

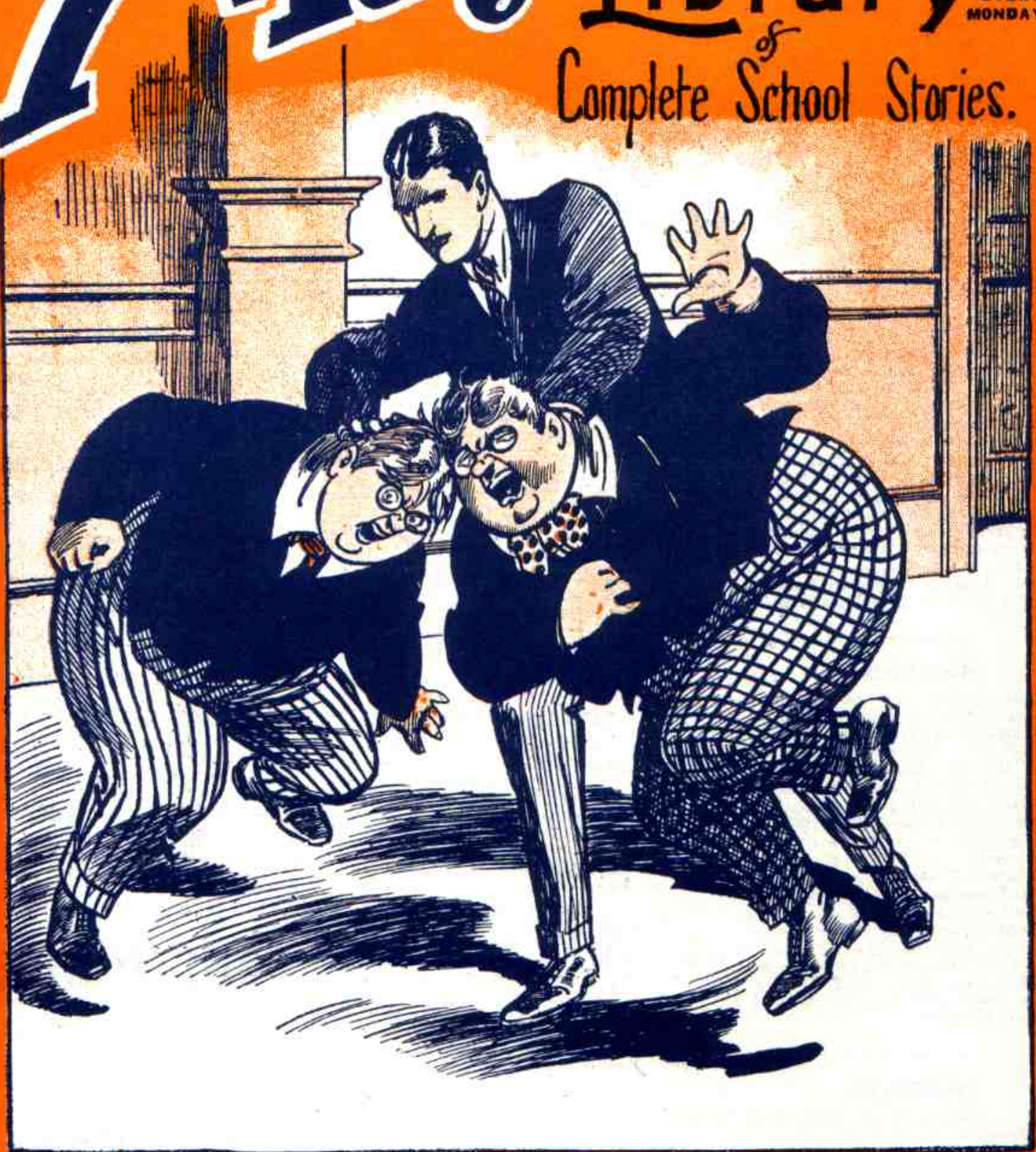
THE MYSTERY OF LONE MANOR! Grand New Story of Ferrers Locke, Detective, Starts To-day.

No. 927. Vol. XXVIII.

Week Ending November 14th, 1926.

The Magnet 2^d

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of Complete School Stories.

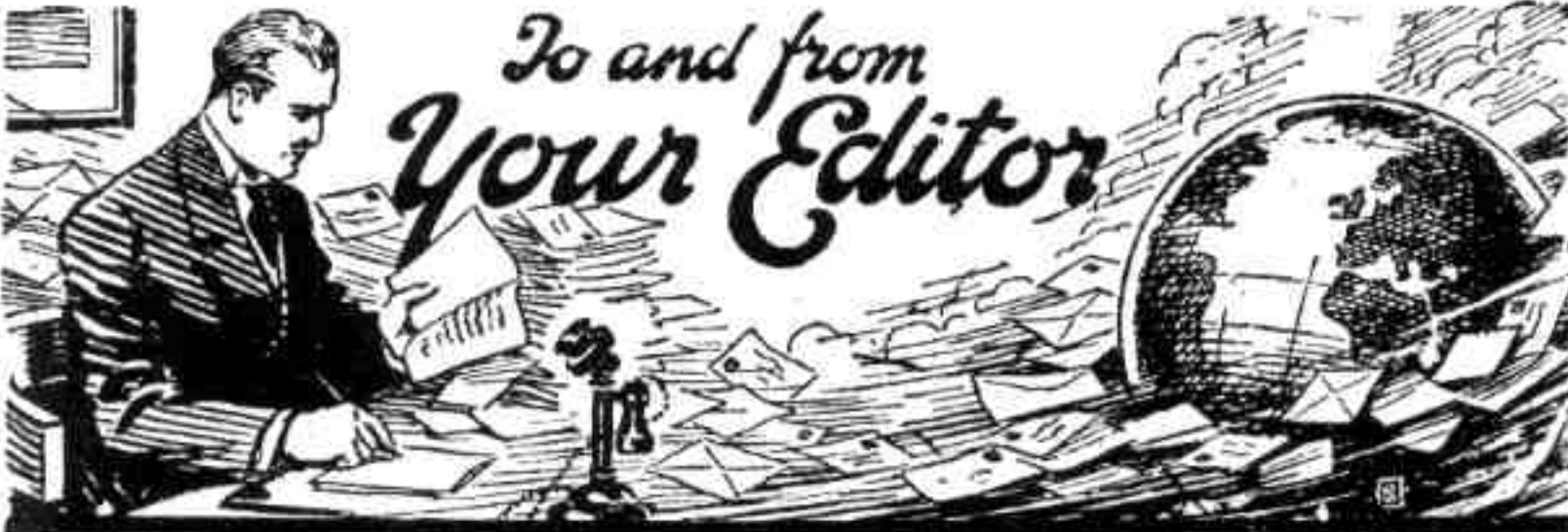


"HEADS!"

A BUMP FOR THE BUNTER BROTHERS!

George Wingate may not be a prefect, but he won't stand any cheek from the Bunters! (See the grand story inside.)

To and from Your Editor



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Write to him when you are in trouble or need advice. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a speedy reply. Letters should be addressed "The Editor," THE MAGNET LIBRARY, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

THE RIGHT SPIRIT!

A REALLY fine letter reaches me from M. Foster, of Watford, Herts, who apparently entered our Famous Cricketers' Competition. He didn't bag a prize, but he doesn't feel a bit downhearted about it. He believes in the old saying, "Try, try, try again!" More than that, he wishes to congratulate the winners in that popular competition on their success. A fine spirit, that, and typical of our great band of Magnetites. Foster, too, is on the look-out for new readers. Splendid! He's only a newcomer to our ranks himself, but he's out to make up for lost time, and we welcome him to the MAGNET circle with open arms.

RAIN!

A reader from Suffolk writes and asks me for the name of the author of "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'." He also wants to know if I have ever met the gentleman, and, if so, what is he like? In the first place, the author of that one-time popular song is Mr. Wendell Hall. In the second, I have never had the pleasure of meeting the gentleman, and it is natural, therefore, that I know next to nothing about him. One thing I am certain about, however, and that is that Mr. Wendell Hall is no prophet if he was thinking of England when he wrote the words of that famous song.

TORTOISES!

A reader chum who keeps a tortoise in his garden is worried to know how to look after it in the winter. My chum need not worry about his pet unduly, for the tortoise sleeps practically the whole of the winter, and only wakes up again when the spring comes round. If my correspondent places the tortoise in a spare cupboard he can leave it to take care of itself. By this time, doubtless, the tortoise has found a snug place for itself, and has dropped off to sleep. If it has chosen the garden it will perhaps have buried itself below the surface of the ground. There's only one drawback to this sleeping place, namely, that the tortoise might work its way to someone else's garden when the spring comes round again.

TRAVELLING!

Several readers lately have stated their intention of travelling to other countries as soon as they get the chance. But one old MAGNET reader who has married and settled down in this country deplores the fact that he has never had the chance to travel—to see the world.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 927.

Well, I sympathise with him, for in most of us at some time or another is the craze to get away from the Old Country. The sights seen away from England, the customs of the different peoples the traveller meets, help to broaden the mind, and provide an education in themselves. But, for obvious reasons, we can't all travel. I can only suggest to my old MAGNET chum that he reads all the travel books he can get hold of. It's the next best thing, and with the special travel films now being shown at the cinemas the illusion is almost complete.

MUSIC!

A reader pal from Middlesex informs me that music has a strange effect upon him. It sometimes makes him cry! Well, that may seem extraordinary at first sight, but it isn't really. In all of us there is a love of music, and in all of us at some time or another there is an answering chord to the music of some of the great masters. How much it affects us just depends on time, place, mood, and the quality of the music. There's nothing to be ashamed of if the music makes you "pipe your eye." It just testifies to the wonderful art of the musician and your sensitive nature. But, of course, I don't recommend this "piping of the eye" as a regular habit. I am merely trying to explain to my reader pal that there is, after all, nothing very extraordinary in the fact that music sometimes makes him cry.

EXAGGERATION!

J.M.D., of Nottingham, wants to know of a cure for "exaggeration." Apparently he has an unhappy knack of multiplying everything, for he goes on to tell me that, in all good faith, he was recounting to his parents an experience that befel him the other day, concerning a scrap he had with a big fellow at his school. Before he had finished his story the big fellow at the school had developed into five big fellows! Really, it is astonishing how these 'schoolboy stories will develop from a molehill into a mountain. I won't take my correspondent too seriously to task, for I am sure he is not an habitual liar. But he must restrain that imagination and "multiplication" faculty of his or he'll get disliked. The best thing for him to do is to think before he speaks, not speak and think afterwards, as he now seems to be doing.

HE WANTS TO BE A DETECTIVE!

A Magnetite, living at Sheffield, has a great ambition to be a detective, and as several queries have reached me on

this subject lately I'll take this opportunity of answering them under the one heading. In the first place, if you youthful Ferrers Lockes want to take up the detective profession seriously your best plan is to join the ordinary police force. But that can't be done until you have reached the age of twenty. From there, ample opportunities are granted to the right sort of fellow to get on and become a member of the C.I.D. But make no mistake about it, the detectives who get to the top of the tree are born not made. It's the old story of every man to his job. As a boy I wanted to be, in turn, a sailor, bus-conductor, engine-driver, and fireman. I have been none of these, however, which is perhaps to the advantage of everyone concerned. A detective's life sounds a rosy one. Plenty of limelight, plenty of money, plenty of crimes to unravel—these are the visions of the would-be detective. And those visions are realised by a chosen few—the men who are born to it, the men who eventually reach the top of the tree. I don't want to pour cold water on these worthy ambitions of my loyal readers. I just want to provide a little ballast to them. Anyway, a call at the local police-station will enable you to learn all there is to know on how to join the Force, which is the first step.

Next Monday's Programme.

"CAPTAIN AND TYRANT!"

By Frank Richards.

This is the title of the next grand story in the special Wingate series that is proving so popular. You'll like it—every single word of it. Just you look out for it, boys!

"THE MYSTERY OF LONE MANOR!"

Then comes instalment two of this amazing mystery story, with Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake playing leading parts. This secret of the old manor house is going to prove an interesting case to the wizard detective, and the way he unravels it will make splendid reading.

GRAND "CINEMA" SUPPLEMENT!

Harry Wharton & Co. have obliged with a special "Herald" number, dealing with the "cinema." Mind you read it, chums!

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY!

Next week Walker of the Sixth at Greyfriars figures in our portrait gallery. Mind you add his "chivvy" to your collection.

Cheerio, till next Monday, chums.

Your Editor.

GET
YOUR
"HOLIDAY
ANNUAL"
TO-DAY!

A RECKONING! Gerald Loder might have attained the coveted position of Captain of Greyfriars, but the underhand methods he has employed to gain his ends come home to roost. George Wingate, the late captain, has something to say to him—and he says it with both fists!



By
**FRANK
RICHARDS.**

A Magnificent, New, Long Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, showing Gerald Loder in his true colours now that he is captain of the school.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Not Taken In!

"I'LL take you in, old chaps."

"Eh?"

"I'll take you in," repeated Billy Bunter.

The fattest junior at Greyfriars grinned amicably at Harry Wharton and Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Wharton and his dusky pal had left the School House and were going round to the bike shed, when William George Bunter rolled in their way.

Bunter blinked at them quite benevolently.

Apparently his intentions were kind.

But the two Removites did not quite catch on, and they stared inquiringly at W. G. Bunter.

"You'll take us in?" repeated Harry.

"Just that," said Bunter. "It's all right. Rely on me. I'll do it, old chap. I'll see you right through."

"Well, you've taken us in often enough," said the captain of the Remove. "I suppose there isn't a chap at Greyfriars that you haven't taken in, one way or another. But—"

"The take-infulness is terrifically characteristic of the esteemed Bunter," remarked Hurree Singh. "But—"

"Oh, don't talk rot, you know," said Bunter peevishly. "When I say I'll take you in I don't mean taking you in, you know jolly well."

"Then what the thump do you mean, if you happen to mean anything?" asked Wharton.

"I mean I'll take you in—"

"Are you expecting a postal order, and do you want us to cash it in advance?" asked Wharton, with a laugh. "You've taken us in with that yarn more than once."

"No!" howled Bunter. "I mean I'll take you in with me. See?"

"Where?"

"To a jolly ripping spread!" said Bunter impressively. "You've been

rather beasts to me, but I'm a forgiving chap. I forgive you—"

"Thank you for nothing."

"And I'll take you in to the spread," said Bunter. "You needn't thank me, Wharton. I'm a generous fellow, and I'm going to do it. Generosity is my strong point. Will you come?"

"Well, my hat! Where's the spread, and whose is it?" asked Harry. "We're just going over to Cliff House. Bob and Johnny and Nugent have started already. But let's hear about the spread. Have you got that postal-order you've been expecting for whole terms?"

"It's Loder's spread."

"Loder of the Sixth?"

"Yes. He's rather a pal of mine—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I've stood by him in the election," said Bunter. "Some of you rotters voted for Wingate's pal, Gwynne. I stood by Loder and got him in as captain of Greyfriars. You see, I've done a lot of electioneering work for him, and all that. Practically won the election for him. I threw my weight into the scale, and that did it."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well if you threw your weight into any scale it would be bound to turn it—if it didn't smash the scales," he remarked. "Half a ton is a tidy weight."

"You silly ass!" booted Bunter.

"Look here. The captain's election is over, and Loder of the Sixth has been elected captain of Greyfriars. Well, he's standing a spread in his study, and he asked me to come. It's a celebration of his victory, you know. He told me plainly that if he won the election all his supporters would be welcome. I'm his chief supporter. I practically got him in. I'm going to the spread."

Hurree Janset Ram Singh chuckled.

"Did the esteemed Loder ask you before the captain's selection or afterwards?" he inquired.

"Before, of course!"

"It would have been terrifically wise

to bag the feed before the election, my esteemed and ludicrous Bunter. The egregious Loder may have changed his excellent mind since."

"Jolly likely, I think," said Harry, laughing. "I can't see Loder entertaining Bunter at a spread in the Sixth."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bunter disdainfully. "I dare say you're jealous of my having friends in the Sixth Form. You would be! But you really oughtn't to show off petty jealousy like that."

"Fathead!"

"I'm asking you to come in with me," said Bunter. "I'm asked to the spread, and, of course, I can take in a friend or two with me if I like. It will be a decent feed. Loder's giving his orders in the tuckshop now."

"Thanks; but I think we'll get off to Cliff House," said the captain of the Remove. "I shouldn't care much for teeing with Loder of the Sixth if he wanted me, which I'm quite sure he doesn't."

"That's all right. I'll take you in," explained Bunter. "Coming in with me you will be welcome. It's no end of a spread. You know, Loder does these things well. Come on, old fellows! I'll take you in."

Wharton and Hurree Singh shook their heads.

The captain's election had taken place in the lecture-hall that afternoon, and Loder had been elected captain of the school in the place of George Wingate, resigned.

They had seen Gerald Loder walk out of the lecture-hall with his friends, looking very bright and cheery and unusually good-humoured. But they had a very strong doubt whether his good-humour would extend to the fellows who had voted against him or those who hadn't taken the trouble to vote at all. If he welcomed them in his study it was likely to be with his ashplant.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 927.

But the two juniors were rather puzzled by Bunter's pressing hospitality.

The Owl of the Remove evidently considered himself "persona grata" in Loder's study since his exertions on Loder's behalf at the captain's election. But it was not quite like Bunter to bother about taking other fellows to a spread.

"Look here. What's this game, Bunter?" asked Wharton abruptly. "Why do you want to take us into Loder's study?"

"Because you're my pal, old chap," said Bunter affectionately.

"But I'm not, you know."

"Oh, really Wharton—"

"Haven't I been your pal ever since you came to Greyfriars, Harry, old chap?" asked Bunter reproachfully. "Didn't I stand by you when you were turned down by all the fellows on account of your rotten temper?"

"You silly owl!" exclaimed Wharton, reddening.

"Well, I did, you know, and I've always been kind to Inky, too, though he's only a dashed nigger. Haven't I, Inky?"

"I have not the honour to be an esteemed nigger, my esteemed fatheaded Bunter," said the Nabob of Bhanipur mildly.

"And I like you, you know," said Bunter. "You're rather a bad-tempered rotter, Wharton, and Inky's a bit of a black savage. But, dash it all, a fellow can make allowances. I'm not going to leave pals like you out of a magnificent spread in a Sixth Form study."

"You put it so nicely, Bunter," said Wharton, while the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur chuckled. It was fortunate for William George Bunter that neither of the Removites considered him worth kicking.

"That's all right, then," said Bunter, apparently taking the remark as implying consent. "Come along! I'll take you in. And if Loder says anything I'll simply say you're friends of mine, and that will be enough. Hold on a minute, though!" Bunter paused and gave the two juniors a blink. "I think I mentioned to you, Wharton, this morning, that I was expecting a postal order from one of my titled relations."

"You did!" agreed the captain of the Remove. "You've mentioned it about a million times."

"Well, it hasn't come."

"It never does come, does it?"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here, this is how the matter stands," said Bunter. "The postal-order will be for ten shillings, and it's absolutely certain to be here to-morrow. You fellows hand me five bob each, and take the postal-order when it comes. See?"

"Not quite!"

"The seefulness is not terrific."

"Look here, one good turn deserves another," said Bunter warmly. "I suppose you can oblige me with a small loan for a single day if I take you in to a magnificent spread in a Sixth Form study?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton. "I see—now! We're to pay you five bob each for admission to Loder's spread?"

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Does Loder know you're charging for admission, Bunter?"

"That's a rotten way of putting it, Wharton. Sordid, in fact," said Bunter. "I can jolly well tell you that if you refuse to oblige me in this small matter, I sha'n't take you in to Loder's spread."

The two juniors chuckled. The mystery was explained now; they knew

the reason of Billy Bunter's pressing hospitality at Loder's expense.

"It's worth the five bob, if you come to that—to meet you on your own sordid ground," said Bunter scornfully. "There will be plenty of everything—tons of tuck! Loder's doing it in style. It's costing him pounds. A man doesn't get elected captain of the school every day! Now, then, yes or no—is it a go?"

"Yes, it's a go—we're going!" said Wharton. "Come on, Inky."

And they went.

"Beasts!"

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh went in for their machines, and wheeled them out. But William George Bunter was not done with them yet. He was looking forward to the magnificent spread in Gerald Loder's study, but he saw no reason why he should not kill two birds with one stone, so to speak, and annex a loan on the security of his celebrated postal-order in addition.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, my hat! You still here?" said Harry Wharton. "Better buzz off to Loder's study, Bunter, before all the good things are gone."

"I'll take you in—"

"Not in the least; you've tried, but it won't work! Get out of the way of the jigger, old fat man!"

"I'll make it five bob for the two," said Bunter, in a burst of generosity, "and you shall have the postal-order, all the same, when—when it comes. There!"

"The whenfulness is terrific."

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Now, look here, you fellows— Oh, my hat! Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as two bicycles wheeled into him.

William George Bunter sat down, roaring, and the chums of the Remove wheeled on their machines. A minute more, and they were in the saddle, riding away for Cliff House School. Billy Bunter, picked himself up, shook a fat fist after them, and rolled off to the House. He had wasted his valuable time, and he had no more time to waste if he was not to be late for Gerald Loder's celebration in the Sixth Form passage.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The New Captain of Greyfriars!

"WELL, we've pulled it off!" said Gerald Loder.

"We've worked the giddy oracle!" agreed Walker of the Sixth.

"Practically a walk-over," said Carne. "I must say, Loder, that you've played your cards uncommonly well."

The new captain of Greyfriars smiled complacently.

There was no doubt that Loder of the Sixth had played his cards well—uncommonly well. It was only a few weeks since George Wingate had turned him out of the first eleven, and he had bitterly resolved to turn Wingate out of the captaincy of Greyfriars, if he could, in return. And he had succeeded. He had been determined to succeed, regardless of the means he used. Loder was not particular as to methods.

He had been determined, and he had hoped for success. Yet he had not ventured to count upon it. By fair means he never could have succeeded; and by foul it was not easy. But for Wingate's scapegrace minor in the Third, he never could have "pulled it off." And even Loder, blackguard as he was, did not like to think of some of the methods he had used, and did not confide the details

even to his intimate friends, Walker and Carne. Neither of them knew why George Wingate had resigned from the captaincy. They were "hard cases," both; but Loder had an uneasy feeling that even those two "hard cases" would have turned from him in disgust if they had known how he had used the reckless perversity of a foolish fag, leading him on from folly to folly, for the purpose of "downing" his brother, the captain of Greyfriars.

Loder said nothing of that to his friends; he preferred not to think about it himself. And he did not find it hard to dismiss from his mind thoughts that troubled him. Loder had a conscience, perhaps, but it was a very elastic one.

At the present moment he was feeling absolutely pleased with himself and things generally.

Captain of Greyfriars!

The words rang very pleasantly in his ears.

The captain of the school was always head prefect; that would follow at once. Loder, at last, would be in a masterful position towards his old enemy and rival, George Wingate of the Sixth, who was no longer even a prefect. The enmity and the rivalry had been all on Loder's side, it was true, but that was not Loder's view. Now that the power was in his hands, he was going to use it—and use it hard. Wingate was down; but that was not enough, he was going to be driven fairly to the wall. At Greyfriars, the captain of the school was captain of football. A few weeks ago, Wingate had "chucked" Loder from the first eleven. Retaliation in kind was coming, and that was a very pleasant thought to the new captain of Greyfriars.

Gwynne of the Sixth, who had been put up against him at the election, had been hopelessly beaten. Loder had scored all along the line. A crowd of fellows had not voted at all; but of those who had recorded their votes, Loder had a large majority. He had even made himself popular with the juniors, even with the fags, before the election. His kindness, his consideration, had been unbounded, his pleasant manners had been quite remarkable. And many of the fellows had in consequence forgotten that a leopard cannot change his spots, or an Ethiopian his skin.

Loder and his friends were rejoicing over the success of their campaign. The sporting men of the Greyfriars Sixth had always found George Wingate a thorn in their side. That thorn was gone now.

Loder, it was true, had a good many promises, half-promises, and implied promises to remember. But they did not worry him. Fellows who expected things of Loder now that he was captain of the school, who had been led to expect things from him, were likely to be severely disappointed—unless it suited Loder to remember his engagements. Coker of the Fifth had backed him up through thick and thin, confident of a place in the first eleven as a reward. There was a rude awakening in store for Coker of the Fifth! Jack Wingate of the Third, had been his strenuous supporter, heedless of his brother's wishes. To the scapegrace of the Third, it seemed assured that things would go much better when his "friend in the Sixth" was captain of the school. It did not even cross his wilful, unthinking mind that he had been made use of, and would be thrown ruthlessly aside when he was done with, as one might throw

away the tool with which one has done dirty work.

Billy Bunter was far from being the only fellow who expected grateful acknowledgment from Loder without the remotest prospect of getting it!

Captain of Greyfriars!

Loder liked the sound of it! It had been his ambition ever since he had been in the Sixth! Now he had realised his ambition. His power would be exerted to benefit his friends, so long as his friends were very civil and very keen to keep in his good graces. And it would be exerted still more vigorously to defeat and discourage and humiliate his enemies, and whomsoever he chose to regard as an enemy. And there were cheeky fags, too, such as Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remoye, whom he had begged off from punishment as an electioneering stroke. They were going to discover that their punishments, like wine, had improved with keeping!

"Time that fag of yours turned up, Loder," said Walker, glancing at the study clock. "What about the spread—eh?"

Loder nodded.

"Tubb's getting a bit careless," he said. "I've been rather kind to him, and that's the result. Fags don't understand anything but lickings."

"You haven't wasted your kindness, old man," grinned Walker. "I believe more than half the Third voted for you."

"I shouldn't wonder if Tubb presumes on it," said Loder coolly. "Well, the election is over now, thank goodness, and he can be brought to his senses."

The study door opened and Tubb of the Third came in with a big parcel. He grinned and banged the parcel down on the table.

"Jolly heavy!" he remarked.

Tubb of the Third would never have spoken to Loder in that familiar way a few days before. Neither would he have ventured to bang a parcel on Loder's table. Loder's excessive kindness—on the eve of the captain's election—had quite deceived poor Tubb, and he was a little "above" himself. He was not destined to remain long thus elevated.

"You're late," said Loder. "I told you five!"

"Well, it's only a few minutes past," said Tubb cheerfully. "I spoke to some fellows as I came up."

"And kept me waiting?" said Loder grimly. "There's a cane on the table, Tubb. Hand it to me; will you?"

George Tubb stared at him.

This was a sudden change, with a vengeance. Tubb of the Third could not, for a moment, understand it. He was not quick on the uptake, as it were, and did not immediately grasp the difference that the successful election had made.

"The—the cane!" he repeated.

"Yes. Don't stand stuttering there! Hand me that cane!" said Loder in his most bullying tone.

"I—I say, Loder, you ain't going to lick me, are you?" asked Tubb in astonished dismay.

"Give me that cane."

The dismayed fag passed over the cane. Loder swished it in the air with quite a pleasant feeling. The exigencies of electioneering had debarred him from the use of the cane for a time. It was quite agreeable to get back to it, like getting back to an old familiar friend.

"Bend over!"

"I—I—I say, Loder, I'm only three minutes late!" groaned Tubb.

"I think I told you to bend over."

Tubb of the Third bent over a chair.

Swish!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"



Crash! A teacup dropped and broke into several pieces. Loder reached for his cane. "You clumsy young scoundrel!" he roared. "I—I say, Loder, I—I'll buy you a new cup," gasped Tubb. "You certainly will," said the prefect, "and you'll hold out your paw, too!" Swish! Tubb sucked his hand frantically. (See Chapter 2.)

"That will do to go on with," said Loder kindly. "You've been a bit cheeky lately, Tubb. You've taken advantage of my good nature. Don't let's have any more of it."

Tubb squirmed away from the chair with feelings too deep for words. That afternoon he had voted for Loder in the election. Tubb would have given a term's pocket-money now to have recalled that vote. He would have given a dozen terms' pocket-money to punch Loder's bullying, grinning face. Such enjoyments being out of his power, however, George Tubb suppressed his feelings and proceeded to get Loder's tea—with a sullen, sulky face such as Loder was accustomed to seeing about him and which he seemed somehow to prefer to a smiling visage.

Crash!

A teacup dropped and broke into several pieces. Tubb was not a handy youth.

The previous day he had broken a teacup, and Loder had only smiled. But that was before the election.

Loder did not smile now. He reached for his cane.

"You clumsy young scoundrel!" he roared.

"I—I say, Loder, I—I'll buy a new cup!" gasped Tubb.

"You certainly will, and another for the one you smashed yesterday," said Loder, "and you'll hold out your paw, too. You can't play bull-in-a-china-shop stunts in this study."

Swish!

Tubb of the Third sucked his hand frantically.

"Now get on with it, and if there are any more accidents I'll give you six," said Loder. "I'll keep you young scoundrels in order somehow."

There were no more accidents, and the hapless Tubb was glad when his fag master dismissed him at last. Outside the study, with the door closed, Tubb of the Third executed a sort of war-dance, breathing fury and brandishing clenched fists at the closed door.

"Great gad! Is that something new in jazzing?" inquired Gwynne of the Sixth, coming along to his study in time to witness Tubb's extraordinary antics.

The fag spun round in alarm.

"Oh! I—I say, Gwynne, don't—don't tell Loder—"

"Ha, ha, ha! I catch on!" chuckled Gwynne. "You're pleased with your new captain, what?"

"He's licked me!" groaned Tubb. "He—"

"Well, cut off!" said Gwynne.

And Tubb of the Third cut off. In the Third Form room he related his experience, with many gestures, in sulphurous tones, thus apprising the Third that Loder, the captain of Greyfriars, was still the old Loder they knew, though for a day or two he had seemed quite a new Loder. It was only too painfully clear to Tubb that the leopard had not changed his spots.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Back Seat for Wingate!

"GAMMON!" said Sammy of the Second.

It was not a respectful manner in which to address his major, William George Bunter of the Third. But Bunter minor of the Second Form not only said "Gammon" derisively, but added:

"Bosh!"

Billy Bunter blinked at his minor through his big spectacles. Sammy blinked back, grinning.

"Rubbish!" went on Sammy.

"Look here, you young rotter—"

"Piffle!" said Sammy of the Second.

"Catch a Sixth Form prefect having you to tea in his study! I don't think!"

"It's a special occasion, you see," explained Bunter. "I'm rather pally with the new captain of the school—"

"Can it!"

"I helped him a lot in the election. I voted for him, and used all my influence to get other fellows to back him up."

"A fat lot that was!" said Sammy Bunter derisively. "You asked me to vote for Loder. I didn't."

"That's because you're a disrespectful young scoundrel, Sammy," said his elder brother wrathfully. "Some fellows would lick you for it."

"Put it away!" jeered Sammy Bunter.

"But this is straight as a string," said Billy Bunter, with great earnestness. "I tell you Loder asked me to come to the celebration in his study, and I can take a friend if I like. Wharton and Inky have just been bothering me to take them in, but I refused. I told them plainly that on such an occasion blood was thicker than water, and I was going to take my brother."

Sammy Bunter closed one eye.

As a matter of fact, family affection was not strongly developed in the Bunter clan.

When a member of that tribe took the trouble to see another member of the tribe, it was generally with a view to getting something out of him for nothing. And it was so very seldom that anything was to be got out of any Bunter for nothing that the friendly meetings of the Bunter tribe were few and far between.

Indeed, Billy Bunter often forgot that he had a brother in the Second Form at all, while Sammy, on his side, was happily oblivious of his fraternal relative in the Remove.

In these circumstances, it was not surprising that Sammy Bunter answered his major's invitation to the spread in Loder's study with derisive disbelief.

"But I mean it, you fat young ass!" exclaimed Billy Bunter angrily. "Ain't I asking you? Ain't I ready to take you this minute? And there's no time to lose. I saw Tubby taking the stuff to the study."

"I saw him," said Sammy Bunter. "If it hadn't been Loder's stuff I'd have chanced butting him over and bagging something out of the parcel. But it's not safe to play japes on Loder of the Sixth. He's dangerous."

"He's all right now, me being pally with him—"

"Rats!"

"Well, not exactly pally," admitted Bunter. "But he really did ask me to the feed after the election, and said he would like to see any friend of mine. That's honest Injun!"

"Buying your vote, what?" grinned Sammy. "Well, I can swallow that much. It's Loder all over."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 927.

"Never mind that! Will you come?" said William George. "The spread is simply ripping—costing pounds! I owe you two-and-six, and we'll call it square. Properly speaking, I don't owe you anything. I certainly thought the remittance was all for me when I got it, and only noticed afterwards that the pater mentioned in his letter that I was to give you half. Naturally, I spent the money before I read the letter. In your place I shouldn't have said anything about it—"

"You mean, in your place you didn't say anything about it," grinned Sammy. "I never knew till I wrote to the pater asking him, and he answered that you had two-and-six for me."

"Well, I'm taking you to a feed worth quids, and that will make it square!" urged the Owl of the Remove. "Look here! I'll make a bargain with you. If you don't bag at least five bobs' worth of tuck in Loder's study, I still owe you the half-crown! There!"

Sammy Bunter became serious at last. This was a business-like proposition, and, as such, appealed to Sammy of the Second.

"Well, I don't see how I could lose by that," he admitted cautiously, after some moments' thought.

"You're bound to gain by it, old chap—that's what I want," said Bunter major. "I thought of you at once—"

"You thought of wiping off that half-crown with Loder's tuck, you mean," grinned Sammy.

"Look here, will you come?" exclaimed Bunter.

Sammy of the Second nodded.

"I'll chance it," he said. "Mind, if I don't get a good feed at Loder's table, you still owe me two-and-six. Will there be a lot of fellows there? I mean, I suppose you're not the only fellow Loder tried to bribe to vote for him?"

"It wasn't bribery, you fat young rotter. It don't matter who's there, there will be plenty of tuck for all-comers. I heard Loder ordering it from Mrs. Mimble."

"Well, I'll chance it!"

"Come on, then!" growled Billy Bunter.

And the Owl of the Remove led the way to the Sixth Form passage, with his fat minor rolling after him.

Wingate of the Sixth was standing in the doorway of his study with a clouded brow.

He glanced at the two Bunters, and signed to them to stop. They stopped unwillingly.

"Do you know where my minor is, Bunter minor?" asked the late captain of Greyfriars.

"Don't know and don't care," answered Sammy.

"What?" exclaimed Wingate. He made a stride out of the study doorway.

Sammy Bunter jumped back.

"Look here, you can't lick me, you know!" he exclaimed. "You ain't a prefect now, Wingate."

"No fear!" said Billy Bunter hotly. "Don't you come the prefect now, Wingate. You're nobody, you know."

George Wingate looked at the two Bunters grindy. It was true that he was no longer a prefect, no longer entitled to command Lower boys to "bend over." This was by no means the first time that he had been made to realise his new position by cheeky fags of the Lower School.

But he controlled his anger.

"I sent a message to my minor," he said. "He hasn't come to my study. He's not in your Form, Bunter minor. I dare say you've seen him about, however. Go and tell him I want him."

"You can't fag me, Wingate," said Sammy Bunter independently. "I'm not your fag, and only prefects can call on fellows who aren't their own fags. Ain't that so, Billy?"

"That's so," said Bunter major. "You come on with me, Sammy, and never mind Wingate."

And the two Bunters rolled on towards Loder's study.

Wingate stared after them.

He was no longer prefect, no longer captain; but he was a Sixth Form man, and not to be treated disrespectfully by fags of the Second and the Lower Fourth. And he was not in his usual good temper that afternoon. The failure of his friend Gwynne at the election had disappointed him keenly. The success of Gerald Loder at the poll had filled him with misgivings. And he had been waiting in his study for some time for his minor, Jack Wingate of the Third, who had not troubled to come. It was, altogether, a very unpropitious moment for the Bunters to choose to "check" the fallen head of the school.

Wingate made a stride after the two juniors, and overtook them almost at Loder's door.

He grasped one in either hand by the collar, and brought their bullet heads together.

Crack!

"Ow, ow!"

"Whooop!"

Bunter major and minor howled in unison.

"Now, you cheeky young rascals!" exclaimed Wingate wrathfully.

"Ow! Leggo!" roared Billy Bunter.

"Leggo, you bully!" yelled Sammy of the Second.

Crack!

The two heads smote together again, and two fiendish yells rang along the Sixth Form passage.

"Whooooop!"

"Yarooop!"

"Loder!" shouted Billy Bunter.

He dragged his collar away from Wingate's grasp, and rushed at Loder's door, and threw it open.

Loder jumped up from the tea-table.

He stared round in surprise.

"You cheeky young sweep! How dare you!" he exclaimed, as the Owl of the Remove rushed into the study.

"Help!" gasped Bunter.

"What?"

"Wingate!" stuttered the Owl of the Remove.

"Oh, Wingate!" grinned Loder. He stepped to the doorway, to see Sammy Bunter wriggling in the late captain's grasp. "Wingate, release that fag at once!"

"What?" exclaimed Wingate.

It was so lately that Wingate of the Sixth had been captain and head prefect, monarch of all he surveyed in all the Forms of Greyfriars, that it was a little difficult for him to keep in mind that the power had passed from his hands.

"Stop that!" said Loder, raising his hand. "Let that fag alone!"

"Are you interfering with me, Loder?" asked Wingate, his eyes flashing.

Gerald Loder nodded coolly.

"I am! If the kid's done anything, you can report him to a prefect! You seem to have forgotten that you're no longer one."

Sammy Bunter jerked himself away from Wingate, and dodged past Loder into the study.

Wingate made a movement as if to follow. Loder blocked the doorway with his own Form. Walker and Carne had left the tea-table now, and they stood behind Loder, grinning. They were

both prefects, and both keen to display their power to the Sixth-Former whom they had dreaded and disliked while he held authority.

"Now, you can lay a complaint, if you like, Wingate," said Loder, in a magisterial manner. "I sha'n't allow the Sixth to be checked by fags, if it comes to that. But no bullying."

"No what?" ejaculated Wingate. "Bullying," said Loder coolly. "When you were captain you spoke to me on that subject a good many times. The position is a little changed now."

"The old order changeth, giving place to the new!" grinned Walker, and Carne chuckled.

"I say, Loder, he wanted me to fag for him," squeaked Sammy Bunter. "I ain't his fag, and he hasn't any right to fag me now he's not a prefect, has he, Loder?"

"Certainly not!" said Loder. "I'm surprised at you, Wingate. You're nobody in particular now; but you've held a responsible position in the school, and you really ought to know better."

"I sent the young rascal on a message," said Wingate, breathing hard.

"You'd no right to, and I uphold him in refusing," said Loder loftily. "If you lay a finger on him I shall call a meeting of the prefects to deal with you, George Wingate. You think a good deal of yourself, but you may look out for a prefects' beating."

Wingate clenched his hands hard.

Loder, for a moment, quailed; he fancied that the late captain of Greyfriars was about to rush on him, hitting out, and that was about the last thing Loder desired to happen. The champion athlete of Greyfriars was not the man Loder wanted to handle personally, if he could help it.

But Wingate, with an effort, checked his wrath. His contemptuous look brought a flush to Loder's cheeks, but his voice was calm enough as he answered:

"As a matter of fact, Loder, you are right. I can't call on that sweep to fag for me if he doesn't choose. That ends the matter."

And Wingate turned his back on Loder and walked away to his own study.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Tea for Two!

GERALD LODER grinned as he turned back into his room.

Already, within a couple of hours of gaining his new rank, he had come into collision with the former captain of the school, and Wingate had had to back down. It was the beginning, and Loder did not mean it to be the end.

He signed to the two Bunters to go, and sat down at the table again.

But the Bunters did not go.

Billy Bunter rolled to the door, but it was only to close it. Then he blinked affably at Loder through his big spectacles.

"I see you've started," he remarked.

"Eh?"

"You've started the spread," said Bunter. "Any more fellows coming?"

Loder stared at him.

As a matter of fact, he had forgotten what he had told Bunter was to be the reward for voting for him at the election. Loder had made so many promises, and had gone so thoroughly into the peculiar business of bribery and corruption that he could not be expected to remember all that he had promised.



Wingate minor struggled and kicked, but Harry Wharton did not heed him. With a swing of his strong arms, he pitched the fag fairly over the stile, and Wingate minor rolled in the grass on the roadside. "Cobb!" he shouted. "Mr. Cobb! Help!" Mr. Cobb's squat form loomed out from under the tree. (See Chapter 6.)

"What business is that of yours, you fat idiot?" he asked. "Get out of my study, and take the other fat freak with you!"

"Oh, really, Loder——"

"Do you want a licking?" demanded Loder angrily.

"He, he, he!" Bunter decided to take this question as a joke. "I've come to the spread, Loder, you know. I've brought my brother."

"Oh, gad!" exclaimed Walker, of the Sixth. "Have you been asking the Remove and the Second to tea, Loder? You needn't have asked me along with them if you have."

"Nor me!" grunted Carne.

"I suppose the fat idiot is trying to pull my leg," said Loder. "I'll take some of the fun out of him. Hand me that cane, Bunter."

"Oh, really, you know——"

Loder jumped up, and Billy Bunter backed round the table. Sammy Bunter backed to the door.

"I—I say, you asked me, you know," gasped Bunter. "You remember, Loder, I told you I'd vote for you and you asked me to the spread afterwards if you got in. I—I—I've come!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Walker. "Bribery and corruption!"

"You said I might bring a friend with me," urged Bunter. "I've brought my minor. Shall we—shall we sit down?"

Loder gave him a grim look.

"I told you you could come to the spread, did I?" he asked, in a reflective sort of way.

"Yes, you did," answered Bunter warmly.

"And that you could bring a friend?"

"Yes; I've brought Sammy."

"Very good!" said Loder. "I'm a fellow of my word. Here's the spread—and here are you!"

The two Bunters brightened up a good deal.

"Look here, Loder——" began Carne hotly.

Arthur Carne's dignity as a Sixth-Form prefect was much impaired by the bare idea of sitting down to tea with fags.

"Oh, shut up a minute, old chap, and let a fellow finish," said Loder. "These two cheeky young scoundrels have come to the spread. They can stay. Stand in that corner, Bunter."

"Eh?"

"I'll help you there if you don't move jolly sharp!"

Loder made a motion with his boot, and the Owl of the Remove found the corner promptly enough.

"Now you in the other corner, Bunter minor."

"I—I say——" stammered Sammy.

"Shut up!"

Sammy Bunter rolled into the opposite corner to his major. Gerald Loder sat down again.

"I—I say, Loder—" began Billy Bunter.

"I'm going to give you six after tea, Bunter," said Loder. "For every time you open your mouth I'll add one. See?"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He did not open his mouth again.

Neither did Sammy Bunter. There were quite a lot of things that Sammy of the Second wanted to say, but he did not think it judicious to say them. He glared with Hunnish ferocity at his major, who had landed him in this. Billy Bunter stood blinking in dismay. He had come to Loder's spread—here he was, and here was the spread. It was quite a handsome spread, and Loder, and Walker, and Carne were enjoying themselves. William George Bunter was only a "looker-on in Vienna," so to speak. It was sheer anguish to him to look on at a feed in which he could not join. And all the time he had the knowledge that tea was going on in his own study, and that it would soon be over, with nothing left for him, and that he would be late for tea in Hall!

All he was likely to get by way of tea that afternoon was the sight of Loder's spread!

He groaned inwardly.

This was his reward for backing up Gerald Loder. It was the reward he deserved, as a matter of fact; but that knowledge was no comfort to Bunter.

Never before had any spread at which Bunter had been present seemed so long to him. They had always seemed too short.

But a spread in these peculiar circumstances was quite a different matter. It seemed to Bunter that it would never end.

The three Sixth-Formers took no notice of the two hapless fags, and they enjoyed their tea, and chatted over it. Bunter major and Bunter minor shifted from leg to leg, tired, and hungry, and furious.

But the spread was over at last, and it was time for cigarettes, which always followed tea in Loder's study. Cigarettes, however, could not be smoked in the presence of fags, so it was time for the Bunters to go. So Gerald Loder rather reluctantly released them from the tortures of Tantalus.

He picked up his ashplant.

"Here, Bunter!"

"I—I say, Loder—"

"Bend over that chair!"

"I—I voted for you, you know, Loder," groaned the Owl of the Remove. "I got a lot of other fellows to vote for you."

"You voted for the best man, I hope, according to your conscience," said Loder calmly. "If you dare to say that you voted for any other reason it's my duty to punish you."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bunter.

"From what you said when you came into this study," went on Loder, "any fellow might suppose that I'd induced you to vote for me in some underhand way. You mustn't hint at that kind of thing, Bunter. It's not the kind of thing I can allow anybody to say. Bear that in mind. I shall keep an eye on you, Bunter, and any more talk of that kind you will be sorry for. Now bend over that chair."

Bunter groaned dismally and obeyed. The ashplant rose and fell.

It was a severe "six," and William George Bunter's yells rang through the study. Sammy Bunter watched, with his little round eyes wide open with apprehension behind his spectacles.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter.

"You can cut!" said Loder.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Billy Bunter rolled to the door. Loder made a motion to Bunter minor, and the fat fag unwillingly bent over the chair.

Whack! Whack!

"Ow! Wow!" yelled Sammy of the Second.

"Outside!" said Loder.

Sammy of the Second was only too glad to get outside. He rolled from the study after his major.

The door closed and Loder & Co. lighted their cigarettes. In the passage Bunter major and Bunter minor looked at one another.

"What an awful beast!" groaned Billy Bunter. "He asked me to the spread—promised me—"

"You silly owl!" hissed Sammy.

"I—I thought—Ow! Ow! Oh, my hat! Yooop!" roared Bunter, as his minor gave expression, at last, to the fury he had so long bottled up in Loder's study. Sammy's fat fist landed on his major's nose in a terrific thump, and Billy Bunter sat down on the floor of the Sixth Form passage.

"Why, you—I—I—I—you—" spluttered Bunter.

He scrambled up.

But Sammy of the Second was already in full flight, and was turning the corner of the passage by the time Billy Bunter was on his feet.

The Owl of the Remove took his way to the Remove passage in the lowest of spirits. As he expected, tea was over in No. 7 when he arrived. Tom Dutton had gone out, but Peter Todd was still there, and he stared at Bunter as the fat junior came wriggling painfully in.

"Hallo! Licked?" he asked.

"Ow! That beast Loder—"

"My hat! Did he lick you at the spread?" grinned Peter. "That's rather thick, even for Loder! Or wasn't there any spread?"

"Ow! No! The beast was only pulling my leg to bag my vote!" groaned Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tain't a laughing matter, you beast!" howled Bunter. "I haven't had any tea, and I'm late for Hall. Is there anything left, Peter?"

"Nothing, old bean!" chuckled Peter. "You told me you were teeing with a friend in the Sixth and I could keep my measly tea. I've kept it."

"I—I was only joking, Peter."

"No end of a joke," agreed Peter. "And the cream of the joke is that you don't get any tea. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Bunter sat down wearily in the arm-chair and jumped up again instantly. "Six" from Loder's ashplant made him indisposed to sit down for some time.

"Ow! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

William George Bunter drifted dispiritedly out of the study again. It was evidently not his lucky day.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

An Unexpected Meeting!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! How did it go?"

Bob Cherry asked that question, as Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh arrived at Cliff House.

Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull looked inquiringly at the two new arrivals. Three of the Famous Five had not taken the trouble to vote in the captain's election, but they were interested to hear the result.

"Loder's win," said Harry.

"The esteemed Loder got home by a ludicrous majority," said Hurree Singh. "He is tremendously up in the stirrups, and thinks no little beer of himself."

"Well, I expected it," said Johnny Bull. "Gwynne really wasn't in the running—and Loder's turned over such a jolly new leaf that he's got round most of the fellows. Not that I trust him myself."

"The trustfulness is not terrific," assented Hurree Singh.

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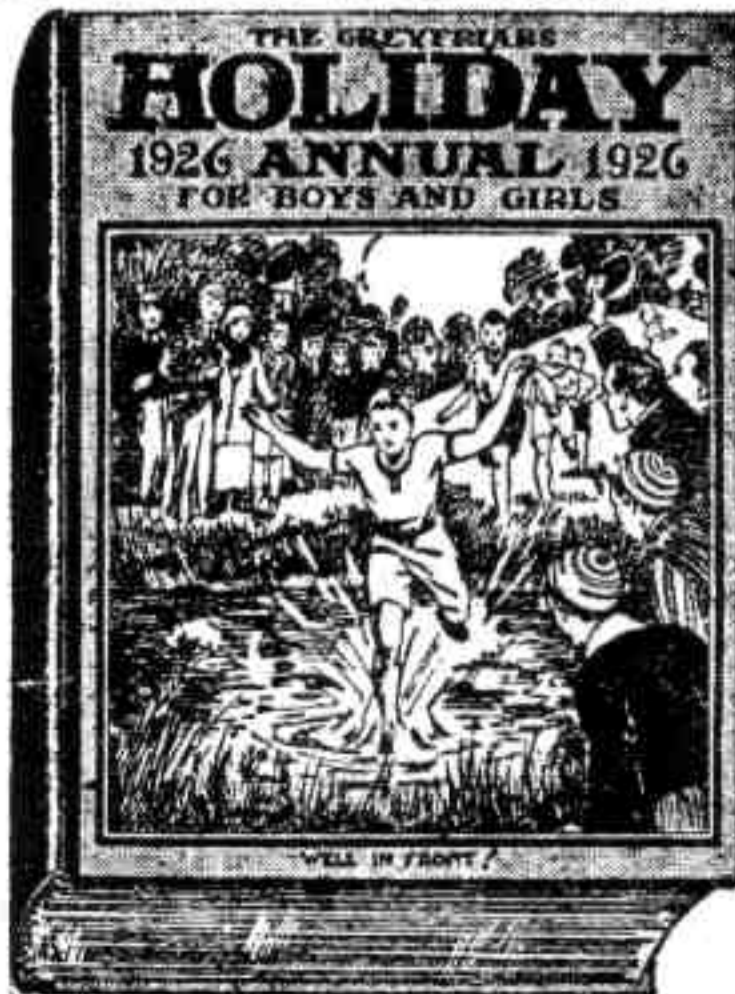
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"It will be rotten for Greyfriars, with Loder in old Wingate's place," said Frank Nugent. "Still, it's Wingate's fault—he resigned."

"He must have had some reason for that, that we don't know about," said Bob Cherry.

"I don't see why he couldn't give his reason, if he had one. It's not treating the school well, to throw up the captaincy without even condescending to explain."

"And then putting up Gwynne, and advising fellows to vote for him," grunted Johnny Bull, "as if the captaincy was a thing he could chuck about to any fellow he liked. That wasn't good enough."

"Well, Loder's in," said Harry Wharton. "A fellow can only hope that he will turn out well; he may chuck some of his old ways, with a lot of new responsibilities on his shoulders. He seems to have been a good deal more good-natured than usual just lately."

Hurree Singh grinned a dusky grin. "The electioneerfulness was terrific," he remarked.

"Well, I suppose it was that," admitted the captain of the Remove. "Anyhow, give him a chance. We sha'n't have much to do with him, unless he gives us his special attention for the sake of old times."

"And he may," said Johnny Bull. "He was always down on our crowd, and he will have a lot of power as captain of the school!"

"That was a reason for voting against him, old man, before it was too late," said Harry.

Johnny Bull shrugged his shoulders without answering. The Famous Five went into the school-room where they were to have tea with Marjorie Hazeldene and Barbara Redfern and their girl friends. Hazeldene of the Remove was there, and he asked at once what had been the result of the election at Greyfriars.

"So Loder's in," said Hazel thoughtfully, when Wharton told him. "I thought he would romp home the way things were going. I wouldn't have voted for him myself—he won't make a good captain of the school. Still, I don't think much of Gwynne. But Loder will be a bit of a twister. He was against letting the Lower Fourth off fagging, the time there was a row about it."

"He won't begin fagging the Remove," said Harry, with a laugh.

"I'm not so sure of that."

"There will be trouble if he does," said Bob Cherry.

"What will you do to him, Bob?" asked Miss Clara. "Boil him in oil, or give him something lingering with boiling oil in it?"

Bob Cherry laughed.

"Still, Loder's captaincy may turn out all right in some ways," Hazeldene remarked. "He won't be so jolly keen on duty as Wingate was."

"Surely that won't be an improvement, Hazel," said Marjorie, looking up from pouring out the tea.

Hazel coloured faintly.

"Nunno! Still, Wingate was a bit of a driver in some ways. Loder will go much easier, I think. Fellows kick over the traces sometimes, and they don't want six from a prefect every time!"

"It might be for their good!" remarked Barbara Redfern, a little dryly.

Hazel grinned.

"We don't always want what's for our good," he answered.



"Look here, Loder," said Wingate minor cheekily. "What?" roared Loder, swinging round. "I'm going to the Cross Keys after classes to-day," said the fag. "Any message for Mr. Cobb?" (See Chapter 8.)

Harry Wharton gave a description of Bunter's generous invitation to Loder's spread, which made the Cliff House girls laugh, and changed the topic. He was quite well aware of what was in Hazel's mind. "Kicking over the traces" was an entertainment in which Hazel sometimes indulged, and with a head prefect like Wingate it had been a rather risky business. Evidently Marjorie's scapegrace brother was already thinking that, under Loder's captaincy, that sort of thing would be easier.

After tea, Marjorie & Co. walked down to the gate with their friends, and the Famous Five lighted their bicycle-lamps, as the dusk was beginning to fall. But as Hazel had walked over, he had no machine, and he rather sulkily inquired whether anybody was going to walk home with him.

"Why the thump didn't you bring your machine if you wanted company on the way back?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Well, I didn't, and I don't want your company, anyhow!" retorted Hazel.

Another grunt from Johnny, and he mounted his machine and started. Harry Wharton smiled and handed his bike to Nugent.

"You'll wheel it home for me, Franky."

"Right-ho!"

"Come on, Hazel, we'll take the foot-path," said Harry cheerily. "Good-bye, Marjorie!"

"Good-bye, Harry!" said Marjorie Hazeldene softly, and Hazel nodded carelessly to his sister, and walked with the captain of the Remove, while the

other four juniors pedalled off and disappeared in the dusk.

Hazel returned at once to the subject of the new captaincy of Greyfriars as he walked with Wharton by the dusky footpaths, taking the short cuts back to Greyfriars.

"It means a lot of changes in the school," he said. "First eleven football will get a shock—Loder will be football captain, you know; and he will back up his own friends all along the line. I shouldn't wonder if he gives Wingate the push out of the team."

"He wouldn't dare!" exclaimed Harry.

"I don't see what's to stop him; he will run the football committee—and, anyhow, he has the last word. And the Head's bound to make him head-prefect—that's the rule. Fancy Loder head-prefect!" Hazel burst into a laugh. "Why, I know he gets out of bounds after lights out, to go down to the Cross Keys to smoke and play cards. Lots of fellows suspect it, and I know it. Smithy knows it, too; he's seen him. Good old head-prefect, what?"

"It's rotten enough," said Harry. "But Loder may chuck that kind of thing now he's captain."

"Catch him!" grinned Hazel. "It will be all the safer for him as captain, and he will paint the town redder than ever. Wingate ought never to have resigned if he'd thought of the good of the school. I suppose his merry minor had something to do with it."

"His minor?" repeated Harry.

"Well, it's no secret that Jack Wingate of the Third has been playing the

goat," said Hazel carelessly. "The Third talk of it a lot, and it's fairly well known that Coker of the Fifth spotted him one day sneaking out at the back door of the Cross Keys, and gave him six just as if he were a prefect! Like Coker's cheek, of course!"

"Just!" agreed Harry. "But it served the young blackguard right, all the same, if it's true."

"Oh, it's true enough—Hilton of the Fifth heard it from Potter, who's a chum of Coker's," said Hazel. "I've wondered several times if that had something to do with Wingate resigning. Perhaps he doesn't want a Wingate to be captain of Greyfriars when the time comes for another Wingate to be bunked from the school! Ha, ha!"

Wharton did not echo Hazel's laugh. He did not see anything humorous in the matter, if the scapegrace of the Third had been the means of bringing disaster on his brother, the best fellow at Greyfriars. Only too well he knew of Jack Wingate's late escapades—more than once he had tried to keep the perverse fag from his folly, for old Wingate's sake, but he had not been successful. And one or two little circumstances had imbued him with a suspicion that Loder of the Sixth had a hand of some kind in Jack Wingate's outburst of unruly blackguardism, which had caused his brother so much trouble.

"Skinner's told me that he's seen young Wingate speaking to that boozy bounder Cobb, of the Cross Keys," went on Hazel.

"Skinner's not a witness I'd put my money on," remarked the captain of the Remove dryly.

"Well, no; but it's jolly likely! Hallo! Talk of angels!" whispered Hazel. "Look there!"

The two juniors had almost reached the stile which gave access to Friardale Lane. Under a tree on the hither side of the stile a squat man stood leaning on the tree-trunk, with a cigar in his mouth. Both the juniors recognised Mr. Cobb, of the Cross Keys, as he struck a match to light his cigar.

"That's the johnnie!" said Hazel. "I wonder what he's waiting there for—so near Greyfriars?"

Hazel did not need to wonder long, for as the juniors reached the stile a Greyfriars fag clambered over from the other side in the dusk and dropped almost on their feet.

It was Jack Wingate of the Third Form.

The fag gave the two Removites a stare, turned from them without speaking, and moved towards the shadowy tree, under which the end of Mr. Cobb's cigar glowed scarlet in the gloom.

Hazel burst into a chuckle. This was confirmation of what he had said to the captain of the Remove, and it amused him.

But Harry Wharton's face hardened. As Jack Wingate stepped towards the tree Wharton dropped a hand on his shoulder.

"Stop!" he said.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Strong Hand!

JACK WINGATE stopped.

He had no choice about that, for the grasp on his shoulder was a good deal like that of an iron vice.

He stared angrily at the captain of the Remove.

"Who's that? Wharton? Let go!"

"Hold on a minute, kid!" said Harry kindly enough.

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"Let go!"

"I want to speak to you."

"I'm in a hurry!"

"So are we, Wharton, as a matter of fact," interposed Hazeldene. "We've none too much time to get in before lock-up, hoofing it!"

"That applies to Wingate minor, too," said Harry. "Come on, kid, you'll be locked out of gates!"

"That's my business, I suppose, isn't it?" said Jack Wingate angrily. "Let go my shoulder, and don't meddle!"

Wharton coloured.

"You'd better come back to school, kid," he said. "You don't want to get into a row for missing call-over."

"Perhaps I shouldn't get into a row," sneered Jack Wingate.

"You mean you've got an exeat?" asked Harry. "But Third Form kids don't have passes out of gates after dark. Look here, Wingate minor, Mr. Quelch is taking the roll to-night, and he is sure to miss you. You don't want to ask for trouble."

"Do you happen to be my grandfather, by any chance?" asked Wingate minor sarcastically. "First I've heard of it, if you are!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Hazel.

Wharton's face set.

"I've seen that man waiting yonder," he said. "It's Cobb, of the Cross Keys! You're going to speak to him, young Wingate?"

"Suppose I am?" sneered the fag. "Does it matter to you?"

Harry Wharton breathed hard. He had not a very patient temper, but he was keeping it severely in check now. Hazel's suggestion that it was Jack Wingate's rascality that had caused the captain of Greyfriars to fall from his position in the school was in his mind now, and many circumstances made him believe that there was something in it. And the young rascal was going on in the same way, after all the harm he had done—risking expulsion from the school, disgrace for himself, disgrace for his brother, shameless and unrepentant! It was altogether too thick, and Wharton felt his anger rising high.

Hazeldene made a movement of impatience. He was not interested in the scapegrace of the Third, except to the extent of feeling a mildly contemptuous amusement at his folly.

"Look here, Wharton, let the young ass alone and come on!" he exclaimed. "I'm jolly well not going to be late for call-over!"

"Hold on a minute!" said Harry.

"Oh, rot!" muttered Hazel sulkily. "Let him be licked for being out after lock-up—and serve him right!"

"I don't care if he's licked. But I—"

"Will you let me go, you interfering cad?" said Jack Wingate in low, concentrated tones of rage. The Remove captain's grip was still hard on his shoulder.

"No!" said Harry, making up his mind. "You're coming back to Greyfriars with us, Wingate minor. You've given your brother enough trouble, and you're not giving him any more if I can stop it!"

"Let me go, you cad!"

"For goodness' sake, either let him go or yank him along!" exclaimed Hazel impatiently. "You'll have Cobb butting in soon!"

Mr. Cobb, whose cigar-end could be seen glowing under the shadowy tree, must certainly have heard the voices of the Greyfriars juniors. But he did not emerge from the shadows; he smoked his cigar there without interfering. Not that interference would have been

tolerated: Harry Wharton was prepared to knock the beery rogue spinning if he intervened. The sturdy schoolboy could probably have handled the innkeeper, man as he was against a boy; Mr. Cobb was too soaked with beer and tobacco to be of much use in a tussle. Wharton hardly gave him a thought. He tightened his grasp on Jack Wingate's shoulder and drew him back towards the stile on the lane.

"Do you think you're going to take me back to the school against my will, Wharton?" panted the fag.

"Yes, if you won't come willingly."

"What business is it of yours?" demanded Wingate minor shrilly.

"Never mind that; you're coming," said Harry resolutely.

"I'll hack your shins!"

"For goodness' sake——" recommenced Hazel.

"Oh, cheese it, Hazel!" broke out the captain of the Remove. "If you're afraid of missing lock-up, cut off by yourself, and don't bother."

"I jolly well will, then!" snapped Hazel, and he vaulted over the stile, and started up the lane towards Greyfriars at a trot.

"Now, Wingate minor——"

"I'll hack your shins if you don't let me go!" breathed the fag furiously.

"Do, and I'll thrash you," said Harry. "You're coming. Oh!"

He staggered, as the fag carried out his threat, and kicked.

Wingate minor tore himself loose, and darted towards the shadowy tree and the glowing cigar-end.

The next moment the captain of the Remove was upon him, grasping him, and Wingate minor was whirled back to the stile.

He struggled and kicked, but Wharton did not heed him. With a swing of his strong arms, he pitched the fag fairly over the stile, and Wingate minor rolled in the grass on the roadside.

Wharton jumped over the stile after him.

His mind was quite made up now; the fag's insolence would have made him determined, even without his concern for Wingate major. As the fag staggered up, Wharton grasped his collar.

"Come on!"

"I won't!" yelled Wingate minor.

"Won't you?"

The fag was swung out into the lane. He struggled savagely.

"Cobb!" he shouted. "Mr. Cobb! Help!"

The glowing cigar-end came into motion at last. Mr. Cobb's squat form loomed out from under the tree.

"Ere, you let my young friend alone!" he exclaimed, clambering laboriously over the stile. Mr. Cobb was short of wind. "You 'ear me—you let 'im alone, or I'll make you!"

Wharton turned on him with a blaze in his eyes.

"Will you?" he exclaimed. "Interfere if you dare, you blackguard!"

"What?" hooted Mr. Cobb.

"Stand back, you rascal!"

"My eye! I'll give you rascal, young jackanapes!" shouted Mr. Cobb. And he made a jump at the captain of the Remove.

Wharton threw the struggling fag into the road and faced the innkeeper with his hands up, and his eyes blazing over them.

Mr. Cobb rushed on to a fist that seemed as hard as iron, and that crashed on his bulbous nose like a hammer.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Cobb.

He sat down suddenly in the lane.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Brothers!

GERALD LODER carried his head high at Greyfriars the following day.

Fellows who did not like Loder—and their name was legion—grinned at one another, and remarked that Loder was putting on quite enough swank now that he was captain of the school.

Even Loder's friends felt that Gerald was putting on plenty of "side."

There was no doubt that his success had got into Loder's head a little.

The actual fact was, that he was by no means fitted for the position he held, which required a man with a steady character and a cool head. Gerald Loder was possessed of neither.

He was the head now of the little world of school, monarch of all he surveyed, his right there was none to dispute. And Loder was more than a little intoxicated with the sense of power.

His appointment as head-prefect had immediately followed his election to the captaincy; that rank always went to the captain of the school, and Loder was a prefect already. Now he was the head of that august body—the Palladium of the school, as the Head had termed them in some of his speeches. Fellows who knew Loder chuckled at the idea. Still, there it was; he was head-prefect, with the power to call up any fellow, senior or junior, at a meeting of the prefects

for judgment, and to adjudge him the punishment known as a "Prefects' Beating!"

Every fellow at Greyfriars who was not a prefect himself was liable to that, even the lofty Sixth—even Wingate, who had so lately been captain of the school. That power, in Wingate's hands, had been exercised wisely and well. It was but very, very seldom that a senior fellow had been given a beating, and only in some flagrant case of bullying, playing the goat, or slacking at games. The power was rather theoretical than practical; but it existed. There were surmises that Loder was likely to use it much more extensively than George Wingate had done. Indeed, in Loder's set, there were already bets on how long it would be before the new captain found a sufficient pretext for giving "old Wingate" a prefects' beating!

The bare idea of George Wingate "bending over" in the Prefects'-room, to take a beating, made fellows catch their breath. Really, considering the position Wingate had held in the school, it seemed impossible; yet it was quite possible, and fellows who knew Loder considered it probable.

But if Loder was looking for trouble with the late captain, as undoubtedly he was, he was disappointed that day. George Wingate had reflected a good deal on the change in his position, and he was very careful not to lay claim to any of the authority that had passed from his hands.



"I order you to leave this room instantly," said Loder, from the armchair. Wingate's lips curled contemptuously. "I shall not leave until I've done what I came in for. I tell you in the presence of the other prefects that you are a scoundrel, and that you're not fit for a decent fellow to speak to. I'm going to thrash you, Loder!" (See Chapter 10.)

Wharton's grasp was on the fag again the next moment. He whirled Jack Wingate away, and marched him up the road towards Greyfriars, gripping his collar, and driving him along a good deal like an unwilling mule.

Wingate minor had to go; he was an infant in the grasp of the captain of the Remove.

"You rotter!" he panted. "You meddling rotter! Let me alone!"

"Get on, you young cad!" answered Harry.

"I'm not going in!"

"You are—though I'm sorry I'm saying you from a licking for staying out," said Wharton savagely.

"You fool!" said Wingate minor shrilly. "I can stay out if I like. I can do as I choose, now Loder's captain of Greyfriars. Understand that, you interfering rotter? I'll tell Loder about this, and he will make it hot for you, I can tell you."

Wharton marched him on without reply.

The fag's words were a proof of what he suspected, and almost knew; he knew it now for certain. Loder had had a hand in the reckless fag's lapse into blackguardism; it was a part of the underhand scheming by which Wingate had been led to resign the captaincy, leaving the way open for Gerald Loder to realise his long ambition. Jack Wingate had often presumed upon the fact that his brother was captain of the school. Now he was presuming upon his precious friendship with the new captain of Greyfriars—he was to be unchecked in his rascality, protected by his "friend in the Sixth." Evidently Loder had given him reason to count upon his protection, for it was a serious matter for a fag to remain out of gates after dark, and Jack Wingate had intended to do so.

"Do you hear?" panted Wingate minor. "Do you understand, you cheeky fool? I tell you, Loder will make you smart for this."

"You little idiot!" said Harry, at last, between disgust and compassion. "It's pretty clear to me that Loder's been making use of you to down your brother, and you've let him do it. A precious lot Loder is likely to stand by you, now he's done with you."

"I'll make him give you six!" howled the fag.

"Well, if you can make him give me six, make him," said Harry. "I'll chance that. You're coming in now with me. Here we are."

They were at the school gates now, and Gosling was there with his keys, about to lock up.

"Jest in time, Master Wharton," said Gosling grimly. "Wot I says is this 'ere, you've cut it pretty fine, sir! Another minute, and I'd 'ave 'ad to report you."

"Come on, Wingate minor!"

"You rotter!"

The gates clanged after the juniors, and Gosling turned his ponderous key. Wharton kept his grip on the fag's collar till they came into the lights of the House.

"Now cut in," he said, releasing him.

"I'll do as I choose."

"You'd better choose to go into the House, then; I'm going to help you with my boot."

"You cheeky cad—Ow!" roared Wingate minor, as the captain of the Remove suited the action to the word.

On second thoughts—proverbially the best—Wingate minor decided to go into the House. He went in, with a furious face, and the captain of the Remove followed him in.

Every man in the Sixth had his fag; but prefects were permitted to fag any fellow in the fag Forms—the Third and Second. Wingate realised that he had made a mistake in fagging Sammy Bunter of the Second, who was no longer amenable to his authority, and he did not repeat the mistake. Not that it made much difference, for almost any junior at Greyfriars would have been proud to fag for old Wingate. Even the Remove, a Form that fiercely repudiated the mere idea of being fagged, would have rolled up almost to a man to carry out any order from Wingate of the Sixth. Harry Wharton, not a very tractable fellow by nature, would have been the first to obey any call from him.

So Wingate really had the power, though not the right, to fag any junior he liked, but he was careful not to exercise it.

It was a drastic change. A nod from Wingate had been enough to secure the willing services of any fellow in sight. Now if he wanted a book fetched, or a bag carried, or a letter posted, he was entitled to the services only of his own special fag, and he was careful not to call upon any services to which he was not entitled.

That was a disappointment to Loder. He had not expected Wingate to have the cool, calm sense to take the change in his position so philosophically as this. He had hoped to hear complaints, and he heard none. He had hoped and watched for a chance of calling Wingate to order, and no chance came his way.

But it was a case of the wolf and the lamb over again. Loder was determined to hunt for trouble now that it was in his power to humiliate his old rival, and it was certain that sooner or later he would find, or make, his opportunity.

George Wingate found his loss of authority extremely awkward in one respect. He had no longer any right over Wingate of the Third, save that of an elder brother anxious for his welfare, which Jack Wingate ruthlessly disregarded.

He had sent several messages to the scapegrace of the Third to come and see him in his study, and Wingate minor had not chosen to come. He could not send him an order to come.

The fag was avoiding him, and it was easy enough to avoid him, for a time at least.

Probably it was a little on the wretched fag's conscience that he had played a large part in bringing about his brother's downfall. Probably he expected a sermon when he saw his brother. For a variety of reasons he did not choose to see him, and Wingate could not make him do so. And he was anxious about his brother, with a deepening anxiety. Vague suspicions in his mind had been growing clearer, more certain. He had long suspected that the fag was acting under the influence of an older, unscrupulous fellow, and his thoughts had, at last, fixed on Loder of the Sixth. Wingate minor's reckless talk helped to confirm his suspicion. Wharton was not the only fellow whom Jack Wingate had told that he could do as he liked now that Gerald Loder was captain of Greyfriars. In the Third it was common talk. Jack Wingate had presumed on being the captain's brother when Wingate was head of the school, but he was what Tubb called "bump-tious" now that Loder was in. Indeed, in one of the many rows of the Third

Form room Jack Wingate had threatened Tubb with "six from Loder."

Third Form talk and tattle would not have reached the lofty ears of the Sixth, as a rule, but Wingate was anxious about his brother, and he gave ear to all he heard. The suspicion that Loder, a Sixth Form man and a prefect, had been base enough to tempt the wretched fag into wrong-doing, as a part of his cunning scheme, made the late captain of Greyfriars tremble with rage. He could not be certain, yet when he thought of all the circumstances, it seemed like a certainty. And that evil influence, which had led the unthinking fag into evil, and had caused his brother's downfall, might be going on, unless it could be stopped. But it would be stopped, fast enough, Wingate told himself, once he could make sure. And for that he had to "have it out" with his brother.

For a whole day Jack Wingate succeeded in dodging the interview he disliked. He even neglected to look in at Loder's study in the Sixth, lest he should be collared by his brother in the Sixth Form passage. But Wingate of the Sixth was not to be dodged permanently. That evening he stood at the door of the Third Form room, to wait for the fags to go in for prep with Mr. Twigg.

Jack Wingate came along with others of the Third, and he scowled at the sight of his brother standing by the door. But he could not escape now. He had to go into the Form-room for prep.

Mr. Twigg was there, and he was chatting with Wingate in the doorway while the Third went in. Wingate stopped his minor as Jack was passing with a sulky face.

"Hold on a minute, kid," he said.

"It's prep," muttered Wingate minor sullenly.

"Mr. Twigg will excuse you for ten minutes. I've told Mr. Twigg that I have something to say to you."

"Certainly," said the master of the Third. "Go with your brother, Wingate minor; you are excused for ten minutes."

Wingate minor bit his lip with rage. But there was no gainsaying an order from his Form master, and he walked away with Wingate major to the Sixth Form passage, while the rest of the Third went in for prep.

Wingate led the way to his study without a word.

In the study, he closed the door, and stood with his eyes fixed on the sullen face of his brother.

"You've no right to bring me here," muttered Jack Wingate. "You're not a prefect now. You're nobody."

"Whose fault is that, Jack?" asked Wingate quietly.

"Your own!" snapped the fag. "Why couldn't you let me alone? You were bound to butt in, and it's your own fault you've come a cropper."

"We needn't go into that, kid," said Wingate mildly. "I was bound to report you to the Head for pub-haunting, to get bunked from the school, or else resign my position. I chose to resign, to save you from what you had asked for—what you deserved."

"I never asked you to!" muttered the fag. "You did it of your own accord. You can't lay it on me."

"Never mind that. I've done it—for your sake! Don't you think that gives me a right, Jack, to ask you not to think of running the same risk again? There will be nobody to save you next time."

Wingate minor's sullen face relaxed into a mocking grin.

"That's all you know!" he said.

"Do you mean that you have somebody to stand by you, somebody in authority, who would be rotten enough to protect you in wrong-doing, and still keep in a position of authority?"

"Never mind what I mean!"

"I've long suspected, Jack, that in playing the fool as you did you were acting under the influence of an older fellow," said Wingate. "I did not think that it could be a Sixth Form man, but I can't help suspecting now, Jack, that it was Loder of my Form. Your own words would make me think so, if nothing else did."

The fag stood silent.

"Tell me this," said Wingate patiently. "Had Loder anything to do with your going to the Cross Keys on any occasion?"

No answer.

"Will you tell me that, kid?"

"I'm not going to tell you anything. It's no business of yours," said the fag sullenly.

Wingate's eyes gleamed.

"Was it Loder?" he demanded.

"Find out!"

"I mean to!" said Wingate grimly. "And if I find out, for certain, that it was Loder, I'll make him fed-up with meddling with a silly fag in the Third Form."

"What can you do?" sneered the fag. "Loder's captain of the school now, and you're not even a prefect. He can order you a prefect's beating, if he likes. You'd better be jolly careful how you treat Loder."

"That's practically a confession," said Wingate. "But I want it plain before I act. And now, Jack, will you give me your word that there won't be any more of it? I've saved you once, by throwing away all I've won at Greyfriars. I was captain of the school and head-prefect, and, as you say, I'm nobody now. Isn't that enough? Do you want to keep on, and disgrace our name, and get sent home from the school? Think of that!"

The fag was looking at his watch.

"Time's up!" he said coolly.

"What do you mean?"

"Mr. Twigg gave us ten minutes. You've jawed me for ten minutes and a half. I've got to get back to prep."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"That's all!"

Wingate minor crossed to the door.

For a moment the elder brother's hand clenched hard. The cheeky fag was within an ace of receiving the thrashing of his life.

But Wingate controlled his temper.

"Very well, get out," he said quietly.

Jack Wingate left the study, with an insolent grin on his face.

The late captain of Greyfriars stood for some minutes, with a clouded brow, before he turned to his work at last, and sat down at his study table. Was it Loder who had brought his brother into evil-doing, into the shadow of the sack? Loder, he was certain, had known his reason for resigning; he had taken part in a general movement of the Greyfriars fellows to get Wingate to withdraw his resignation, on the eve of the captain's election; he would not have done that, had he known that withdrawal was impossible. He had done it to conciliate Wingate's numerous friends; to gain their confidence and their votes in the election, knowing that Wingate could not accede to the demand that he should resume his old position.

He had, therefore, known what the reason of that resignation was—and how could he have known it, save from

Jack Wingate? And if he knew it from Wingate minor, was not that a proof that he was on terms of intimacy very unusual between a Sixth-Form man and a fag of the Third—that he was, in fact, the unknown evil influence Wingate had long suspected?

It seemed assured enough—but it was vague; action was impossible without something clearer than this! And even with the facts clear, what action was open to George Wingate to take?

Loder was captain of the school; he was in power. Wingate could not make his brother's disgrace known; he could not accuse Loder of his treachery without betraying his brother—his brother, whom he had given up everything to save. That was impossible! But once he had proof, he would take action—he was resolved on that. Loder should not escape unpunished; he would and should receive a lesson for his baseness.

The troubled Sixth-Former dismissed the problem from his mind at last, and settled down to his work; but it was not easy. Loder's evil, triumphant face—Jack Wingate, unthinking, reckless, on the road to ruin—came constantly into his thoughts; and Wingate of the Sixth found it uncommonly hard to bury his mind in Greek.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Wingate Minor Loses His Friend in the Sixth!

HARRY WHARTON smiled slightly.

The Lower School were coming out after second lesson; and Harry came out with the Remove fellows into the quad. A Third Form fag, loafing along by himself, scowled at the captain of the Remove.

Wingate minor's scowl did not affect Wharton very much. He knew that he had earned the fag's bitterest resentment by interfering between him and the precious Mr. Cobb; but the young rascal's resentment was not likely to disturb Wharton's equanimity. As for the six from Loder, that Wingate of the Third had promised him, Harry had heard nothing of it so far.

Jack Wingate scowled more darkly as he caught the half-good-humoured, half-contemptuous smile on Wharton's face. He came over to the captain of the Remove.

"I suppose you know that your meddling the other day is the talk of the school," he said.

Harry Wharton laughed.

He knew that Hazeldene had talked of the incident in the Rag, to a crowd of laughing Removites and Fourth-Form fellows. Hazel had represented Wharton in the character of a kindly grandfather restraining erring youth, and the juniors had chortled over it. Wharton did not mind, but it seemed that Jack Wingate minded.

"My dear kid," said Harry, "the school doesn't talk about the doings of a kid in the Third! Your silly scrapes will never be the talk of the school—never more than the tattle of the fags! Catch on?"

"You cheeky rotter!" said Wingate minor, crimsoning, as he was thus cheerfully reminded of his own insignificance. "You'll be made to squirm for it, anyhow. Just wait a bit."

"As long as you like," said Harry.

"But don't call a Remove man names, kid—you're liable to be kicked across the quad if you do."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"The kickfulness is likely to be terrific, my esteemed disgusting little blighter," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "Run away before the boot-leather is applied rearfully."

"I can jolly well tell you—" began Wingate minor hotly.

Johnny Bull dropped his hand on the fag's shoulder.

"Cut off!" he said briefly.

And Jack Wingate, noting the grim expression on Johnny's face, decided to say no more, and he cut off. The Famous Five glanced after him rather curiously. Vernon-Smith joined them,

fellow he's made use of. If he gets to hear the liberties that young ass is taking with his name, I fancy there will be a surprise for Wingate minor. Loder's the last man at Greyfriars to stand cheek and familiarity from a fag."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, he's speaking to him!" said Bob Cherry.

The juniors, following Wingate minor with their glances, saw him approach Loder of the Sixth. Loder was walking under the elms with Carne, with the lofty air which he had unconsciously assumed since he had become captain of the school.

With a cane under his arm, and his hands behind his back, Loder was parading, rather than sauntering, with Arthur Carne of the Sixth. Carne's expression was not wholly pleasant. His friend Loder was telling him that he had some doubts about his form for first-eleven football. This was fairly cool, from a man who had recently been dropped from the first eleven himself. Not that Loder had any intention of dropping Carne, if it came to that; but he was not sure that his friend had treated him with sufficient respect since he had attained his present position of dizzy eminence. His remarks were intended to put Carne in his place, Carne having, at least in Loder's opinion, presumed upon the familiarity Loder allowed him.

So Carne's teeth were set, and he had a number of disagreeable remarks in his mind, which he did not venture to utter. He was even thinking that, taken altogether, he rather preferred Wingate, whom he disliked, as captain of the school, to Gerald Loder, who was his friend!

Loder, however, was in a very cheerful mood. He looked quite good-tempered; setting anybody down had a cheering effect on Loder, and now he was setting Arthur Carne down.

Jack Wingate approached the two prefects a little timidly.

Since the election, he had not spoken to his friend in the Sixth, and the election was now two days old. He was a little hurt that Loder had not sent to his study for him. Really, it almost seemed that his friend in the Sixth had forgotten his existence. No doubt he was very busy, taking over control; but the scapegrace of the Third was hurt and annoyed. He was very far from realising how extremely slight and insignificant a person he was to Loder, in spite of all the kindness and attention he had received. In actual fact, Gerald Loder had very nearly, if not quite, forgotten that there was such a person at Greyfriars as Wingate minor of the Third. He had no further use for him, and he was not likely, therefore, to bulk largely in Loder's mind.

The new captain of Greyfriars was reminded of his half-forgotten existence now. Jack Wingate came up, "I say, Loder!" he began.

Carne stared at him contemptuously, and walked on, making it quite clear that if Loder chose to be talked to by Third-Form fags in open quad, he, Arthur Carne, did not choose to associate himself with anything of the kind.

Loder paused, and looked at the fag.

(Continued on page 16.)

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For Next Week!

CAPTAIN AND TYRANT!

By Frank Richards.

Another great story in the
special series starring
GEORGE WINGATE
and
GERALD LODER,
the rival Sixth-Formers

Order your "MAGNET"
early. Saves disappoint-
ment.—Editor.

and he was grinning as he looked after Jack Wingate.

"Bright young spark, what?" said the Bounder.

"Cheeky young rotter, you mean," said Frank Nugent. "I'm a good-tempered chap, I believe, but I know I shall kick him if he comes in my way too often."

"The kid's got wind in his head, you know," said the Bounder. "Loder must have been pulling his leg—for a lark, I imagine. He thinks he's got a friend in the Sixth, and that Loder will back him up now he's captain of the school. He hardly makes a secret of it—though it's not a judicious thing to talk about—if true."

"Loder has been pulling his leg, I'm afraid," said Harry gravely. "I'm afraid he's made use of the young fool, to down Wingate."

"I thought something of the kind myself," said the Bounder. "But Loder isn't the man to bother about a



THE GREYFRIARS HERALD



No. 248.

HARRY WHARTON, EDITOR

Week Ending Nov. 14th.

Editorial!

By Harry Wharton



THE gymnasium at Greyfriars has a thrilling history. It is not one of the oldest parts of the school building, for the ancient monks who used to inhabit Greyfriars didn't indulge in gymnastics. The gym was built on to the main building in 1840 or thereabouts, so I suppose you would call it fairly modern. However, the gym has a history of eighty-five years behind it; and if only its walls could speak, they would tell of many thrilling schoolboy tussles, with and without gloves. Scores and scores of Greyfriars fellows, past and present, have met in the gym to settle their differences in fistie combat. Within those four walls many a knock-out blow has been struck, and those same walls have often re-echoed to the cries of "Give him socks!" and "A knock-out, by Jove!"

The gym is the venue for all the "official" school fights. The unofficial ones take place either behind the chapel or in a secluded spot in Friardale Wood.

There is this difference between an official scrap and an unofficial one. In the case of the former a prefect is present to see fair play, and gloves are generally used. If the combatants are punishing each other too heavily the prefect calls halt. The unofficial scrap, however, is a hammer-and-tongs affair, in which no quarter is asked or given. There is no limit to the number of rounds fought, and it is on record that one famous fight lasted twenty-two rounds!

But the Greyfriars gym is something more than a mere battleground. It is fitted up with a trapeze, and a vaulting-horse, and parallel-bars, and all the rest of the gymnastic paraphernalia. Gymnastics are not compulsory at Greyfriars, but most fellows like to have a turn at the punching-ball occasionally, or swing the Indian clubs, or wield the weighty dumb-bells.

Probably the finest gymnast in the Remove is little Wun Lung, the Chinese. He performs the most daring and breathless feats on the trapeze, and when we have a gymnastic pyramid he always takes the loftiest and most perilous position. If you could watch Wun Lung's ape-like agility on the trapeze, you would no longer doubt the Darwinian theory that man is descended from monkeys!

The worst gymnast? Well, that doubtful honour falls to the lot of William George Bunter.

I've only seen Bunter on the trapeze once. His huge bulk was suspended on high, and the trapeze seemed in imminent peril of collapsing! You see, its human load is not supposed to exceed half a ton! How Bunter had managed to get up there I don't know!

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but, having accomplished the ascent, he was unable to get down again, and he shouted and squealed for assistance. Finally we had to fetch a ladder, so that the fat junior could descend in safety.

And yet Bunter, in his colossal conceit, imagines he is Greyfriars' Greatest Gymnast!

HARRY WHARTON.

POETICAL GYMNASTICS!

(After "The Cataract of Lodore.")

By Dick Penfold.

HOW do the fighting-men
Box in the gym?
Mighty and muscular,
Sturdy of limb,
Facing each other
With never a fear;
Crowds at the ring-side,
To give them a cheer!

ROUND I.

Fighting and smiting
In manner exciting,
Shouting and springing
And slogging and swinging,
Pommelling, punching,
Careering and crunching,
Rallying, rushing,
And clinching and crushing,
Dancing and prancing,
And grimly advancing,
Dashing and crashing
And beating and bashing,
Skidding and sprawling
And falling and brawling,
Gliding and sliding
And chaffing and chiding,
Clanging and clattering,
Bruising and battering,
Stunning and shattering
Amid the loud chattering—

That's how the fighting-men
Box in the gym!

(Interval for a "breather.")

ROUND II.

Hitting and hammering,
And clashing and clamouring,
Twisting and twirling
And wheeling and whirling,
Yelling and yapping
And snorting and snapping,
Banging and bounding
And punching and pounding,
Dodging and dropping
And hurtling and hopping,
Smiling and scowling
And grinning and growling,
Thumping and clumping
And bashing and bumping,
Retreating and meeting
And flying and fleeing,
Rapping and slapping
And clapping and tapping,
Boiling, recoiling,
Turmoiling and toiling,
Whacking and smacking
And cracking (no stacking!),
Clutching and clasping
And grunting and gasping,
And never desisting
And never resisting—
Until, at the knock-out,
The ref pulls his "clock" out,
And his thunderous "Time!"
Puts an end to my rhyme.

Mighty and muscular,
Sturdy of limb,
That's how the fighting-men
Box in the gym!

Gymnasium Gossip!

By Bob Cherry



THE fat and fatuous Billy Bunter has had the cheek to challenge me to a boxing contest in the gym. Of course, I sha'n't take the silly Owl seriously. If I did, Gosling, the porter, would have to come along with his broom and sweep up little bits of Bunter! The only sort of contest in which I should be likely to be beaten by Bunter would be a toast-eating contest. I should find myself "whacked" at the sixth "round"!

LORD MAULEVERER is strongly of the opinion that the Greyfriars gymnasium should be converted into a dormitory—a sort of rest-room for fellows who happen to feel tired in the daytime. Mauly declares that there would be room to swing about twenty hammocks. But Greyfriars has got no room for hammock-swingers—or for "lead-swingers"!

A COPY of "Punch" was found lying about in the gym the other day. Evidently some would-be world-beater has been sweating up the noble art of self-defence!

ALONZO TODD considers that the trapeze in the gym is very dangerous. Dicky Nugent fell off it the other day, and landed on top of Alonzo. Nothing dangerous in that, so long as a fellow lands on something "soft"!

MARK LINLEY deplores the fact that wrestling isn't taken up more seriously at Greyfriars. Most of us are too busy wrestling with Latin verbs to find time for the other sort of wrestling!

BOLSOVER MAJOR, whose ambition it is to become the world's champion pugilist, is advertising for a sparring partner. Applicants are requested to provide their own crutches and bandages!

WILLIAM GOSLING, our hoary and venerable porter, declares that in his youth he used to be "a hexpert gymnasium." Evidently Gossy means "gymnast." He must have been a jolly sight more agile in those days than he is now. I saw him go crawling across the Close just now, and his speed didn't exceed a hundred yards per hour!

PETER TODD has been walking about for some days past with a nose which has swollen to double its normal size. The explanation is that Billy Bunter was doing some club-swinging in the gym, and Peter happened to be standing in the danger-zone! He received a terrific clump on the nose, which quite knocked him out.



The Head's Jimmy-Nastic Class!

By
DICKY NUGENT

Another Conical Story of St. Sam's.

"NOTISS.

A special meeting of Masters will be held in the Jimmynasium to-nite, at 8 o'clock in the forenoon. I've got a jolly important announcement to make.

(Signed) I. BIRCHEMALL,
Headmaster."

The masters of St. Sam's frowned when they perozed that notiss.

"Bother the Head and his meetings!" eggscloimed Mr. Lickham. "I wanted to go to the pictures to-nite!"

"And I'm playing in a Snakes-and-ladders Tornyment!" growled Mr. Justiss. "I shall have to cansel my match now, and my opponent will think I'm funkng!"

"Donner und blitzen!" snorted the German master, Herr Otto Guggenheimer. "The Head, he vos an awful nuisance, ain't it?"

"And he can't spell for toffy!" added Mr. Chas. Tyzer, looking at the Head's announcement. "It should be 'Jim-nasium,' not 'Jimmy-nasium'! Any fool knows that! I knew it myself long ago!"

The masters felt very annoyed with the Head for spoiling their evening, but it was impossibil for them to dodge the meeting. The Head's commands were like the laws of the Swedes and Persians. They simply had to be obeyed.

Promptly at eight o'clock, therefore, the masters turned up in force in the Jimmy-nasium.

Dr. Birchmall was waiting for them. He was perched on the box-horse, swinging his long, lean legs two and fro.

"Ah! Good-evening, jentlemen!" said the Head, as the masters trooped in. "You are doubtless wondering why I summoned this meeting. The fact is, I've got a partikularly bright brane-wave. Saterdag next is Speech Day—"

"Tell us something we don't know!" growled Mr. Lickham.

The Head frowned.

"Be silent, Lickham, unless you want to go out on your neck!" he said sternly. "Saterdag next is Speech Day, and the Guvvners of the school are coming down, in accordance with time-onnered custom, to present the prizes. Now, I think it's up to us to entertain the Guvvners in some way. I want to keep in with them, you know! It's a wise pollicy."

"Quite!" said Mr. Justiss. "But surely the Guvvners get quite enuff entertainment when they come down here? There's a big bankwett in the dining-hall, and the old buffers can eat, and drink, and be merry to their hearts' contempt."

"Yes, yes!" said the Head impatiently. "But I don't mean that sort of entertainment. I think we ought to get up something extra special for the Guvvners' bennyfit. I thought, at first, that we might play a footer match against them. But General Funguss, the Chairman of the Guvvners, is in his ninety-ninth year, and he might find footer a little too strenuous. So I've had to think of something else. What do you say, jentlemen, to a Jimmy-nastic Class composed mainly of masters?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Mr. Lickham.

"Dot vos vot I call a tom-fool suggestion, ain't it?" growled Herr Guggenheimer.

The Head smiled.

"Nonsense, Guggy!" he said jentially.

"There is nothing foolish about it. Have you ever seen a jimmy-nastic pirramid, jentlemen? If so, you must admit that it is a very impressive sight. There is no reason why we shouldn't practiss a pirramid amongst ourselves. I should form the foundation of it, and a master would stand on either side of me. Two more masters would be perched on our sholders; and on the sholders of those two, another master would stand. Then, on his sholders, at the very summit of the pirramid, we would have a small boy—Midgett of the First, for example. Is that clear?"

"Clear as mud!" growled Mr. Lickham.

The Head sighed.

"For the bennyfit of Lickham, who is a person of very feeble intellect, I will describe the formation of the pirramid, or tabblo, in detale," he said. "I shall stand on the ground—"

"The safest place!" mermered Mr. Justiss.

"You, Justiss, and you, Lickham, will stand on either side of me. Herr Guggenheimer and Mr. Chas. Tyzer will ballance themselves on our sholders. On their sholders, in turn, will stand Mr. Skellington, who is only a light-weight. And on Mr. Skellington's sholders, to make the tabblo complete, will be Midgett of the First. I will send for Midgett at once, so that we can reherse the pirramid."

Young Midgett was promptly sent for, and he shivered with comprehension when he joined the masters in the Jim.

"Why, the retched boy is trembling like a leaf!" eggscloimed the Head. "Pull yourself together, Midgett! We are not going to eat you! We are forming a human tabblo, and we want you to be the pinnacle of it."

Midgett looked scared.

"B-b-but supposing I fall, sir?" he stammered. "I should hurt myself, shouldn't I?"

"Undoubtedly!" said the Head, nodding. "You would hurt yourself so badly that you would be past meddiele aid. But we would see that you had a good berrial!" added the Head soothingly.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Now we will get to bizziness!" said the Head briskly.

The masters were not at all keen on the human pirramid—especially those who would occupy the high positions.

The Head was the pivot on which the pirramid would depend; and if he failed to bear the weight of those on top, and crumpled up at the knees and collapsed, the tabblo would come crashing down like a house of cards.

"I—I think you'd better eggssense me, sir, from taking part in this stunt," said Mr. Skellington. "You see, I haven't taken out a life-insurance pollicy!"

"Cowherd!" said the Head scornfully. "Obey my orders at once, or it will be the worse for you!"

The Head flatly refused to allow anybody to back out. He had set his heart on giving the jimmy-nastic display for the bennyfit of the Guvvners, and he was in deadly Ernest.

The masters, however, were in a horribul state of blue funk. As for young Midgett, he was shaking and quaking, and shivering and quivering.

As it happened, though, the first reheral proved quite a success. Apart from one or two trifling spills, in which Mr. Skellington broke his front teeth, and Herr Guggenheimer's nose was flattened on the floor of the Jim, there were no casualties. Everything worked like a charm.

"Bravvo!" said the Head, when the reheral was over. "I feel quite proud of my Jimmy-nastic Class. It will make the



Mr. Lickham's nose was like a squashed strawberry.

Guvvners sit up and take notiss. We must praectiss this tabblo every night, and bring it to the highest pitch of perfection. It would be perfectly awful if we made a hash of things on Speech Day! Why are you caressing your jaw, Skellington?"

"Yow! I've lost my front teeth!" howled Mr. Skellington. "That tumble we had just now—"

"Oh, dry up!" said the Head irritably. "Fancy making a fuss about losing a cupple of teeth! In view of the lofty position you occupy in my tabblo, you can thank your lucky stars that you haven't snapped your spine or busted a rib or two! We'll pack up now. The next reheral will take place to-morro night at the same time."

From that time fourth everything went merrily. And when Speech Day arrived the Head was beaming all over his dial at the prospect of entertaining the Guvvners.

St. Sam's assembled in Big Hall for the presentation of the prizes, and then everybody adjerned to the Jim. The Head and the masters, and Midgett of the First, changed into swettens and shorts, and there was a harty cheer when they trooped into the Jim.

As a sort of curtain-raiser, the Head had a frendly boxing-bout with Mr. Lickham, whom he noked round and round the ring. It was a frendly scrap, but by the time it was over Mr. Lickham's feelings towards the Head were anything but pally. His nose was like a squashed strawberry, and one of his eyes had put up the shutters.

General Funguss, the Chairman of the Guvvners, looked very board while the boxing bout was in progress.

"Shivver my timbers!" he eggscloimed, in his military way of speaking. "Is this what you brought us here to see, Dr. Birchmall—a senseless display of fistycuffs?"

"Not at all!" said the Head. "That was just a preliminary canter, if I may say so. The star turn will now take place. Forward, my merry Jimnasts!"

The sooprem moment had arrived! Amid a brethless silence the members of the Head's tabblo took up their positions.

Finally, when little Midgett climbed to his dizzy eminence and stood there, perched on the sholders of Mr. Skellington, there was a loud roar of applaws, in which General Funguss joined.

The human pirramid was now complete.

"We will remain like this, perfectly motionless, for three minnits," announced the Head, who was standing with legs apart and arms outstretched, one resting on Mr. Lickham's sholder and the other on the sholder of Mr. Justiss.

The school and Guvvners looked on, spellbound.

Just before the three minnits were up a big bluebottle suddenly took it into its head to alight on the Head's nose. It did so, and the Head, although he didn't larf, was greatly tickled by the incident—or, rather, by the insect. Forgetting that any movement would be fatal, he suddenly jerked his right arm away from Mr. Lickham's sholder in order to get at the bluebottle.

Crash!

As falls the giant oak, so fell the Head's pirramid! The masters came toppling down and sprawled on top of each other, with the Head berried underneath.

Midgett of the First had the biggest drop. Fortunately, however, he broke his fall by alighting on the head of General Funguss.

The seen that followed beggard description. The Head and the masters were struggling on the floor as if they were taking part in a Rugby scrum. The general roared with anguish, and tenderly rubbed his napper. Midgett of the First was skreeking historically. You never saw such a rumpus in all your natcher!

When the members of the Head's Jimmy-nastic Class had sorted themselves out, the Head got a terribul ticking-off from the general, who called him a hair-brained loonatick and a chopheaded chump, and continued to hurl wrathful epitaffs at him for about twenty minnits.

That evening, when the Head took calling-over, his arm was in a sling, and he was on crutches, and his napper was swathed in bandages. He got no simperthy from the members of his Jimmy-nastic Class. They all agreed that it served the old buffer right!

THE END.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 927.



(Continued from page 13.)

"Well?" he snapped.

"I—I've hardly seen you since the election," said Jack Wingate.

"What about it?"

"What?" faltered Wingate minor.

"Why the d—ce should you see me?" exclaimed Loder impatiently. "What do you mean?"

Wingate minor stared at him blankly.

Loder had been remiss already, doubtless, and had seemed to forget his young friend in the Third. But this was unexpected; it was overwhelming. The prefect's curt, sharp manner was quite new, and a startling contrast to his kindness of old.

"I—I thought—" stammered the wretched fag.

"What do you mean?" snapped Loder.

"Why have you come up to me at all? I don't talk to fags in the quad."

"I—I thought you wanted to speak to me," faltered Jack Wingate, keeping back the tears of vexation with an effort. "You—you've spoken to me in the quad before, Loder."

"Have I? I don't remember. Anyhow, cut off!"

Loder made a movement to pass on. A glitter came into Jack Wingate's eyes. He admired the sportsman of the Sixth tremendously; he considered Loder a man to admire and to imitate. But he was intensely annoyed and resentful, all the same. He was not going to stand this!

"Look here, Loder—"

Loder swung back.

"What?"

"I'm going to the Cross Keys after class to-day."

"What?"

"Any message for Mr. Cobb?" asked the fag insolently.

Loder drew a deep breath.

He had expected something of this kind. A wiser fag than Jack Wingate would have taken the first hint to keep his distance, after he was done with by a fellow in Loder's position. But Gerald Loder had fully expected that the conceited, foolish fag would give some trouble. He was prepared for it. As a matter of fact, even Loder's tough conscience was a little troubled by the use he had made of the scapegrace fag. He sincerely hoped that the boy had taken no harm from those visits to the public-house, which had been a necessary part of his cunning scheme. He had resolved that, as soon as he could afford to throw the foolish fag aside, he would give him a lesson on that subject. Now was the time.

"Let's have this plain, Wingate minor," said the captain of Greyfriars in a tone of deadly quietness. "You dare ask me if I have a message for a public-house keeper?"

"You've given me messages for him before."

"If you dare say so, or even hint distantly at anything of the kind, Wingate minor, I will take you before the headmaster and report you," said Loder. "I will see that such a young rascal is not allowed to remain in this school a day longer."

"Wh-a-at?"

"You've just said you're going to the Cross Keys. I'll pass that over as silly swank. Let me ever discover that you have gone to such a place and I'll see you bunked from the school fast enough."

Jack Wingate could only blink at him.

He almost wondered whether he was dreaming. Was this Loder? Loder, of the Sixth? Loder, who had talked to him as one man of the world to another, who had helped him to "see life," who had introduced him to the sporting circle at the Cross Keys, who had been the cause of the black trouble between him and his brother? Really, it seemed to the wretched fag that he was staring at quite a different Loder.

In point of fact, it was a different Loder. Gerald Loder plotting to oust the captain of the school from his place and Gerald Loder in the enjoyment of success were two quite different personages.

"Now," said Loder in a magisterial tone, "tell me this—have you ever been to that pub, Wingate minor?"

"You know I have!" gasped Jack Wingate.

"I know nothing. You tell me you have. It may be true or false, and I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. I shall not report you to the Head."

"Report me to the Head!" gasped Jack Wingate faintly.

"I shall give you six," said Loder, slipping the cane down into his hand.

"Bend over by that tree."

"I—I—"

"Do you hear me?"

"You—you—you're not going to lick me?" stammered Jack Wingate in amazement and dismay.

"I am!"

"I—I thought we were friends—"

"You thought what?" thundered Loder.

"I—I thought we were friends!" stammered the fag. "You said—you've often said—"

"That's enough! Bend over!"

Like a fellow in a dream Jack Wingate obeyed. He hardly knew whether he was awake or not, in his utter amazement. But the strokes of the cane, were real enough. Loder laid them on with a practised hand, and he laid them on hard.

In the distance Harry Wharton & Co. had a full view of that punishment.

The Bounder grinned, and shrugged his shoulders. But Wharton's face was clouded. He could feel for the wretched, bumptious lad, whose cheeky familiarity with the sportsman of the Sixth was given so cruel a check as this.

The last stroke fell, and Loder tucked his cane under his arm again.

"Now cut!" he said.

And he walked on without troubling to bestow another glance on the hapless young scamp, whom he had fooled, and deceived, and used, and thrown aside with utter ruthlessness now that he was done with him.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

JACK WINGATE stood looking after Loder.

His face was very white, his eyes thick with unshed tears. He was cut to the very soul; the lashes of the ashplant had not cut him so deeply as the contemptuous disregard of his "friend in the Sixth."

Loder rejoined Carne, and the two prefects walked on together, lofty and unapproachable. Lesser mortals moved

out of their path. Jack Wingate stood quite still, as if rooted to the ground. He had received the severest shock of his young life.

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter rolled up and stopped to fix his eyes on the wretched fag, blinking through his big spectacles.

Bunter was immensely entertained.

The fag stared at him dully. He was too bitterly wounded and downcast to feel Bunter's mockery very much.

"Had it hot—what?" chuckled Bunter.

"He, he, he! Our friends in the Sixth don't always play up, do they? He, he, he!"

Bunter chuckled explosively.

He had had an experience something like this himself, on election day—Loder after the election had proved so very different from Loder before the election. It was quite entertaining to the Owl of the Remove to find another fellow in the same boat.

"Loder's a bit of a worm, isn't he?" grinned Bunter. "But what did you expect? A fag like you bragging about having a friend in the Sixth! Loder was bound to take it out of you as soon as he heard of it! He, he, he!"

Wingate minor did not answer.

He turned away, and limped towards the House, half blinded by the tears he was determined not to shed.

He saw Harry Wharton in a blur, as the captain of the Remove touched him, kindly enough, on the shoulder.

"Cheerio, kid!" said Harry. "Loder's a cad, and a brute! You're better without him, kid—much better. Look at it like that."

Jack Wingate passed on without replying. He was almost in a dazed state. But it came into his mind, as Wharton spoke, that he had reason to be thankful that the Remove fellow had interfered with him the other day. He had intended to stay out after lock-up, relying unquestioningly on his friend in the Sixth, now captain of Greyfriars, to see him through. He knew now exactly how much Loder would have seen him through!

He went into the House, and came on Tubb & Co., of the Third, a grinning crowd. He knew that they had seen what had passed under the elms; it seemed to him that all Greyfriars had seen his bitter humiliation. After his foolish talk in the Third Form-room, they had seen it! He remembered that, in his boastful folly, he had threatened George Tubb with "six from Loder." And now—His cheeks crimsoned with shame and misery.

Any fellow knowing what the wretched boy was feeling might have compassionated him then, and forgiven his folly. But the unreflecting fags of the Third were not disposed to be merciful.

"How's our friend in the Sixth getting on?" asked Tubb, with a roar of laughter. "Is he going to give me six?"

"Doesn't the captain of the school take his orders from you, after all, young Wingate?" asked Paget.

"Who's bending over now?" chortled Tubb.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a sudden end to a friendship!" chuckled Grant of the Third. "Tragic, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who puts on airs, and who gets six from a prefect?" yelled Tubb, in ecstasy.

"Who's sidey, and who gets taken down a peg?" shrieked Robinson II.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Wingate was glad to escape into the Form-room, and relieved when Mr. Twigg came in for third lesson.

Third lesson was, however, a torment for him.

He gave hardly any attention to his Form master, and was given lines and a rap from the pointer. He did not heed.

But he had to heed the unconcealed derision of the fags. The grinning faces of the Third were round him; even the presence of Mr. Twigg did not restrain chuckles and grins and whispers.

After class, it was obviously the intention of Tubb & Co. to find a little harmless entertainment in baiting Wingate minor; and he scuttled away when the Third were released, and dodged into the Cloisters to avoid them.

He was almost a pariah in his Form. The fags could have forgiven almost anything but "side," and "side" founded on a friendship with a man in the Sixth Form provoked their special contempt and disgust. There was not a fellow in the Third who had a kind word or look for Wingate minor now.

He had cared little, so long as Loder was his friend. The sportsman of the Sixth, and his kind patronage, had filled the wretched boy's thoughts. He had come to despise his former friends and the humble Third. Now he was thrown back on them, and he had nothing to expect from them but scorn and derision.

No doubt that would pass off; memories in school are short. In a few days, with a little tact and common-sense, he might be on his old footing in the Third, as he had been before his friend in the Sixth had taken him up. Tact and common-sense were not special gifts of Jack Wingate's; still, doubtless sooner or later he would make his peace. But for the present time his position was a bitter one.

There were scorn and mockery for him in his own Form—possibly actual ragging, too, now that it was only too clear that he had no special protection to rely upon. Outside his Form, there were Remove fellows who had been kind to him, on his brother's account if not on his own. He had repaid their kindness with insolent ingratitude, and had no more to expect. In all the great school, in a crowd and a swarm of fellows, he had no one to give him a friendly word, no one to feel compassion for him in his disastrous fall from his fancied elevation. No one, unless it was his brother—his brother, whom he had neglected, condemned, disregarded, and whose career at Greyfriars had been ruined by him.

The unhappy boy laid his burning forehead against one of the ancient stone pillars in the Cloisters, and the tears ran down his cheeks, now that he was alone and unobserved.

There was a footstep, but he did not hear it.

"Jack!"

Wingate minor started violently at the sound of his brother's voice. He spun round, turning a pale, miserable, tear-stained face to George Wingate.

"Jack! What is it?"

The fag could not speak. His brother's look and tone were kind, anxious. The harm that the reckless fag had done him did not seem to linger in George Wingate's mind; he was only concerned for his brother.

"What is it—a licking?" asked the late captain of Greyfriars, troubled and perplexed.

Jack nodded, without speaking.

"But—dash it all!" said the Sixth Former. "You're not the kid to blub over a licking. Is there something else?"

The fag nodded again, in miserable silence.

An alarmed look came over Wingate's face.

"You've not been found out?" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Great gad! Have I done it all for nothing? Is it the sack, then?"

"No, no!"

"Then what—"

"Loder!" breathed Jack Wingate.

"Was it Loder licked you?"

"Yes."

Wingate's perplexity increased.

"Loder? Then I was wrong—it was not Loder who—"

"It was!" panted the fag.

"I don't follow," said the Sixth-Former. "I asked you yesterday, was it Loder who led you into playing the fool, into going to that filthy show, the Cross Keys—"

"It was—it was!"

"But you say it was Loder licked you, now? Do you mean to say that you did as I asked you—threw it all over, and turned over a new leaf?" asked George Wingate.

"No!" said the fag bitterly. "Loder's done with me now, and he's thrown me over. He thrashed me for speaking to him."

"Oh!"

"He's done with me," said Wingate minor, with tears of rage in his eyes. "I see it all now. I know why he made me go to the place. It wasn't friendship—"

"Friendship!" said Wingate, with a stare. "Friendship between a Sixth Form man and a kid in the Third! Don't be a fool!"

The fag crimsoned.

"I—I thought—I—I was led to think— Oh, the rotter! Making a fool of me all the time! He made me break bounds; he made me get mixed up with those boozy rotters at the Cross Keys—it was Loder all the time! I know why now—I know! I know!" The words came in a passionate torrent from the fag. "He made use of me; he intended you to find out that I was there. It was a trick against you! The brute! The cunning brute!"

Wingate's face set like stone.

It was all clear to him now. Loder's scheme was unfolded before his eyes. Hitherto blind, he saw it all. The wretched fag led into offences; his brother, the captain of Greyfriars, duly apprised of it! Loder could not have foreseen that Wingate would resign, rather than protect his brother in wrongdoing as prefect and captain! But clearly he had known that Wingate would not give his brother up to punishment—he had read his character well enough for that. What Loder had expected was, that George Wingate would screen his brother in wrongdoing, while keeping on his captaincy, and Loder's next move would have been to inform the Head of that state of affairs! It was all clear now! Wingate's resignation had saved Loder the trouble of making his last move in the game, that was all.

Wingate minor was still speaking, savagely, passionately, almost wildly. The Sixth-Former did not heed him. He had no need to hear more; he knew now exactly how matters stood. He had been a plaything in Gerald Loder's hands all through—his good name, his honour and conscience, his brother's good name and lifelong prospects, had been pawns in the game. And Loder had won all along the line. He was captain of the school now, and Wingate



Left and right, right and left, Loder staggered and tottered under the attack, dizzy with the blows that rained on him. "Go it, Wingate!" yelled Bob Cherry, from the corridor. "Bravo!" (See Chapter 10.)

was down and out, and the hapless fag cast aside with contemptuous cruelty now that he had served his turn!

"George, listen to me! Is he going to get away with it like this?" The passionate fag made his voice heard at last. "Loder goes out of bounds—he goes to that pub; he made me go there! If the Head knew——"

"You young fool! Do you think he's not guarded himself?" said George Wingate bitterly. "What proof have you to give the Head?"

"I—I——" the fag stammered.

"All you can tell the Head is, that you've disgraced yourself and your school, and asked for the sack; that you've been again and again to a place strictly out of bounds; that you've done enough to be bunked a dozen times over. Are you going to tell the Head that?"

The fag was silent, with quivering lips.

"Even if you could hurt Loder, you would be sacked yourself. You deserve it; but I've thrown up the captaincy of the school to save you from it," said Wingate major. "I don't know that I shall regret it, if this lesson saves you from ruining yourself and blackening the name we both bear. Are you fed-up yet with playing the goat?" asked the late captain of Greyfriars, with bitter sarcasm.

"Yes!" breathed the fag. "I—I've had a lesson! You needn't rub it in, George, I know what a fool I've been."

"That's something," said Wingate.

"It's rotten, if Loder gets off, after what he's done," muttered the Third-former. "It's rotten! He led me on—he made a fool of me; and then turned me down and licked me!"

"Serve you right," said Wingate gruffly. "You wouldn't have been led into anything of the kind, if you hadn't been a shady young rascal."

The fag hung his head a little.

"You needn't rub it in," he repeated. "I know what a fool I've been! I—I thought—I thought that——" He broke off miserably.

Wingate relented. After all, what was the fault of the foolish, unthinking fag, compared with that of the Sixth-form man who had deceived him and made use of him. And Loder's treachery could not be brought home to him—he could not be shown up for what he was—not without betraying Jack Wingate to the punishment which doubtless he deserved—but from which his brother had given up everything to save him. Was Loder to escape unpunished, after all?

"Well, never mind, kid," said the Sixth-former, "if you've made up your mind to play the game straight from now on, that's something—you can make up for what you've done, by keeping straight after this."

"I'm going to—honour bright! Oh, I've had a sickener of it—I know I've been made a silly fool of. Loder was laughing in his sleeve at me, all the time, of course—he must have been."

"Of course, he was, you young ass!"

"The rotter! And he's won all along the line, and he keeps clear—you can't say a word, and I can't say a word, or else the Head will know what I've done, and I shall be done for here."

"Loder won't quite escape," said Wingate.

The fag looked alarmed.

"George, it's got to be kept dark—you wouldn't dream of giving me away after what you've done already to keep me from the sack——"

"No! Nothing will be said—Loder knew that, and knows it now," said Wingate bitterly. "You've nothing to fear, so long as you keep straight. Play the fool again, and you take your chance."

He walked away down the Cloisters, with his hands driven deep into his pockets, his brows darkly contracted.

Nothing could be said—he knew it, and he gritted his teeth as he realised that Loder knew that he knew it. For his brother's sake, no Greyfriars fellow must hear a word of what the plotting prefect had done.

But there were other ways.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Called to Account!

"WHARTON!"

Temple of the Fourth called out to Harry, after class that day. The captain of the Remove glanced round. He was punting about a footer with his chums before tea.

"Hallo, Temple!"

"You're wanted," said Temple, "Loder, in the prefects'-room."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Trouble already?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't see how it can be trouble," he said. "I suppose I shall have to go, anyhow."

"Tell Loder he's not to bother us now he's captain of the school," suggested Bob.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"And, tell him, if you like, to find another messenger next time he wants a fag," said Cecil Reginald Temple; "Loder seems to think that he can send Fourth-form men on messages, now he's captain. He will have to learn that he can't fag the Fourth."

And Cecil Reginald Temple walked away, evidently very much perturbed, in his personal dignity, at having been sent on a message to a Remove fellow.

Harry Wharton went into the House. He wondered what Loder wanted, but he hardly thought that it could mean trouble with the new captain of Greyfriars. So far as he was aware, he had given no offence so far.

He entered the prefect's-room; and, in that august apartment, he found Gerald Loder lounging in an armchair by the fire, with four or five other Sixth-formers around him.

All of them were smiling, as if over some joke among themselves; and Walker burst into a laugh as Wharton came in. Carne chuckled.

Wharton's face set a little.

Apparently he was the topic that caused entertainment to Loder and his friends, though why, he could not guess.

"You sent for me, Loder," he said frigidly.

Loder gave him a glance.

"Oh, yes, I've a few words to say to you, Wharton! You're captain of the Remove, I believe?"

"Yes."

"What I tell you is for your form, and you can tell the others. I'm making some changes now that I'm captain of the school. From this date, the Lower Fourth will be liable to fagging, like the Third and the Second forms."

"Will they?" said Harry.

"Yes. That's all. You can cut."

Wharton did not cut.

"It's been established a long time that the Remove don't fag," he said.

"Yes! It's high time there was a change," assented Loder. "I'm glad you can see it."

Loder's friends chuckled.

"I don't mean that," said Harry quietly. "I mean——"

"Never mind what you mean! I'm not interested in hearing your views! Shut the door after you!" said Loder.

"I had better tell you——" began Wharton again, his eyes gleaming.

"Not at all; get out!"

"The Remove will not consent to fag," said Harry unheeding. "I can speak for them as captain of the form. We shall refuse to fag."

"You will refuse to obey orders from the captain of the school, what?"

"Yes, if they infringe our rights," said Harry, without hesitation. "We know what our rights are, and we shall stand up for them."

"The kid's a lawyer," grinned Walker. "He's got it all cut and dried. We shall have to mind our eye in dealing with the Remove."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder rose lazily to his feet.

"There's a chair yonder, Wharton," he said. "Bend over it! I'll give you six for cheeking me, and as a warnin' of what's to come if you don't obey orders. Bend over!"

There was a footstep in the doorway before Wharton could answer. George Wingate strode into the prefects'-room.

Loder stared at him, as did the other prefects. Since Wingate was no longer a sharer of that rank, he had no right in that room. Once, unthinkingly, he had walked in, from force of habit; but the surprised and scornful stares of Loder & Co. had recalled him to the new position of affairs, and he had left quietly, without a word, and he had not transgressed again—till now! Now he came striding in; and Loder exchanged a grinning glance with his friends. Once more the fallen captain had put it into his power to gibe and insult, and Loder did not mean to lose the opportunity.

Wingate glanced round the room, and then came over to the group of Sixth-formers before the fire.

"What the dooce are you doing here, Wingate?" asked Loder. Wharton stood unnoticed now; the captain of Greyfriars had transferred his attention to higher game. "Get out of this room at once."

"Cheek!" said Walker.

"Thumpin' cheek!" said Carne indignantly. "You know jolly well that this room is used only by prefects, Wingate."

Wingate did not heed Carne or Walker. His eyes were fixed on Gerald Loder, with a glitter in them that made the new captain of Greyfriars feel uneasy. Some of the insolence faded out of Loder's face.

"I've come here to speak to you, Loder," said Wingate.

"You shouldn't come here unless you're sent for, as you know very well," said Loder.

"I came here because you are here, and what I have to say won't keep," said Wingate.

"It must keep! I order you to leave this room instantly," said Loder blustering.

Wingate's lip curled contemptuously.

"I shall not leave till I've done what I came in for. You are captain of Greyfriars now, Loder, and head-prefect, and I tell you, in the presence of the other prefects, that you are a scoundrel, and that you're not fit for a decent fellow to speak to."

"What?"

"A scoundrel, a rascal, unfit for any Greyfriars man to associate with!" said Wingate distinctly.

Loder's face became quite pale.

The other prefects exchanged curious glances. They were well aware that there was no love lost between the late captain of Greyfriars and the new captain. But they had not expected anything like this, and they wondered what it was all about. Only one fellow in the room guessed, and that was Harry Wharton.

"You've got the captaincy," went on Wingate. "You've got it by dirty treachery, and you know it!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Carne. "Loder was elected by the school, just as you were, Wingate. What do you mean?"

Loder breathed hard.

"Let him explain what he means," he said. "I'm not afraid of plain speaking. If I've done anything to justify what he says, let him tell all Greyfriars from the Head down to the lowest fag in the Second Form."

Wingate gave him a bitter look.

"You know why I can't do that," he said.

"Oh! You can't?" said Walker.

"No."

"Is that what you call cricket?" asked Carford major. "You come here and call Loder names, accuse him of being a scoundrel, and then say that you can't explain what he's done. I call that slandering a fellow."

Wingate flushed.

"I've got my reasons, which Loder knows well enough," he said.

"Nothing of the kind," said Loder coolly. "I know that you resigned the captaincy, and never told anybody your reason. That's all I know."

"I'm not here to bandy words with you," said Wingate, his eyes glittering. "You're safe after what you've done; you took care of that from the beginning. But for one consideration that you know perfectly well, I'd go straight to Dr. Locke and tell him the whole story, whether I could prove it or not. As matters stand, I shall say nothing; you've been too cunning for me, and you've left me only one way of punishing you, Loder! I'm going to thrash you!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wharton. He was rather glad that the captain of the school had sent for him to the prefects' room. It was worth while being "on" in this scene.

George Wingate advanced a step towards Loder as he spoke.

Loder backed away hastily. His face was white.

"Are you mad, Wingate?" he exclaimed hoarsely. "If you dare to lay a finger on me—the captain of the school—"

Wingate laughed scoffingly.

"Did you expect anything else, Loder? You knew that I should find out, sooner or later, how you had tricked me. You must have known that. Did you think that your captaincy would protect you?"

It was quite certain that Gerald Loder had thought so. He had never dreamed that Wingate, howsoever incensed, would think for a moment of laying hands on the captain of the school. Such a proceeding was utterly unheard-of. But Loder had made a mistake for once. He had been too cunning and calculating; and he had not realised that a fellow might, in his just anger, throw all discretion to the winds, as Wingate was now doing.

Wingate came forward again, and again Loder backed away. He backed round the big table.

"Keep off, you mad fool!" he panted. "You know that the captain of the

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No. 11.—Cecil Reginald Temple (of the Upper Fourth Form).



The great Cecil Reginald is captain of the Upper Fourth—a form that prides itself on being very superior to the Lower Fourth, or the Remove. It's superiority, however, is open to question, for when these rival Forms meet on the playing fields the honours usually go to Harry Wharton & Co. Temple, with all his natty ways and loftiness, is easily led by the nose; but his chums Dabney and Fry, have a sobering effect upon him. These three Fourth Formers occupy Study No. 2 in the Upper Fourth passage, and in this apartment many famous wheezes for "dishing" the Remove have been evolved—usually without success. A dandy, and given to affectation he may be, but Cecil Reginald's heart is in the right place, and he has heaps of pluck.

school is not allowed to fight, like a Lower Fourth fag!"

"You can fight or not, as you choose," answered Wingate. "In either case you are going to take a thrashing, if I can give you one."

"Keep off!" yelled Loder, as the late captain of Greyfriars rushed on him.

"Put up your hands, you ead!"

"Look here, Wingate—" shouted Walker angrily.

Wingate did not heed.

He was attacking Loder now, savagely, and the captain of Greyfriars had to put up his hands to defend himself.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

The prefects stared on blankly at the amazing scene—of two Sixth-Formers, one of them captain of the school, fighting like fags in the prefects' room. Harry Wharton watched the combat breathlessly, and there were soon plenty of other witnesses. North and Gwynne of the Sixth came hurriedly in; Potter and Greene of the Fifth stared in at the doorway; Hobson of the Shell was the next to arrive; and then, as the amazing news spread, fellows of all Forms flocked into the passage, and crammed and crowded and craned to get a view of the fight.

"Stop, you duffers!" shouted Gwynne.

"Hold on, for goodness' sake!" ex-

claimed Potter of the Fifth. "Are you fellows mad? You'll have all the school here soon."

The fighting Sixth-Formers did not heed.

Wingate was resolutely bent on punishing his enemy; and Loder required all his attention for the struggle. His face was black and bitter, and he was putting up a good fight. He would have given anything, or almost anything, to have avoided it; but now that he was fairly in for it, he did his best, and for a time he even nourished a hope that he might prove the victor. With all his faults and rascalities, Loder was no coward.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

It was a fight without gloves, and without much regard to rules; it was hammer and tongs all the time, fist to fist, blow for blow. On Wingate's side there was little attention to defence. But Wingate's deep anger and resentment, his passionate determination to make Loder suffer for his roguery, gave Loder some chances, which he did his best to improve. Again and again his blows came home, and Wingate's flushed face bore the signs of them.

The onlookers ceased to call on them to stop; it was useless. Walker and Carne debated, in hurried whispers,

whether they should intervene, and throw Wingate bodily out of the room. But Wingate's friends were there, and they were certain to interfere if Loder's pals did. Moreover, Loder's pals were not wholly displeased by what was happening—even his bosom friends had seen the unpleasant side of Gerald Loder's character since he had attained his present position. So there was no interference; on all sides the Sixth-Formers who had crowded into the room looked on; from the passage a swarm of juniors stared at the scene. But not a hand was raised to stop the struggle.

Crash!

It was Wingate who went down.

His foot had slipped, and Loder was on the chance like lightning. Wingate went down heavily on the floor, under a heavy drive.

He struggled up, with Loder attacking him, beating him down, not giving him the ghost of a chance. The on-lookers almost held their breath; it looked as if the late captain of Greyfriars must go down again, fairly knocked out; and Loder's eyes blazed with the hope of victory. Victor in that fight, conqueror of the champion athlete of Greyfriars, Loder's cup of triumph would have been full to overflowing.

But it was not to be. Under every disadvantage, Wingate struggled up again, fighting hard, and stalled off Loder till he had recovered a little. Then he came on again with a fierce attack that was not to be denied.

Right and left, left and right, and Loder staggered and tottered under the attack, dizzy with the blows that rained on him.

"Go it, Wingate!" yelled Bob Cherry from the corridor.

"Bravo!"

"Shut up, you fags!" shouted Walker. "Clear off, the lot of you! Do you hear?"

The juniors heard, but they did not heed. Wild horses would hardly have dragged them from the spot while that tremendous combat was in progress. Hardly a man at Greyfriars had ever seen a fist-fight between two of the Sixth; it was a sight that was not to be missed.

"Going!" murmured the Bouncer as Loder staggered and faltered. "Going—going—gone!"

Crash!

Loder was on his back on the floor.

He lay there, gasping, panting, one eye closed, his face spattered with crimson from nose and mouth. He had fought hard; but the fierce struggle he had put up had added to the severity of his punishment. Never had a man been so completely licked as Gerald Loder was at that moment.

Wingate stood panting, staring down at him. His face was still dark with anger; Loder was beaten, but it hardly seemed to the fellow whom he had so bitterly wronged that he was punished enough.

"Are you done?" snapped Wingate scornfully.

Loder gasped for breath.

"Yes, you rotter! I'm done. You bound, you shall pay for this—you shall pay dear for it."

"You've played a dirty trick on me, and I've thrashed you for it," said Wingate, between his teeth. "You're a scoundrel, Loder, as I said before, and as I'll say again. You've got what you asked for. Now do as you choose; I'm ready to answer for what I've done to you or anybody else."

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And Wingate swung away, turning his back on his defeated enemy, and strode out of the Prefects'-room, the awed crowd in the passage respectfully parting to make room for him.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

After the Feast, the Reckoning!

GREYFRIARS SCHOOL was fairly buzzing with the story of the fight in the Prefects'-room that afternoon.

Every fellow at Greyfriars thought of it, talked of it, commented upon it, discussed it, again and again and yet again. It was an unprecedented happening—it was amazing, it was like a thunderbolt from a blue sky. And it was bound to be followed by serious consequences, and all the fellows speculated with breathless interest upon those consequences and what they were likely to be.

The rights and wrongs of the matter could not possibly be known. The facts that were obvious were that the late captain of Greyfriars had forced a fight upon the new captain and thrashed him. His motives were variously estimated; but all agreed upon one point, and that was that George Wingate, whether justified or not, had placed himself hopelessly in the wrong.

A strict disciplinarian himself, when in power, he had thrown discipline to the winds now that his power was gone. He had always stood up severely for the rights and privileges of the prefects, and now he had attacked and thrashed the head prefect. He had been known to give a Fifth Form senior lines for lounging into the Prefects'-room. Now he had invaded that sacred apartment himself, with no more right there than any Fifth-Former, or junior for that matter. All along the line he was hopelessly in the wrong, and that was so unlike the sensible and sedate Wingate that fellows wondered and wondered what provocation he could possibly have received from Loder to drive him to such a length.

Skinner of the Remove opined that it was simply jealousy of the new man who had got his place, but that suggestion was pooh-poohed. It was something deeper than that. But what it was the school never knew. Wingate kept his own counsel.

What was going to happen next was the burning question in every Form, from the Sixth to the Second. The matter could not rest where it was.

It had to come before the Head, and it was extremely probable that the Head would expel any fellow for doing as George Wingate had done. Unless Wingate could give Dr. Locke an extremely good explanation, it was quite on the cards that he might be "bunked" from Greyfriars. That was a contingency that made the fellows catch their breath when they thought of it. Wingate—lately captain of the school and the idol of Greyfriars—bunked! It seemed impossible, and yet it was not only possible, but, in the circumstances, it was quite probable.

All Greyfriars knew that in the Sixth Form room that afternoon the Head had observed the battered state of two members of the top Form. It was known that he had inquired into the matter, that he knew that there had been a fight between the two—a startling and shocking piece of news for the Head.

After class Billy Bunter brought the news to the Remove passage that the Head had sent for Loder, and that the captain of Greyfriars was shut up in Dr. Locke's study. It was learned later that

he had sent for Gwynne, North, Walker, and Carne—doubtless for the purpose of receiving a full and circumstantial account of what had happened. The next step, apparently, was to send for Wingate, and fellows hung about the passages to watch for the late captain on his way to the judgment bar. But the Head did not send for Wingate—scouts watched the passages in vain. Wingate of the Sixth had gone to his study after class, and he remained there.

Perhaps he expected to be sent for. Doubtless he was wondering how he could possibly excuse his amazing outbreak to the headmaster. Doubtless, reflecting on what he had done, he realised its rashness, realised how it had placed him at the mercy of a ruthless enemy and rival. But he did not regret his action. In the same circumstances he would have done the same over again. Loder had driven him too hard. But though he did not regret his action in thrashing the cad of the Sixth, he realised full well how that action must appear in the eyes of the others, especially in those of Dr. Locke. There was no pardon for what he had done. Even if he told the whole story, and proved it, regardless of the consequences to his brother, the Head could not and would not have forgiven him for such a breach of all the laws of the school.

He knew it, and he knew that he was "for it." He wondered why he was not sent for, but the summons did not come. He remained in his study till evening call-over, when he went into Big Hall with the rest of Greyfriars.

In the crowded Hall every eye turned upon Wingate and Loder alternately. Both were deeply marked by the fight—marked in a way that was extremely uncommon in the Greyfriars Sixth. Loder was the more severely marked of the two. In breathless whispers the fellows told one another that the captain of Greyfriars had a black eye. Captain of Greyfriars—and a black eye! Fellows could scarcely believe their own eyes as they looked at Loder's eye!

"I say, you fellows, the Head's taking the roll!" whispered Billy Bunter excitedly.

Dr. Locke had entered with a very grave face.

There was a hush.

It was seldom that the Head took roll. That duty generally fell to a master or a prefect. But matters were not as usual that day. All the fellows guessed at once that Dr. Locke's presence was connected with the affair in the Prefects'-room.

In a quiet voice Dr. Locke called the names, and the Greyfriars fellows answered "adsum" in turn. No one was absent from that call-over. But the usual signal to dismiss was not given when the last name had been called. The Head was seen to pause. Then he called the name of Wingate.

"Wingate, step forward."

From the ranks of the Sixth the stalwart figure of George Wingate advanced. All eyes were upon him, and his face was crimson. He was only too deeply conscious of the savage marks on his face.

Loder's glance followed him, bitterly, sardonically. His enemy was to pay dearly for what he had done. There was solace in that knowledge for the bruised and battered captain of Greyfriars. Loder had been thrashed, and the thrashing had been severe. But at long last he held his old enemy in the hollow of his hand. That was a satisfaction to him.

(Continued on page 27.)

"COME AT ONCE!" These words have the dual effect of spoiling an exciting footer match and starting Ferrers Locke, the world-famous detective, on the biggest mystery case of his career!



The MYSTERY of LONE MANOR

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Larkham City v. Cardiff City!

"WELL saved!"
"Saved, there! Oh, saved!"
"Bravo, Travers!"

Again the ball went shooting for the net, swift and low and deadly. But Tom Travers, the goalkeeper of that famous First Division club, Larkham City, was there. Like lightning he was across the goalmouth and had gathered the ball. There was a rush from the opposing forwards; but the next moment Travers had doubled aside, and had sent the ball soaring out to his own forwards with a magnificent kick that brought forth a fresh demonstration of enthusiasm from the crowd.

The Larkham City forwards were away in a moment. The ball flashed down the lines, utterly bewildering the half-backs of the visiting team. A dull roar rose from the onlookers as the Larkham outside-left raced down the touch-line, the leather dancing at his nimble toes.

The back tackled, and the wing man flashed the ball to the inside-left. The shouting died to a murmur, to a complete hush.

The inside man was covered, but quick as light he got rid of the ball to Crisp, the centre-forward. Crisp darted on, only the goalie to beat now, and a moment later the tense silence was shattered with a stupendous wave of cheering, as the ball flew from the centre's foot straight and true into the top right-hand corner of the net, leaving the goalkeeper standing.

Those last few minutes had been a wonderful exhibition of football at its best, and the excited crowd was yelling itself hoarse. Despite the terrific pressure on the home goal since the start of the game, despite the fact that Cardiff City had seemed at first to be having things all their own way, the "Larks," as the home team were affectionately called, had opened the scoring! And the crowd was letting itself go.

"Great stuff!" chuckled Jack Drake, his cheery face alight with excitement. The young assistant of the famous detective, Ferrers Locke, was seated with Locke near the edge of the field—it had been impossible to get seats in the

grand-stand. "Cardiff and Larkham are showing us what football really is—eh, guv'nor?"

Ferrers Locke nodded and smiled.

"You're right, Jack! Splendid football it is! And to my mind one of the men most worth watching is that fellow Travers in goal. Amazing chap!"

"Rather, guv'nor! He's great, isn't he? Quite a young chap, too!"

The two glanced across at the figure in the white sweater between the posts of the Larks' goal. Tom Travers, though comparatively new to first-class football, was rapidly making a name for himself as one of the smartest men between the sticks. A good-looking, fair-haired youngster of nineteen, with the build of an athlete, he was already something of a local idol. Yet his friendly smile and ease of manner showed that his success had left him quite unspoiled.

The teams had lined up, facing each other across the centre line. The whistle piped, and the next moment the ball was rippling down the line of the Cardiff City forwards. Jack Drake and Ferrers Locke settled down to watch in silence—the football was too good this afternoon for any of it to be missed.

The detective and his young assistant had visited Larkham for the final stages of a case in which Locke had been collaborating with Scotland Yard. Their work was finished now, and they had dropped in to see Cardiff City play the Larks before motoring back to London. Ferrers Locke, keen sportsman that he was, had been glad of the opportunity of seeing the battle between two such famous First Division clubs, and Jack had been equally keen.

Throughout the first half excitement was kept at a high pitch. There was no further scoring; it was still one-nil when the whistle went for half-time. But the play had been brilliant, keeping the onlookers in a continued breathless suspense. And though, perhaps, most of

the play latterly had been in the Cardiff City area, the visiting team had made a number of spirited attacks which had brought out to the full all the skill and resource of the Larks' goalie, Travers. It was his name that the crowd was yelling when the half-time whistle sounded.

"Tom Travers has made a big hit," said Locke. "He—Hullo!"

As the Larkham City goalkeeper had turned towards the entrance to the dressing-room with one or two others members of the team, a youngster in uniform had appeared at the edge of the field. It was a telegraph-boy, and instantly several hundred pairs of eyes were riveted upon him, as he made straight across the turf towards Travers.

The goalkeeper had halted abruptly at sight of the boy, as though in some odd way he had sensed the fact that the telegram was for himself. He took the orange envelope as though reluctantly, and tore it open, scanning the contents. Then he nodded quietly to the youngster, who turned and retraced his steps, leaving the Larks' goalkeeper staring down at the paper sheet.

It was a small enough incident, but somehow it held Jack Drake's attention. He watched the figure in the white sweater with interest. It struck him that the Larks' trainer might have done well to intercept that telegram.

On resumption of play, Larkham City were favoured with the slight breeze that was blowing down the ground. Their supporters were in a cheery, confident mood. Judging from the first half of the play, and with the score at one-nil, it looked as though there was every hope of the home team pulling off a well-fought victory.

A ding-dong tussle was in progress in mid-field. Then Crisp, the home centre-forward, slipped the ball across to the outside-right. The wing man was promptly tackled by the opposing left-half, who neatly robbed him and passed forward. The Cardiff City inside-left got possession, and the whole line of forwards swept down the field on the offensive.

Keeping perfect line, the five forwards raced on, the ball bobbing at the feet

ANSWERS

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of the inside-left. The right-half challenged him, and the inside-left flashed the ball to his centre. But the Larkham centre-half darted forward like a streak of light and intercepted. A faint murmur of relief arose from the watching crowds.

But the attack on the Larks' goal was not to be checked so easily. The Cardiff centre-forward was on the half in a flash, and, though he failed to get possession, he forced a pass that was intercepted. Cardiff City, with the ball flashing from forward to forward, pressed on once more, beating the home halves hands down.

It was from the outside-right that the shot for goal came—a surprising shot, from a difficult angle, that should have been stopped with ease. Yet Travers failed!

How it happened, no one seemed quite to know. The young goalkeeper seemed to make scarcely any effort; but then it had looked as though the shot was so simple that there was no effort needed. The next moment the ball was lying in the net, and the Cardiff City supporters were yelling their delight. Jack Drake gave a gasp.

"Well, I'm hanged!"

"The man was asleep!" cried an exasperated spectator near them.

And suddenly from one particular corner of the onlookers came a storm of angry cries and cat-calls.

"Wake up, Travers!"

"Play football!"

"Pull up your socks, man!"

The man seated next to Jack Drake winked at the youngster and inclined his head to the corner from which the noise and yells were coming.

"The Kelly crowd," he grunted.

"They're on the war-path, ain't they?"

"The Kelly crowd?" echoed Jack, puzzled.

"That's it," the man beside him answered. "You've not been to this ground before this season, then, if you don't know about 'em. They're a gang of tough customers who come here to amuse 'emselves and make trouble. The police have got their eye on the Kelly crowd, though. Hope they get pinched!"

Travers had turned and picked the ball out of the net. Ferrers Locke was frowning in bewilderment.

"Queer he let that through!" said Locke, pulling at his pipe. "It looked as though a baby could have saved it!"

Jack nodded.

His thoughts had gone back to the interval, when that telegram had been brought out to the Larkham goalkeeper. It might mean nothing, of course. On the other hand, it might explain a good deal. If Tom Travers had had bad news, worrying news, it would explain his momentary lapse. The best player can be put off his game in those circumstances.

But whatever the cause, there was undoubtedly something wrong with Travers. Interspersed with flashes of his usual brilliance, when he saved the seemingly impossible, were periods now when he seemed to be in a dream. And at last the inevitable happened. He let through a shot which was little more than a trickle, and the Kelly crowd got busy voicing their opinions.

"Wake up, you stuffed dummy!"

"Get off the ground! Go an' play marbles!"

"Yah, you blackleg! Who's selling his side?"

The last remark brought a quick flush to Travers' face. He glanced up at the corner from which it was hurled, his eyes dark. Instantly a chorus of jibes and cat-calls came from the delighted hooligans. They thought they had got their man "rattled," and nothing could have pleased them better.

Ferrers Locke's lips tightened grimly.

"That's not the way to make a man pull himself together. More likely to do the other thing," the detective muttered.

But Travers was the butt of the Kelly crowd now, and they scarcely gave him a moment's peace. Most of the play was in the home area now, and Travers was kept busy. Clearly something had happened to put the young goalkeeper off his game, but though he made an obvious effort to pull himself together, he could do nothing to please the barrackers. Though he betrayed no further sign of hearing the taunts flung at him, it soon became clear that things were getting on his nerves. A third goal crashed past him, and at that, with only five more minutes to play, the hooligans of the Kelly crowd let themselves go with a vengeance. The man next to Jack glanced at him significantly.

"What did I tell you? There's going to be trouble."

Half a dozen or so policemen were moving with studied unconcern in the direction of the corner by the Kelly crowd. One of the hooligans flung a

heavy stick at the goal, which whizzed past Travers' head. A moment later a shower of sticks and stones went spinning out towards him.

The long blast of the whistle shrilled out, the signal of full time. And at that moment a dozen figures dropped over into the field, followed by half a dozen more. The police broke into a sudden run. Yells and shouts rang out, and a thunderous trampling on wooden seats. The Kelly crowd were out to revenge their bitter disappointment at the defeat of Larkham City.

Tom Travers, who had turned away towards the entrance to the dressing-rooms, halted in his tracks. He stood motionless, facing the roughs who were swarming over the barrier towards him with waving fists. His face bore a look of surprise more than anything else. It was as though he could scarcely grasp the facts.

In an instant Ferrers Locke was on his feet.

"Come on!" he snapped to Jack Drake, slipping his pipe into his pocket. His face was set and grim. "Come on. It's up to us!"

The next moment the detective, with the youngster at his heels, was pushing his way swiftly to the barrier. Then he vaulted nimbly over the rail, on his way to Travers' side.

Ferrers Locke Lends a Hand!

THE field was in an uproar.

There was no doubt that the hooligans of the Kelly crowd were out to give Travers a rough handling.

Already the men in blue were hitting out doggedly in an attempt to quell that ugly rush. Travers stood as in a dream, but there was a grim twist to his lips, and his fists were clenched. He was not going to run for it.

But the policemen were insufficient for the job on hand, and though they fought gamely, they were soon swept aside by the now thoroughly angry roughs of the Kelly crowd. As Locke and Jack arrived breathless at Travers' side, the shouting hooligans came running across the goal-line to surround them. Back to back the three stood with tight-clenched fists and set faces.

"Yah, blackleg!"

"Who sold his side?"

"Give 'im socks!"

A burly ruffian in a red choker hit out at Travers with a leg-of-mutton fist that would have felled an ox. But before the blow could land Ferrers Locke had lashed out with a lightning left, straight from the shoulder. The man crashed back into his friends, a shapeless bundle of clothes. Locke gave a grim chuckle.

The roughs had surrounded them, were pressing in on all sides. Jack Drake hit out fiercely at a loose-lipped face that loomed up aggressively in front of him, and the face vanished promptly. From the corner of his eye he saw Travers' fists smashing into his assailants, and Locke hitting out coolly, with a quiet science that was proving deadly against the rough-and-ready methods of the hooligans.

But they were not fighting alone now. The rest of the crowd were not content to stand by and watch that unequal contest. All the sportsmanship of the better type of onlooker was aroused. A swarm of them were pouring to the rescue, and soon a free fight was in progress that was giving the hooligans all the trouble they had been looking for.

"Give 'em beans, boys! Smash the hooligans!"

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Like lightning Travers was across the goalmouth and had gathered up the ball. There was a rush from the opposing forwards but the next moment the goalie had doubled aside and had sent the ball soaring out to his own forwards. (See page 21.)

It was Crisp, the Larkham City centre-forward, whose voice rang out cheerily above the uproar. The two teams had not been slow to rally round Travers, and together with the loyal spectators they were wading into the rowdies in fine style.

A little knot of footballers were fighting their way through to Travers, Ferrers Locke, and Jack Drake. Jack caught a glimpse of a gigantic Cardiff City player with fists going like flails, who was knocking the ruffians right and left as he surged through them like a battering-ram.

"Wade in, boys!" he was yelling.

And very soon the hooligans had had enough—more than enough. They broke and ran, and the police, darting after them, collared several whom they had marked down as ringleaders. Some of the roughs would be seeing the inside of the police-court for this afternoon's little affair.

Ferrers Locke gripped Travers' arm.

"Come on!" he muttered. "Best get out of it, Travers. They've had their lesson!"

The Larkham goalkeeper nodded silently.

"Right!" he said. He looked curiously at Locke and Jack. "I—I must thank you gentlemen for lending a hand. You were pretty prompt. But for you, I'd have been pretty roughly handled before the others came up."

"Well, we couldn't very well stand by and watch," laughed the detective.

"You bet we couldn't!" cried Jack warmly.

The other footballers were clustering round. Crisp, the centre-forward, a look of concern on his rugged face, put a hand on Travers' shoulder.

"All right, old man? They didn't land you?"

"No, thanks," answered Travers. He smiled faintly. "I—I suppose I should only have had myself to blame, anyway. We ought to have won, Crisp, oughtn't we?"

"H'm!" grunted Crisp awkwardly. "Well, lad, that's a big thing to say. I—"

He broke off, frowning. Then suddenly he shot the young goalkeeper a keen glance.

"Look here, Travers," he muttered, "it's not a thing I want to rub in—the best of us get off form at times. But—well, yes, we ought to have won. What was the matter, lad? I'd been wondering—that telegram—"

Travers' face held a quick, startled expression, Jack noticed. But the goalkeeper did not speak.

"Was it bad news?" asked Crisp bluntly, but with sympathy in his tone. "If so, I understand," he grunted. "Ought never to have got to you, that wire. I can't think—"

"Yes," interrupted Travers quietly. "It was bad news. I think it's bad news—"

"You think so?" echoed Crisp, puzzled.

"I—I can't quite explain," said Travers queerly.

He turned away, leaving the centre-forward staring after him. The young goalkeeper seemed to be walking away as though in a dream. Clearly his thoughts were elsewhere. Then suddenly he remembered Ferrers Locke, and turned again, holding out his hand.

"Thank you!" he said simply.

Locke and Jack shook his hand in turn. Travers glanced suddenly at the clock over the stand. He started.

"Jove! Fifteen minutes to get the London train!"

"You're not going to London?" cried Crisp. "But—"

"I must!" said Travers. "It—it's a matter of life and death! Fifteen minutes! And I shall have to see the manager first!"

"You've not much time, then," said Locke. "Look here, we've got a car parked outside. Can we take you off to the station? There's just a chance of catching that train then."

The goalkeeper shot him a grateful glance.

"By Jove, that's good of you!"

"Oh, rot! You'll find us waiting with the car by the main entrance."

It was not till they were in the detec-

tive's powerful car, speeding towards the railway-station, that Tom Travers learnt who his companions were. His eager pleasure was obvious. His good-looking, clean cut face had been anxious and troubled, but now his eyes gleamed suddenly.

"Ferrers Locke, the wizard-detective!" he cried. "By Jove, what a bit of luck! If you'll help me, that is—"

He paused awkwardly. "I—I don't like it. There's some queer business at the back of it."

"Queer business?" Ferrers Locke's expression altered a shade, like a war-horse at sound of the trumpet. "Queer business, eh? Well, queer business is what I revel in! Where, how, why? Give me details!"

The car was not far from the station now, but a block in the traffic forced them to a mere crawl.

"We shall never do it!" cried Travers in chagrin. And Jack watched his face curiously. What could it be, that mysterious telegraph message that had so strangely affected the Larks' goalkeeper.

There was another traffic block a hundred yards from the station. Travers grabbed his bag.

"I'll run for it!" he said. "Thanks ever so much, sir! Look here, can I write to you if I find there's anything wrong at Lone Manor? I—"

"Right—here's my card."

Jack and Locke sat and watched the running figure of Tom Travers disappear into the crowd. Jack grinned.

"I dunno where or what or why Lone Manor is," he said, "but it looks as though he jolly well expects to find something wrong, guv'nor!"

"Yes. It's tantalising, too, not to know what it means," answered Locke.

He backed the car, turning it. Suddenly Jack gripped his arm.

"Half a mo', guv'nor! He's back again! Must have missed the train!"

Travers was coming, tight-lipped, towards them.

"Missed it by the skin of my teeth!" he exclaimed. "Not another till six—"

forty. Look here, I wonder if you could spare me a few minutes, Mr. Locke? I'd like to tell you my yarn right now."

"Right," answered the detective. "Suppose we go into the Station Hotel and have some tea?"

And it was in a quiet corner of the hotel tea-room that Locke and Jack listened to Travers' strange tale.

Lone Manor, he told them, was the name of an old moated house in Kent, where lived an old miser named Adam Guelph, who was Travers' uncle. Grim and strong-willed, never parting with twopence when a penny would do, Adam Guelph had, nevertheless, taken in Tom Travers when he was left an orphan and brought him up. A queer old man with odd moods and prejudices.

"As rich as they make 'em," explained Travers. "But as soon as I was eighteen he turned me out of his house to earn my own living, with scarcely more than a few shillings in my pocket—told me that was the way to toughen me, not by letting me sponge on him. I nearly starved. Then I got into professional football. But I should have been in the gutter now, for all my uncle would have done for me.

"I won't pretend to be very affectionate towards him. Still, I'm grateful for what he has done in the past, and it was no good having a row with him. I've visited him now and then since he sent me off to fend for myself." Travers leaned forward suddenly. "And during the last twelve months I've seen a queer change in the old boy.

"Miser though he is, he's none of your shrivelled-up little beggars. Six feet in his socks, and pretty tough considering he's sixty. He's been all over the world in his time, and knows how to look after himself. But, as I say, there's been a change."

Travers' eyes were gleaming oddly.

"It was as though he were afraid! What of, goodness knows! But I felt he was afraid, scared stiff sometimes—at nights particularly. He'd start suddenly in his chair, as though listening—for what? There was a hunted look in his eyes then. I remember one night, when his face went white as death. There were beads of sweat on his forehead. He'd thought he heard footsteps creeping round the house—"

Travers broke off and drew a deep breath.

"There's an old drawbridge that spans the moat, and he had it put into working order, and now it's raised every night."

Locke drummed his fingers on the table.

"Sounds very queer," murmured the detective thoughtfully. "Did he give no hint as to what it was he feared?"

"Nothing definite. I asked him once or twice, but he shut me up like an oyster at once. But one night he asked me a rum question. Had I ever heard of—What was it? Some queer name—"

Travers paused a moment, then he nodded.

"I remember now. 'Los lobos'—those were the words, whatever they mean. I asked him that, but I couldn't get anything more out of him. 'Los lobos!' Yes, that was it."

"'Los lobos' means 'the wolves,'" said Ferrers Locke. "It is Spanish."

"The wolves!" cried Travers. "The wolves, eh?" He frowned, then shrugged his shoulders. "It's a queer puzzle, isn't it? That was the last time I saw him, and when I went I asked him bluntly if anything was wrong. He pretended to laugh at me. But something's wrong all right, for he suddenly changed his tune, and, gripping my arm with fingers that felt like bits of steel, he told me that if ever he sent for me suddenly I was to go at once!"

Travers plunged his hand into his pocket and drew out a crumpled ball of paper. Unrolling it, he spread it out on the table. Jack Drake and Ferrers Locke stared down at it eagerly. It was a telegram—the telegram Travers had received that afternoon.

And on the crumpled sheet was written:

"Come at once.—ADAM GUELPH."

"What does it all mean?" cried Travers. "I'm certain of one thing, though—that there's some danger hanging over my uncle! I must get off to Lone Manor at once—"

Ferrers Locke broke in crisply.

"I'm glad you confided in me," he said. "This looks interesting—thundering interesting! Goodness knows what's at the back of it all, but it's clear enough that something threatens your uncle—some mysterious danger we don't dream of. Imminent danger, since he's sent this urgent wire. You must go to him at once, of course—but we'll come with you. The quickest way is by road, since that train's been missed. Thank goodness we brought the car to Larkham, Jack! Come on—seconds may make all the difference!"

Less than ten minutes later the powerful car, with Ferrers Locke, Jack Drake, and Travers on board, was speeding out of the old town on its race to the South.

Whatever the mysterious danger was that threatened old Adam Guelph in the lonely moated house in Kent, Ferrers Locke, the wizard-detective, was going to lend a hand.

An Amazing Mystery!

THAT breathless journey thrilled all three, set the blood tingling in their veins. When they had a sound reason Jack and Locke were speed-merchants, if ever there were any. And as they raced on down the broad, smooth main roads, skirting London on their way, Travers gave further details of Lone Manor to his companions.

The old house was situated on the edge of the fen lands, utterly lonely, four

miles from the nearest village. Though it was big enough to keep a dozen servants employed, Adam Guelph had reduced the staff to three.

"And all menservants," put in Jack. "He's not unprotected, then, by long chalks!"

"You'd think he'd feel safe enough," agreed Travers. "But he evidently doesn't. That's what makes me so afraid. It must be something mighty unpleasant he thinks to be hanging over his head. I'm uneasy—terribly uneasy."

Dusk was falling as they passed through Rochester. So far the way had been simple enough, but Travers had to direct them now. Jack had taken over the driver's seat from Locke, and he made the powerful car fairly hum down the darkening lanes.

A cold wind was rising, cutting in from the sea over the great stretches of marshland. The road led past deep dykes, along wide stretches of desolate rush-grown fen. Jack Drake had a sudden strange sense of foreboding. Anything might happen, he felt, in a dreary waste of marshland such as this. But the car raced on, deeper and deeper into the heart of it, nearer with every moment to the lonely moated house from which Adam Guelph had sent the urgent S.O.S., as it seemed to be, to his nephew.

The car's headlamps raked the darkness, gleaming on stretches of stagnant water, casting a ghostly light far over the flat countryside ahead, with its whispering rushes and stunted trees stirring in the night wind. The moon was rising out of a bank of cloud. Suddenly Travers pointed ahead.

"Nearly there," he muttered. "You see that belt of trees? Beyond there."

They raced on through the gloom. Nearly there! What would they find awaiting them at Lone Manor, Jack wondered—had they come in time to avert that mysterious danger that they believed to hang over the old man? Or had some dark tragedy—

The trees flashed by, and suddenly Lone Manor loomed up before them, an irregular pile of stone, black against the sky.

From half a dozen windows streamed lights. Yet despite those lighted windows, the chill sense of foreboding that had taken hold of Jack, remained. The youngster shivered suddenly in the wind that cut across the road, and he glanced at Locke and Travers. Locke's face was inscrutable, but Travers' was set and tense.

Jack slipped into second gear.

"Straight on," muttered Travers. He peered ahead. "The gates seem to be open—straight through 'em, and on over the drawbridge."

The car purred on. They passed through into the black shadows of the garden, and with a curious hollow sound they rolled over the drawbridge into the flagged space before the big front door. Jack cut off the engine and brought the car to a standstill.

"Here we are, anyway," murmured Locke, as the three jumped out.

The detective's keen eyes were running over the building, staring up at the lighted windows, and along the glittering waters of the moat, sparkling in the light from the windows here and there, but with long stretches of darkness where the water lay black and still. Travers moved towards the big front door.

"I've got a key," said Travers.

The bunch of keys jangled as he inserted one in the lock. The door swung back, and a stream of light poured out upon them from the lamplit hall. He stood aside for Locke and Jack to pass

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inside, and followed them, closing the door behind him.

"Everything looks all right," he said, "doesn't it? I wonder— Hope I've not brought you here on a fool's errand after—"

He broke off, and sent a clear hail ringing through the hall. They stood waiting, but there was no answer. Travers nodded towards a hat on a peg near-by.

"That's my uncle's hat, anyway," he said, with a laugh. "So he's here all right. Uncle Adam! Hallo, there!"

Again his call died away without an answer. No answer, no sound of footsteps. Travers looked puzzled.

"Have they all gone deaf?" he muttered.

He pushed open a door on the right and walked into the lighted room beyond. It was the dining-room, and on the table were the remains of a half-finished meal.

"That's queer," said Travers. "My uncle seems to have been having grub, and knocked off in the middle. Wonder what interrupted him?"

the opposite side of the hall. The room was in darkness, deserted. Two more rooms he entered, one lighted, the other dark. Still no sign of anyone. Again he shouted; still no answer.

Jack Drake felt a tug at his nerves. There was something eerie about this great lighted house, its window streaming brilliantly out into the night, and yet not a soul to be found!

What could it all mean? There were no signs of a struggle, of violence. Yet Adam Guelph and his three servants surely would not all leave the lonely house together, of their own free will! No, there must be someone—something, perhaps, had happened to take them all into one of the distant wings, where their calls had been unheard.

"Hallo, what's that?"

It was Locke's crisp voice that cut the silence. The three had returned to the hall, and the detective was pointing to something that lay in the shadow of the bottom stair of the broad oak stairway—something that made a bright patch of colour against the dark carpet. He stepped forward and picked it up.

mournful cry of a curlew, but all else was silent as the grave. It was as though Adam Guelph and his servants had vanished off the face of the earth utterly, without trace!

Only that one clue, the mysterious Jack of Diamonds! The detective stared down at it. Even the face of Ferrers Locke was bewildered.

What strange new mystery had he come upon? How long before their arrival had the old moated house been standing there on the edge of the marshes, with its lighted windows gleaming out into the dark, with that half-finished meal upon the table within, but its occupants gone, spirited away—whither?

The Box!

"CRUMBS, gov'nor," breathed Jack Drake, "this takes the biscuit!"

In the lamp-lit hall of the old moated house the three stood staring at one another in startled bewilderment—



Tom Travers, who had turned away towards the entrance to the dressing-rooms, halted in his tracks. He stood motionless, facing the roughs who were swarming over the barrier towards him with waving fists and threatening weapons. (See Page 22.)

He went back into the hall. There was still no sign of Adam Guelph or any of the three servants. Travers rang one of the old-fashioned bells, and they could hear the distant jangle of it far away in some remote corner of the house. But no one came from the servants' quarters in answer, and Travers' face was growing startled.

"I—I don't like this!"

"Rather a chilly welcome!" smiled Locke. "People seem to have made themselves pretty scarce. What about looking through the rooms?"

"But there must be someone in!" cried Travers, in an exasperated voice. "All these lights about—that meal half-eaten in the dining-room—someone must have been in the dining-room not ten minutes back!"

"Let's have another stab at the jolly old bell!" said Jack Drake, jerking it hard. Again they heard it ring vaguely in the servants' quarters, but without reply.

"Hang it all, they are bound to be about somewhere!" muttered Travers, tight-lipped. He swung open a door on

"A playing-card!" murmured Ferrers Locke. "The Jack of Diamonds. What's it doing here?"

"But that's thundering rum!" exclaimed Travers. "My uncle never plays cards, hasn't a pack in the house!" He stared round him suspiciously, his face grim and his fists clenched. "There's something jolly queer about all this! Where is my uncle? Where are the servants? We've got to rout 'em out."

Together with Locke and the youngster, Travers searched feverishly through the big old house, from floor to floor. Cellars and attics were entered; but by then the amazing truth had become almost a certainty in their minds. The house was empty!

Back in the lighted hall the three stared at one another, and Travers' face was deathly white.

That Adam Guelph scarcely ever left the house, he knew. And never would all the servants have been out together, leaving the house deserted and empty. What could it all mean?

From somewhere out on the desolate marshes surrounding the house came the

Ferrers Locke, the detective; Jack Drake, his young assistant; and Tom Travers, the young Larkham City footballer. And in Tom Travers' eyes lay the beginnings of a terrible fear.

"So we're too late!"

Travers' hoarsely muttered words voiced the thoughts of Ferrers Locke. Whatever it was—that mysterious danger that had threatened Travers' uncle, Adam Guelph, causing the old man to send that urgent message for help to his nephew, which had brought the three of them racing down by car to this lonely house in Kent—whatever the danger had been, it must have befallen. For Lone Manor was empty!

Ferrers Locke's brows were knit.

"If only we could know!" cried the detective, in a low voice. "There's been some strange drama acted under this roof to-night! But what can have happened? No one here—neither master nor servants—yet no sign of violence, of a struggle. But the house would not be deserted like this if some-



Ferrers Locke pointed to something that lay in the shadow of the old oak stairway. He stooped and picked it up. "A playing card," he murmured. "The Jack of Diamonds! What's it doing here?" (See this page)

thing terrible had not happened, that's sure enough!"

It was a staggering mystery. To have found Adam Guelph murdered would have been terrible—but understandable. Yet they had found Lone Manor with its great windows streaming with light, with a half-finished meal laid in the dining-room—a meal that had been interrupted by—what?

From the road through the marshes the moated house had borne every sign of occupation. Nowhere had they found even a hint of foul play. Yet Lone Manor was silent as the grave, untenanted; brightly lit but empty—a house of mystery!

Ferrers Locke stared down at the object in his hand—the playing-card he had found lying on the stairs.

Would it prove to be a clue?

"Queer!" muttered Locke, turning the card in his fingers. His finger-tips ran over the brightly coloured face of that Jack of Diamonds. And suddenly he started. "Hallo! What's this?"

"What is it?" cried Jack Drake eagerly.

Locke moved nearer the lamp. Again his sensitive fingers brushed the surface of the card. When he glanced up, his eyes were gleaming.

"By Jove, Travers, this is a find! What do you make of it?"

Travers took the card and examined it closely.

"Seem to be some marks on it," he said doubtfully. "Pin-pricks—easier to feel 'em than to see 'em. But I can't make out—"

"Needle-pricks," corrected Locke. "And a very fine needle at that! They are almost invisible. To a man who was not on the look-out, they'd pass unnoticed. But there are words pricked there, Travers—two words, 'Los lobo!' Those two words you heard your uncle mention. I told you what they mean—the wolves!"

"The wolves!" whispered the young footballer. "What in blazes does all this mean, Mr. Locke?"

"That's what we've got to find out!" answered Locke grimly.

And Jack Drake, looking at the strong, tight-lipped face of the detective, did not doubt for a moment that, sooner or later, Ferrers Locke would find out! Whoever they were up against in their search for the vanished man, whoever their shadowy enemies turned out to be, however cunning and clever and unscrupulous, it would be an amazing thing, thought the youngster, if they succeeded long in baffling the wizard-detective.

Locke tossed the Jack of Diamonds upon the table where the lamp was standing.

"We must search the house again—every inch of it! No, I don't mean in the hope of finding anyone. It's clear that there's no one here. It's clues I'm

after now. We've already found one, I believe. What's the betting there aren't others, if we look long enough and well enough?"

It was eleven o'clock when Locke began his search, and it was nearly four in the morning when he had finished. But Travers was amazed to hear the hour strike; it had been strangely exhilarating to watch the famous detective and his assistant at work. And at the end of that systematic search through the big, rambling old manor, Locke knew that nothing had escaped him.

"I'm disappointed," he said, thoughtfully filling and lighting a pipe. "I had hoped to find something—some little thing that could help us—" He broke off and shrugged his strong shoulder. "But there it is—the mystery is complete! As far as the house is concerned, Travers, your uncle has vanished without trace!"

They were standing in the dining room, with that half-finished meal still upon the table—mute evidence of the startling suddenness with which that unknown drama of the night before must have taken place. Jack Drake turned to the window and dragged back the heavy curtains that hung across it.

"It's getting light over there," said the youngster, nodding towards the eastern sky, which was swiftly growing bright.

"Good!" exclaimed Locke. "We shall be able to continue our clue-hunt outside, Jack."

He turned briskly towards the door, but a sudden sharp exclamation from the youngster brought him round.

"What's up, Jack?"

Jack Drake was staring out of the window eagerly. The lower sash had been raised, and now he was pushing it higher, in order to lean out.

"Spotted something, guv'nor," explained Jack briefly, pointing downward.

Locke came up beside him, and Travers. The two stared down in the direction of the youngster's pointing finger.

Below, the dark waters of the moat washed the wall of the old house, murky and stagnant, with here and there a green trail of slime or weeds. It was something floating immediately under the window that had caught Jack's notice.

A small box, half submerged, with a carved lid showing uppermost. Locke's eyes gleamed.

"Good! This looks interesting, young'un! That box hasn't been floating long—twelve hours or so, at the very most, I should say. We'll soon have that fished out, and—"

Travers broke in excitedly.

"There's a boat round the side of the house," he said quickly. "I'll lead the way!"

(What does this mysterious box contain? What light does it throw upon the amazing disappearance of Adam Guelph? Mind you read next week's powerful instalment!)

THE WHIP HAND!

(Continued from page 20.)

Dr. Locke fixed his eyes upon Wingate. The Sixth-Former stood with downcast gaze.

"Wingate, I have taken this opportunity of referring, in the presence of the whole school, to the disgraceful occurrence in the Prefects' room to-day. Of your own accord, for reasons you did not choose to acquaint me with, you resigned both the captaincy of the school and your rank as prefect. Having done so, you had no further right to enter the Prefects' room at all. Did you enter that room without leave?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you refuse to leave, although ordered to do so by a prefect?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you force a fight upon Loder of the Sixth Form?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you admit that Loder did all in his power to avoid such an unheard-of and disgraceful struggle?"

Wingate's lip curled slightly.

"Yes, sir," he said again.

"I shall not go into the causes, if any, of the quarrel," said the Head. "You may have received provocation, or you may not; it is immaterial in either case. No provocation could justify such a breach of discipline. Even if you demonstrated to me that Loder had given you every imaginable provocation, I should still regard your conduct as I regard it

now—as absolutely indefensible and unpardonable. You understand that?"

"Yes, sir!" said Wingate in a low voice.

"In the case of almost any other Greyfriars boy there would be only one possible sentence," said the Head. "I should expel him from the school. If I spare you that extreme sentence, Wingate, it is on account of your excellent record in the past—on account of your good name all the time you have been at Greyfriars, since you were a junior boy in the Second Form. For one fault, even a fault so serious as this, I shall not expel you. I cannot forget that I have trusted you, placed great faith in you, and had great hopes of you."

"Thank you, sir," said Wingate, his voice faltering.

"On condition, therefore, that you submit yourself absolutely to the discipline you have disregarded and outraged, I shall allow you to remain in the school," said the Head. "I think that, upon reflection, you must have realised that your conduct is indefensible. If Upper Form boys placed in authority by me are to be assaulted and disregarded by others under their authority, there is an end to the discipline of the school. You long held the position of captain and head prefect, and you know this."

"I know it, sir."

"Very good. I shall therefore leave the matter to be dealt with by the whole body of prefects at a prefects' meeting," said the Head. "Loder, the captain of the school, will preside at that meeting and give the casting vote. You are as much under Loder's authority as any other member of Greyfriars in any Form, senior or junior. Whatever punishment is awarded you by the prefects, under Loder's guidance, you will submit to without question or resistance. On this condition alone can I

allow the matter to pass out of my hands. You understand me?"

Wingate drew a deep breath.

"I understand, sir."

"I require your promise that there shall be no further insubordination, no further resistance to continued authority. After what you have done I require your promise to act as any other member of this school would act as a matter of course," said the Head, with a touch of scorn.

Wingate's flush deepened.

"I'm sorry, sir, that I've lost your good opinion," he said haltingly. "I'm more sorry than I can say. Of course, I promise. If I stay at Greyfriars—if you let me stay—I expect to toe the line like any other Greyfriars fellow. That's a matter of course."

The Head's grim brow relaxed a little.

"Very good," he said. "That closes the matter, as far as I am personally concerned. You will await a summons to a prefects' meeting. You will obey that summons, and you will submit unquestioningly to the punishment inflicted by the body to which you lately belonged."

"Yes, sir!"

"Dismiss!" said the Head.

The tense, breathless silence was broken. The Greyfriars fellows crowded out of Hall.

Loder walked away with his friends, and there was grinning triumph in his battered face. Fellows gathered in crowds in the corridors to watch Wingate pass.

He did not seem to see them.

He walked with his head erect, looking neither to the right nor to the left, direct to his study, and the door closed on him,

(Continued on next page.)



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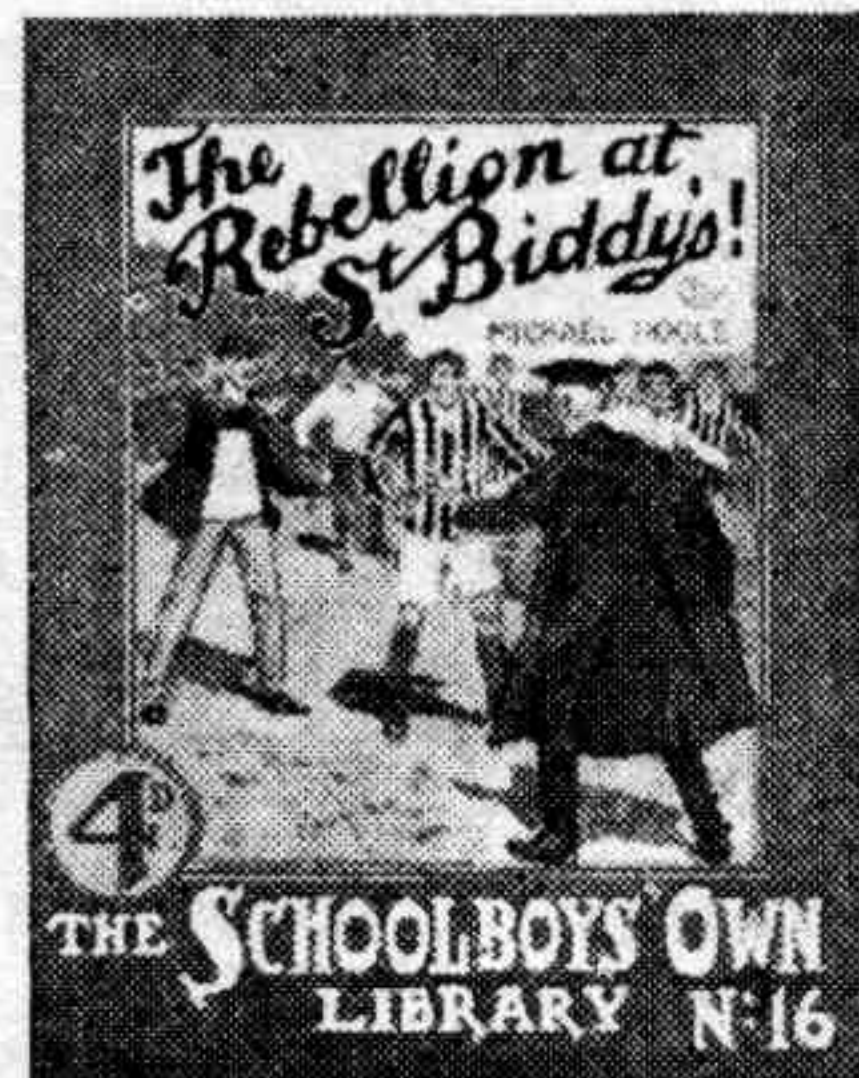
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THE WHIP HAND!*(Continued from previous page.)*

shutting him off from the curious eyes of the crowd.

"Well, that puts the tin hat on it, you fellows!" said Bob Cherry as the Famous Five moved off to their own quarters.

"It does," said Harry Wharton glumly. "Poor old Wingate! He has fairly chucked himself into Loder's claws now."

"And the awfulness will be terrific!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh gloomily.

"It will be a prefects' beating, of course," said Bob.

"Fancy Wingate—licked like a fag! Bending over in the Prefects' room, and Loder laying on the asphalt!" Bob Cherry whistled. "Do you think he will stand it?"

"I wonder!"

And all Greyfriars wondered, and per-

haps George Wingate, pacing his steps that evening with black and bitter thoughts in his troubled mind, wondered too!

THE END.

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