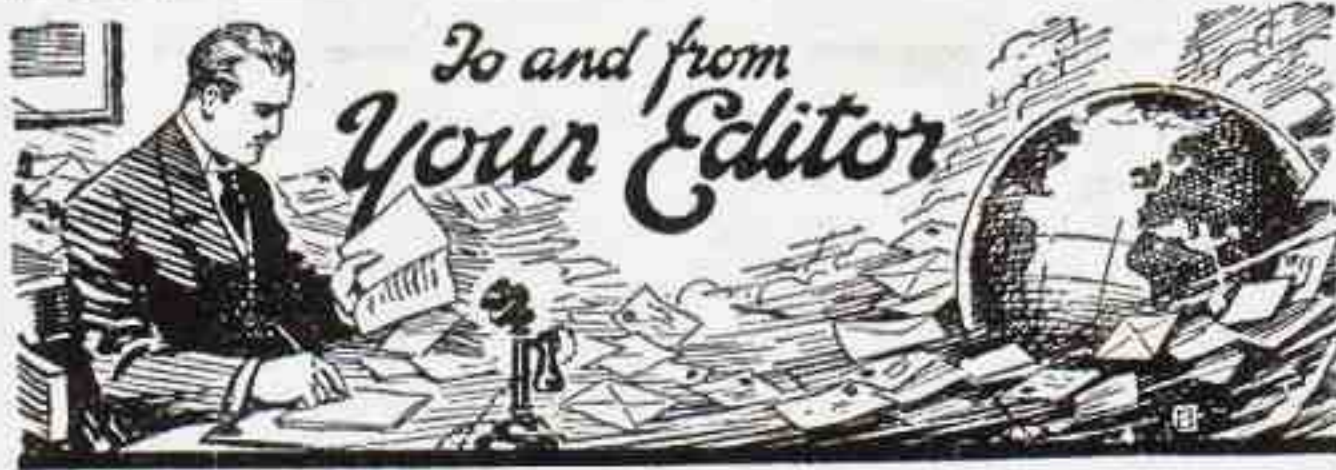
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(An amusing scene from the long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars - inside.)



FIVE POUNDS FOR A LINE!

That's the surprise offer I am making to all Magnetites in next week's issue of their favourite paper. Most of you no doubt have observed your parents and friends deep in the throes of solving

CROSS WORD PUZZLES,

and from the bottom of your youthful hearts have pitied them. Cross Word puzzles undoubtedly are interesting, but they take time to solve and require an unlimited stock of patience. To be in the fashion, as it were, Magnetites are going to have a series of Cross Word Puzzles to themselves, built up on the time-honoured Limerick.

Each week will be published an unfinished verse conveying the idea of "cross words"—words spoken in the heat of the moment—between two schoolboys. And each week to the reader who submits what is, in my opinion, the cleverest line I shall award the Handsome Prize of £5. There will be splendid consolation prizes, too. These take the form of useful pocket-knives.

Nothing frightfully difficult about that, is there, chums? Think of it, FIVE POUNDS for the winning line! And this remarkable offer will be repeated each week. Look out for the start of our grand

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"HARRY WHARTON'S DOWNFALL!"

That's the title of the next long complete story of Greyfriars. It shows the one-time captain of the Remove sinking lower and lower in the estimation of his Form-fellows and his Form master. Harry Wharton's arrogant spirit is proving his undoing; it is taking him into the company of such cads and slackers as Skinner, Snoop, and Stott. Conscious all the time of his failings, Wharton makes no effort to right himself; rather does he seem to take a delight in showing the worst side of his character—that side of his character we got a glimpse of when he first came to Greyfriars.

UNBALANCED PRIDE!

To crown his cup of bitterness and humiliation—at least, that's the way Wharton looks at it—Bob Cherry is appointed captain of the Remove in place of Lord Mauleverer, who resigns from that energetic post. Big, honest Bob is desirous of avoiding trouble with his former chum, but Wharton seems bent upon thrusting a quarrel upon him. Cherry keeps his temper within bounds—up to a point. Then, goaded by the bitter taunts of his one-time friend, Cherry does exactly what Wharton wants him to do. He fights! The outcome of this scrap between two members of the once formidable Famous Five I will leave you to discover for yourselves. But this much I will say now—it's packed with thrills from the sound of the gong. Look out for this powerful story, boys—you'll enjoy every word of it.

"THE DEPUTY DETECTIVE!"

Next week's instalment of this splendid detective serial shows Jack Drake scoring where shining lights of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard fail. The house of a certain Government official, residing in Surrey, is visited by the notorious motor-bandits, who make off with a considerable amount of jewellery. But that's not the worst part of the affair, however. It transpires that a highly-important State document is missing, too. And that document has got to be recovered before it falls into the hands of certain Foreign agents who would give a small fortune to possess it. Drake hits the trail without delay, and, thanks to the splendid training he has received from Ferrers Locke, throws daylight upon a knotty problem that leads at once to the whereabouts of the stolen document. A fine instalment this, chums, and one that all of you should read.

"HUNTING!"

The "Herald" staff has prepared an extra-special supplement with the above subject as its centrepiece. All manner of things are hunted, from fags and postal-orders to rats and moths. The spirit of the chase is maintained

throughout, and some of the "kills" are extremely humorous. Look out for next Monday's special Hunting number, boys.

MATCHES WANTED.

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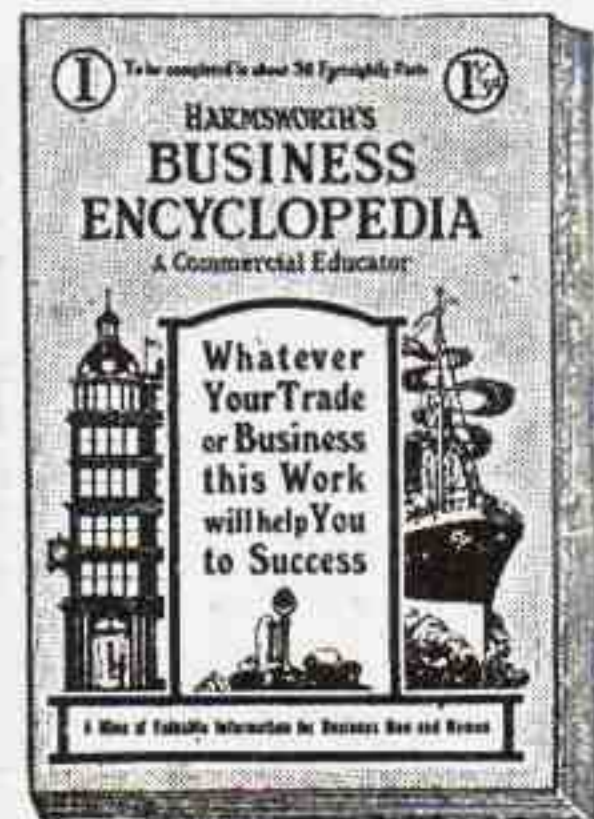
Syd. Nock, 4, Adrian Street, Moston, Manchester, tells me he very much wishes to hear from a Magnetite in or around Manchester. Possibly one of my numerous chums living near the silvery waters of the Irwell will oblige.

FOR STAMP COLLECTORS.

Canadian stamps are always interesting. Here is a chance for collectors who want specimens from the North West. J. B. Williams, 527, Old Orchard Avenue, Montreal, Canada, asks me to find him a few stamp enthusiasts who will exchange with him.

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Every boy or young man who is starting out in life, or who has already commenced a business or commercial career should read HARMSWORTH'S BUSINESS ENCYCLOPEDIA. This important new work which has been written by Cabinet Ministers, Treasury Officials, and some of the greatest business men of the day, contains up-to-date and complete information on every branch of business and commerce. It is to be issued in fortnightly parts, at 1s. per part. For just over 1d. per copy the finest possible information is available to everyone who possesses ambition to succeed in the world. It is a thousand textbooks in one. It will not only help you to hold down your job but makes it possible for you to succeed to better positions until you reach the top of the tree. Part 1 will be on sale Thursday, January 15th, and can be obtained from any newsagent or bookseller.



Part 1—Thurs. Jan. 15
Order a Copy TO-DAY!

MAULY WAKES UP to the fact that the life of a Form captain is anything but a bed of roses. Horror of horrors—a "skipper" has work to do and plenty of it! The schoolboy earl hates anything in the nature of work, but it is wonderful how soon he alters his views when a flies bat, wielded by the energetic Wingate, whistles about his elegant person!



Slacker— and Captain!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, with Lord Mauleverer—the Slacker of the Remove—well in the limelight.

Told by FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mauly Means Well!

“OLD bean!” Lord Mauleverer spoke rather hesitatingly. His lordship had walked into the Rag, where Harry Wharton, late captain of the Greyfriars Remove, stood at the window, looking out into the quadrangle.

It was a clear, frosty winter's morning. From the window of the Rag, Harry Wharton was idly watching a crowd of Remove fellows punting a football about.

It was the morning “break” after second lesson, and the Rag was generally deserted at that time of day. Wharton was alone in the room when Lord Mauleverer came in.

“Thinkin', old chap?” asked Mauleverer.

“Yes.”
“Mind my buttin' in?”
“Not at all.”

Lord Mauleverer sat down in the window-seat. He crossed one elegant leg over the other, with a due regard to the crease in his well-cut trousers. His lordship was particular in these little matters.

“The fact is—” said his lordship.
“Yes, Mauly?”
“I was lookin' for you.”
“Well, you've found me.”
“I wanted to speak to you, you know.”
“Go ahead!”

Lord Mauleverer coughed. Evidently he had something to say to the late captain of his Form. Equally evidently, he found some difficulty in saying it.

“The fact is—” he repeated.
“Yes?”
“You—you don't mind?”
“Pile in!” said Wharton encouragingly.

“The fact is, you know, a fellow hates buttin' in,” said Lord Mauleverer apologetically. “Chap ought to mind his own business, as I'm always tellin' Bunter. Great thing, mindin' one's own bizney—what?”

Wharton nodded.
“Still, we've always been friends, haven't we?” said Mauleverer.

“Certainly!”
“We've never had a row, that I remember.”

“Never,” assented Wharton.
“Then you won't mind what I'm goin' to say, perhaps.”

Harry Wharton's face hardened a little. From the window he could see his former chums—Bob Cherry, Nugent, Johnny Bull, Hurree Janset Ram Singh—in the cheery crowd of juniors who were punting the ball in the frosty air. Lord Mauleverer followed his glance and understood his expression.

“That's all right,” he said hastily. “I'm sorry to see you on bad terms with your old pals, Wharton. But that isn't what I was goin' to speak about. Nothin' of the kind.”

“All serene, Mauly!”
“It's about the election,” said Mauleverer. “I dare say you know that Mr. Quelch has fixed the date for the election of a new Form captain—next Wednesday?”

“Yes,” said Harry.
“I was awfully sorry you lost it,” said Mauleverer. “Bit thick of Quelch to cancel an election. It's never happened before that I know of. But I suppose he thinks he knows best!”

“He thinks so, I suppose,” assented Wharton, with a curl of the lip. “I'm not complaining.”

“The fact is, old bean, you've put Quelch's back up.”

“I know that.”
“Anyhow, he's come down heavy,” went on Lord Mauleverer. “You're deposed, old man, and there's goin' to be a new election—and you're not allowed to stand as a giddy candidate!”

“I shouldn't, anyhow!” said Harry.
“Oh, wouldn't you?”
Wharton shook his head.
“Why not, if a fellow can ask without buttin' in too much?”

“I don't acknowledge Mr. Quelch's right to turn me out of the captaincy,” said Wharton, with a gleam in his eyes.

“But he's got the power, you know.”
“I know that. And he's used it. He's down on me, and he's turned me out of the captaincy of the Form. I've got to stand it, but I'm not going to pretend to think it's just.”

“Oh!” said Mauly rather uncomfortably.

“Anyhow, I'm not allowed to stand if I wanted to,” said Harry. “So that's that!”
“Quite so, old bean. All the same, you

ought to be captain of the Remove. I was thinkin' that the matter might be set right,” said Lord Mauleverer. “It's true that our jolly old Form master is down on you. But, as a reasonable chap, you'll admit that you've given him some cause.”

“Not at all!”
“Oh!”
Lord Mauleverer coughed again. He did not feel that he was getting on very well.

“Dash it all, old man,” he said at last. “You've been in hot water with Quelch ever since the term began.”

“I don't see that I've been to blame.”
“Don't you?” ejaculated Lord Mauleverer, raising his eyebrows. He really seemed surprised by that statement. “As a reasonable chap, you know—”

“Perhaps I'm not a reasonable chap!”
“Well, I wouldn't say that,” said Lord Mauleverer. “But you are a bit of an obstinate beggar, Wharton, if you don't mind my sayin' so.”

“Is that what you came in to tell me?”
“Good heavens, no! Not a bit of it! For goodness' sake, old bean, don't get your back up with me!” exclaimed his lordship anxiously. “There's enough rows goin' on already. Don't row with me, there's a good chap.”

Harry Wharton laughed.
“I'm not going to row with you, Mauly, old fellow, though I mayn't be a very reasonable chap in your opinion.”

“Can't it be set right?” said Mauleverer.
“I don't see how.”

“Quelch isn't a bad sort—a bit sharp-tempered, perhaps, and given to tantrums—but he's all right in the main,” said Mauly. “He's down on you, for a cert. But—well, when a chap breaks out of detention, and makes his giddy Form master look a fool, you can't expect the old bird to be pleased, can you?”

Wharton did not answer.
“Now, I've been thinkin',” went on Lord Mauleverer. “You cleared off that Saturday, and put Quelch into a terrific lute. You told him you'd been to Folkestone—miles an' miles out of school bounds. It really was a bit thick, Wharton, comin' on top of all the rest. Especially as Quelch thought you'd gone over to St. Jude's with the team to play

footer, and buzzed off there after you, and looked no end of an ass."

Wharton smiled slightly.

"That wasn't my fault."

"Well, no. It was Quelch's misfortune," agreed Lord Mauleverer amiably. "Still, it happened, and he was no end waxy. Now, if you'd explained to him why you went off to Folkestone that afternoon, that would make a lot of difference, I think. Nobody knows why you went. The fellows think it was just a jaunt to cheek Quelch, and Mr. Quelch thinks so, too. You can't expect him to like it. But I think—"

"Well?" said Wharton, looking rather curiously at the dandy of the Remove. "What do you think, Mauly?"

"I've heard that your uncle, Colonel Wharton, returned lately from abroad," said Mauleverer. "It's occurred to me that very likely you went to meet him comin' off the boat."

"You're getting quite keen, Mauly."

"Well, I'm rather a keen chap, you know, when I get goin'," said Lord Mauleverer modestly. "Isn't that it?"

"Perhaps."

"I'll take that as yes," said his lordship. "Now, Mr. Quelch hasn't the faintest idea of it. Suppose you explained to him—"

"No fear."

"An' told him you were a bit sorry to have treated him disrespectfully."

"I'm not sorry."

"Oh?"

"Is that all?" asked Wharton.

"Well, my idea is, that if you put it like that to Quelch he would go easy," said Mauleverer. "After all, it's rather bad form to cheek a master, isn't it?"

"Is it?"

"Yaas. Now, my belief is that if you explained to Mr. Quelch, and put it decently, he would give you leave to stand for re-election," said Lord Mauleverer. "I'd vote for you like a shot, an' so would most of the fellows. Then you'd be captain of the Remove again, an' all would be merry an' bright, what? Won't you do it?"

Wharton shook his head.

"What's the good of keepin' up trouble?" urged his lordship.

No answer.

"Well, I thought I'd mention it," said Lord Mauleverer, after a long pause. "I can't think you're in the right to keep up a feud with Quelch like this, Wharton—speakin' as a friend, you know. I suppose you're satisfied—"

"Quite!"

"But look at it!" urged his lordship. "You've rowed with your old friends—four of them. When there's a row with four chaps on one side and one on the other, doesn't it look as if the one might be a bit in the wrong? Majority against him, you know. Now you've rowed with Quelch, too. Goodness knows how many more you're goin' to row with! Me perhaps, if I'm not jolly careful."

"Possibly."

"Well, then, a chap who's rowin' with nearly everybody can't be always in the right, you know, can he?"

Wharton's face set grimly.

"It's no good talkin', though, I suppose," sighed his lordship.

"No good at all."

"Well, no harm done. But I'm afraid the Form will get a worse captain," said Lord Mauleverer. "I hear that Vernon-Smith is puttin' up. Also Peter Todd and Fisher T. Fish, an' one or two other fellows. Quite a giddy crowd of candidates, in fact. Bob Cherry and—"

Wharton started.

"Is Cherry putting up?"

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"Yaas."

"Oh!" said Wharton, compressing his lips.

"He's a good man, an' I hope he'll get in," said Lord Mauleverer. "But I fancy the Bounder will beat him. Smithy's a good man in his way—a good skipper so far as football goes—but not a good captain for the Form—what? I told him so when he asked for my vote."

Harry Wharton looked from the window again. Bob Cherry was in sight, his rugged face flushed with healthy exercise, a face that was not handsome, but very good to look upon. But Wharton's was hard as he looked at it. Bob Cherry, his former friend, was planning to take his place, then.

"Most of the footballin' crowd will vote for Cherry, I think," went on Mauleverer. "But some of them will back up the Bounder, and Smithy's got all the slackers and black sheep on his side—Skinner and his set. I don't like the idea of Smithy gettin' in. Not a good thing for the Form. Wharton, old man, I wish you'd do the sensible thing."

"What about yourself, Mauly?"

"Eh?"

"You're popular in the Form," said Wharton, with a curious look at Lord Mauleverer. "I don't suppose you have an enemy in the Remove, or in all Greyfriars. Why not put up?"

"Oh, gad!" ejaculated Lord Mauleverer, in astonishment. Evidently the idea had not crossed his noble mind.

"Go in and win!" said Wharton. "I'll back you up, for what that's worth. I've still got some friends in the Remove who will vote as I do. Put down your name as a candidate, Mauly, and go in and win."

Lord Mauleverer blinked at him.

"You mean that, Wharton?"

"Yes, rather!"

"You think I'd make a good Form captain?" asked Mauly.

Wharton hesitated a second.

"I think you're the most decent chap in the Remove, Mauly, and I'd like to see you captain of the Form."

"Really, old fellow? You're awfully flatterin', you know," said Mauleverer, evidently rather taken with the idea. "By gad, if you're quite sure that you don't mind my buttin' into your place and—"

"Quite sure."

"I'd rather see you make it up with Quelch, you know, and—"

"That's out of the question."

"Well, if you're sure of that—"

"Quite."

"Then it's a go!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer. "It's a jolly old go, old bean, and I'm goin' in for it."

"Good man!"

"Oh, gad, there's the bell!"

The bell rang for class, and there was a rush of Bob Cherry & Co. from the quad towards the Remove Form room. Harry Wharton walked out of the Rag with Lord Mauleverer, with a smile on his face. But it was not a pleasant smile.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Candidates!

HARRY WHARTON had all eyes upon him as he entered the Remove Form room.

He did not seem to observe it.

He went sedately to his place in the Form and sat down quietly. As a matter of fact, he knew that, for the present, he occupied a more prominent position than ever in the eyes of the Lower Fourth. He had been captain of the Form, and he had been turned out of the captaincy by an act of authority

of his Form master. It was the first time such a thing had happened in the memory of the Remove, and the wonder had been great as to how Wharton would take it.

He was not a fellow to take any injury "lying down," and he could not be expected to realise that he was in the wrong, and had received no more than he deserved. So there was every prospect of more trouble in the Form, not a pleasant prospect to fellows who wished Wharton well, and were sorry to see him on his present course. Pleasant enough, however, to fellows like Skinner and Snoop and their set, who were glad to see the captain of the Form down at last, and hoped to see him farther down yet.

Wharton had taken his fall calmly enough. Indeed, he had given no sign of what he thought or felt on the subject. More and more of late he had grown reserved, non-communicative, though there was nothing that could be called "sulky" about him. Towards his old friends he was indifferent, yet did not cut them. If they happened to come in contact he would speak civilly enough. With other fellows in the Remove he was friendly and pleasant, and it was certain that he could have found friends to replace the old had he so desired. But he did not so desire, apparently.

There was now no one in the Remove who could be considered his rival, though many were his friends. He seemed cheerful enough, too. Apparently the present state of affairs did not weigh upon his spirits.

Indeed, Wharton's mood in these days was a puzzle to a good many fellows, possibly, to some extent, to himself.

But that he intended to go on his own way, following his own obstinate bent, whithersoever it might lead him, was clear to all. Right or wrong, he was going on his own way.

Mr. Quelch glanced at him as he came into the Form-room, and Wharton met his eyes calmly and steadily. If there was defiance in his steady gaze, it was nothing tangible enough for the Form master to take note of. Yet his look roused Mr. Quelch's anger and resentment once more. He frowned as he went to his desk.

That morning a notice had appeared on the board in the Remove master's hand, assigning the date for the re-election. And the Remove was naturally considerably excited on the subject.

Wharton had lost a good deal of his popularity of late, but had he been allowed to stand for re-election, it was probable that he would have retained his old position.

But with Wharton barred as a candidate, the outcome was exceedingly doubtful.

Vernon-Smith had announced himself as an aspirant for the captaincy, and it was certain that the Bounder would get a good following. But there were many fellows in the Remove, like Mauleverer, who shook their heads at the idea.

Peter Todd had a chance, perhaps less than the Bounder, still, a good chance. Bob Cherry was undoubtedly more popular than either of them, and the footballing fraternity favoured Bob, who was the best half-back the Lower Fourth could boast. But Bob, good, honest fellow as he was, and first-class footballer, was not, perhaps, likely to turn out so well as captain, and he was conscious of that himself. Nobody could help liking Bob Cherry—even Skinner rather liked him. But as captain of the Form, he did not seem, somehow, to fit in the picture.

Fisher T. Fish had announced his candidature, amid laughter. The American

junior was of opinion that what the Remove really required in a captain was Transatlantic brains, and keenness, and cuteness, and of those qualities Fishy guessed and calculated that he had unlimited quantities. But it was probable that Fisher T. Fish would capture only one vote in the election—his own.

Billy Bunter was also a candidate, regarded with still more merriment than Fishy. Bunter took the matter seriously, but was the only fellow in the Remove who did.

So far, nothing was known of Lord Mauleverer's intentions, but his lordship was thinking over the matter very seriously during third lesson. Mauly was a modest fellow, and it would never have occurred to him to put himself forward. But he had a very great respect for Wharton's opinion, and if Wharton thought he was good enough, Mauly was prepared to think so, too.

And the more he thought about it, the more his lordship found that he fancied the idea. Certainly, it would be some trouble, and his lordship hated trouble. It might mean exertion, and he detested exertion. Nevertheless, he was prepared to face the trouble and the exertion, and to captain the Remove if they wanted him so to do. If they did not want him, they could say so, by means of their votes; and his lordship would retire with undisturbed equanimity from the field.

After third lesson, before dismissing the Form, Mr. Quelch spoke on the subject of the coming election. It was a serious matter in the eyes of the Lower Fourth, and the Form-master viewed it with becoming seriousness.

"No doubt you have seen the notice I placed on the board this morning," said Mr. Quelch. "The election of a captain of the Remove will take place at three o'clock on Wednesday afternoon. Any boy in the Remove, with one exception, is permitted to offer himself as a candidate. I shall now take down the names of the candidates. Every boy who wishes to offer himself for election will give me his name."

Several fellows jumped up at once. Billy Bunter was the first, and Fisher T. Fish the second. There was a chuckle in the Remove.

Then Bob Cherry, Peter Todd, and Vernon-Smith rose to their feet. And then Harry Wharton.

"My hat!" murmured Skinner to Scoop. "His Highness is askin' for more trouble."

Mr. Quelch fixed an icy glance on Wharton. All eyes in the Remove turned once more on the late captain of the Form.

"You may sit down, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "You are not concerned in this matter."

"I think I am, sir."

"What?" exclaimed the Remove master. "I have already told you, Wharton, that you will not be allowed to stand for re-election."

"Quite so, sir. All the same, I suppose I have a right to protest."

"To protest?"

"Yes, sir. I protest against a new election taking place at all," said Wharton.

"I still consider myself captain of the Remove, until I am turned out by a majority of votes. That hasn't happened."

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes on Wharton.

A pin might have been heard to drop in the Form-room for some moments.

Mr. Quelch's hand strayed to the cane on his desk. But he withdrew.

"I presume, Wharton, that your remark is intended for insolence," he said last.

"Not at all, sir. I am stating a fact."

"You will take five hundred lines. Now sit down."

Wharton sat down.

At a sign from Mr. Quelch the five candidates came out before the Form. Mr. Quelch gave Bunter a frown.

"You really wish to have your name taken down, Bunter?"

"Oh, certainly," said Bunter cheerfully.

"Very well. And you, Fish?"

"I guess so, sir."

"Do you mean yes or no?" snapped Mr. Quelch. He was feeling angry and annoyed, hence his affected inability to understand the American language.

"Yep!"

"What?"

"Sure!" said Fisher T. Fish.

"Can you speak English, Fish?"

"Just a few, sir."

Mr. Quelch frowned, and gave it up.

"Look here, you ass, Mauly—" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"Oh, really, Mauly, I was counting on you to back me up, you know," said Billy Bunter reproachfully.

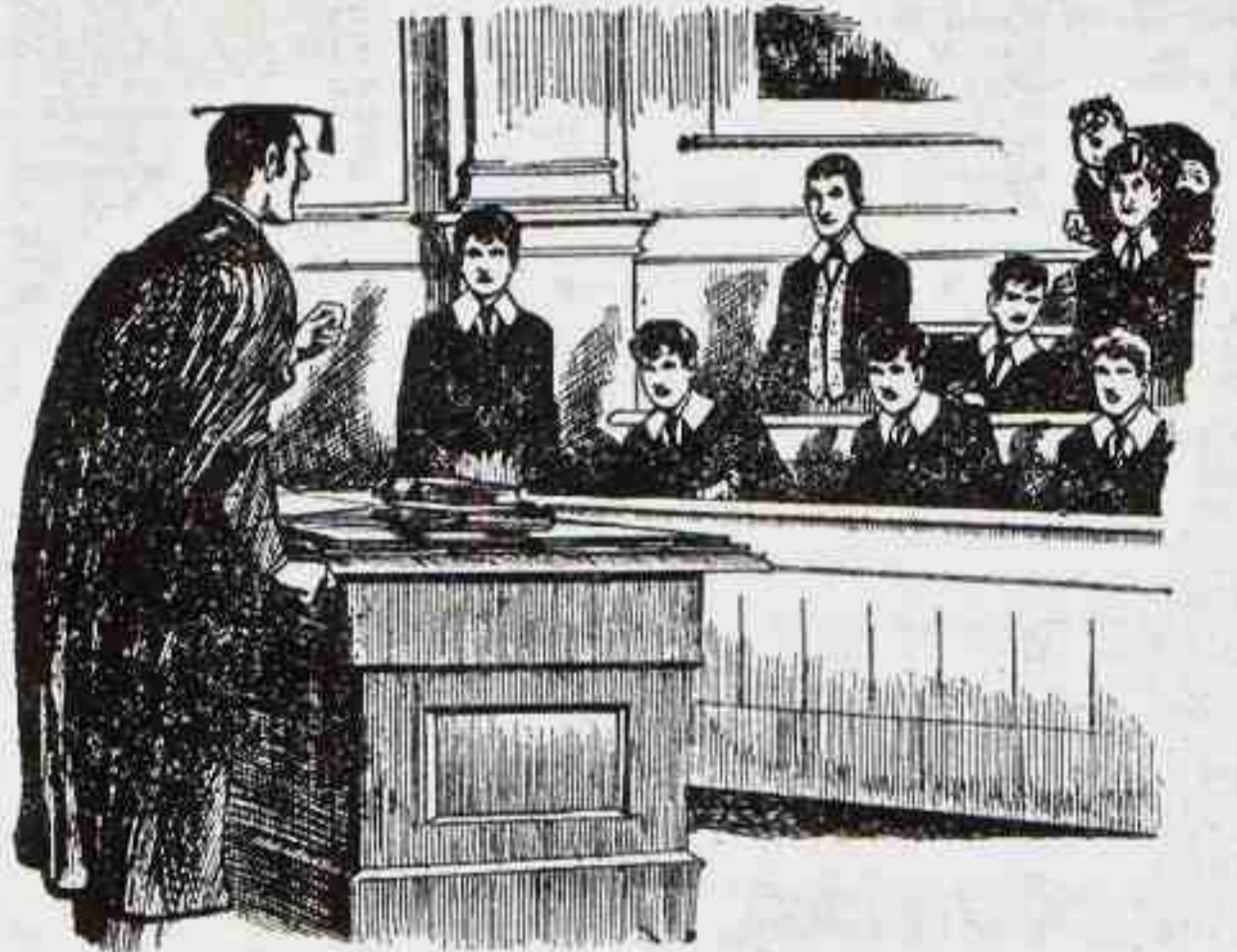
"I guess I wanted your vote, Mauly," said Fisher T. Fish.

A buzzing crowd of fellows, many of them laughing, surrounded Lord Mauleverer in the corridor. His lordship was smiling and amiable, but quite determined. He had put in his name as a candidate, and was resolved to stand by it. It had taken the Lower Fourth quite by surprise. Lord Mauleverer had not been expected to display sufficient energy even to vote in the election.

"Well, this is a giddy surprise," said Bob Cherry, laughing. "You're a giddy dark horse, Mauly."

"Yaas," assented Mauleverer.

"Rot!" said Peter Todd. "Better cut it out, Mauly, and vote for me, old man."



"You may sit down, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch coldly. "You are not concerned in this matter." "I think I am, sir!" "What?" exclaimed the Form-master. "I protest against a new election taking place!" said Wharton. "I still consider myself captain of the Remove!" (See Chapter 2.)

at that. Five names were taken down, and then the Remove had a surprise. Lord Mauleverer rose in his place and stepped out.

"Please put me down, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Skinner. "Mauly's woke up for the election."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch frowned away the laughter.

"Very good, Mauleverer." He glanced over the Form. "Is that all?"

That apparently was all. It was enough; six candidates was a good allowance for a junior Form election.

"Dismiss!" said Mr. Quelch.

And the Remove marched out of their Form-room in quite a buzz of excitement.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Rivals of the Remove!

"MAULY!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's woke up for the occasion!" chortled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll come along and wake you up in time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rats!" said Lord Mauleverer cheerfully. "I'm goin' in for it hot an' strong, I can tell you."

"You silly owl!" exclaimed the Bounder.

"Thanks."

"What sort of a Form captain do you think you will make?" demanded Vernon-Smith.

"Better than you, old top."

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"You see, I want to keep you out, Smithy," said his lordship. "You don't mind, do you? But really, I think you wouldn't do."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Bounder granted angrily.

"You see, you're a great footballer, and all that," said Mauleverer. "But there are other things. I really think that a captain of the Form ought to be a respectable sort of chap—what?"

"What?" ejaculated the Bounder.

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"Now, you're not really a very respectable sort of chap, are you, Smithy? Nothin' against you, you know, but you're not."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!" growled the Bounder, and he walked away. As a matter of fact, Lord Mauleverer had voiced the opinion of a good many members of the Remove. There was rather a taint of the "black sheep" about the Bounder, and even his own chum, Tom Redwing, was a little doubtful.

"Quite right, you fellows," said Billy Bunter. "The Bounder's no good; he's shady, you know. A Form captain ought to be like Pontius Pilate's aunt—above suspicion."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Russell. "Do you mean Caesar's wife, fathead?"

"No, I don't! I mean Pontius Pilate's aunt. You don't know much about these things, Russell."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Toddy's no good, either," went on Bunter. "You ought really to see that for yourself, Toddy. I hate to mention it, as I used to be your study-mate; but you're really not quite the class, are you?"

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really Toddy—"

Peter Todd slipped his arm into Russell's, and walked away with him, in earnest talk. Peter was earnest; Russell grinning. No doubt Peter was explaining the various and unanswerable reasons why Russell should vote for him on Wednesday.

"As for Fishy," went on Bunter, "that's utter rot! I wouldn't be found dead in the Form if Fishy were captain!"

"I guess you'll be found burst if you don't ring off, you cheeky porpoise!" grunted Fisher T. Fish.

"Bob Cherry isn't much good, either," said Bunter, blinking round at the grinning Removites through his big spectacles. "I suppose you're not going to elect a chap Form captain because he's got the biggest feet in the Remove."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Why, you fat duffer!" roared Bob Cherry.

"You fellows vote for me," said Bunter. "Vote for the best man—that's really your duty, you know. Pick out the best all-round man—"

"Well, you're all-round enough!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The all-roundfulness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky—"

"But are you really putting up, Mauly?" said Frank Nugent. "It's rather sudden, isn't it?"

"Yaas."

"What put the idea into your silly head?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"My dear chap—"

"Oh, let old Mauly rip," said Bob good-naturedly. "He's a right to put up, if he chooses."

"Thanks, old bean!"

"Rot!" growled Johnny Bull. "It will split the vote, and it's split enough already. The Bounder will be hard to beat."

"Well, the vote will be split enough, anyhow, with six giddy candidates in the field," said Bob.

"Mauly's playing the goat. We don't want a Form captain who hasn't sense enough to go in when it rains."

"If the Remove don't want me they can say so," said Lord Mauleverer amiably. "It goes by vote."

"Fathead!"

"Cheese it, Johnny, old man," said Bob Cherry. "It's a free country, you know. Mauly will do as he likes."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 884.

"Yaas, begad!"

"Rot!" snorted Johnny Bull. "I don't believe Mauly even thought of this for himself. Some rotter has put him up to split the vote. I dare say Skinner suggested it to him."

"Not guilty, my lord!" grinned Skinner. "But I'm jolly well going to vote for Mauly. I was thinking of backing up Smithy—anything to keep your gang out. But I'm backing Mauly."

"Same here," said Snoop.

"Hear, hear!" said Stott.

Lord Mauleverer looked rather dismayed.

"Here, I say, hang it all!" he exclaimed. "What the thump are you backin' me up for, Skinner? I hope there's nothin' about me that you approve of."

"Wha-a-at—" stuttered Skinner.

There was a roar of laughter from the Removites. Skinner's expression was really extraordinary.

"I mean that, you know," said Mauleverer. "Of course, you can vote for me if you like. I can't stop you. But I don't like the idea of bein' your candidate, Skinner. I don't really."

"You silly owl!" bawled Skinner. "I jolly well won't vote for you now."

"All serene, old chap! Don't yell."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Somebody's put it into the silly chump's head," persisted Johnny Bull. "Mauly never thinks of anything for himself."

"Oh, gad!" said Mauly.

"I've been making a calculation, and I work it out that we shall just beat the Bounder," said Johnny. "That ass Mauly butting in may spoil the whole thing. Somebody's been putting it into his silly head, and if it wasn't Skinner it was some other scheming sort of rotter—"

"Look here—" hooted Skinner.

"Oh, draw it mild!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer warmly. "I suppose I may make as good a Form captain as the next chap. Wharton's got some judgment, and he thinks I shall do all right, anyhow; and if you don't mind my mentionin' it, I think more of Wharton's judgment than of yours, Bull, old bean."

"Wharton!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

"Yaas."

Johnny Bull's eyes gleamed.

"Wharton put it into your head to stand for Form captain, did he?"

"I don't know that he put it into my head," said Lord Mauleverer. "He thought it a good idea, and said so."

"Pulling your leg, you silly ass, to dish us!" growled Johnny Bull. "And a pretty, low-down trick, too."

Lord Mauleverer looked steadily at Johnny Bull.

"That's not Wharton's way," he said.

"He may be a bit of a wilful beggar, but he's straight. He thinks I'm a good man for the job, an' I jolly well agree with him. Anyhow, I'm standin'. And you can go and eat coke, Bull!"

"What?"

"Coke!" said his lordship.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a rotten trick," said Johnny Bull savagely. "I never thought that Wharton would come down to that. He's making a fool of you just to dish the election for us."

"That's enough!" exclaimed Lord Mauleverer angrily. "Wharton's a friend of mine, and I'm not going to hear him run down. Cheese it!"

"You silly chump, I say, again—"

"You've said quite enough. Cheese it!" said Lord Mauleverer. "I'm not a whale as a fightin' man, but I shall punch your head, Bull, if you say another word like that about Wharton."

Johnny Bull glared, and pushed back his cuffs.

"Punch it!" he said.

"Yaas—certainly!"

And the next moment Lord Mauleverer would have suited the action to the word. But at that moment he was pushed gently aside, and Harry Wharton stood in his place, facing the angry Johnny.

"This is my affair, Mauly," said the late captain of the Remove. "Leave it to me."

"My dear chap—"

"Leave it to me, old man!"

"Any old thing," said Lord Mauleverer amiably.

Wharton fixed his eyes on Johnny Bull's flushed, angry face.

"Ready!" he said.

There was a buzz in the crowd of Removites in the corridor. For a moment it looked as if the two former friends would close in strife. But Bob Cherry grasped Bull by the arm.

"Chuck it!" he muttered.

"Look here—"

"Come away, old man!"

Johnny Bull reluctantly assented. Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders, and walked away with Lord Mauleverer. The crowd of Removites broke up, and Skinner looked after the late captain of the Remove with a very curious expression on his face.

"Wharton's coming out," he said to Snoop. "I never liked the chap, but—"

Skinner paused, and whistled.

"It's a trick," said Snoop. "He's dead against his old crowd, and he don't like Bob Cherry buttin' in for the captaincy. He's makin' a fool of Mauly just to dish that crowd."

"That's it."

"Poor old Mauly! He's ass enough for anybody to take him in," said Snoop, with contemptuous commiseration.

"It beats me," said Skinner. "I never liked Wharton. Too much swank for me. Too high-and-mighty altogether. But—well, it beats me! I never liked him, but I believed he was straight. This isn't straight, Snoopey."

"Not half!" grinned Snoop.

"I'm rather shocked at him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Snoop, rather tickled at the idea of Harold Skinner being shocked at anything.

"Well, I mean it," said Skinner. "It wasn't only Wharton's swank that used to get my goat, as Fishy put it; but he was so high-falutin. Things that were good enough for other fellows were never good enough for him. So jolly particular, and all that. But taking in a simple chap like Mauly to pay out his old friends—well, I should baulk a bit at that myself, and I never set up to be particular. Wharton's changed a lot. Bless if I can quite make it out!"

"It's rather a shame," said Snoop. "Mauly will make an ass of himself, of course. He's got no chance."

"Don't you make any mistake, Snoopey. He's got a jolly good chance, and Wharton knows it. He'll make about the worst Form captain that ever was, and Wharton knows that, too. And he don't care!" Skinner whistled again. "My belief is that Mauly will get in. Everybody likes him, for one thing, and he's a harmless ass for another, and he's got tons of money for another. Nobody's quite satisfied with any of the other candidates. They've all got some drawbacks."

"That's so," agreed Snoop.

"Toddy is a good man, in his way, but he's rather a freak," said Skinner. "Smithy's the real goods, but he's a bit of a blackguard. Bob Cherry is all right, of course; but he's rather an ass, and

lots of the fellows will vote to keep Wharton's old gang out. I know I shall. Mauly will very likely walk into a walk-over."

"Jolly cute of Wharton, in that case."

"And jolly low down, just as Bull said. My hat's he's comin' out!" said Skinner. "If Wharton goes on in this way, Snoopoy, I shall begin to feel quite friendly to him."

Snoop chuckled.

"You remember the giddy fallen angel in Milton that we get in Sunday prep?" said Skinner. "Jolly old Lucifer, who fell from his high estate, and great was the fall thereof. When he was down on his luck he said: 'Evil, be thou my god!' And it jolly well looks as if Wharton is going the same way, jolly well going to make all the trouble he can out of sheer cussedness. Snoopoy, my son, there's goin' to be heaps of trouble in the Remove this term."

And Skinner looked quite merry and bright at that happy prospect.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Backing Up Mauly!

THERE was great merriment in the Greyfriars Remove on the subject of Lord Mauleverer as the candidate for the captaincy of the Form.

Even his relative and study-mate, Sir Jimmy Vivian, chuckled at the idea.

The general opinion of Mauly, in the Remove, was that he was almost too lazy to live. He would exert himself almost to any extent to escape a little exertion.

As a captain of the Form it really was impossible to picture Mauly. In the Remove, Form captain was captain of football, and Lord Mauleverer as football skipper was simply a "scream" to think of, as Skinner put it.

That Mauleverer had any chance of carrying the election seemed wildly impossible at first glance. It was so obvious that he was in every possible way un-
suited for the position.

His friends and admirers, like Jimmy Vivian, doubtless would roll up to vote for Mauleverer. But even his friends must know that he would be no good as captain of the Form. Six or seven votes, perhaps, was the largest allowance for Mauly, in the general opinion at first. But that opinion soon changed.

Fellows compared notes on the subject, and quite an unexpected number, as it turned out, had decided that Mauly was the man.

Skinner & Co. had decided to back him, in spite of Mauly's unflattering reception of their support. Skinner disliked Peter Todd, and objected to Bob Cherry as a member of "Wharton's old gang," who had ruled the roost quite long enough, in Skinner's opinion. As for the Bounder, he had once been gally with Skinner, and had turned him down; and Skinner was quite glad to back up a rival candidate against him. He would have backed the Bounder against Peter Todd or Bob Cherry, but he was quite keen to back Mauly against the Bounder.

And Skinner had some influence over the shadier members of the Remove. His friends were not a pleasant set, but their votes counted.

Other fellows, much better fellows than Skinner & Co., did not want the Bounder in on account of his rather hectic record. A fellow who had once been distinguished as a "pub-haunter," and had not quite given up that peculiar pursuit, was

not a proper captain for the Remove. The Bounder had a good following, but plenty of fellows would have preferred to see Mauly in. If he was a "dud" in some respects, at least he was straight as a die, without stain and without reproach.

Bob Cherry was a popular candidate, but many shared Skinner's feeling that Wharton's old crowd had ruled the roost long enough. And Bob, though now on unfriendly terms with the late captain of the Remove, was a prominent member of the old crowd.

As for Peter Todd, he had a following, too. But most of the Removites regarded him as rather too original a character to be seriously regarded as a possible captain for the Form. Skinner characterised him as a "freak," which was coarse and unjust. But certainly Peter was not commonplace, at all events, and was looked upon as odd in some ways.

As for Bunter and Fishy, their candidature was a candidature "pour rire," as Smithy put it in French. They were simply chuckled at.

There was, as the acute Skinner had observed, some drawback attached to every candidate for election, and the only one who was unanimously liked personally was—Lord Mauleverer.

Wharton's influence counted for a good deal, too.

A majority of the Form would have re-elected Wharton had he been allowed to stand for election. His support of Mauleverer, therefore, counted for a good deal, and there were few fellows in the Remove as keen, or as suspicious, as Skinner with regard to his motives for supporting the dandy of the Remove.

Unexpectedly, therefore, it turned out that Lord Mauleverer had a very great deal of support in the Form, and when that fact transpired his supporters grew

more numerous, being added to by fellows who simply desired to be on the winning side.

Skinner, without asking his lordship's permission, appointed himself election manager for the House of Lords candidate, as he called Mauly. That evening Skinner butted cheerfully into his lordship's study full of keenness. Skinner was determined to get Mauly "in" by hook or by crook. To beat Bob Cherry and Peter Todd and the Bounder was a consummation devoutly to be wished in Skinner's amiable mind, and Lord Mauleverer was, so to speak, the stick he was going to beat them with.

He found Mauleverer resting on the luxurious sofa in Study No. 12, while Sir Jimmy Vivian was sorting out books for prep. Sir Jimmy had chuckled at the idea of Mauly as a candidate, but he was going to back him up tooth and nail, like a loyal chum. He gave Skinner a far from favouring glance, as the black sheep of the Remove came in. But his brow cleared as he learned what Skinner wanted.

"No time to waste, you fellows," said Skinner. "Election's to-morrow, you know, and we've got to get Mauly in."

"Fancy old Mauly captain of the Remove!" grinned Sir Jimmy.

"Best man for the job," said Skinner.

"Think so?"

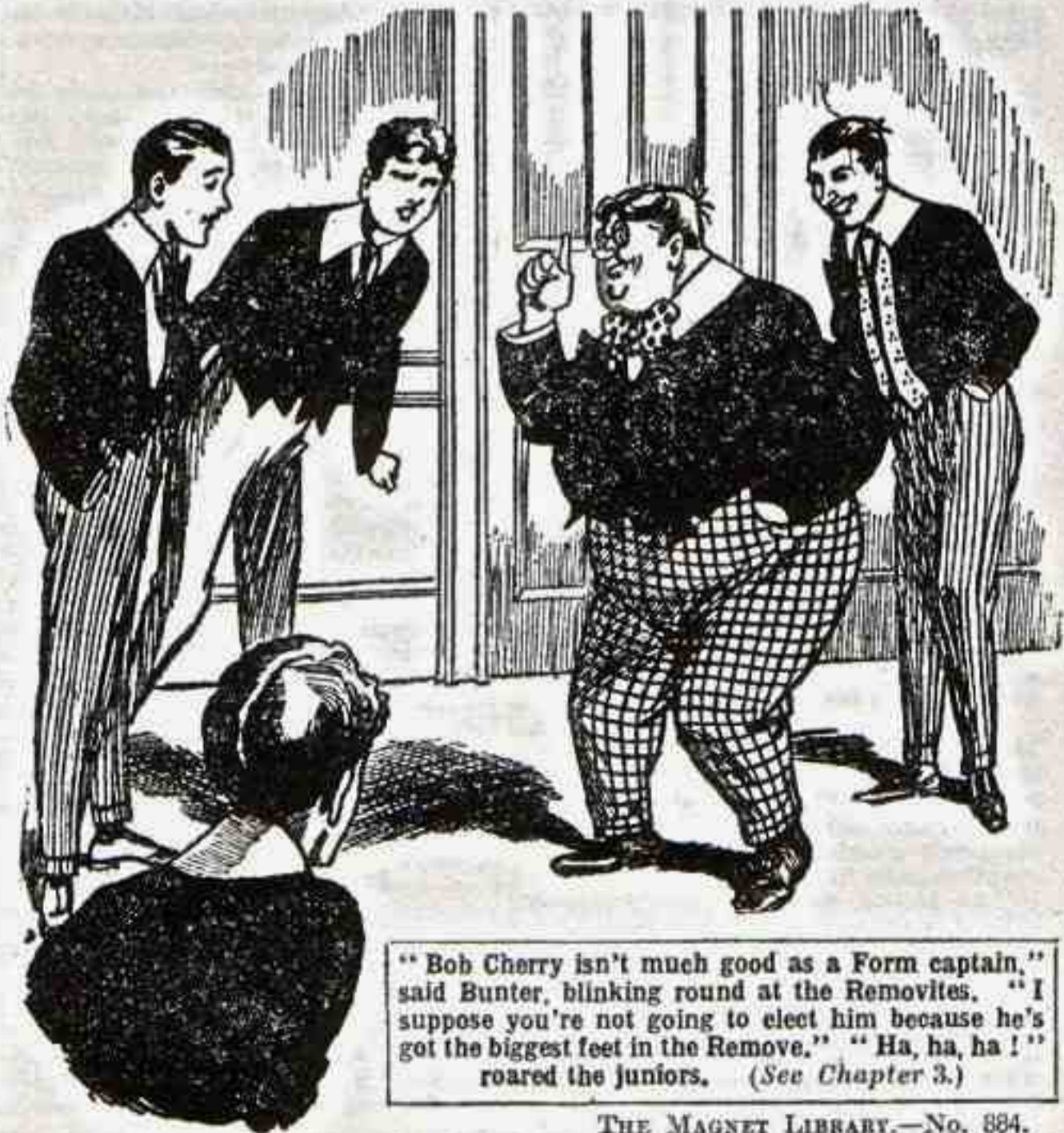
"Certain!"

"By gad, you're very flatterin', Skinner!" yawned his lordship from the sofa.

"My dear man, lots of fellows think so," said Skinner calmly. "What we want is a decent, straight chap, fellow who plays the game all along the line. That's you, Mauly."

"Hear, hear!" said Vivian.

"But you don't like straight chaps, as a rule, Skinner," said his lordship, with a perplexed air.



"Bob Cherry isn't much good as a Form captain," said Bunter, blinking round at the Removites. "I suppose you're not going to elect him because he's got the biggest feet in the Remove." "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. (See Chapter 3.)

Skinner coughed, and Sir Jimmy chuckled.

"Besides, Wharton thinks that you're the man, Mauly," went on Skinner, deciding not to hear Mauly's remark.

"Yaas."

"Well, Wharton wouldn't back you up if he didn't think you were the best man for the job, would he?"

"I'm sure not," said his lordship innocently.

"Hem! There you are, you see! We can't leave the captaincy to a freak like Todd, or a shady bouncer like Smithy, or a fathead like Bob Cherry. We want you, Mauly."

"Thanks, old bean!"

"But, of course, you'll have to exert yourself a bit—electioneerin', and all that."

Lord Mauleverer looked alarmed.

"Really, you know—" he protested. The idea of exerting himself seemed rather to discourage the House of Lords candidate.

"You'll have to make a speech or two," said Skinner.

"Oh dear!"

"But your supporters will see you through," said Skinner encouragingly. "I'm going to manage the whole thing for you."

"You're very good."

"I've been making a list already, and I've got down fifteen names. You won't need many more than that to get you in."

"Good!"

"Have you done your prep?"

Lord Mauleverer groaned. Preparation was a perpetual nightmare in his easy-going existence.

"No."

"Well, at a time like this you're not going to be bothered with prep," said Skinner. "I'm going to do it for you."

"Skinner, old man, you're a really good chap! You're a much better chap than I ever supposed!"

"Of course, you'll have to give a bit of attention, or Quelchy may catch you out in the morning—"

"Oh dear!"

"But I'll do all the work, old top!"

"Good man! But it's not allowed for chaps to help one another in prep, you know," said Lord Mauleverer dubiously.

"Rot!" said Skinner decisively.

"Chaps always do their prep together, and one looks out words for another, and all that!"

"Yaas. But a chap is supposed to dig at the thing for himself—"

"That's all rot!"

"Well, you see, a fellow must play the game," said Mauly. "If Quelchy catches me stumblin' he will ask me whether I've prepared the bosh, and I can't say I haven't, can I? And I can't say I have if I haven't."

Skinner checked the reply that was on his lips. He was not particular upon the point of a few falsehoods himself, but he knew that his views of morality would not do for Study No. 12.

"You see, it's a special occasion, Mauly," he said. "On a special occasion you can let another fellow do the work for you. You're bound to think of the Form at a—a crisis like this."

"Think so, old bean?"

"Absolutely certain, Mauly."

"All serene, then!"

Lord Mauleverer was, perhaps, easily satisfied with any reason that might be given for letting him off work. A section of the Aeneid had to be "prepared" by the Remove that evening, and Skinner proceeded to do Mauly's work for him. Skinner was quite good at it; he could have made his mark in

the Form as a scholar if he had had any ambition that way. When he chose to work he could work well. He put Lord Mauleverer through his paces in quite an efficient manner, with very little exertion on the part of his lordship, to a sufficient extent to enable Mauly to setape through in the Form room the next morning.

Then prep was dismissed.

"Now for business!" said Skinner. "There's an election meeting in the Rag at half-past eight, Mauly. You must show up and make a speech."

"I say, aren't you goin' to be my manager?"

"Certainly."

"Can't you make the speech for me?"

"You silly owl—"

"Eh?"

"I'll sketch it out for you, but you must deliver it," said Skinner. "After that, a supper in this study to your supporters."

"Yaas. But—"

"But what?" asked Skinner impatiently.

"Somebody would have to go down to the tuckshop."

"I'll do that, aw!"

"Oh, all right!"

"Something decent in the way of a study supper," said Skinner, eyeing his lordship. "Something that will make the fellows want to come."

"I say, nothin' like bribery an' corruption, you know," said Lord Mauleverer dubiously.

"My dear chap, that's all right. You're bound to treat your supporters generously—they expect it."

"Yaas; all right—if you think so."

Skinner looked at his watch.

"Now, got a move on; it's time we turned up in the Rag."

"Sure it's necessary?"

"Do you want me to carry you down?" hooted Skinner.

His lordship detached himself from the comfortable sofa, with a sigh.

"I'm ready, old bean."

Lord Mauleverer left the study with Skinner and Sir Jimmy Vivian. Skinner stopped at the door of Study No. 1, and looked in on Harry Wharton.

"Finished your prep?" he asked.

"Yes," said Harry, glancing up.

"Come on, then! All Mauly's supporters have to turn up for the meeting, you know."

Wharton hesitated a moment.

In the new line he had taken it had not occurred to him that he would be acting in confederacy with Harold Skinner. There was something very repugnant in that idea. Skinner easily read the expression on Wharton's face, and smiled sneeringly.

"You're backing Mauly up, I suppose!" he snapped.

"Yaas, come on, old fellow!" said Lord Mauleverer amiably.

Wharton nodded. It was impossible to back out now, if he had wished to do so. He had to support the candidate he had induced to enter the field. The late captain of the Remove came out of his study, and walked down to the Rag with Lord Mauleverer.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Many Candidates!

THE Rag was crowded with Remove fellows.

That apartment was used in common by the Fourth and the Remove, but on the present occasion the Fourth Form fellows had deserted it. Temple, Dabney & Co. had strolled in, but the Removites made it plain

that they did not want any outsiders present on this important occasion. Cecil Reginald Temple had raised some objection to his exclusion, and had been promptly up-ended into the passage by Bolsover major of the Remove, after which Temple & Co. retired with dignity and left the Rag to the Remove election meeting.

Almost the whole of the Remove—numerous Form—had turned up. All the candidates were there, and all of them were going to address the Form meeting in turn. There was a buzz as Lord Mauleverer came in with Harry Wharton. Billy Bunter had mounted a chair to address the meeting, and there was a general shout of.

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up!"

"Stand down!"

"Roll away!"

"Yes, shut up, Bunter!" said Todd. "We've got to get to business—you know!"

The Owl of the Remove gave Peewee an indignant glare.

"I'm a candidate, ain't I?" he bawled.

"Fathead!"

"I'm jolly well going to address the meeting!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, fair play, you know!"

"Cheese it!" called out the Bouncer.

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Push that fat duffer over, somebody."

It was only too clear, even to William George Bunter himself, that his candidature was not taken seriously by the Remove.

"You hop it, Bunter," advised Fisher T. Fish. "I guess the galoots don't want your chin-wag. I guess I'm waiting to speak, too."

"You go and eat coke, you bouncer!" I say, you fellows—"

"Roll him over."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Bob Cherry laughing. "Bunter's a giddy candidate and he's entitled to speak. Give him two minutes."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Two minutes is too much," growled Johnny Bull. "Make the most of it, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Yaas, fair play, you know," said Lord Mauleverer. "Go it, Bunter."

"Silence for the giddy speech!" chuckled Hazeldene. "Get it over, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Hazel—"

"Get it over!" roared Bolsover major.

"Go it, Bunter!"

Bunter blinked over the impatient meeting through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Buck up!"

"Gentlemen of the Remove—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm going to say a few—a few well-chosen words—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's going to be a new captain of the Form—"

"We know that."

"What the Remove wants," bawled Bunter, "is a fellow fit for the job—a chap who's good at games—that's me—and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"First-class footballer, though let out of matches by the jealousy of the late captain of the Form—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"There are some fellows," went on Bunter, "who are born to command. That's the kind you want. I'm that sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "An eye like Mars, to threaten and command, you know, as Tennyson says in—"
 "Ha, ha! Make it Shakespeare."
 "Four eyes, you mean!" roared Bolsover major.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You beast, Bolsover—"
 "Are you finished?" shouted Ogilvy.
 "No, I haven't! I haven't started yet—"
 "Your mistake, you're finished," said Bolsover major, and he jerked the leg of the chair upon which the Owl of the Remove was standing.
 Bump!
 "Oh! Yarooooooop!"
 "Roll him away," said Skinner. "Next man in."
 "I say, you fellows—"
 "Sit on him, somebody!"
 "Groooooogh! Gerroff! Ow!"
 Billy Bunter's speech was over. Fisher T. Fish set the chair straight and jumped on it.
 "Gentlemen and galoots—"
 "You dry up, Fishy!"
 "Gentlemen, I offer myself—"
 "No takers!"
 "I guess I offer myself as a candidate for your suffrages. I guess the captain the Remove wants is a real, live American, with something like brains in his cabeza, and some vim in him, and some push and go. You get me? That's the word—push and go!" said Fisher T. Fish impressively. "You want waking me! A galoot raised in Noo Yark is the precise galoot you want. Got me? Push and go— Yarooooooop!"
 Fisher T. Fish was taken at his word, though not in the sense he intended. Bolsover major pushed the chair, and Fishy went!
 He landed on the floor with a bump and a yell.
 "Next man in!" said Skinner.
 "Toddy! Go it, Toddy!"
 Peter Todd mounted the rostrum. Peter was given a hearing; he was not the fellow to be handled like Bunter or Fishy. For five minutes Peter Todd was allowed to address the meeting, and there was some cheering. Then the Bounder took his place, and there was a general movement of interest. It was easy to see that the Bounder commanded a much larger number of supporters than Toddy.
 "Gentlemen," said Vernon-Smith, "I'll say only a few words—"
 "The fewer the better," said Snoop.
 "Order!"
 "In the first place, I'll say I'm sorry Wharton's out of the captaincy. I've had my troubles with Wharton, on and off—"
 "Who hasn't?" interjected a voice. And there was laughter. The Bounder grinned, and went on:
 "I've had my troubles with Wharton, at times, as I've said, but he was a jolly good captain, and I think it's rather tack of Quelchy to boot him out. Still, he's out, and we want a new skipper, and I think I'm the man. You all know my football record—"
 "Hear, hear!"
 "Bravo!"
 "If I'm given the job of leading the Remove, I shall do my very best to lead—"
 "To the Cross Keys?" inquired a voice.
 There was a roar of laughter.
 "I shall lead it—"
 "To the nearest billiard-room?" further inquired the voice.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Shut up! Order!"
 The Bounder's face was crimson.



"Oh, gad! I—I—I say—oh, my hat! Whoop!" gasped Lord Mauleverer as Wingate hooked him off the sofa by his collar. Bump! He sprawled on his expensive study carpet. "Get up!" said Wingate grimly. "I'm going to teach you not to slack!" (See Chapter 7.)

"I think I shall make a pretty good Form captain. I shall do my best. As vice-captain of football, I've sometimes led the team—"
 "More vice than captain!" said Skinner.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I'd rather see Wharton back in his job. But failing Wharton, I think I shall fill the bill pretty well—"
 "Until you get sacked for breaking bounds."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Order!"
 The Bounder gave Skinner a black look, and stepped down. His place was immediately taken by Bob Cherry.
 There was loud cheering for Bob. He was generally liked, and the Removites were ready to cheer him, though many of them without any intention of following up their cheers with votes.
 "Gentlemen of the Remove—"
 "Hear, hear!"
 "Go it, Bob!"
 "I'm standing for election," said honest Bob, his rugged face flushed a little under the stare of so many eyes. "It's no good saying that I shall make as good a captain as Wharton, because I know I shouldn't—"
 "Oh, my hat!"
 "But it's not a matter of choice about it. I don't think really I could captain the Remove so well as Smithy—"
 "Great Scott!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Well, this is a jolly original sort of

electioneering speech, and no mistake," murmured Skinner.
 "But you see," went on Bob, "I don't think Smithy's the man. Nothing against Smithy, of course—we're friends, ain't we, Smithy?"
 "Oh, rather," grinned the Bounder.
 "But Smithy isn't the man for Form captain, owing to one or two little drawbacks that I needn't mention."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "The other candidates are simply piffle," went on Bob. "If you've got any sense, you won't elect any of them. It's really between Smithy and me—or should be!—and in my opinion, Smithy isn't the man, owing to those little drawbacks I've mentioned."
 "You haven't mentioned them yet," objected Snoop.
 "Give 'em a name!" roared Bolsover major.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Well, you all know what I mean," said Bob. "If Smithy never played the goat, I'd withdraw, and vote for him myself, as the next best man to Wharton. But he does play the goat; there's no getting out of that, is there, Smithy?"
 "You ass!"
 "No offence, you know, old chap!"
 "Fathcad!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Well, I'm sorry if you take offence, Smithy, old scout, but there it is. I'm bound to put it plain," said Bob. "If

"I'm elected, you chaps, I shall do my best as captain of the Form—"

"Might as well do your worst," said Skinner. "There wouldn't be much difference."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Skinner!" roared Johnny Bull.

"The shutupfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed and ridiculous Skinner."

"Go it, Bob!" shouted Nugent.

"Well, I think I've said enough!" said Bob.

"Too much!" said Skinner.

"I was going to say something more, but I've forgotten—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wasn't really keen on standing," said Bob. "But my friends think I ought to put up for the job, and I'm putting up. There aren't any good candidates, but I really think I'm the best of the bunch—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"We've had enough of the old gang!" shouted Skinner.

"Hear, hear!"

"That doesn't seem sense to me," said Bob Cherry. "But I'm not begging for votes. Here I am, if the Remove wants me. That's all."

And Bob stopped down.

"Last man in!" said Peter Todd.

"Buck up, Mauly!"

Skinner pushed Lord Mauleverer forward, and helped him on the chair. His lordship blinked over the meeting. Harry Wharton stood by his side as a prominent supporter.

"Gentlemen and fellows—"

"Bravo!"

"Skinner says I've got to make a speech—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He was going to make it up for me, but he hasn't, so I really don't know what to say—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I shall be no end obliged to you chaps if you'll vote for me. I shall take it really kindly, you know."

"Hear, hear!"

"And—"

"Go it, Mauly!"

"And—"

"On the ball!"

"And—"

"Bravo!"

"And—and that's 'about all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well done, Mauly!"

The Rag rang with laughter and cheers. Lord Mauleverer stepped down from the chair. But he stepped up again.

"Oh, I say, I forgot—"

"Go it!"

"I want all my supporters to come to my study this evening for supper."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo!"

"That's all, old chaps!" And his lordship stepped down again.

"I say, Mauly, I'm backing you up!" roared Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, aren't you a candidate yourself, old fat bean?"

"I withdraw in your favour, Mauly, old fellow. I say, what will there be for supper?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton stepped on the chair. There was hushed attention at once. Wharton glanced over the meeting, seemingly unconscious of the grim looks from his former comrades.

"Gentlemen—"

"Go it, Wharton!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 334.

"I'm no longer your captain, owing to what I regard as an act of tyranny of Mr. Quelch—"

"Oh!"

"But there may be some fellows present who think my opinion of some value," went on Wharton. "I may be mistaken—"

"No, no! Go on!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Very well, I'm going to vote for Mauleverer myself. I'd like to see all the Remove roll up and vote for him. Mauleverer's a decent chap—one of the very best—straight as a die—"

"Bravo!"

"I'm going to vote for him tomorrow. If I've still got any friends in the Remove, I'd like to see them vote as I do."

With that, Harry Wharton stepped down from the chair, and walked out of the Rag with his arm linked in Mauleverer's.

A quarter of an hour later the Remove passage was crowded with fellows—a procession that was heading for Study No. 12.

Supper in Mauly's study was a feast of the gods, and Lord Mauleverer's loyal supporters did not neglect his invitation.

Prominent among them was William George Bunter. Perhaps Bunter had realised how small were his chances of figuring as captain of the Remove. Perhaps he considered that a supper with Mauly was worth more than the captaincy of the Form. At all events, he was there, distinguishing himself at the festive board. The study was crowded when Fisher T. Fish came in.

The meeting in the Rag had convinced Fisher T. Fish, much against the grain, that the Remove did not want a real live American, with plenty of push and go, for captain. So Fishy, as a cute business man, consoled himself with the supper in Mauly's study, on the principle that half a loaf was better than no bread. Vernon-Smith strolled along the passage a little later, and looked in, and walked away, shrugging his shoulders. More than half the Remove were in the study, or waiting outside, and it was borne in upon the Bounder's mind that the question of the captaincy of the Remove was already settled.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Captain Lord Mauleverer!

IT was over!

Wednesday afternoon had come and gone.

Mr. Quelch had been present, with two prefects of the Sixth Form, at the Remove election, which took place in the Rag duly at the appointed hour.

Two of the candidates having withdrawn, and having ranged themselves as supporters of Lord Mauleverer, there remained only four in the field.

Of the four, Peter Todd came off worst, with only half a dozen votes. The Bounder was next lowest—much to his chagrin. He had all the qualities required for a good captain of the Form, only he had some qualities that were not required. What Skinner called his "juicy old reputation" told heavily against him in such an affair. The Remove did not want to be captained by a fellow who had been, more than once, within measurable distance of the "sack," and might be within measurable distance of it again.

Bob Cherry came next; but the idea, sedulously fostered by Skinner & Co., that the "old gang" had ruled the roost long enough, told against Bob. Lord Mauleverer was an easy first,

His lordship was greatly elated.

To the duties and responsibilities of his new post, it was probable that his easy-going lordship had not yet given a thought. He took the result of the election as a testimony of the Remove's friendly feeling towards himself—as indeed it largely was.

Mr. Quelch was probably not pleased by the result—all the more because he knew that Mauleverer was Wharton's candidate, and that Harry Wharton had used all his influence in his lordship's behalf. Without that influence, it was not likely that Mauleverer would have been successful. But Mr. Quelch could only register the decision of the voters, and it was duly announced that Herbert Mauleverer, was elected captain of the Remove. After Mr. Quelch and the prefects had retired, Lord Mauleverer was carried shoulder-high out of the Rag by his enthusiastic supporters.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders over the result.

"Precious asses!" was his comment. "Fat lot of good Mauly will be when the Rookwood match comes along."

"Precious asses!" agreed Peter Todd. "Why didn't you stand down and vote for me, Smithy?"

"Why didn't you stand down and vote for me?" growled the Bounder.

"No jolly fear!"

"Bob Cherry would have been better than that ass!" growled the Bounder.

"It really was a bit thick Wharton putting him up to it. But he would have been beaten if we had all stood together. It was splitting the vote that got Mauleverer in!"

"You shouldn't have split the vote, Smithy."

"Fathend! You shouldn't have!"

"Pair of asses, both of you!" growled Johnny Bull. "If you'd stood together and backed us up, Bob would have got it!"

Peter shook his head.

"I know that. But we've had enough of the old gang, old chap."

"Oh, don't give me any of Skinner's piffle at second-hand!" growled Johnny Bull. "Bob was the man, and you know it! What good is Mauleverer going to be?"

"Precious little!"

"Well, then, ass—"

"I dare say he'll get fed-up with it, and resign," said Peter Todd cheerfully. "Then if you back me up—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

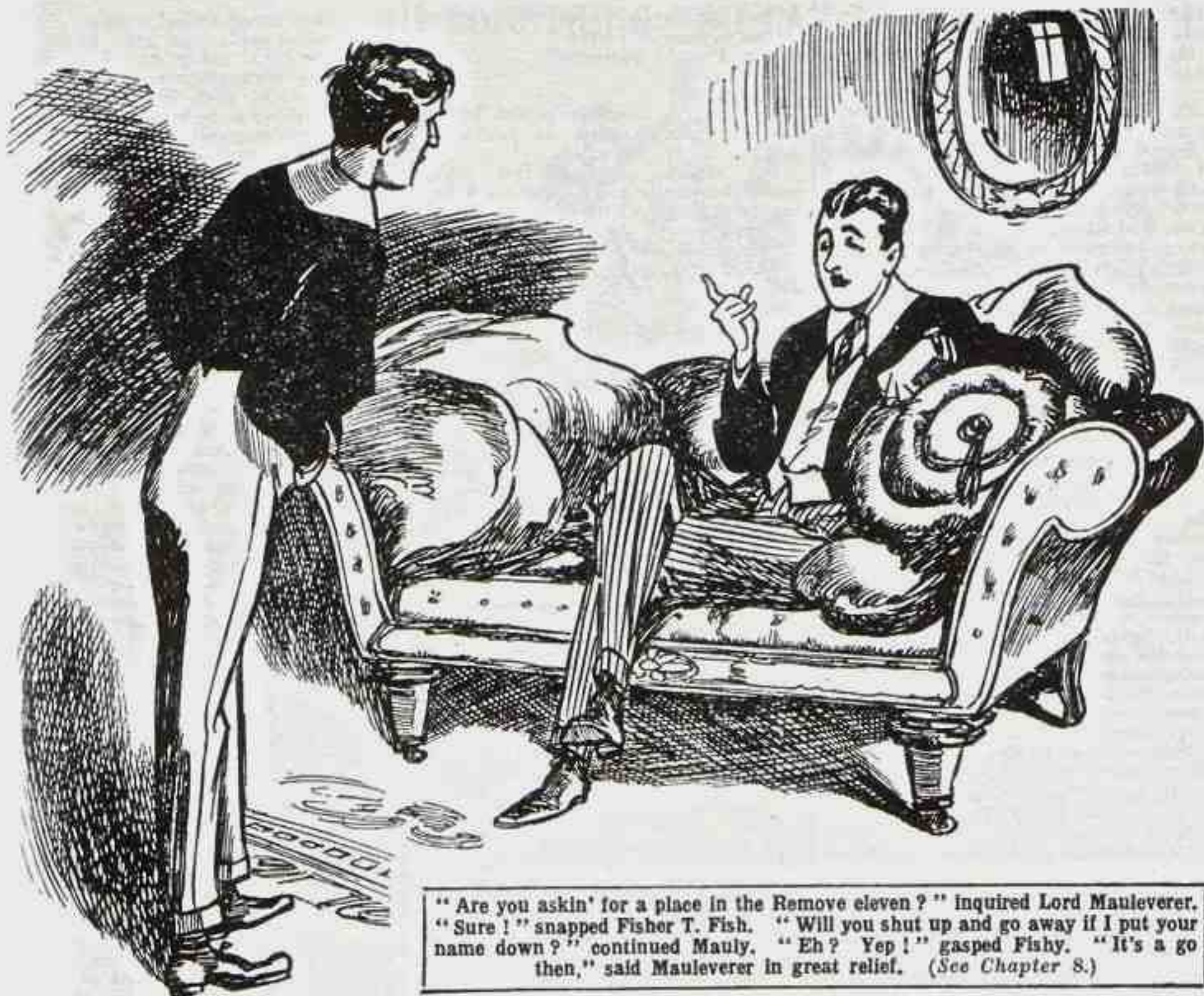
Peter Todd grinned and strolled out of the Rag. The Bounder followed him, with a frown on his face. Peter's chances had always been slight, but Vernon-Smith, who had a great deal of influence in the Form, had counted on many more votes than he had received. It was rather a "lacer" for him to realise how slight was his hold on the Remove when it came to a matter of serious import.

Bob Cherry did not look ruffled. As a matter of fact, Bob had not been very keen on election. But his friends were disappointed, and all the more exasperated, because they knew that they owed Bob's defeat to the late captain of the Remove.

Wharton was still in the Rag, and his glance rested, with rather a mocking expression, on the Co., as they stood in a group together discussing the result. Johnny Bull gave him a grim look, more than half-disposed to walk across and pick a quarrel with him on the spot.

"It's all Wharton's doing!" Johnny Bull muttered. "He put Mauly up to make a fool of himself, just to dish us."

"I'm afraid so," said Frank Nugent, with a clouded brow.



"Are you askin' for a place in the Remove eleven?" inquired Lord Mauleverer. "Sure!" snapped Fisher T. Fish. "Will you shut up and go away if I put your name down?" continued Mauly. "Eh? Yep!" gasped Fishy. "It's a go then," said Mauleverer in great relief. (See Chapter 8.)

"The dishfulness was terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Well, it can't be helped," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "No good crying over spilt milk."

"It's rotten, all the same. It's low-down."

"Oh, no!" said Bob uneasily. "I—I fancy Wharton did what he thought right, anyhow. Besides, Mauly might have got in without his help."

"He couldn't have!" growled Johnny Bull. "Wharton put him up to it, and then backed him up for all he was worth. You'd have scraped in ahead of Toddy and the Bounder, if Mauly hadn't been in the field."

"Well, it's all over, anyhow."

"I've a jolly good mind—" Johnny Bull's glance rested darkly on the late captain of the Remove.

"No, you haven't," said Bob. "What's the good of rowing? Let's get out of this!"

The Co. moved towards the door. They passed Wharton, and the mocking look on his face made Johnny Bull breathe hard and deep. He paused.

"I hope you're satisfied now, Wharton?" he said bitterly.

"Quite, thanks!"

"You've got a dud elected as captain of the Form. Bob would have got in, but for you!"

"So kind of Cherry to arrange to take my place!" said Wharton. "Did you expect me to be enthusiastic about it?"

"It's not your place, as you've been turned out of it, and jolly well deserved to be!" exclaimed Johnny Bull hotly.

"Thanks for your opinion!"

"Mauly will be captain of football now. What sort of a job will he make of it, do you think?"

"Oh, he can play footer!" said Wharton carelessly.

"You think he can captain the team?"

"I dare say he can find help, if he needs it," said the former captain of the Remove coolly. "If he finds himself up against a job too big for him, he may ask somebody else to take it on."

"You, for instance!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Me, for instance!" assented Wharton smilingly.

"So that's your game—using Mauleverer as a stalking horse!"

"How bright you are getting, Bull! You really read a fellow's thoughts. How do you do it?"

Johnny Bull clenched his hands.

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Bob.

The Co. left the Rag.

Harry Wharton looked after them, the mocking smile on his face still. When he was left alone in the room, he walked to the window, and stared out into the misty quadrangle.

The smile died away from his face.

A clouded, thoughtful expression replaced it. His look grew darker, discontented. His mind was busy with thoughts—not pleasant ones—as he stood staring out into the winter mist. Was there regret—remorse, perhaps—in his breast, a weakening of his indomitable will?

If so, it was but brief.

He shrugged his shoulders angrily, impatiently, as if throwing aside haunting, accusing thoughts, and walked out of the Rag. With a smiling face he joined the crowd of congratulating juniors in Lord Mauleverer's study.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Bad Start!

LORD MAULEVERER yawned deeply.

It was a week later.

For seven days Mauly had been captain of the Remove.

In those days it had been borne in upon his lordship's noble mind that more was expected of a Form captain than good-natured cheerfulness and an obliging temper.

Indeed, he found that a too-obliging temper was rather a drawback in his present new position.

It came to his knowledge, much to his surprise, that a fellow who had never had an enemy in his life might make quite a number of enemies as soon as he was in a position of authority.

One of the duties of a Form captain at Greyfriars was to see that members of his Form turned up regularly for games practice on the days when that was compulsory. For the performance of that duty he was answerable to Wingate, the captain of the school.

Skinner & Co., and the other slackers, expected quite an easy time under
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 884.

Maully's rule. And their expectations were fulfilled.

Mauleverer himself never turned up to games practice if he could help it. He had a deep, sympathising fellow-feeling with others who sought to escape exertion.

So when, on Friday afternoon, Wingate of the Sixth came down to Little Side to take Remove games practice in hand, he found less than a third of the Form there, and among them Lord Mauleverer was conspicuous by his absence.

Wingate looked over the juniors with a frown. The captain of Greyfriars had come there to give the Lower Fourth an hour of his valuable time. He seemed annoyed.

"Wharton!" he rapped out.

"Yes, Wingate."

"Where are the kids?"

"They don't seem to have turned up, Wingate."

"Where's Mauleverer?"

"I don't know!"

Wingate frowned, and walked away to the School House. He came up to the Remove passage and looked into Study No. 12.

Lord Mauleverer was there.

His lordship was doing his duty as captain of the Remove, according to his noble lights, by adorning the study sofa with his elegant figure. It was a fine day, and there was a stretch of blue sky visible from the study window. Lord Mauleverer was staring at the blue of the sky as if deeply interested in it. But he turned his head as the captain of Greyfriars looked into the study.

"Hallo, Wingate!" he said amiably. "Come in, old bean! Take a pew!"

Wingate eyed him.

"I understand that you've been elected captain of the Lower Fourth," he said.

"Yaas, the fellows were so kind."

"You know it's compulsory games practice to-day?"

"Yaas!"

"Why aren't you on the ground?"

"Tired!"

"Do you know that hardly anybody's turned up?"

"Shouldn't wonder. That's all right, Wingate."

"All right, is it?" asked Wingate.

"Yaas. Form-captain is empowered to excuse any fellow games practice if he's not fit," explained Mauleverer. "Skinner told me so."

"That's correct; but you have to report it to me."

"Well, I'm reportin' it now."

"Skinner isn't fit, I suppose?" asked Wingate, with grim sarcasm.

"No; he told me he'd got a pain."

"And Snoop—"

"He's got a pain, too."

"And Stott—"

"Yaas; he's got a pain."

"And Bunter?"

"He's tired."

"And Fish—"

"He's gone out."

"And Desmond—"

"He's crocked."

"How is he crocked?"

"I forgot to ask him. But he said he was."

"And the rest—have they all got a pain?"

"Yaas."

"Good!" said Wingate grimly. "Then it's time you had a pain, too, Mauleverer, if this is the way you carry out your new duties, and I'm going to give you one—see?"

"Oh, gad! I—I say! Oh, my hat! Whoooooop!" gasped his lordship as the prefect hooked him off the sofa by his collar.

Lord Mauleverer sprawled, gasping, on his expensive carpet.

"Oh, I say! Yaroooh!"

"Get up!"

"Oh dear!"

His unhappy lordship picked himself up. He eyed Wingate in doubt and dismay.

The captain of Greyfriars looked round the study, and picked up a fives bat belonging to Sir Jimmy Vivian.

"Bend over!" he said tersely.

"Oh, I say, Wingate, you know—"

"Bend over!" snapped the captain of Greyfriars.

"Oh, gad!"

Lord Mauleverer dismally bent over a chair.

Whack, whack, whack! Whack, whack, whack!

Six hefty whacks were bestowed on the wriggling Maully. "Six" from a prefect was a heavy or a light punishment, according to the way the six were laid on. On the present occasion they were laid on with a heavy hand, and Lord Mauleverer was gasping when the captain of Greyfriars had finished.

"You understand that?" inquired Wingate, laying down the fives bat.

"Ow! Yaas! Ow!"

"I give you five minutes to round up the slackers who are dodging games practice. Get them down to the ground. See?"

"But—but if they've got a pain—"

"Do you want another six?"

"Ow! No."

"Then get going—sharp!"

"Oh dear!"

Lord Mauleverer got going; there was no help for it. Deeply did his lordship repent him that he had ever "put up" for the captaincy of the Remove. Certainly, he had never anticipated anything like this. But he was "for it" now, and he had to make up his noble mind to unaccustomed exertion.

Slackers, frowning over the fires in the Remove studies, received unexpected visits from the captain of the Remove, and brief orders to turn up on the Remove ground at once—irrespective of any "pains" they might or might not have.

They received the order with fury.

"Why, you cheeky rotter!" shouted Skinner in Study No. 11. "Do you think we elected you for this?"

"Cheek!" snapped Sidney James Snoop.

"Altogether too thick!" agreed Stott.

"I'm jolly well not going, for one, and I'll jolly well punch your head if you bother me, Maully!"

"Sorry, old beans!" said his lordship dismally. "But you've got to go."

"Why, you silly ass, we might as well have Wharton back!" hooted Skinner. "Might as well have elected Bob Cherry."

"Oh, gad, I jolly well wish you had!" groaned Lord Mauleverer. "Get a move on, there's good chaps!"

"Sha'n't!"

"I've got to give your name to Wingate if you don't."

"Well, you rotter!"

"Call yourself a Form-captain! You ought to stand up to Wingate."

"You stand up to him, if you like, Snoopey! He's too hefty for me!" said

Lord Mauleverer, with a sigh. "Get goin', will you?"

Skinner & Co. got going. Mauleverer they were quite prepared to throw out of their study, neck and crop—captain of the Remove as he was. But Wingate of the Sixth was quite a different proposition. They grumbled loud and long, but they went down to change.

Billy Bunter was still more infuriated when Lord Mauleverer rooted him out of the Rag, where he was improving the shining hour by dozing over the fire.

"Sha'n't go!" howled Bunter.

"Must, old fat bean!"

"I'm ill; I've told you I'm ill! I've sprained my ankle—"

"Wingate says—"

"Blow Wingate!" snorted the Owl of the Remove. "You're captain of the Form, ain't you, Maully?"

"Yaas. But—"

"Well, you report me to Wingate as usual, owing to spraining my back-bone—I mean my ankle. Tell him I look frightfully sick—"

"But you don't, old bean."

"Oh, really, Maully—"

"Get a move on, Bunter, there's a good little pig!"

"Beast!"

"I shall have to report you if you don't. In fact, I think Wingate expects me to kick you out."

"You jolly well kick me!" shouted Bunter, in great wrath. "Didn't I stand down at the election and let you get in as captain when I could have pulled it off easily—a popular fellow like me? What are you grinning at, you cheeky beast? I'm not going. You kick me, and I'll jolly well ram your head in the coal-locker!"

"Will you, by gad?" said the captain of the Remove. Perhaps the "six" from Wingate had given an edge to Maully's usually placid temper; or perhaps he was thinking of another six that might reward him if the slackers did not turn up to time. At all events, he now displayed an energy that had never been expected of him.

He grasped Bunter by the collar and swung him round, and planted an elegant boot upon his tight trousers. A fiendish yell rang through the Rag.

"Yaroooh!"

"Now will you go, old fat man?"

"Ow! Wow!! I'll kick your shins! I'll— Yaroooh! Stop kicking me, you beast! I'm going, ain't I?" wailed Bunter.

And he went.

Lord Mauleverer seemed to be warming to the work now. Slacker after slacker was rooted out and despatched to the football field, every one of them grumbling and grouching and swearing vengeance on the captain of the Remove.

There was quite a full attendance at games practice on the Remove ground, on Little Side, that afternoon. Under Wharton's rule there had generally been two or three slackers missing, on one excuse or another; but Wingate had "lucked up" Mauleverer to such an extent that hardly a man failed to put in an appearance on this occasion. It was, as Skinner remarked savagely to Snoop, worse than Wharton.

After games practice Lord Mauleverer limped back to the House, and sank exhausted on his study sofa. Infuriated slackers, who had expected an easy time under Maully's rule, came along to tell him what they thought of him—indeed, they might have proceeded from words to drastic action had not Sir Jimmy Vivian mounted guard over his noble relative with a golf-club in his hand.

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"What a life!" groaned Lord Mauleverer.

Bob Cherry looked in presently—not to grouse. He had come to congratulate.

"Well done, Mauly!" he said cheerily.

"Eh?"

"You've started well, old chap."

"Have I!" groaned Lord Mauleverer.

"Yes, rather! Keep it up."

"Oh gad!"

"What's the matter?" asked Bob.

"Oh dear! There's a dozen fellows in the Remove thirstin' for my blood!" groaned Mauleverer. "I never had an enemy before I was ass enough to put up as captain of the Form. Now I believe I'm goin' to be lynched as soon as I get out of this study."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

But it was not a laughing matter to his hapless lordship.

And so it came about that on the following Wednesday, when Lord Mauleverer had held his new office for a week, he sat in his study and groaned dismally and yawned portentously. Quite unintentionally, he had taken a heavy burden upon his noble shoulders, and like the outcast of old, he found his burden greater than he could bear. And the Rookwood match was close at hand now, and the Remove were in a state of great excitement on that subject, an excitement which Mauly did not share in the very least. And when he reflected on what was expected of him, the new captain of the Remove yawned and groaned alternately in the lowest of spirits.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Strong Team!

SIR JIMMY VIVIAN, of the Remove, strolled into Study No. 12, and gave his noble relative, Lord Mauleverer, a nod and a cheery smile. Sir Jimmy seemed to be in great spirits.

In that little matter he contrasted very considerably with his noble relative. Mauly was in a despondent and worried mood.

Seven days of captaincy in the Remove had done it.

Seven days as captain of that rather unruly Form had been precisely six and a half days too much for Mauly.

Skinner & Co. were his deadly enemies by this time. Under Wharton's rule they had not expected to be allowed to slack at games practice. Under Mauly's rule they had expected it, and had been momentarily gratified, and then cruelly disappointed. If they were not, as Mauly had told Bob Cherry, exactly thirsting for his blood, at all events they were feeling very malicious and venomous.

There were other troubles.

The Form captain had some duties in the Form-room—on occasion, for instance, he would be directed to mark papers, to save a little labour to the Form master. Good-natured Mauleverer was always easy to persuade. A fellow had only to whisper to Mauly how many marks he wanted, and the new head of the Remove would put them down.

Which was not long in coming to Mr. Quelch's knowledge, causing an explosion in the Form-room that was like unto an eruption of Vesuvius.

Ruthlessly Form-room duties were taken out of Lord Mauleverer's feeble hands. He did not mind that; he was relieved. But it was rather a come-down, and it set the whole Remove grinning at their new captain. And Mr. Quelch had allowed some remarks to

escape which indicated his opinion of the captain of the Form and of the Form which had elected him captain.

But the great worry, at present, was the Rookwood match. Mauleverer could play footer, though he was not keen on it. Nobly he had made up his mind to exert himself to the uttermost on Rookwood day, and play the game of his life, and score a tremendous victory—if he could. Slowly but surely it dawned upon his aristocratic brain that a football captain had other duties—off the field as well as on.

Harry Wharton had had a wonderful eye for a fellow's form. Vernon-Smith, doubtless, would have equalled him there. Bob Cherry would have done pretty well undoubtedly. Lord Mauleverer was simply nowhere. He could not wash his hands of the matter. Certainly he was a little lazy, but he had a sense of duty. He was going to do his best; but he was lamentably conscious that his best was likely to be very bad. And it was a worry; it was a bore. There was not the slightest possible, probable shadow of doubt that it was a bore—a ghastly bore.

Lord Mauleverer had few strong likes or dislikes. But on one point he was emphatic, he hated being bored. He would dodge round corners to elude fellows who bored him; he would walk great distances to keep out of the way of Billy Bunter or Fisher T. Fish. But he could not dodge round a corner out of the way of the Rookwood match. That awful fixture was coming down on him like a ton of coke, in Mauly's estimation.

So, in reply to Sir Jimmy's cheerful grin, Lord Mauleverer gave his young relative a lugubrious look. He did not see what there was for Vivian to grin cheerfully about. Certainly, Sir Jimmy was not captain of the Remove. There was something in that.

"Rookwood day on Saturday, Mauly!" said the schoolboy baronet cheerily.

Groan!

"I say, Mauly, are you ill?"

"Nunno! But would you mind, old bean, talking about somethin' else?" asked Mauleverer wearily. "Talk about politics, or the agricultural problem, old chap, or—or the influence of blue in the arts—not football!"

"But you're captain on Saturday—"

Groan!

"Well, I won't talk about it, Mauly," chuckled Sir Jimmy. "I only blew in to ask you somethin'. Wharton never fancied me as a man for the Remove eleven. He's a bit of an ass in some things. Will you play me against Rookwood on Saturday?"

Lord Mauleverer brightened.

"Is that all? Certainly!"

"Good man!" said Sir Jimmy, and he strolled out of the study again, whistling cheerily.

"Oh, good gad!" murmured Mauleverer. "I remember now Cherry told me it's time I got the list out for Saturday. I really think that might be left to the committee, but I suppose they'd think me a slacker if I suggested it. I'm not goin' to slack now I'm captain of the Form." Lord Mauleverer spoke to himself with great determination. "That's a thing that can't be done. I'm goin' strong. I mean that!"

Bolover major loomed up in the doorway. Sir Jimmy, in the passage, had gaily informed Bolover that he was down for Saturday, much to Percy Bolover's surprise. As places in the Remove eleven seemed to be going cheap, Bolover major thought he might as well put in for one. He was a passable full-back, and considered himself a first-class one, and was fixed in the belief that he had never had justice under Wharton's rule.

"Hallo, Mauly, old chap!" said Bolover with unusual affability. "Got up your Rookwood list yet?"

"I'm workin' at it," said Lord Mauleverer—"workin' hard! I've made a start, Bolover."

"How many names down so far?"

"Hem! One."

"Oh, my hat! What price little me for right-back?" asked Bolover.

"Certainly, old fellow!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Bolover major again.

Certainly, Mauleverer was easier to deal with than the former captain of the Remove.

"It's a go," said Mauleverer. "Count on it."

"Good, old man! But, I say"—Bolover major seemed a little anxious—

(Continued on page 16.)

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EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON

Week Ending January 17th, 1925.



EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

MANY Greyfriars fellows of the past have shown a marked propensity for practical joking. There has been no outstanding "jape" which has made history like the famous hoax at St. Jim's when a Sixth-Former impersonated "Bluff King Hal," and honoured the school with a Royal visit! So cleverly did the practical joker play his part on that occasion that the whole affair was carried through without a hitch; and it was not until some years later that the culprit confessed that he had been responsible for the biggest schoolboy jape in history!

BUT, although no hoax of such magnitude has ever been perpetrated at Greyfriars, there have been several japes well worth recording. In 1870 the Head and all the masters received a summons to attend an important educational conference in London. They went, leaving the school in charge of the prefects. On arriving at their destination, they found that they had been hoaxed. Meanwhile, the Greyfriars fellows had trussed up the prefects in the Form-rooms, and treated themselves to a day's holiday! There was a dreadful rumpus when the Head and his colleagues returned; but the identity of the practical joker was never established. A good many fellows were "in the know," but they guarded the secret jealously. For the outrage on the prefects the whole school was gated for a month.

SOME years later a misguided practical joker caused great confusion and consternation by making a tour of the dormitories in the night and mixing up everybody's clothes. Next morning all was chaos. Prefects found themselves with fags' suits several sizes too small for them, and diminutive fags found themselves with the garb of giants. Most of the fellows were obliged to remain in bed until the muddle had been straightened out—a business which occupied the whole morning. But if it was the practical joker's intention to curtail the day's lessons, he was disappointed. The morning had been wasted, but three hours were tacked on to afternoon lessons—which was no joke at all!

HIGHCLIFFE has its practical jokers, as well as Greyfriars. It was Gadsby of Highcliffe who visited this school in the **THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 884.**

role of a dentist; and, although he did not actually extract any teeth, he gave his victims a very unpleasant time before an incident occurred which led to his being "bowled out." Another Highcliffe fellow once took the place of Gosling, the porter, and he led the Greyfriars fellows a merry dance before his real identity was discovered.

PRACTICAL jokes are all very well in their way, but they have a habit of recoiling on the head of the joker, with painful consequences for that bright youth. Naturally, I do not approve of practical jokes—though I confess I played a good many myself in the happy far-off days when I was a fag. But my present exalted position debars me from planning practical jokes. More's the pity, I sometimes think!

BY the way, my fag has just come in to clean my footer boots. The hand he plunged into one of the boots was withdrawn, covered in treacle. Evidently some optimistic japer had expected me to put my foot in it—instead of which Nugent minor has put his hand in it. Now Nugent's wrath. Japer—beware!

BORN TIRED!

Two perpetually tired individuals at Greyfriars have just awakened to the fact that we required their views on "My Favourite Dinner" over a month ago. Here they are:

LORD MAULEVERER:

My favourite dinner is a plate of thin soup. I like it best because there's no cuttin' or carvin' to do, begad! It's no fag to eat it—or, rather, drink it. You just lap it out of a spoon. But when it's rump steak for dinner—oh, what a business! Hackin' an' dissectin' a steak with a blunt knife is too much like hard work to suit me! I very often go to sleep over it, an' then Quelch gives me a hundred lines for convertin' the dinin'-hall into a dormitory!

WILLIAM GOSLING:

Wot I says is this 'ere—'ow can a man enjoy a dinner when 'e's reached the toothless stage, like me? I've only got two sound teeth in me 'ead. Dr. Locke says to me, says 'e, "Wot you want, Gosling, is a hearty fishal set. If you care to have them fitted, I will bear the expense." But no hearty fishal teeth for me, thanks! I should swaller 'em in a moment of forgetfulness! Anyway, my favourite dinner is summat in liquid form—summat with a snap an' sparkle in it. None of your tough chops an' leathery steaks for me!

THE practical joker, like the poor, is always with us. He is regarded by the "powers that be" as a pest and a nuisance, and they generally endeavour to curb his sense of humour with a cane or an ashplant. By his schoolfellows, however—with the exception of those who fall victims to his japes—the practical joker is favourably regarded. Sometimes, if he "stunt" has a dash of daring in it, he is looked upon as a hero.

In whatever light we regard the practical joker, we cannot deny that school life would be dreadfully dull without him. His merry antics cause the term to pass swiftly and pleasantly. He always keeps you in a state of breathless wonder as to what he will do next. Will he dare to put white mice in his Form master's desk? Or will he rig up a "booby-trap" for some unpopular prefect? Or will he, perchance, play ghostly pranks by garbing himself in flowing draperies at midnight, and scaring his schoolfellows?

Of course, there are two brands of practical joking—the harmless kind and the caddish kind. Some fellows have a perverted sense of humour—I'm thinking of Skinner at the moment—and their japes are not in the best of taste. Perhaps you recollect the occasion when Skinner and Bolsover major dressed up in old clothes, and personated Bunter's poor relations—though they turned out to be rich relations in the end.

There are certain things which should not be made fun of. Poverty is one. And when Mr. Quelch heard Skinner and his companions singing:

"We are the poor relations
Of Bunter, W. G.,
We have no cash, we cut no dash,
A pair of paupers we!"

he became righteously indignant, and Skinner and Bolsover got the licking they deserved.

Other practical jokes of Skinner's, less caddish in nature, are fresh in my memory. When Alonzo Todd was a new boy, Skinner prevailed upon him to eat the Head's dinner. The guileless Alonzo promptly obeyed, under the impression that the meal had been specially prepared for his own benefit! When the Head came in, and saw his dinner disappearing, there was a painful reckoning for Skinner!

Then there was the occasion—it was on All Fools' Day, if I remember—when Skinner bamboozled the whole school into thinking that the Head had awarded a day's holiday. The practical joker had placed a bogus announcement on the notice-board.

But the way of the practical joker, like that of the transgressor, is hard. And would-be practical jokers would be well advised to weigh up the possible consequences before going ahead with their gleeful japes.

Just a word before I ring off concerning next week's special number. Some brainy individual suggested that it would be a fine thing to have a special Supplement dealing with the thrilling sport of hunting. No sooner suggested than done. All the "Herald" pens have been busy. Join in the "Hunt" next week, chums!

HARRY WHARTON.

[Supplement 4.



Skinner's Startling Scheme!

By Bot Cherry

SKINNER of the Remove came staggering out of Mr. Quelch's study, squeezing his hands tightly together. Skinner's face was twisted with anguish, and he uttered loud lamentations. I cannot repeat them word for word, but the chorus went something like this:

"Ow! Yow! Yowp! Yaroooo!"

Skinner had been having a little argument with his Form master, on the subject of an impot which had been awarded, but never written. Skinner had forgotten all about it. Mr. Quelch hadn't. Hence the summons to the Remove master's study, and the painful sequel.

As he crawled away to his study, Skinner murmured uncomplimentary things about Mr. Quelch, and vowed he would make that gentleman sit up.

"The beast!" muttered Skinner. "He's a jolly sight too free with that cane of his. He's made me smart, and I'm going to get my own back on him—the miserable old tyrant!"

Having made this resolve, Skinner started to think out ways and means whereby he could make Mr. Quelch sit up.

Skinner is an ingenious youth, with a mania for practical joking. He set his wits to work, and an inspiration soon came to him.

For the next half-hour or so Skinner was very busy. He had taken a packet of invitation-cards from his desk, and he proceeded to fill them in. He had taken the precaution of locking the door of his study, in order to be safe from prying eyes.

Skinner possessed the rather dangerous gift of being able to imitate other people's handwriting. There was scarcely a master at Greyfriars whose calligraphy Skinner was unfamiliar with. On this occasion he faithfully reproduced the writing of Mr. Quelch.

The invitation-cards having been filled in, they were placed into envelopes, and addressed to various people.

And Skinner, chuckling gleefully, set out on his mission of distributing the invitation-cards. One was slipped under the door of the Head's study, and then the masters' studies were visited in turn. If the master happened to be at home Skinner slipped the envelope under the door and bolted. If the master was out, the envelope was left on his study table.

Skinner then put on his overcoat and cap, and sallied forth to Friardale. He left a card at the vicarage for Mr. Lambe, and another at Sir Hilton Popper's residence, and a third at Dr. Short's. He also handed one in at the porter's lodge at Highcliffe, with instructions that it was to be delivered to Dr. Voysey. Then, humming a merry tune, the rascal of the Remove strolled back to Greyfriars. His plans for making Mr. Quelch "sit up" were complete.

Meanwhile, the Head had opened the envelope which had been thrust under his door. He was mildly surprised to find that it contained an invitation-card, worded as follows:

"Mr. QUELCH presents his compliments to Dr. LOCKE, and requests the pleasure of his company at an informal dinner this evening at seven o'clock. No acknowledgment is necessary."

The Head was pleasantly astonished. It was only on very rare occasions that Mr. Quelch ever invited anyone to dinner. Mr. Quelch was a very thrifty gentleman, and he did very little entertaining on the grounds that it was too costly. Hence the Head's surprise. Hence, also, the surprise of Mr. Prout and Mr. Hacker, who found invitation-cards awaiting them on their return from an afternoon's golf.

All the masters, in fact, were surprised: *Supplement ii.]*

They wondered what had happened to Mr. Quelch, that he should suddenly become so hospitable. Was it his birthday? Had he inherited a fortune? Or had he decided to give up being thrifty, and to start a campaign of reckless expenditure?

Whatever the reason for this sudden burst of generosity on Mr. Quelch's part, his colleagues were agreeably astonished, and all of them decided to take advantage of the invitation. They did not, however, send notes to Mr. Quelch saying they would be delighted to accept, for the invitation-cards clearly stated that no acknowledgment was necessary.

Shortly before seven o'clock, Mr. Quelch, blissfully unconscious of what was in the wind, settled down in his study to work. He

THE PRACTICAL JOKER!

(After John Keats.)

By Dick Penfold.

O H, what can ail thee, wretched lad,
Alone and palely loitering?
"I'm feeling stiff and sore and
sad,
And both palms sting."

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched lad,
So haggard and so-woe-begone?
"From Quelch a licking I have had—
He laid it on!"

"I put a hedgehog in his desk,
Hoping a sudden shock to bring;
It was a creature most grotesque—
A hideous thing!"

"When Quelch came in to take the class
He looked (as usual) grim and gloomy;
His gimlet optics seemed to pass
Completely through me!"

"Lessons will now commence!" he said,
And then he lifted up the lid;
And I was seized with sudden dread—
A quaking kid!"

"You've done it now!" said Vernon-
Smith,
As Quelch plunged his hand inside,
It came in painful contact with
A prickly hide!"

"A yell of anguish rent the air,
And Quelch sprang back a yard or so,
"My boys! Who placed that hedgehog
there?
I wish to know!"

"I shuffled out, with inward dread,
Feeling as nervous as could be,
And in a trembling voice I said:
'Please, sir, 'twas me!"

"Then Quelch seized his trusty cane,
At sight of which I felt quite ill;
He wielded it with might and main—
I'm squirming still!"

"And that is why I linger here,
Alone and palely loitering;
I'm feeling jolly limp and queer,
And both palms sting!"

had a free evening, and he had resolved to add yet another chapter to that formidable work, the history of Greyfriars.

Scarcely had Mr. Quelch inserted a foolscap sheet in his typewriter, when there was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" said the Remove master, not without irritation.

Enter Mr. Capper and Mr. Twigg. They were wearing evening dress, and beaming smiles. But the smiles diminished a little when they saw that the table was not laid.

"Good-evening, Quelch!" said the two masters together.

"Good-evening, gentlemen!" said Mr. Quelch, not very cordially. "Do you wish to consult me on some matter? If so, I beg of you to be brief, I am very busy."

Mr. Capper and Mr. Twigg stared blankly at the Remove master. They could not help reflecting that that was a curious way for a host to greet his guests.

"Perhaps we are a trifle too early, Quelch!" suggested Mr. Capper. "It is not quite seven. But I always consider it bad form to be late for dinner."

Mr. Quelch jumped.

"Dud-dud-dinner!" he stuttered. "With whom, might I ask, do you propose to dine?"

"With you, of course!" said Mr. Capper, a trifle heatedly. "Surely you are not so absent-minded that you have forgotten your invitation?"

Mr. Quelch fairly gasped. He was about to speak when further visitors arrived. Mr. Capper and Mr. Twigg stood respectfully aside to allow the Head to enter; and after the Head came Messrs. Prout and Hacker, and Larry Lascelles. All were in evening dress.

"Good-evening, my dear Quelch!" said the Head genially. "Bless my soul, we are quite a crowd! In which room do you propose to hold this—er—happy function?"

Mr. Quelch blinked at the Head in amazement.

"Sir! I—I do not understand—" he stuttered.

The Head's geniality vanished. He frowned. "This afternoon, Quelch," he said, "I received a card from you, inviting me to dinner at seven o'clock."

"Good gracious!"

"I trust that the invitation was genuinely meant? Surely, Quelch, a man of your position and maturity would not so far forget himself as to practise a hoax on his colleagues?"

"I—I—"

Mr. Quelch stuttered and stammered, and finally found coherent speech.

"There is no dinner!" he exclaimed.

A painful silence followed Mr. Quelch's bombshell. Then there was a tramping of feet in the passage, and Sir Hilton Popper strode into the already crowded study. Hard on the heels of Sir Hilton were Dr. Short and the Rev. Mr. Lambe.

"Good-evenin', gentlemen!" said Sir Hilton boisterously. "Thank you for invitin' me to dine with you, Mr. Quelch! I shall be delighted, begad!"

"Gentlemen," blurted out Mr. Quelch, "there is some ghastly mistake! I have issued no invitations to dinner. Any invitations you may have received, purporting to come from me, are spurious! It is quite obvious that you have all been hoaxed—not, of course, by me, but by some misguided practical joker—some boy with a perverted sense of humour!"

The new arrivals were thrown into a state of consternation. Sir Hilton Popper grew very angry. He stamped on the floor of Mr. Quelch's study, and insisted upon the affair being probed to the bottom.

None of Mr. Quelch's visitors could say who had delivered the invitations. But Mr. Lascelles remembered to have seen Skinner of the Remove going out of gates that afternoon, grinning rather maliciously. This was a slender enough clue as to the author of the outrage; but a visit to Skinner's study resulted in the discovery of a packet of invitation-cards, also a number of envelopes, similar to those which had been sent out. Skinner was taxed with the affair, and under cross-examination he acknowledged his guilt.

Skinner paid the penalty next morning in Big Hall. He was hoisted on to the shoulders of Gosling, the porter, and given a flogging which he will remember for many a long day. And Skinner will think twice, in future, before playing a practical joke upon a Form master!

THE END.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 284.



(Continued from page 13.)

"don't you go giving away places to every dud that asks you, you know. We want to beat Rookwood."

"Are you a dud, Bolsover?" asked his lordship innocently.

"Eh?"

"If you are, of course—"

"You silly owl!"

"My dear man—"

"Oh, you're the limit!" said Bolsover major. "I'm a first-class back—good as Johnny Bull, anyhow."

"All serene, then."

Bolsover major walked away, glad that he was down for Saturday's team, but rather doubtful what the team would be like, with the playing men selected in this easy-going way. Lord Mauleverer took out a handsome little Russia leather pocket-book and a gold pencil, and wrote down two names on a blank page. He felt that he was getting on.

Having performed that onerous duty, his lordship felt that he was entitled to stretch his weary limbs on the sofa and rest a little, which he proceeded to do. He was resting contentedly when Fisher T. Fish loomed up in the doorway. Lord Mauleverer closed his eyes, hoping that the most relentless bore in the Remove would think him asleep, and pass on his way. But Fisher Tarleton Fish had come on business.

"Hallo, old mugwump!" said Fishy. "Wake up, Mauly! I hear you're making up the list for Saturday."

"Oh dear!"

"I guess I haven't taken much stock in Remove football," said Fisher T. Fish. "That guy Wharton never understood that a galoot raised in Noo Yark could lay over anything put up by a benighted mugwump in this sleepy old island. I guess he got my goat a few. Now I calculate that I'm the guy you want, Mauly—the genuine goods, you know. You're not a pesky mugwump like that jay Wharton. You know a good thing when you see it, Mauly—what? Count on me."

"Eh?"

"I'm your antelope," said Fisher T. Fish.

"Which?"

"I'm your mutton, with the wool on, Mauly."

"Oh, gad!"

"You got me?" asked Fisher T. Fish.

Lord Mauleverer made a mental effort.

"Are you askin' for a place in the Remove eleven?" he inquired.

"Sure!"

"Will you shut up and go away, if I put your name down?"

"Eh? Yep!"

"It's a go, then."

"Honest Injun, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"Right-ho! Rely on me for Saturday, and I guess the galoots will see something to make 'em sit up and take notice—just a few!" said Fisher T. Fish impressively. "I really calculate—"

"You said you'd shut up!" said Lord Mauleverer plaintively.

Fisher T. Fish chuckled and walked away, much to his lordship's relief. A

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 884.

place in the Remove eleven was a light price to pay for getting rid of Fisher Tarleton Fish—at least, in the opinion of the new captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

But the news was spreading now that the Form captain was setting about his duties in earnest, and that he was picking out men for one of the most important of the Remove fixtures. Fellows who were keen to play Rookwood came along to see Mauleverer without losing time.

It was one of the charming weaknesses of Lord Mauleverer's happy character, that he found it difficult and unpleasant to say no to anybody. It was easier and more agreeable to say yes. It made fellows feel so much more agreeable and comfortable and friendly. So Lord Mauleverer's responses, as he reclined on the sofa and received innumerable offers of service on Saturday, were a series of affirmatives. Indeed, had Mauly been a banana merchant, and run out of that succulent fruit, no doubt he would have replied to intending purchasers: "Yes, we have no bananas!"

He had been rather late in making a start with his footer list; but now that it had once started, it was growing rapidly—indeed, it was growing like the beanstalk in the fairy tale.

Later on, four fellows came to the study together, looking rather perturbed. Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, and Frank Nugent, were all rather concerned about the Rookwood match—with cause, when they learned how Mauleverer was selecting his men.

"We don't want to butt in, Mauly," said Bob Cherry, "but we'd like to know whether we're down for Saturday."

"Yaas."

"Well, that's all right," said Johnny Bull, much relieved. "You seem to have picked up some duds, but I suppose we shall give the team a backbone."

"Yaas!"

"We want to beat Rookwood, you know, Mauly," said Frank Nugent.

"Yaas."

"The carefulness in the selection of the team is the proper and ridiculous caper, my esteemed Mauly," said Hurree Singh seriously. "Otherwise, the beatfulness may be a boot on the other leg."

Lord Mauleverer grinned.

"Yaas."

The four juniors passed on, rather uneasy in their minds about Saturday's prospects. A few minutes later William George Bunter rolled into the study.

"I say, Mauly—"

"Go away, Bunter."

"But I say, what about Saturday?" said the Owl of the Remove. "I never got a chance when Wharton was skipper, and you know what sort of a footballer I am, Mauly! I shouldn't mind keeping goal, but I'm first-class in the half-back line, and as centre-forward I fancy there are few fellows at Greyfriars to beat me, even in the upper Forms. What about little me at centre-forward, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"Oh, good!"

Billy Bunter rolled away in high feather. Then Lord Mauleverer made a tremendous effort, got off his sofa, and locked his study door. After that he turned a deaf ear to raps on the panels, and voices that came through the keyhole. Further applicants for places in the Remove eleven were turned empty away, so to speak.

Really, no more were needed. There were already fifteen names on Lord Mauleverer's list, and if Lord Mauleverer led them all into the field on

Saturday, it was certain that Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, would receive the surprise of the lives.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Not the Thing!

HARRY WHARTON was in the Rag when Lord Mauleverer lounged elegantly in that apartment, in the evening, with a paper in his hand. Most of the Remove were there, after prep, and there was a general movement of interest when the captain of the Remove was seen to stick the paper on the door.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called out Bob Cherry. "Got through, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"Good man!"

"I say, you fellows, this is going to be a good team—something a bit better than Wharton used to get together," said Billy Bunter. "Wharton never put me down at centre-forward."

"You!" roared Bob.

"Yes, rather! Mauly knows a good man," said Bunter. "Wharton never did."

"You!" gasped a dozen Removites.

"Oh, my hat! What sort of a team has Mauly got together?" exclaimed the Bounder.

There was a rush to read the football list on the door. Fellows read it, and gazed at it, thunderstruck. Lord Mauleverer stepped back, and loafed away to an arm-chair, and sat down, leaving the Removites to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, as it were. Really, it was a list calculated to cause amazement in the Remove. It ran:

Vivian; Bolsover major, F. T. Fish; Desmond, Kipps, Newland, Skinner, Hazeldene, J. Bull, F. Nugent, Hurree Singh, R. Cherry, W. G. Bunter, H. Wharton, S. J. Snoop.

Peter Todd counted down the names, and came to a result that made him gasp. Mauly's own name was not there, he had forgotten to put it down.

"Fifteen!" said Peter dazedly. "Fifteen! Does the born idiot think we're playing Rigger on Saturday?"

"And what a crew!" said Squiff.

"What a giddy crew!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Mauly, you thumping ass—"

"Mauly, you piffing chump—"

"Mauly, you footling freak—"

"Great gad!" said Lord Mauleverer, in surprise, from the depths of his arm-chair. "What's the matter?"

"The matter?" howled Bob Cherry.

"Yaas."

"The matterfulness is terrific, my esteemed fathheaded Mauly."

"You've left me out!" roared the Bounder.

"Have I, old chap? Why didn't you speak?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you know we play eleven men in soccer, you born dummy?" shrieked Peter Todd.

"Yaas."

"You've got fifteen names here, ass!"

"Have I really?"

"Haven't you counted them?" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Never thought about it, my dear fellow!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Lord Mauleverer looked thoughtful. "I can't very well alter the list now," he said.

"Can't alter it?" shrieked Bob.

"No. You see, I've told the fellows they should play."

"Why did you tell them so, ass?"

"They asked me."
 "Great pip!"
 "But it's all right—"
 "All right?" stammered Bob.
 "Yaas. I dare say the Rookwood chaps won't mind playin' Rugger for once—"
 "Pip-pip-playing Rugger?" said Bob Cherry dazedly.
 "Yaas. That would make it all right, wouldn't it? Isn't fifteen the number for a Rugger team? I don't claim to be an authority on football, of course, especially Rugger, but I thought that was the number."
 "Oh, holy smoke!"
 "Isn't he a daisy?" gasped Peter Todd. "Some football captain!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You-you-you blithering, footling chump!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Take out four of those names before I scrag you."
 "Really, you know!" Lord Mauleverer unwillingly detached himself from the armchair. "You can make it all right, if you think the Rookwood chaps are really keen on making it Soccer on Saturday. I don't see why they should be. I met a chap in the vac who told me that Rugger was ever so much the better game. They played it at his school, you know, so he knew. But if four of you fellows resign, that makes up the right number for Soccer."
 "You footling ass!"
 Lord Mauleverer crossed over to the door, and drew his pencil through four names. The names were Cherry, Bull, Nugent, and Harree Singh. They were the four members of the team who seemed dissatisfied, which was doubtless Mauly's reason for marking them off. The other members had not grumbled, so far.
 "Is that all right?" asked Mauleverer brightly.
 "Oh, dear!"
 "Where do you come in, Mauly?" grinned Hazeldene. "You silly ass, you've left out your own name."

"Oh, gad! I forgot! I suppose that means that I shall have to kick out another man. Thanks, Hazel."
 And his lordship drew the pencil across Hazeldene's name.
 "Why, you silly ass—" gasped Hazeldene.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Mauly, you blitherer," exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "Do you really think you'll be allowed to put that crew of duds in the field?"
 "Yaas."
 "One footballer in the whole lot, that's Wharton," said Johnny Bull. "I suppose Wharton took care of that."
 "Wharton hasn't spoken to me about it," said Lord Mauleverer. "I put him in because he used to captain the team; I remembered that just in time."
 "You—you remembered it!"
 "Yaas. I've got a rather good memory, you know."
 "Oh, crumbs!"
 "What do you think of the team, Wharton?" asked Mauleverer, turning to the late captain of the Remove.
 "Why, what are you laughin' at, old bean?"
 Harry Wharton wiped his eyes. Lord Mauleverer's selection of a team to play Rookwood had been rather too much for him.
 "Oh, Mauly!" he gasped.
 "You jolly well knew he would make an ass of himself when you put him up for the election!" roared Johnny Bull.
 "That was your game."
 "Shush!" murmured Bob Cherry.
 Wharton gave no heed to the indignant Johnny.
 "You'd better make a few changes, Mauleverer," he said. "Of course, I've no right to advise you—"
 "My dear chap, I'm relyin' on you for advice," said his lordship anxiously. "I was countin' on you to stand by me an' see me through, you know, till I got the hang of the thing. What's the matter with the eleven?"

"Oh, dear! Well, for goodness' sake kick Bunter out—"
 "Oh, really, Wharton—"
 "Yaas," said Lord Mauleverer, dutifully drawing his pencil through the name of W. G. Bunter, much to the wrath of the Owl of the Remove. "But that leaves only ten men, you know. Can't play Rookwood a man short."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I say, you fellows, I'm not standing out!" roared Billy Bunter indignantly. "You chaps know what a footballer I am—"
 "We do!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Oh, yes, we do!"
 "Look here, Mauly, you gave me your word—"
 "Oh, gad! Did I?"
 "Yes, you did, and I jolly well think that—"
 "I'll stand you a feed in the study instead, old chap," said Lord Mauleverer. "Cake, and jam, and buns and—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Well, of course, old chap, I like to oblige a pal," said Bunter amiably. "Just as you think best, Mauly, old man."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Lord Mauleverer detached the paper from the door, and slipped it into his pocket. It had dawned upon his noble brain that it would not do. Indeed, the Removites had made it impossible for any doubt to be left on that point.
 "I'll think this over," said his lordship.
 "You'd better!" grinned Squiff.
 "The betterfulness will be terrific."
 "Wharton, old man, you come along to my study, and we'll go over it together," said Lord Mauleverer.
 "Any old thing, Mauly."
 "Wharton's not captain of the Remove now," exclaimed Skinner. Skinner had wedged into the list; but he was aware of precisely how much chance his name had of remaining there if the captain of the Remove acted on Wharton's



OUR FIGHTING FLEET!

A chatty article about the subject of this week's splendid Free Plate, **H.M.S. EREBUS (Monitor)**.

By **"JACKSTAFF"**
 (The well-known Naval writer).

THE unlovely "Jack Dempsey" looking craft depicted in this week's Free Plate is H.M.S. Erebus, monitor. All warships are mobile gun-platforms. A monitor is that—only more so. Practically every other type of man-o-war has some function additional to that of carrying guns. A monitor has none. She is just a gun-platform fitted with engines. The Erebus is one of a pair of monitors named after a couple of ships famous in connection with Arctic exploration, but the generic appellation of the type has an American derivation. In the American Civil War an engineer named Ericson fitted up a ship armed with a heavy gun, and of low free board, which won a sensational victory. He named her

Monitor, and in all navies these freak ships have been known as monitors ever since. In so far as the British Navy is concerned, monitors were not a regulation type in 1914. But soon after war broke out it became necessary to provide shallow-draught vessels for use off the Belgian coast. Therefore, some monitors were improvised until such time as new ones could be built. All were the most freakish, ungainly craft that ever flew the white ensign. They carried one, sometimes two big guns, drew only a few feet of water, and had enormous bulges sticking out from their sides which made the vessels almost as broad as they were long. Being slow-moving, they steered most erratically. Their motion was a somewhat inebriated waddle. As they drew only a few feet of

water and had very light hulls, a big bill for breakages had to be paid every time they fired their guns. The concussion used to smash all loose crockery, hurl chairs about, and splinter doors. But the monitor never took any heed either of what she did to herself or of what the enemy did to her. She would waddle out to a point off Ostend or near, sit herself down on a sandbank, and blaze unconcernedly away at the enemy. If U-boats tried to torpedo her, she only laughed at them. At worst, they could but dent her bulges, and that mattered nothing at all. The bulges were there to be dented. They stood out on each side of the hull for yards and yards, so wide that races might have been run along them; but whatever happened to the bulges, the hull itself remained uninjured, and the monitor was unsinkable. Where she differed from all other classes of warship was that she could go on calmly battering the enemy in conditions that would have been too dangerous for any other vessel to face. The Erebus and her sister, the Terror, were the best-designed units in the squadron of monitors our Fleet possessed when peace arrived. Consequently, they were kept as drill-ships, though all the rest of the monitors went to the scrapheap. The Erebus has two fifteen-inch guns, eight four-inch guns, and a battery of anti-aircraft weapons. She is fitted also with an apparatus for making smoke-screens, and her big guns will carry 40,000 yards. Whilst bombarding off the Belgian coast she was hit amidships by a wirelessly controlled boat laden with explosives, but this only placed her out of action for a couple of weeks, though to any other type of fighting-ship the mishap would almost certainly have proved fatal.

advice. Not that Harold Skinner had any intention of exerting himself on Saturday; but he was pleased at the prospect of being able to boast that he had played in the Rookwood match.

"You dry up, Skinner, old bean," said Lord Mauleverer. "Come on, Wharton."

And the present and past captains of the Remove left the rag together. Johnny Bull looked after them grimly.

"That's the game," he said to his comrades. "Mauly's a stalking-horse, as I've said; Wharton's still captain of the Remove, and laughing in his sleeve at Quelch."

"Well, he was a jolly good captain," said Bob Cherry easily. "We can rely on the team if Wharton picks out the men."

"The relyfulness is terrific," agreed Harree Janset Ram Singh.

"I don't know!" muttered Nugent.

"Franky, old man—" said Bob.

"I tell you I don't know! I don't understand Wharton at all this term. I can't help thinking—" Frank Nugent broke off.

"And I can tell you, I know!" said Johnny Bull savagely. "Wharton's up against us, because we used to be his friends, I suppose. I can't see that he's got any other reason. I'll bet you anything you like that our names won't be in the list."

"Oh, rot!" said Bob.

"Not that I care; but they can't make up a winning team without us."

"Well, then, Wharton wouldn't—"

"He would! He doesn't care a rap for the match, or for anything else, if it comes to that! He'd rather see Rookwood wipe up the ground with us than see our names in the list."

"That's rot!" said Bob gruffly—all the more gruffly, perhaps, because he had an uneasy twinge of misgiving himself.

"Well, you'll see!" growled Johnny Bull.

"After all, we're not the only pebbles on the beach," said Bob. "There's plenty of good stuff in the Remove. Of course, that list is utter rot; but a good team could be made up, even without little us."

"Not a winning team against a crowd like Rookwood."

"Well, I don't know—"

"I do!" said Johnny Bull. "And Wharton, had better take care, too. There'll be trouble in the Remove if he tries on shifting us out of the football. And that's his game."

Bob Cherry shook his head. But he felt a deep inward misgiving, and he was very anxious to see the Rookwood list.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Voice of Jacob!

"POLONIUS behind the giddy arras!" growled Skinner.

Skinner was referring to the late captain of the Remove. Snoop and Stott nodded assent. Literary allusions, as a rule, were quite lost on Snoop and Stott; but "Hamlet" had been "done" that week in the English class, and so they knew who Polonius was.

"The hands are the hands of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob!" went on Skinner, evidently in a mood for quotations to illustrate his meaning, and quoting this time from "Sunday prep."

"Might have guessed it, you know," said Snoop. "Wharton put Mauly up for the job, and intended all the time

making a stalking-horse of him, as Bull called it. Mauly in name, and Wharton in fact—what? And Quelch can go and eat coke. Deep of Wharton."

"Not that I care," added Skinner. "I never really wanted to play against Rookwood."

Sidney James Snoop closed one eye at Stott, who grinned. Skinner caught the wink and the grin, and scowled.

"Well, you're out of the team too, Snoopey!" he sneered.

"I don't mind much," said Snoop—"not so much as you do, old man. Lot of fag, anyhow, just to brag that a chap's played for School. I was really pulling Mauly's leg more than anything else."

"Well, now Wharton's pulled our leg," growled Skinner. "I'm told I'm not wanted, after all. Not that I care, as I said. But it's a bit thick for Wharton to be turned out of the captaincy, and to keep on the job with Mauly as a screen. I wonder what Mr. Quelch would say if he knew!"

"Well, he wouldn't butt into football matters," said Stott. "He doesn't know or care much about our matches."

"Mauly's told me that if I stick to games practice for a few weeks, he'll think it over again," said Skinner. "Mauly tellin' a chap not to slack! Satan rebukin' sin, you know!"

"Of course, it's Wharton all the time," said Snoop. "He's got Mauly right under his thumb."

"All the better, if you ask me," said Stott, in his slow way.

Frederick Stott was much under Skinner's influence, but he had a way sometimes of coming out with remarks like this. Without the valuable friendship of Harold Skinner, Stott would have been a much better fellow.

His two comrades glared at him.

"Better, is it?" snarled Skinner.

"Well, Mauly would have lost us the match, if he'd been given his head," said Stott. "Wharton will pick out a winning team for him."

"A fat lot we care about that," said Skinner.

"Well, I do. I haven't a chance of figuring in the eleven, I know, but I'd like to see the Remove beat Rookwood."

"I'd like to see 'em get the licking of their lives, to pay Mauly out for dropping me!" snarled Skinner.

"You said you didn't care."

"Oh, don't be a fool!"

"You mean you do care?" asked Stott.

"I mean that I'll jolly well punch your silly nose if you don't stop talking piffle!" growled Skinner.

"You needn't get your rag out," said Stott. "You wouldn't like other fellows to hear you say you want the Remove licked. I jolly well wish Mauly would put me in as back. I know I'd do my level best. Wharton gave me a chance once, in his time, and you made me chuck it, Skinner. I wouldn't let that happen again, I can tell you."

"Wouldn't you?" sneered Skinner. "Well, you've got no chance now—not a ghost of one. If Mauly put you in, Wharton would pull the strings and drop you out again—see?"

"I suppose he would," said Stott moodily. "Bit rotten, though, loafing all through the football season, and never getting a game except in pick-ups."

"You won't get a game while Wharton's pulling the strings, anyhow," said Skinner. "So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it. I think—"

Skinner broke off as he sighted Harry Wharton. The three black sheep of the Remove were lounging under the elms

while they talked, and they had not observed the late captain of the Remove leaning against one of the old trees, with his hands in his pockets. Skinner started, and felt a little uneasy as he realised that all that he had been saying had been said in Wharton's hearing. Wharton smiled mockingly as he met Skinner's glance.

"So that's how you've figured it out, Skinner?" he said, with sarcasm.

"Well, yes, I have," said Skinner sulkily. "You're making Mauly into a sort of dummy, working him just as if you worked him with a wire, and you know you are."

"The hands are the hands of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob—what?" said Wharton, laughing.

"You can't deny it!" snapped Skinner. "All the Remove will see it soon—even Mauly himself, I fancy. And Mr. Quelch, too!" added Skinner.

"The sooner the better," said Wharton coolly. He snapped his fingers. "That much for Mr. Quelch and what he thinks about it! I was going to speak to you, Stott. You can play back when you choose to buck up a little. Do you feel up to playing Rookwood on Saturday?"

Stott jumped.

"Me!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"You," said Wharton, with a nod. "I'm keeping in Bolsover major at right back; he's a good man when he chooses. What about you for left?"

"You mean it?"

"Right as rain."

"I'm your man, of course!" exclaimed Stott eagerly. "But—but I say, Wharton, what about Johnny Bull? I don't pretend to be as good a back as Bull. No good if I did."

Wharton's brow darkened.

"I'm not asking your advice, Stott. I'm offering you a place in the eleven for Saturday, if you choose to take it."

"Taken, of course," said Stott.

Skinner breathed hard.

"What about me?" he asked.

"You're no good," answered Wharton unceremoniously. "Too many cigarettes. You'd crack up in ten minutes."

"Stott smokes," said Skinner sullenly.

"I jolly well sha'n't touch a fag again this week!" exclaimed Stott. "Rely on that, Wharton."

"I do," said Harry. "That's understood, of course."

Skinner gave him a bitter look.

"You say you're keeping Bolsover major in?"

"Yes; I've told him so."

"And who the deuce are you, to keep a chap in or turn him out?" demanded Skinner savagely. "Have we only dreamed that you were kicked out of the captaincy, after all?"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Mauleverer's good enough to take my advice," he said.

"You mean that you're still captain of the Remove in your own estimation, with Mauly as a mask?"

"Anything you like," said Wharton; and he walked away with his hands in his pockets, whistling.

"Well," said Snoop, with a deep breath, "that beats it!"

"Of course, you won't play on Saturday, Stott?" said Skinner, in a casual sort of way.

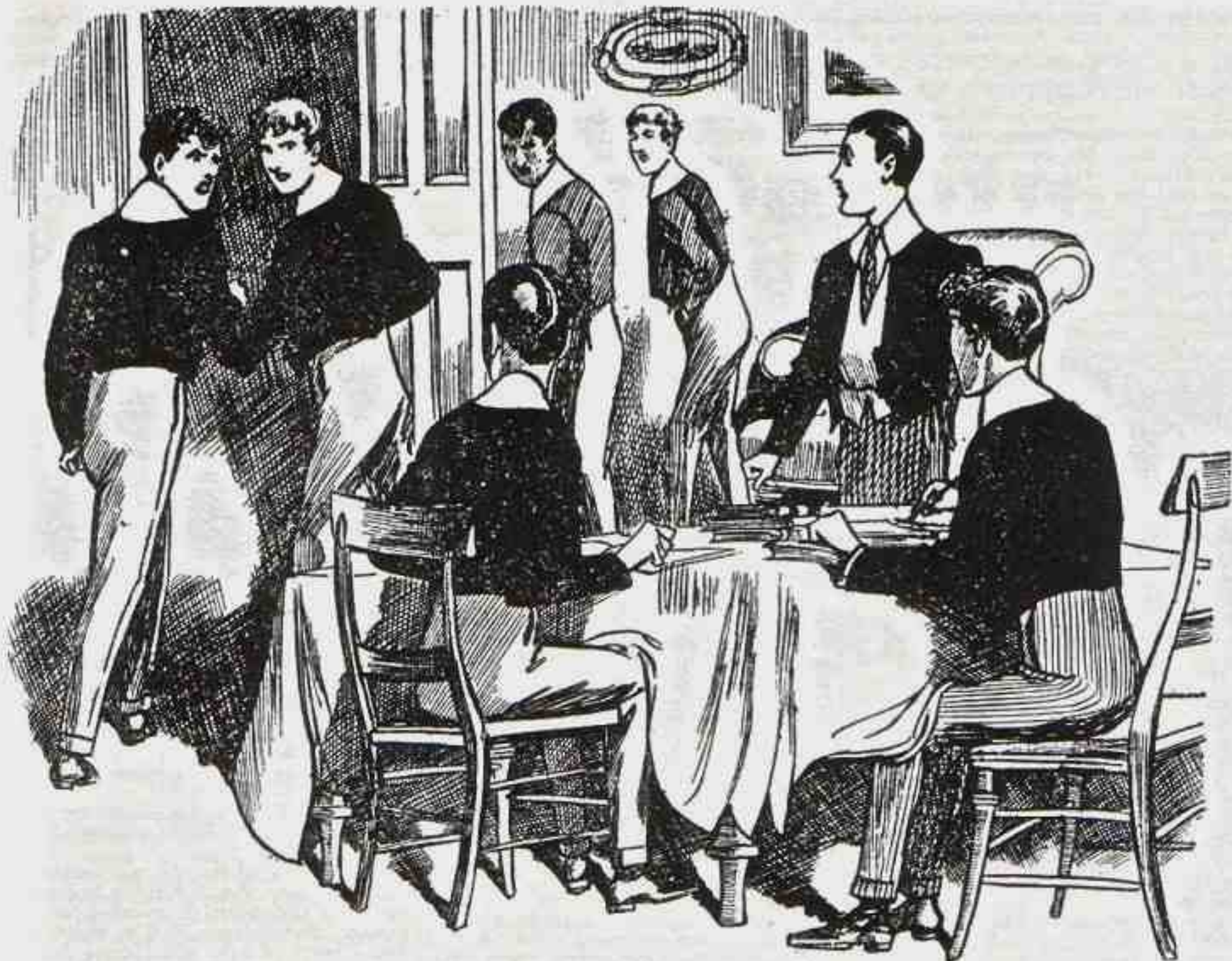
Stott looked at him.

"Sha'n't I, just!" he answered, with emphasis.

"So you're going back on your friends, and sucking up to that cheeky cad?" said Skinner.

"You asked him for a place yourself."

"Don't give me any back-chat, you sneak!" said Skinner savagely. "If you



You're making use of that fool Mauly to pay off scores against your old friends, Wharton," said Bull. Lord Mauleverer rose to his feet, a gleam in his eyes. "That's enough!" he said. "Outside for you!" Johnny Bull clenched his hands. Bob Cherry caught his arm and hurried him out. "This won't be the end of it, Wharton," said Johnny, between his teeth. "Dear me!" ejaculated Wharton. "Shut the door—there's a draught!" (See Chapter 11.)

back up Wharton you needn't speak to me again."

"I'd rather speak to Wharton, if you come to that."

"Wha-a-at?"

"So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it," said Stott defiantly. "I'm going to play, if they'll have me, that's a dead cert; and if you don't like it, Skinner, you can lump it, so that's that."

Harold Skinner clenched his hands; and Stott, with a sullen glare, followed his example. Skinner thought better of it. Stott was a rather burly fellow, and when he had his back up—as sometimes he did—it was Skinner's cue to treat him with tact.

"Well?" growled Stott, eyeing him a good deal like a bulldog.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Skinner.

And he turned his back on Stott, and walked away with Sidney James Snoop. Stott stared after him, sniffed, and then walked off towards Little Side, where some football practice was going on.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Power Behind the Throne!

HARRY WHARTON had always filled a prominent place in the eyes of the Remove. Even on his first arrival at Greyfriars, a moody, discontented new boy, he had made his mark in the Form. Since those days he had changed much; but

many fellows who remembered the "old Wharton" very clearly, remarked that he seemed now to be changing back to his old self. Good or bad, liked or disliked, popular or unpopular, Wharton had always been a fellow to reckon with, and had always had a prominent place; and since his fall from the captaincy he seemed to loom more than ever in the eyes of his Form-fellows.

Some of the Removites, as well as Skinner, had an inkling of what was in his mind; though, as Squiff remarked, it was never easy to tell what the chap was thinking of, especially this term, when he seemed so different from the Wharton of last term. Now, as practically captain of the Form, although his Form master had solemnly and officially turned him out of that position, Wharton was more than ever an object of interest to the Lower Fourth.

Fallen from his high estate, merely an ordinary member of the Remove, and nothing more than that, he was still, evidently, a power in the land. The nigger in the woodpile, as Fisher T. Fish expressed it, Polonius behind the arras, according to Skinner.

Why he had put up Lord Mauleverer for the captaincy had puzzled some of the fellows. To keep out his old friend Bob Cherry seemed to be the reason; but it was growing clearer now that that, if it was the reason, it was not the whole reason. It was being discerned now that, with Lord Mauleverer official captain of

the Form, Harry Wharton was unofficial captain. Mauly had the shell and Wharton had the kernel, as Hazeldene told the fellows in the Rag, in spite of Mr. Quelch.

Wharton was nobody now, nobody more than anybody else, officially. But his candidate had bagged the captaincy, and now that he had bagged it, Wharton ruled in his name. That was how the affair stood at the present stage.

What Mr. Quelch thought of it, even if he observed the state of affairs at all, the juniors did not know. So far, it would have been difficult for him to intervene, which was perhaps the reason why he seemed to observe nothing.

But that Wharton was, to all intents and purposes, still captain of the Remove was very clear to the Removites—painfully clear to some of them. A fellow with aspirations to play for the Form asked Wharton about it, as a matter of course. And the fellows to whom Wharton was implacably hostile knew that it was useless to speak to Mauleverer on the subject.

Lord Mauleverer was much happier in his new position now. According to Hazel, he had the shell while Wharton had the kernel; but according to Mauly's own ideas he had the kudos, while Wharton had all the trouble. Which was a division very agreeable to his lazy lordship.

That Wharton was leading him by the

nose for his own purposes—not very creditable purposes—his lordship was not likely to suspect, or to believe if anybody told him so.

Other fellows were slow to believe it. But they were driven to that conclusion at last, even Bob Cherry. It came as a shock to Bob. He was no longer Wharton's friend. He had long ceased to hope that the breach in the once-united "Famous Five" would ever be healed. Wharton was going his own way; his former friends were going theirs. But that Wharton's way should prove to be so perverse was a surprise to a fellow who had trusted him. It seemed to Bob, ruminating distantly on the subject, that sheer evil was uppermost in Wharton now. A reckless, ruthless persistence in wrongdoing that was amazing.

What had come over him?

There had always been a wilful strain in him, a touch of perverse obstinacy. But his enemies, any more than his friends, had never envisaged this.

That he was bringing Mauleverer, his kind friend, into contempt, perhaps did not occur to Wharton, certainly not to Mauleverer himself. But did he care, anyway, in the new ruthless course he had marked out for himself? Bob Cherry could not help thinking that he did not care, and it was a shock to him to think so.

Mauleverer was under his influence. Wharton was constantly in Study No. 12 now. Indeed, he went to that study for prep, and Study No. 1 was left entirely to Billy Bunter. Wharton and Mauleverer were always seen together. Mauly, who had never chummed with anybody, seemed to be chumming with the fellow who was in disgrace with his Form master, at war with his old friends, a rebel against authority, and regarded very dubiously now by most of the Removees.

But if he had lost old friends he seemed to be in the way of gaining new ones. Bolsover major's loud voice was heard in the Rag in his praise. Bolsover major had never been satisfied with Wharton's official captaincy. He was quite satisfied with the unofficial captaincy, since it had led to his selection for the Rookwood team. In Bob Cherry's study there was warm discussion on that subject.

"Wharton never thought Bolsover good enough to play in a big fixture before," said Johnny Bull grimly. "Has Bolsover improved in form?"

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"And Stott. Stott can play back after a fashion. But Wharton would have laughed at the idea of playing him against Rookwood in the match last term. Now I hear that he's selected."

"Blessed if I can make it out!" said Mark Linley.

"It's to leave me out," said Johnny Bull bitterly. "And when the list comes out you'll see that Bob is left out of the half-way line."

"Well, there are other fellows in the Remove who can play half," said Bob, as cheerfully as he could.

"It's a dead set against us," said Johnny Bull savagely. "I'd never have believed it of Wharton. He doesn't care if the match is chucked away—not a rap!"

"I can't quite believe that," said Mark.

"It's clear enough, all the same. We're all left out, I tell you, and if Greyfriars wins the match, the fellows will all say that it's time there were some changes!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Well, if we beat Rookwood we needn't grumble," said Bob.

"But we sha'n't beat them. Wharton will win if he can, to justify himself. But he's taking too many risks. And if

we're licked there will be a row about it," said Johnny Bull, between his teeth. "Mauly can go on playing at being captain of the Form if he likes, but he won't keep football captain if Rookwood beats us, I can tell him that. It's no good saying anything now, I suppose. The fellows would set it down to jealousy at being left out. A good many of them are pleased enough, anyhow, to see us taken down a peg."

"Oh, draw it mild, old chap!"

"Well, they are. But if the Rookwood match turns out a muck-up they'll sing a different tune. We shall carry the whole football club with us, then."

"Well, let's hope it will be a win," said Bob. "Goodness knows there's been trouble enough already. We don't want a split in the club."

"It's us against Wharton," said Johnny Bull doggedly, "and if he doesn't go down we go down, and Remove football along with us."

"I'd like to see the list," said Frank Nugent.

"Well, you won't see our names in it, you can take my word for that in advance!" growled Johnny Bull. "Friday now and the match to-morrow. Wharton would have spoken to us before this if we were wanted."

"It's for Mauly to speak, he's captain."

"Precious captain!" sniffed Johnny Bull. "Look here, we're going to have it out! I want to know. Let's go and see Mauleverer about it, and get it plain. Then we shall know where we stand."

There was some discussion on that, and finally Johnny Bull's suggestion was agreed to.

The position of the Co. was rather awkward one. Frank Nugent had never been an indispensable member of the eleven. But Johnny Bull in the back, Bob Cherry at half, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh in the front line, had always been called upon when a match was of importance. One of them might be passed over, or even two; but if all three were left out it would be enough proof that Wharton was carrying personal hostility into football matters, using the innocent Lord Mauleverer as a tool for the purpose. But insistence on their claims came very awkwardly. It rather put them on a footing with fellows like Bolsover major, who had always been seeking to butt into the eleven and lost in complaint when left out.

That evening the list should have been posted up in the Rag, but there was no sign of it. Lord Mauleverer had consulted no one but Wharton on the subject. "Dud" as he was, he was assuming unlimited authority. Not that his lordship really was to blame. He had boundless trust in Wharton, and knew that the late captain of the Remove was an absolutely reliable authority on the subject, and it never crossed his mind, even remotely, that he was being "used."

Four juniors came along the Remove passage to Study No. 12—Johnny Bull with a frowning brow, Bob Cherry wearing a worried look, Nugent very quiet and thoughtful, Hurree Janset Ram Singh with the usual beaming cheerfulness quite gone from his dusky face.

Johnny Bull gave a heavy knock at Mauleverer's door, and it flew open. Three juniors were at prep in the study, Wharton having brought his books along, as usual, to work with Mauly and Sir Jimmy.

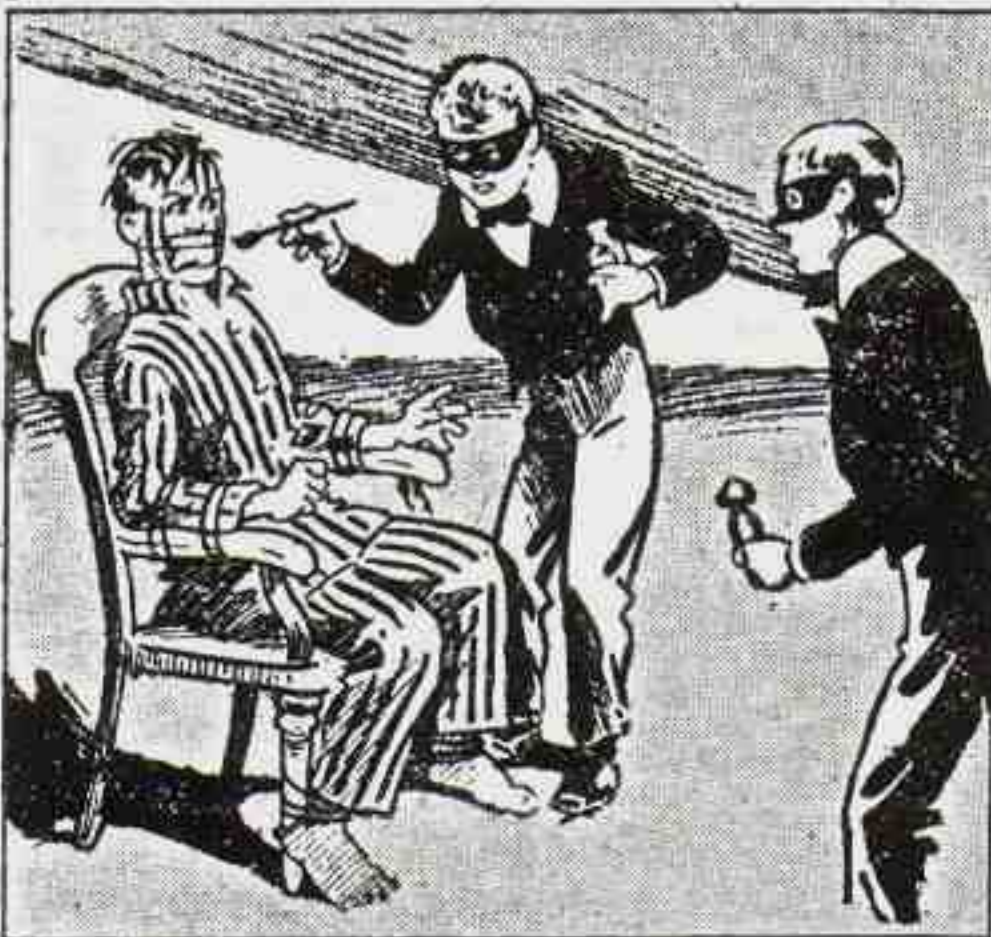
"Hallo! Trot in, old beans!" said Lord Mauleverer cheerfully.

"Interrupting you?" asked Bob.

(Continued on page 28.)

WHAT IS THE ROOKWOOD SECRET SOCIETY?

Who are the members of this amazing and powerful organisation?



A VICTIM OF THE SECRET SOCIETY.

THE "POPULAR"

Read all about it in

"THE PAINTED PREFECT."

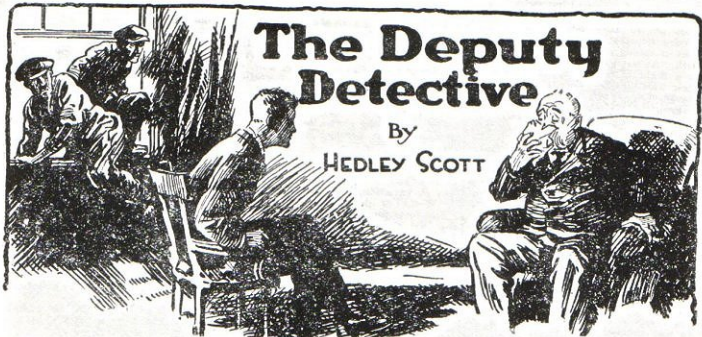
A stirring long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood.

by OWEN CONQUEST

in

ON SALE TUESDAY.

A DEAD LANGUAGE such as Latin offers little fascination to the average boy, but a quotation from it puts young Jack Drake on the trail of the motor bandits. Far from being dead this particular phrase is alive with sinister meaning.



The Deputy Detective

By
HEDLEY SCOTT

FEATURING JACK DRAKE—FERRERS LOCKE'S CLEVER BOY ASSISTANT!

The Haven!

ON the outskirts of Hambleton, nestling in peaceful scenery, stood a derelict mansion of Tudor design. The remnants of a gate that swung noisily upon a single hinge to every breath of wind still bore upon its blistered paint-work the legend:

"THE HAVEN."

Rightly named in many respects was this relic of an old world, for the hand of man had not stirred in it for over a century. To whom it belonged was a mystery that the simple folk of Hambleton never thought of solving. That it was a useless property, past repair, many a covetous land and property agent had regretfully decided when what little of its history there was to tell had been made known to him.

The Haven looked capable of crumbling upon its own foundations at any moment. Its windows were uncurtained, its roof showed gaping rents, its chimneys mere suggestions of what they might once have been. Birds squawked incessantly beneath its crumbling gables, weeds and furze-bushes claimed the acre of ground in which it stood in undisturbed possession.

Well away from the main road, seldom seen from week in to week by any human being, the Haven reared its dismal head skywards in dreary solitude.

And yet, as the setting sun sank majestically into a ball of fire in the western horizon, the sound of moving feet on the gravel drive caused the night air to be made hideous by the shrill, nervous cries of a flock of birds that rose in noisy protest from their nests at the advance of intruders.

"Durned row!" grunted one of the visitors to the Haven. "Looks as if all the bloomin' birds of Surrey have made this tumbledown shack their home!"

"There was a chorus of laughing approbation from the visitors' companions—six in all—cut short, however, as another voice broke into speech.

"The identical place," it said. "One might be in the South Seas for any sign of civilisation there is hereabouts."

"Hear, hear, chief!" muttered one of the six. "The nearest cottage is a mile and a half away."

"Dear, dear!" The chief tapped his chin thoughtfully and gazed frowningly at the Tudor ruin.

"Come," he said at length, "let us explore!"

Treading noiselessly, the whole party moved forward to the tumbledown portico. Beyond it lay the open door and the panelled hall.

"Shut the door, Watson," commanded the chief. "Expert you will have to lift it into position—there's only one sound hinge left. Can't announce our presence here to all the world by carelessly showing a light. Give the man a hand, confound you!" he added

CHARACTERS YOU WILL MEET.

JACK DRAKE, a boy of fifteen with a gift for detective work, the assistant of Ferrers Locke, the world-famous scientific investigator.

INSPECTOR PYECROFT, of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard, a friend of Locke and Drake's.

THE CHIEF, a mysterious person who directs the coups of the notorious motor bandits, and of whose identity nothing is known to the police.

THOMAS and WATSON, two members of the gang.

While Locke is away on the Continent Drake is given the opportunity of handling his first case, his instructions being to lay the rascally motor bandits by the heels.

He makes a bad start, however, for he has the misfortune to fall into the hands of the gang. Locke's rooms are cleared of all their furniture, which is taken out into a removal-van and driven off in full daylight.

On the top of the van, bound and gagged inside a packing-case, Drake is taken he knows not whether. The van comes to a stop. The furniture is taken out. Then, just as one of the gang remembers the packing-case on the top of the van, the horses take fright and bolt. They head for the river, crash through a wooden pier, and plunge into the Thames. Meanwhile, the packing-case, with Drake a prisoner inside it, hurtles over the water, and, luckily, comes to rest on a cargo of sand being taken down-stream.

(Now read on.)

irritably to the other members of the party.

They hastened to do his bidding, the lash of his tongue providing a spur none of them attempted to ignore.

"Now switch on that torch of yours, Thomas!"

On the instant a shaft of light illumined the dilapidated hall, revealing sagging beams, falling plaster, and broken floorboards. As a drab background these signs of ruin fitted in well with five of the party that stood within the hall. "Scoundrel" was written in every "crooked" face—human derelicts, outcasts. But none outside their chosen circle knew them to be the notorious motor-bandits—the talk of the county. Yet such they were.

The sudden beam of light brought with it a change of expressions. Into five of the furtive faces shot the light of fear as the owners stood in an expectant group, listening intently. But the craven expression was habitual with these hardened offenders, and it broke under the mocking eyes of the man they called their chief.

He stood, a picturesque figure, in a long, black cloak, nearing six feet in height. A crepe mask adorned his features, successfully hiding them, but the glittering orbs that pierced the eyelets of the mask showed his calibre. No craven, this, but a forceful, dominant character, whose slightest wish was a command where his followers were concerned.

"Well, von hood's," he said derisively, his educated voice purring strangely in contrast with the harsh, uncultured tones of his accomplices, "how do you like it?"

"All right, gov'nor!" smirked Watson. "This 'ere's a place in a thousand."

"A regular palace!" granted Thomas, at which there was a subdued outburst of laughter.

"Our headquarters for a few months, at any rate," continued the chief. "The other place is getting too hot for us. Follow me!"

He took the torch and moved forward without hesitation. The gaps in the

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flooring, the fallen masonry he avoided like one well accustomed to traversing this dangerous path. It spoke volumes for his retentive memory, for he had passed over the ground but twice before on a visit of inspection. His followers were not so sure of themselves, and sundry imprecations escaped them as they stumbled over the objects in their path. At last the chief reached the top of a flight of stone steps that wound their way into the lower regions of the Haven.

Down this staircase he strode quickly, coming to a halt in a spacious cellar littered with empty bottles, crates, straw, and a collection of rubbish.

His five accomplices produced candles from their coat pockets, and in a few moments the place was well illumined.

The party looked about them with interest. With the exception of the rubbish that littered the floor there was nothing to see but four brick walls and innumerable cobwebs.

"Nice and dry," was Watson's comment.

"Wasn't always," chuckled Thomas, indicating with an expressive gesture the empty bottles.

Even the chief smiled at this sally, but he quickly became grave. Indicating the empty crates, he invited the party to seat themselves. Remaining standing himself, he addressed them in low tones for five minutes or so, the while his accomplices listened with all attention.

"To-morrow at seven o'clock, then," he concluded. "We meet in full strength." You will notify the band, Thomas.

"Ay, ay, sir!" grunted Thomas, who was evidently a "lieutenant" in this strange company. "And we initiate the new man, eh?"

"We do!" came the reply. "He will make number thirteen—"

"Thirteen!" echoed two of the company hoarsely. "Unlucky number!"

"Pahaw!" The chief snapped his fingers. "What business have we with superstition? Why, you dolts, the last crib we cracked was number thirteen!"

His derisive tone failed to shake off the dread suspicion that beset his accomplices. Scoundrels in all walks of life are strangely superstitious, and these motor bandits were no exceptions.

And had they known the identity of the man they were likely to initiate into their select circle on the following day their superstitious belief would have been considerably strengthened!

As it was they laughed, the better to cover their troubled feelings, and silently followed in the wake of their chief.

And their exit was the signal for another outburst of squawking from the indignant birds that had made the Haven their home. Otherwise the coming and going of a powerful limousine that contained them passed unnoticed.

Human Freight!

"**H**ALLO! Rain!" The captain of the Tin Lizzie, a steam tug that plied a daily trade up and down the waters of the River Thames, made the laconic remark as he gripped the helm of the fussy little vessel and swung it hard over.

The Tin Lizzie—as was to be expected—was indifferent whether it rained or snowed. It had its work cut out to drag three loaded barges in its wake. The "chug-chug" of its engine bore ample testimony to the fact that the task was

not a light one. Engines have a happy knack of voicing their objections when overworked.

"Better cover up the cargo, Bill," said the "skipper," turning to his first mate, who, incidentally, was second mate, stoker, cook, and man-of-all-work.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

Slipping nimbly over the stern of the Tin Lizzie, Bill spread the tarpaulin over the cargo in the first barge, and as nimbly performed the same operation with number two. He was about to jump the intervening space between number two barge and number three when, despite the gloom, he detected an irregular shape perched amidships the third barge.

"Well, I'm 'anged!" Bill permitted himself the expression as he scratched his shaggy head, and, by way of variation, altered it to:

"Well, I'm blowed!"

Not for a moment did he recollect seeing that peculiar "cargo" on board at London Bridge, whence the voyage had started. And the Tin Lizzie was now nearing Gravesend—a journey accomplished without a single stop.

"Must have dropped from the blooming skies!" Bill had recovered from his first surprise sufficiently to examine the cargo at closer quarters. And what he saw was a large-sized packing-case.

"What the deuce can it be?"

Forgetful of the rain, forgetful that the cargo of sand was rapidly becoming wet, Bill stood staring down at that packing-case as though he were regarding something very freakish.

Then, to his now growing horror, the case moved violently, although no motion of the barge could account for it, and no visible hand had touched it.

"Lumme!" Bill's eyes nearly started out of their sockets; his shaggy hair almost stood on end.

Again the case moved—this time towards his direction; and, with a howl of fear, Bill turned and ran for his life. He rejoined his skipper in a breathless state, and began incoherently to pour out an account of the terrible thing he had seen.

"What's bitten yer, Bill?" exclaimed the skipper scathingly. "You're a-seein' things, I swan! The pork yer had for supper, 't'wasn't?"

"Honest, skipper, it moved!" said Bill tremblingly. "Go and see for yourself."

"I'll see fast enough!" growled the skipper testily. "Don't stand there, shivering like a blubber of lard! 'Tain't nuthin' supernatural, as they calls it. Leave it ter me!"

The skipper, a diminutive figure in a reefer-jacket, hitched his slacks, bade his mate take over the helm, and with no less agility than Bill before him skipped nimbly from barge to barge. He was almost as much surprised as Bill had been when he caught sight of the packing-case; but he had had the advantage of being forewarned. Not quite so swiftly now he strode forward, and, legs jammed wide apart, balancing naturally to the mild rolling of the barge, he gazed, fascinated and perplexed, at the packing-case.

It moved!

The skipper saw that much, and leaped back, a muttered imprecation falling from his lips. Then, his courage getting the better of his fears, he strode forward and struck a match.

The light flared up in the darkness, and the skipper bent his head to read the sundry labels on the case. While he was thus engaged, there came a peculiar mumbling sound from the interior of the case that all but caused him to topple overboard in his astonishment.

"Strike me—" The skipper's exclamation died away unfinished, as a possible solution of the strange happening before him presented itself.

In a moment he was wrenching at the boards of the case. To his relief they came away from their supports far easier than he had imagined. The mumbling sounds came stronger now. Trembling with excitement, the skipper lighted another match. Holding it above his head he peered down into the interior of the case. And what he saw caused him to start back in amazement.

"Streuth!" he exclaimed. "Where the deuce did you come from?"

For the extra cargo on the third barge was Jack Drake—still bound and gagged, a fast prisoner in the packing-case!

Drake's reply was scarcely intelligible, which was not to be wondered at. A gag is a bad handicap for a conversation. The skipper, seeing the position, quickly severed the knot that held the gag in place, and waited for an explanation.

But explanation there was none. Drake raised his cramped limbs to a sitting position, tried to speak, but found the effort too much for him. He fell back, head nodding on his chest, at a dead faint.

"This 'ere's a go, an' no mistake!" grunted the skipper. "E's in a bad way."

Stooping, he gathered the bound figure of the boy detective in his strong arms, and with a tenderness stranger even to keeping with his rough exterior, the skipper of the Tin Lizzie bore his unconscious burden to the deck of the tug.

"I've found the spook," he said to the astonished mate. "And for the love of Mike, get some brandy! For all we knows he'll be joining that 'appy band, too sweet. Looks in a bad way to me!"

The mate dashed below and returned with a brandy-flask. Meanwhile, the skipper had cut loose Drake's bonds and was chafing his limbs. A little of the raw spirit brought new life into Drake's numbed body. He shivered slightly; his eyes twitched.

"Ere, matey, 'ave another pull; dey good!"

Once more the brandy-flask was brought into commission. This time it served to open Drake's eyes. He gazed about him wonderingly in a darkness in only by a ship's lantern. He stared, with screwed-up features, at the weather-beaten faces bending over him, and rubbed his eyes.

"W-where am I?"

A natural question in the circumstances, and one that needed none too literal a reply. But the skipper of the tug was a very exact sort of gentleman.

"Why, matey, you're ten minutes out of Gravesend."

But Drake scarcely heard him. He was sitting up now, his teeth biting deep into his lips, to counteract the pain as the blood rushed back to his numbed limbs. To one who has never experienced what that sensation is, let him enlarge upon a picture of "pins and needles" a thousandfold, and some faint idea of the torture will be gained.

"How d'yer feel, son?"

"Much better, thanks!" grinned Drake, caressing a bump on his head the size of a penny. "I must have landed on something soft."

His words conveyed nothing to the skipper and his mate. They were wondering where he came from, and how he had managed to get aboard in a packing-case.

Seeing the puzzled expression on the faces of his rescuers, Drake instinctively guessed the position.



Trembling with excitement the skipper struck a match. Holding it above his head he peered down into the interior of the packing-case. Then he jumped. "Hallo!" he ejaculated. "Where the deuce did you come from, youngster?" (See page 22.)

"Suppose you didn't see me come aboard when the van horses took fright!" he grinned. "Rockon—"

"Were you concerned in that smash-up?" demanded the skipper, tilting his hat to one side of his head. "Bless yer, we were all eyes on the poor brutes of 'osses! Now I come to think of it, I did see a packing-case come hurtlin' over the water. Naturally thought it had gone under. Chap's not likely to worry 'is 'ead about a packing-case, when a couple of helpless 'osses are struggling in the river for their lives."

"I suppose not," said Drake. "Deuced lucky for me, your barge was passing at the time! I knew I was heading for the river, although I was cooped up in that box, for I heard the shouts of the people telling me so. But how long ago did all this happen?"

"Lemme see," said the skipper thoughtfully. "It's half-past two in the morning now. Lemme see, that runaway affair took place at about five o'clock at night. To think of you being sailed up in that there case all those hours!"

"Must have been unconscious!" said Drake ruefully. "I remembered landing on your cargo—thought at the time how soft it was—and then I snuffed it."

He rubbed his head again, and the skipper, bending forward, drew in his breath.

"Streuth, son, you've got a regular packet! Must 'ave landed with a force, eh?"

"That packing-case saved me, any way," said Drake. "It took the worst

shock of the landing. I was so cramped in it, too, that I wasn't flung about inside. But tell me," he added earnestly. "Where did the affair take place? Remember, I was sealed in that confounded packing-case all the time."

"Somewhere near Wapping!" grunted the skipper. "My memory's none too good for things like that. And Bill was down below at the time. I 'ad all my work cut out to get this 'ere tug outer the way of them horses."

At this point Bill came up from below with a basin of soup and a hunk of bread.

"Thought you might feel peckish," he said, handing the basin to Drake. "Tain't extra, but it'll keep out the cold."

Drake was hungry right enough. The appetising odour of the soup reminded him in double quick fashion. He felt his circulation come back to the normal as he shifted the contents of the basin; his head cleared; his strength returned.

"I'd ask you to take a nap for a bit," said the skipper thoughtfully, "but we're almost in dock now. We're unloading at Gravesend."

"Many thanks!" said Drake. "You're a white man, skipper. Not even curious to know how I got fixed up in that case, either!"

"Well, I won't say as 'ow I'm not curious!" grunted the skipper. "But 'tain't no business of mine, I'm reckon'ing."

Drake forthwith outlined his adventures of the previous afternoon to an

amazed audience of two Thames watermen.

"Well, blow me!" was the skipper's comment, when the lad had concluded. "You 'tecs take life pretty calmly, I must say. Thought we saw all the adventure there was on the river. But your crowd takes the band." He looked Drake up and down. "By the Lord Harry, you're only a nipper—scuse an old dog's plain speakin'—no older than me own son. And you're Ferrers Locke's assistant! Streuth, Bill," he added, giving his mate a hearty slap on the back, "we've been entertainin' one of the nob's!"

Thus did two rugged, honest watermen have sufficient data to keep alive a spirited conversation for a week or more. When Drake took his leave of them at Gravesend just as the dawn was creeping up in the east, he pressed into their horny hands his watch and chain as mementoes of the occasion. And as the watchcase bore the youth's name engraved upon it, and the miniature shield attached to the chain a similar legend, the skipper and the mate of the tug Tin Lizzie felt honoured citizens indeed.

Later, when they were to spin their yarn in the company of fellow-watermen who doubted its veracity, those mementoes were going to prove conclusive evidence, sufficient for the hardest disbelievers.

They watched him tramp away from the wharf, this plucky lad who had faced death scores of times, and as a parting salute the skipper pulled the cord of the

siren. Its blaring note set all the cocks in the district a-crowding.

Thus did the Tin Lizzie show its appreciation of the honour accorded it.

No. 13!

AS the clock in the village church at Hambleton struck the hour of seven the following evening a tall figure clad in a flowing black cloak alighted from a powerful limousine and entered the tumbledown portico of the Haven.

The chief of the motor-bandits, for such this picturesque figure was, swiftly negotiated the dangerous path between the broken hall door and the top of the stone stairs, and stood listening.

"Who's that?"

The curly came hard and sharp.

"In Hambleton there is no place like the Haven!" The chief's reply was uttered in a contemptuous tone.

"The chief!"

The words were uttered in a semi-apologetic air, and a moment later a lantern shed its bright rays on the scene. They revealed a swarthy, evil countenance, over which spread a suave, ingratiating smile, as the chief looked the sentry up and down appraisingly.

"All's well, Anton?"

"Ay, chief! The band is down below. Do I lead—"

The chief ground out some reply that was sufficient to send the sentry flat against the wall, lantern raised on high, so that his master might pass.

A noisy altercation was in progress in the underground cellar between ten ugly-looking individuals when the tall, masked figure filled the aperture. On the instant the chatter died away, and all eyes were focused upon him.

Thomas and Watson strode forward, and, with a deference quaintly picturesque in such low company, saluted their chief.

"Be seated!" The command was rapped out as the tall masked figure swept majestically to the top of a long deal table and settled itself in an armchair. The other members of the company were not so comfortably accommodated. Empty wooden crates, upended, served them as chairs.

The chief ran his eyes over the assembly with a familiar glance until they came to rest upon a newcomer to the band of desperadoes.

"Stand up, number thirteen!"

Those piercing orbs never flickered as the command was hissed out, never left the sullen, half-leering features of the man thus called upon.

He rose to his feet, a broad-shouldered, ugly-looking customer, with a straggling beard, almost as well proportioned as the chief himself.

"Greetings, milord!" he growled, pulling a shaggy forelock.

The chief was not displeased at this outward and signal show of deference. Anything affecting his vanity earned a good mark for the bestower. Number thirteen had started with a good impression.

"Your name? Your references?" The questions were snapped out.

"Gustave Usebert Finlayson," came the immediate reply. "Late of Parkhurst Prison, Isle of Wight. Number in family one—meself. Age last birthday, thirty. Ambitions, cracking a crib a day, a risk digested with every meal, a livin' wage, and brainy bloke like yerself to horganise me movements."

"Well spoken!" said the chief, a mocking smile playing at the corners of his thin lips. "I see you have been well coached by your proposer."

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All eyes were turned upon Watson as he rose to his feet.

"I will answer for our new comrade," he said, showing an uneven row of teeth in a ghastly grin. "He's a stop-at-nothing bravo, can climb like a cat, and can keep a stiff tongue."

"Indeed!" The chief eyed the newcomer to the band with an almost affectionate glance. "He has sworn the oaths? He has received his first allowance—"

"Ay," broke in Thomas, who was something resembling a paymaster in the army. "I've given 'im his number and a twenty quid sub."

"Good!" The chief of the motor-bandits ran his organisation on business-like lines. "There is but the final test for our new comrade to undergo. See to the man, Thomas!"

The man addressed crossed the stone floor of the cellar to an improvised hearth whose chimney constituted a narrow slit in the wall that led to another cellar. A small fire was burning brightly on the hearth, and into its glowing embers Thomas thrust an iron fashioned like a miniature golf-stick.

The newcomer to the band of scoundrels eyed this proceeding with changing expressions. His dirty face screwed up in a hundred wrinkles as he watched the iron gradually colouring to the heat.

And all the while the chief's piercing eyes, half mocking, half suspicious, waited to see any sign of the craven in the face before him. But he was satisfied as, Thomas remarking that the iron was hot, the newcomer strode forward with an easy smile.

"Guess I'm ready for the vaccination, milord!" he chuckled.

"Good!" The chief rubbed his hands with satisfaction. Here was a man after his own heart. "I see you are of the right calibre. The man who proposed you will set our mark upon you. Bare your right arm, comrade Gustave. We stamp your number on your arm, so that should fickle memory ever play you false your eyes may serve to remind you that an oath has been given to our cause. Number thirteen, you are initiated!"

As he said these words the chief signalled to Watson. The man advanced with the red-hot iron, and was about to begin the branding process, when an imperious gesture from the chief stayed him.

"Back!"

The chief stooped over the bared arm of Gustave, and glared at a clearly defined tattoo mark of a poised snake.

"I see you have been branded before, Gustave," he said lightly. "A snake—eh?"

"The symbol of my existence," came the reply, in tones a trifle uneasy, thought Watson. "Always waiting to strike, always waiting for my opportunity—"

"And you are thirty years old—eh?" The question came quick as light.

"Why, of course—"

"Then how comes it that the date eighteen ninety appears in that masterly piece of tattoo work?"

It was a smart question, and it took Gustave aback.

"Er—a man never likes to admit he's old, chief," he faltered.

"Quite so," smiled the chief. "And what work were you doing in Parkhurst, Gustave?"

The query again came as quick as light, "Bricklaying, chief!" The answer came painfully slow.

"And you've managed to keep your hands and nails well manicured all the time?"

A low murmur of surprise escaped the

party of scoundrels as they crowded forward, just sufficient in volume to drown the gasp of dismay Gustave emitted. Sheepishly he looked down at his hands, foolishly he gazed at the grime upon them, nervously he regarded the well-manicured, the well-formed cuticles.

"Very interesting, my dear friend," hissed the chief. "Watson, a pair of water and soap!"

The man hastened to do his chief's bidding. He returned a moment or a later with a bucket of rain water and a slab of soap. These he placed in front of Gustave.

"Wash!" commanded the chief. "I'd like to see those hands without the grime. Memento they will tell an interesting story."

Gustave looked furtively round the room, like a rat seeking a way of escape. Seemingly paralysed, he still held his hands dangling limply before him.

"Wash!"

The command seemed to revive Gustave with a jerk. His right reached for the piece of soap, then—

Smack!

A violent blow took the chief full in the face and sent him staggering back. The slab of soap was sent whizzing into the face of Watson, a crashing straight left lifted Thomas off his feet.

"Stop him!"

The chief roared out the command. Gustave picked up the branding iron, and, with a lion-like roar, charged headway through the astonished members of the band.

One-two—three of the band dropped in their tracks as some portion of the anatomies encountered that whirling stroke of metal. Then, under the lash of these infuriated chief's tongue, the remaining members of the party hurled themselves at Gustave in a body.

The branding iron was whipped from his hands, savage fingers gripped him on all sides. And still they could not pull him down. Fighting like a wild cat Gustave dragged his assailants towards the door of the cellar. With one desperate heave of the shoulders he shook them from him like water from a bucket.

"Stop him, confound you!"

Another moment and Gustave would have been up the stone steps half-way into safety and freedom; but as he prepared to dash from the cellar an emperor crashed hurtled across the room and crashed upon his uncovered head.

It was not sufficient to stun him, but the force of it caused him momentarily to stop. And in that moment the wolves were dragging at him again. This time they made no mistake. Scratching and kicking to the last in the Bowers fashion, Gustave was stretched out on the stone floor a prisoner.

"Bravo, Watson!" exclaimed the chief, patting his lieutenant on the shoulder. "That was a splendid shot of yours."

The prisoner's eyes glared balefully at the scowling faces bent above him, and then fixed themselves on the masked features of the chief.

"Dear, dear," said that worthy half to himself. "What a pity you are not one of us, Gustave! A regular firebrand for a fight—eh?"

"Wish to Heaven I'd shifted that mask of yours!" came the prisoner's hissing retort. "I'd give something to know what scoundrel's face lies beneath it."

"That's a pleasure you may think of, my dear friend, without let or hindrance, but it will never be realised. I rather fancy your features are familiar to me now that your beard has gone awry."

Gustave smiled contemptuously. What mattered now that his disguise had become disarranged in the struggle? It

would serve its purpose no longer.

With a quick gesture the chief bent down and whipped the false beard away from the prisoner's chin. Another movement, and a "shock-headed" wig had parted company from a sleek, well-oiled head of jet-black hair. The shaggy eyebrows, too, the chief found detachable.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With Gustave's true features now revealed, despite the remaining disguises of grime and dirt, the chief seemed to find something amusing.

"Would you think, comrades" he chuckled, "that No. 13 was an ambitious police-officer?"

"A cop!" exclaimed two or three hoarse voices.

"Exactly, gentlemen!" came the laughing response. "A cop. A real live detective-inspector of the C.I.D. In short, my dear friends, Inspector Pycroft, of Scotland Yard."

"Pycroft!" exclaimed Watson incredulously. "But—but I thought he was Finlayson!"

"You thought!" growled the chief fiercely.

"But I met Finlayson when he arrived in town from Parkhurst Prison yesterday, after we had skinned out Ferrers Locke's flat, guv'nor," protested Watson. "It was Finlayson I stood a drink in the Swinging Lantern to-day. It was Finlayson I asked to join our band. You see, chief, Finlayson and I are old pals—"

"Rest easy, my friend," smiled Pycroft from the floor. "Finlayson it was whom you met yesterday, Finlayson it was who consented to join your rascally crew to-day. But Master Finlayson ran foul of your humble. He's now detained under suspicion at Scotland Yard."

"But he must have split!" exclaimed

Watson shrilly. "How else would you have known of our meeting?"

"Yes, he did squeal!" grunted Pycroft. "You see, I held sufficient cards to send him back to Parkhurst almost by the next train. I asked his permission"—this sarcastically—"to impersonate him for a little while in return for the damning evidence I held against him!"

"And Finlayson double-crossed us?"

"Something of the sort," grinned Pycroft.

"Enough!" rapped the chief. "This man knows too much, comrades. He must join his late colleague Ferrers Locke. Dead men tell no tales!" he added harshly. "This rendezvous will serve us no longer. Comrades, the Haven must crumble on its foundations and on the unfortunate person of this meddling police-officer. You understand!"

"Ay!" Ten voices growled out in assent. "The dog!"

"De mortuis nil nisi bonum," grinned the chief mockingly. "Come! We leave in twenty minutes!"

Just in Time!

JACK DRAKE stepped out at Wapping Station seven hours after he had left the friendly watermen at Gravesend, and looked about him with interest.

In those seven hours he had returned to Baker Street, explained certain happenings of the previous afternoon to Sing-Sing, who was like a person demoralized at finding the rooms all empty and his young master gone, and had generously "sacked" the Chinese servant for a month's holiday on full pay.

A snatched hour's rest had seen Locke's young assistant eager to get on

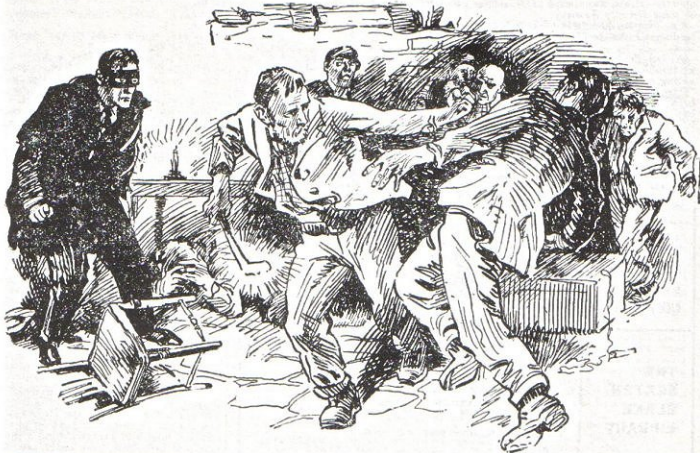
the trail of the motley bandits who had treated him so shabbily, and to Wapping, the place where the van horses had taken fright, he accordingly went. But none would have recognised in the slouching, disreputable-looking figure that lurched down Peter's Street, Ferrers Locke's smart assistant. What he intended doing Drake had not the slightest notion. Instinctively, he made his way to the river bank, looking for any signs of a broken wharfedoor or pier.

But an hour's wandering brought him nothing in the way of a clue. Discreet inquiries failed to elicit any information on the subject of the runaway van horses of the day before.

Three hours dragged by fruitlessly, and Drake, sharply reminded that he had snatched but a frugal meal at six o'clock that same morning by the chiming of a church clock that signalled the hour of twelve, looked about him for a place of refreshment.

He sighted a cafe of Italian proprietorship in this cosmopolitan neighbourhood, and directed his footsteps in its direction. Lounging carelessly into the place, he selected a corner seat that screened him from other customers by reason of its tall wooden back, and ordered a coffee and sausage and mash. This latter dish seemed to be something of a speciality in the cafe if twenty crude handbills pinned to the walls at regular intervals, announcing its price, could be taken as the outward and visible sign of its popularity. And Drake had to admit that for ninnence those sausages and mashed potatoes wanted a deal of beating. His inner man temporarily satisfied, Drake sipped his coffee and looked about him with interest.

From the other side of the partition he heard voices. Two men, apparently,



"Stop him!" The chief roared out the command as Gustave picked up the branding iron and, with a lion-like roar, charged his way through the astonished members of the gang. (See page 24.)

were engaged in telling funny stories, judging by the intermittent bursts of coarse laughter that floated ceilingwards.

Drake paid scant heed to his fellow-diners, however, until he heard his own name mentioned. Every nerve a-tingle, ears strained to their uttermost, young Drake kept still as a mouse.

"The young cub was in the blooming packing-case, you see," he heard one voice.

"Gorn? An' wot 'appened to 'im, mate?"

"The fishes 'ave him, Gustave—packing-case an' all!"

"Haw, haw!"

Another burst of laughter signalled the end of another "joke" between these two men on the other side of the partition. Drake heard the scuffling of feet, felt the wood partition at his back give a little as the two men rose to a standing position.

Felling his cap well down over his eyes, and picking up a newspaper that lay to hand, the young slouch appeared to be intently studying it when two burly figures passed down the narrow aisle. They gave him a casual glance in passing, but Drake's glance was anything but casual. From out of the corners of his eyes he glimpsed a familiar face—a face that sent a thrill of exultation down his spine.

"Watson!" he muttered to himself. "The house painter fellow of yesterday. This is a bit of luck, and no mistake!"

He called the oily-looking waiter, paid his bill, and sauntered out in the wake of Watson and his companion, at a distance of ten yards or so. He saw them strike down a narrow street to the left, and, with a carelessness well assumed, he followed them, always at the same distance. When they stopped and looked round—a measure they employed frequently—Drake was always in the shelter of some friendly doorway.

For over an hour this chase went on, leading—Drake had not the slightest idea.

At last the pair in front halted before a tumbledown house, outside which swung a signboard that bore the legend "The Swinging Lantern." Drake drew back behind the shelter of a friendly buttress only just in time. Watson and his companion glanced to right and left of them, and then lurched through the swing-doprs of the tavern.

As Drake kicked open the swing-door of the tavern he almost crashed into a burly fellow who was leaving.

"Why the dickens don't you look where you're going!" growled the man passing out.

"Why don't you go where you're looking," was Drake's cheeky response.

A hoarse guffaw of laughter greeted his words as he lounged into the bar. The smoky atmosphere almost choked him, and yet it served the purpose of screening him from too-inquisitive eyes. He swaggered up to the counter and ordered a drink, what time he glared insolently at the questioning faces bent upon him.

"Just ashore, mate?"

One seafaring-looking individual asked the question in friendly fashion.

"Mind yer own business!" growled Drake, rolling a cigarette between his grimy fingers.

His aggressiveness appealed to the people present; his slim build, his obvious youth, interested them. But Drake was deaf or rude to all inquiries. Meanwhile, he had eyed the crowd up and down for a sight of Watson and his companion.

He could hardly suppress his satisfaction when he observed them seated at a table in the far corner of the bar-parlour. The smoky atmosphere half-screened them from view. Drake's keen eyes saw Watson's companion, however, and he stored away an impression of a shaggy-haired, bearded individual, with gaol-bird written all over his crafty features, for future reference.

With well-assumed carelessness Drake lounged nearer their direction, always keeping them under observation, although his eyes seemed to be paying more attention to his glass of refreshment. And in this fashion the lad overheard stray bits of information.

"But when do we crack the next crib?" he heard Watson's companion mutter.

"I don't know myself, Finlayson," replied Watson. "The chief never lets on about a job until the last minute."

"Who is the chief, mate?"

Drake leaned forward, his ears thirsting for information, as likewise did the man called Finlayson.

"You'd like to know," came the answer. "We'd all like to know. But the chief is a mystery man with a sharp

way of dealing with folk who nose into his private business."

And so the conversation ran on for an hour or more without Drake's having picked up a single clue of any use to him. At last he saw signs that the two were about to move, and, with a cheery good-day to the bar-tender, Drake strolled out through the swing-doors.

He took up a position a few yards away and waited. As he had anticipated, Watson and his companion soon emerged. Without a glance in the lad's direction, the two took train to Waterloo. A minute behind them followed Drake. He retrieved a few seconds of his handicap by the time the booking-office was reached.

"Same station as me two pals," he grinned at the booking-office clerk. "The two just gone ahead of me."

"Return, Witley?"

"That's it, guv'!"

Armed with his ticket, the lad strolled over to the indicator, and discovered from which platform and at what time the Witley train was due to start. Witley? He knew that was in Surrey somewhere—ah, four miles from Goddington; he remembered now.

At three-twenty-five a train drew out of Waterloo Station. In it were seated Watson and his companion and Jack Drake.

One hour and a half later it drew in at Witley—a dead-and-alive hole, thought Drake. Watson and his companion alighted, likewise Drake. Then began a long walk over the furze-covered common, down winding lanes, and across a broad heath to Hambledon. So easy was his task to keep in sight Watson and Finlayson that Drake allowed his eyes to leave them for a couple of minutes or so. When he looked for them again, however, they were nowhere to be seen.

"That's deuced funny!" muttered Drake. "I—"

His eyes caught sight of the derelict outline of the Haven.

"They're in there, for a wager," he told himself. "Must be. There's no cover hereabouts that could shelter them. Guess I'll emulate Mr. Asquith—wait and see."

For a lengthy period Drake sprawled down upon his stomach watching the Haven.

A furze-bush sheltered him from view, although through a small gap in it he commanded a view of the winding road leading up to the old mansion and the place itself. He had the satisfaction of knowing that he was on the right track, for Watson appeared at intervals on the weed-covered drive, apparently waiting for somebody.

"This looks interesting!" muttered Drake.

It was interesting, more interesting than Drake had dared to imagine. Another hour rolled by, during which time ten other shady-looking people strolled up and down in front of the Haven, finally to enter it.

"What's the blooming game—" began Drake, when there came the sudden purr of a car-engine.

A second later round the bend in the road appeared a smart limousine.

With bated breath Drake watched a draped, masked figure alight—saw him whisper a few words to the chauffeur—saw the car drive off the road on to the common land, and garage behind a thick clump of furze-bush, and, lastly, saw the late passenger enter the tumbledown portico of the Haven.

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"Jove!" exclaimed Drake, rising steadily to his feet. "This must be the meeting-place of the blessed motor-bands. And that picture guy is their leader—the mystery man! What a feather in my cap if I bag the lot!"

He ruminated for a while, and, as the last chime from a neighbouring church clock struck the hour of seven, at last arrived at the obvious plan of going for some assistance. He couldn't tackle thirteen men at a single sitting unaided. To think was to act with Locke's assistant. In less than three minutes he was speeding on his way to Hambleton village, a mile and a half away. The blood surged happily through his veins as he pelted along. The glory of winning his first case—a case wherein all the mighty intellects of Scotland Yard had failed—tickled him immensely.

And while he sped away hot-foot for assistance, a certain "branding" process was in operation in the underground cellar at the Haven.

"This is the place!"

Drake whispered the words half an hour later as he halted before the dreary old mansion in company with a dozen villagers. At their head, pompous and ludicrously rural, was a hefty constable, the sole representative of the police at Hambleton! A Service revolver was gripped in his hand. He had imagined Drake's tale to be a cock-and-bull story at first, and had hinted so pretty plainly; but so earnest was the lad that even his rural curiosity was aroused. His "force," specially mobilised for the occasion, were eager to be at grips with these dreaded motor-bands—too eager!

Down the gravel drive they rushed, the constable at their head, and Drake, annoyed at the want of caution on such an expedition, was perforce obliged to follow.

When he arrived in the underground cellar, in which a few flickering candles still shed a feeble light, he was surprised to find it empty. And yet, what was that wriggling figure in the far corner?

Before the constable had recovered from his surprise, Drake was tearing across the cellar, peering up at a bound and gagged figure secured by a staple to the wall. Without loss of time he removed the disfiguring gag, and then he leaped back with a cry of amazement.

For the face revealed was that of Inspector Pycroft, of the C.I.D.: no doubting that, despite the thick layer of grime and dirt on his heavy features. "Pycroft!" he exclaimed. "You! Good heavens!"

But the C.I.D. man was in no mood for explanations at that moment.

"The bomb!" he said hoarsely. "It's due to go off any moment now. In the left-hand corner, behind the crate! Stop the mechanism, Drake—"

With a bound Drake was across the room, leaving an astonished party of villagers to sever Pycroft's bonds. He found the crate indicated, heard the ticking of a timepiece, and knew that his hands had fastened on an infernal machine. Luckily for all concerned, Drake was familiar with the mechanism of such deadly things.

In two seconds the infernal machine was rendered harmless.

"Thank heavens!" breathed Pycroft, coming forward and seizing the lad's hand. "You've saved my life."

"But the gang—the chief?" put in Drake almost fiercely.

"Gone!" grunted Pycroft. "Cleared off a quarter of an hour ago. Heard the car start up."

"And you? What are you doing here, in this get-up?" queried Drake. He looked closely at the inspector's dilapidated clothes. "Surely you're not Finlayson—"

"Jove, this is a rare tangle," said Pycroft. "You I guess I was Finlayson. Number thirteen in the motor-bandit gang—almost got as far as a full-blown member, when that cursed chief rumbled me."

Thereupon explanations were given and received between these two to the utter amazement of the Hambletonians—especially the constable.

This latter individual ordered his "force" to scour the country outside, for what purpose he alone knew. Then, turning to Pycroft, he engaged him in conversation.

Meantime Drake was looking round that dreary apartment. Suddenly his eyes caught sight of a pile of quarto-size writing-paper, similar to that found in exercise books, on the plain, deal table. Idly he turned the blank sheets over until he came across one that bore writing upon it.

With a suppressed whoop of delight Drake fastened on that single piece of paper, and seeing that his action had not been observed, began to read it. To his growing astonishment, the first line of writing—in a distinctly boyish hand—ran as follows:

"De mortuis nil nisi bonum."

To his further astonishment, the same line was repeated word for word the complete length of the page.

"Great Scott!" muttered Drake. "Lemme see; this is a Latin quotation, which means 'Speak nothing but good of the dead.' Now, how the deuce did that come to be here? Looks like a blessed impot paper. I've written the same line myself many a time at Greyfriars. Bless old Quelch and his inopts. He's indirectly put me on a clue!"

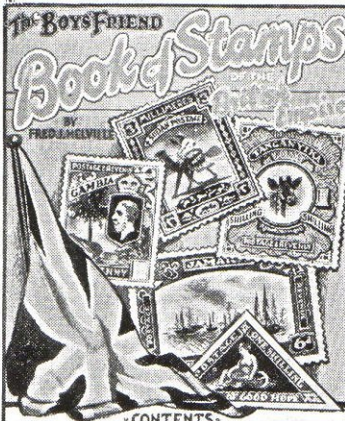
A wild idea sprang into his head, growing less wild as he fully contemplated it. He held a clue, he felt sure, as to the identity of at least one member of the gang. Unconsciously he repeated the Latin quotation as he strolled back to Pycroft.

"Now what the deuce are you burbling about?" demanded the Scotland Yard man with a violent start. "Those are the blooming words the chief used before he said good-evening."

"Is that so?" said Drake sweetly, in-

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noently. But into his heart leapt a wild exultation, for his clue had been strengthened by Pycroft's remark.

"This is the end of a perfect day, and no mistake!" grunted the C.I.D. man dismally. "The whole gang has slipped through my fingers; we don't even know the locality of the next crib they mean to crack, and not a single clue left behind."

But in that Inspector Pycroft made a mistake, for a certain clue in the shape of a piece of paper covered with writing remained folded in Drake's pocket—a clue sufficiently strong to be followed without the good-natured but blundering guidance of Inspector Pycroft of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard.

Therefore Drake made a dismal response and an eloquent gesture: "Not a single blessed clue!"

(Here will this chance clue lead the plucky boy sleuth? Next week's ripping instalment of this powerful story will enlighten you—don't miss it, chums!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 884.



(Continued from page 20.)

"Yaas. Trickle in."
Wharton went on with his prep. Sir Jimmy Vivian looked up, grinned, and looked down again. But the four did not heed them. They had come there to speak to the captain of the Remove.
"Won't keep you a minute, Mauly," said Bob.
"As many minutes as you like, dear old bean," answered his lordship, with a yawn. "Anythin' to interrupt prep."
"About the Rookwood match to-morrow—"
"Yaas."
"When are you posting up the list?" asked Johnny Bull.
Lord Mauleverer glanced at Wharton, evidently to be prompted.
"To-morrow," said Harry.
"To-morrow, old beans," said his lordship.
"Have you finished making it up?" asked Bull.
Another glance at Wharton.
"Yes," said Harry.
"I asked Mauleverer, not you, Wharton!" said Johnny Bull savagely.
Wharton shrugged his shoulders.
"It's the same thing, old chap," said Lord Mauleverer amiably. "Wharton's takin' a lot of trouble off my hands. He's got the energy, you know."
"Well, we only want to ask a question," said Bob Cherry. "Are our names down on the list, Mauly?"
"Blessed if I know!"

"Whipt?"
"I mean, I'll ask Wharton."
"Wharton's got nothing to do with it!" booted Johnny Bull.
Lord Mauleverer raised his eyebrows.
"Lots!" he answered.
"Are you captain of the Remove, or is Wharton?"
"I'll ask Wharton—"
"You footling ass—"
"Look here, old bean," said his lordship plaintively. "I'm glad for any fellow to come in an' interrupt prep. But if you've only come here to call me names, run away before I get annoyed. See?"
Bob Cherry fixed his eyes on Wharton.
"It seems that this matter is in your hands, Wharton," he said. "My own opinion is that Mauly couldn't do better than take your guidance—if you play the game and don't let him down."
"Thanks!" yawned Wharton.
"Cut that out, Cherry!" said Lord Mauleverer. "That isn't the sort of talk I can listen to, and you know it!"
"You're rather an ass, Mauly, old man."
"I've been told that before, an' I don't mind. But, ass or not, I'm not the chap to hear it suggested that a friend of mine might let me down. Drop it, or clear."
A faint colour showed in Harry Wharton's cheeks.
"Well, as we're dealing with Wharton, I'll ask him," said Bob. "Are our names down for to-morrow, Wharton?"
"No!"
Short and sharp was the answer.
"We're all left out!"
"Yes."
"May a fellow ask why?"
"Certainly!" said Wharton blandly.
"There's a general opinion in the Remove that the football has been too much altogether in the hands of the old gang. Mauleverer's bound to take notice of public opinion. It's time some changes were made—new talent, and all

that. Mauleverer's sorry to drop me out—"
"Yaas!"
"But there it is. Some changes are necessary, and good sportsmen are expected not to grumble."
"Yaas!"
"Though whether you grumble or not it comes to precisely the same thing," added Wharton, with a polite smile.
"So that's that!" said Johnny Bull, in a deep voice.
"That's that!" agreed Wharton.
"You're making use of that Mauly to pay off scores against your old friends?"
Lord Mauleverer rose to his feet, a glint in his eyes.
"That's enough!" he said. "Out for you!"
Johnny Bull clenched his hands almost convulsively. Bob Cherry caught his arm, and even Johnny, in his deep anger, realised that it was futile to quarrel with his well-meaning lordship, at least. His glance passed Mauleverer and rested on Wharton.
"This won't be the end of it, Wharton," he said, between his teeth.
"Dear me!" said Wharton.
"You—"
"Shut the door after you, will you?" There's rather a draught from the passage," said Wharton pleasantly.
With feelings too deep for words the four juniors withdrew from Lord Mauleverer's study. They were defeated, and there was nothing more to be done.
But, as Johnny Bull had said, this was not the end.

THE END.

(Now look out for next week's magnificent story of *Geocliars*. Harry Wharton is booked for more trouble, and he gets it. You'll vote "Harry Wharton's Downfall" one of the best stories you have ever read. Don't miss it.)



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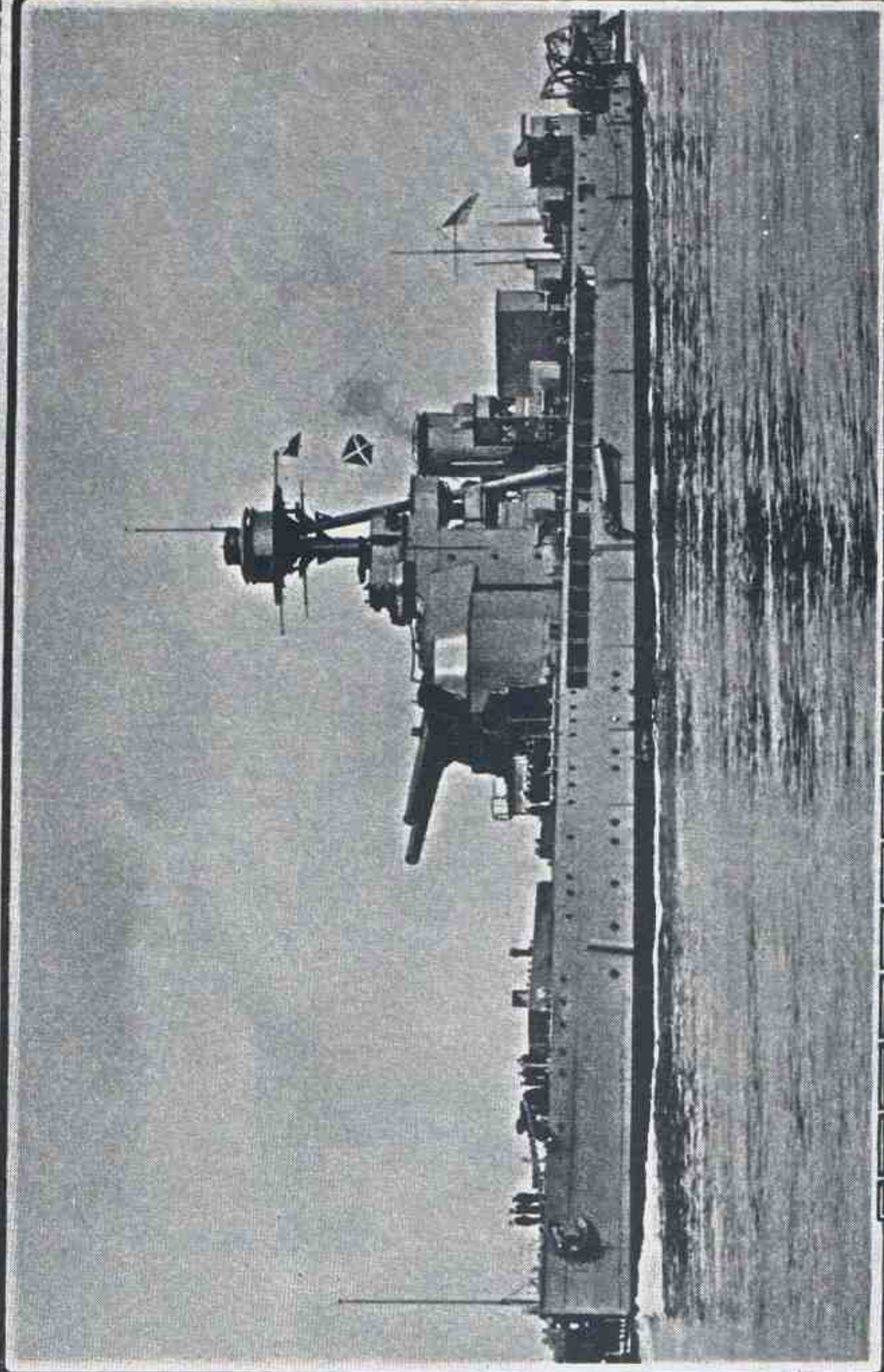
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