

"ALONZO'S PLOT!"

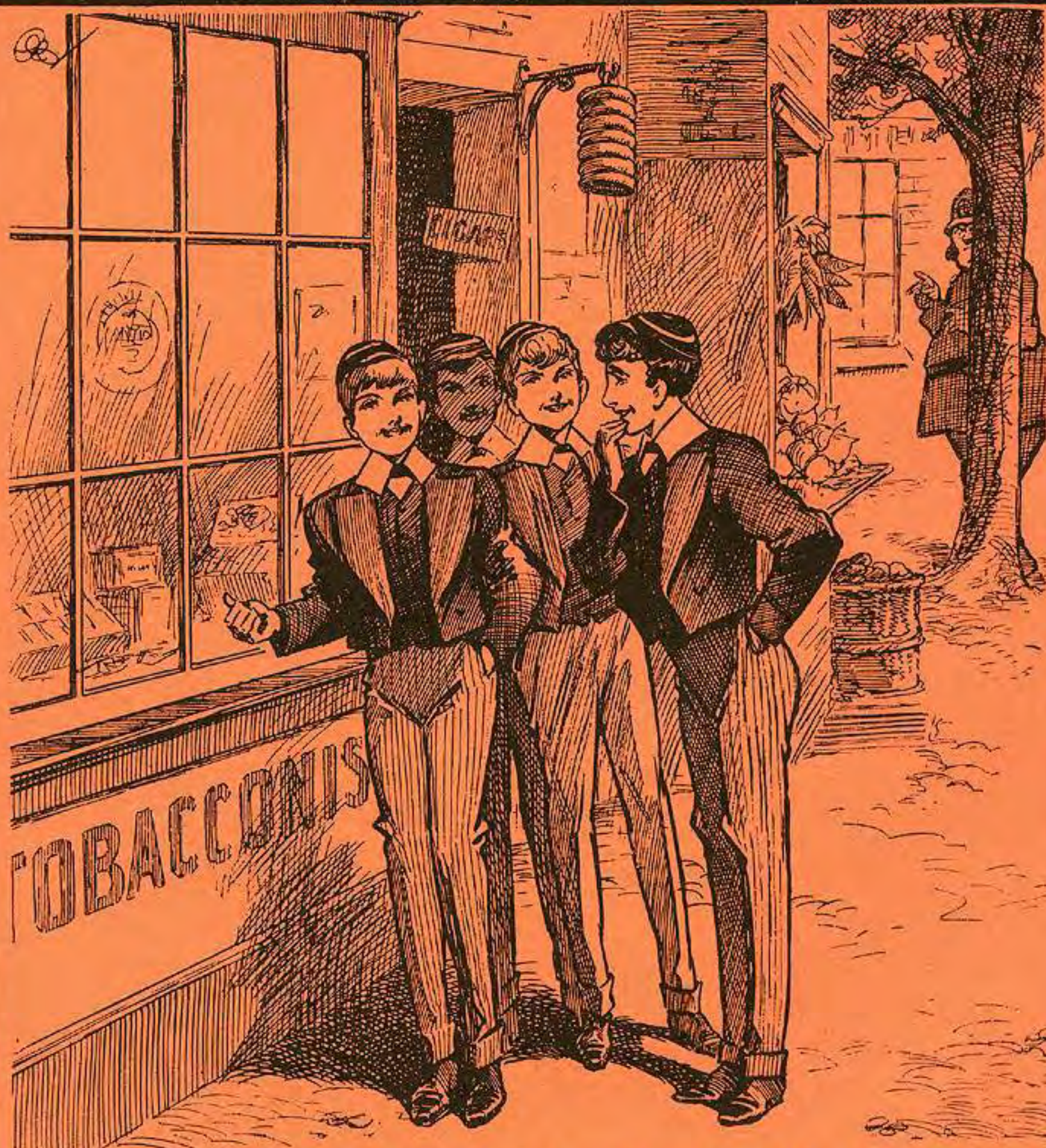
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Alonzo's Plot

A Splendid, Long, Complete
School Tale of
HARRY WHARTON & CO.
at Greyfriars.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Todd Obliges.

"FAG!"
"Fag!"
"Fag!"

Loder the prefect stood at the end of the Sixth-Form passage at Greyfriars and called, and called again. But no voice answered.

There had been a dozen juniors at least within sound of his voice when he called first. But only two or three heard

his second call. And his third passed totally unheard. The fags were not fond of fagging for Loder. His voice was quite enough to send them scuttling away out of hearing.

Loder scowled. He wanted a fag particularly just then. For the fourth time he raised his voice and shouted:

"Fag!"

Three juniors were coming downstairs from the Remove quarters, and they stopped as they heard the call.

"That's Loder's voice," remarked Harry Wharton.

"He wants a fag," said Nugent. "Do you feel inclined to fag for him?"

"Not much!"

"You, Inky?"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur, familiarly known as Inky, shook his dusky head.

"The not-muchfulness is terrific," he replied.

"Then let's get out the other way," said Nugent, grinning.

And the chums of the Remove retraced their steps. As they went towards the back stairs, they heard the angry voice of Loder once more:

"F-a-a-ag!"

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, as they passed him

in the Remove passage, "I can hear Loder yelling for a fag."

"Better go," suggested Nugent.

Bunter grunted.

"I'm jolly well not going. I've had enough of fagging for Loder; more kicks than ha'pence. One of you chaps had better go—if somebody doesn't go, he'll come up here, and most likely bring a cricket-stump with him, and——"

"Well, we're going out."

"Oh, really, you know! He's bound to come to this study first of all, you know, and if I'm alone here——"

"Well, come out, too," said Harry Wharton.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"How can I come out when I haven't finished my tea?" he demanded. "I've got some cheese toasting at this blessed minute. I—I say, you're not going?"

"Yes, we are!"

"It's not fair to——"

But the chums of the Remove were gone.

Bunter blinked after them in dismay, and listened for a repetition of the voice from the distance. Bunter was uneasy. The other fellows in No. 1 Study had finished tea, but Bunter was lingering while there was anything left, in his usual way. He was toasting cheese now, and he blinked back into the study to see how it was getting on. He could not have left that cheese uneaten for any consideration. But to remain alone in the study and face a wrathful prefect——

If it had been Carne, or Ionides, Bunter would not have cared so much. He would have locked the door of the study, and pretended not to hear any knocking. But it was impossible to lock a prefect out of the study.

"And he's bound to come here, first shot," murmured Bunter. "He's got a spite against this study. If he takes the trouble to come up at all, he'll poke his nose in here first thing. Somebody ought to go. After all, a prefect is entitled to a fag when he wants one."

But Bunter did not go himself. He evidently did not consider William George Bunter as the person who ought to go.

There was a step in the passage, and Bob Cherry came along from the end study. Bunter brightened up at once.

"Buck up, Cherry!" he exclaimed.

Bob Cherry paused, and looked at him in surprise.

"Eh?" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"Buck up! There's no time to lose!"

"What on earth is there to buck up for?" demanded Bob Cherry. "What are you driving at?"

"Loder has called four times."

"Loder?"

"Yes. Aren't you going to him—I thought you heard him calling fag, and——"

"Calling fag, is he?" said Bob Cherry, with a grin.

"Then I'm jolly well not going down that way! Thanks for the tip, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Bob Cherry turned away, and strode off in the direction Harry Wharton & Co. had taken. Bunter blinked after him in dismay.

In his eagerness to commit Bob to the tender mercies of Loder, he had over-reached himself.

"Well, really," he murmured, "that is rotten of Cherry! Somebody ought to go. Here, I say, Hazeldene, are you going down?"

Hazeldene chuckled.

"Not much! I'm going up!"

"But——"

"You'd better clear, too. Loder sounds wrathful—he may come up!"

"That's just what I was thinking, and—well, of all the rotters, to walk away while I'm talking to him!" exclaimed Billy Bunter, in disgust.

From below came an exasperated call once more:

"FAG!"

Bunter jumped as he heard it. The prefect's tone showed that he was losing patience, if he had not lost it already. Ere long he would come striding up the stairs, and then woe to the unhappy junior he found in the Remove passage.

"I shall have to buzz off, I suppose," muttered Bunter discontentedly. "It's rotten! I—I wonder if I could get anybody to go. Dutton! Dutton!"

Dutton, the deaf junior in the Remove, was coming out of his study. He had a kettle in his hand, which he was going to fill at the tap at the end of the passage. Bunter shouted to him.

"Dutton! Dutton!"

"Hallo!" said Dutton.

"Dutton! Are you going down?"

"Going to tea with Brown?" said Dutton. "Oh, no! I'm having tea alone!"

"Oh, dear! Are you going down?"

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"Yes; I saw him about a quarter of an hour ago. He was going out with Linley."

"My word! Loder wants a fag!"

"Eh?"

"Loder's calling for a fag."

"Who's in a bag?"

"Oh, I didn't say anybody was in a bag!" shrieked Bunter.

"I said Loder was calling for a fag, you duffer!"

"Well, if anybody's in a bag he's bound to suffer, I suppose," said Dutton, in wonder. "But how did he get into the bag?"

"Oh, buzz off, you chump!" gasped Bunter. "It's no good talking to you!"

"Making a stew?" said Dutton. "It smells more like toasted cheese."

He sniffed, and went on to the tap, and filled his kettle and returned to his study. Bunter did not attempt to make him hear again. He felt that he would rather have gone down himself and fagged for Loder than have tried to make Dutton understand the matter. Dutton was deaf than ever to-day, and he was always a little trying.

Bunter wrinkled his brows in thought. At the same time he was listening intently. At the first sound of Loder on the stairs he meant to scuttle away to safety, and leave his toasted cheese.

But suddenly his fat face brightened up.

"The Duffer!" he exclaimed.

Of course! It was Alonzo Todd, the Duffer of Greyfriars, whom he had thought of suddenly. He knew that Todd was in his study.

In two seconds more Bunter was in Todd's study, too. Alonzo Todd looked round with his simple, good-natured face. Todd was a fellow who would believe anything, or could be got to do anything, and there were many mischievous youths at Greyfriars who took pleasure in taking advantage of his innocence.

"Dear me, it's Bunter!" said Todd.

"Yes," said Billy Bunter. "Haven't you heard Loder?"

"Loder?"

"Yes; he's calling for a fag!"

"No; I have not heard him," said Todd, with a shake of the head. "You see, my study door has been closed until now."

"Yes, but—there he is again!"

"FAG!"

"Yes, I hear it now," said Todd, bending his head to listen. "Is that Loder?"

"Yes; and he wants a fag. You'd better cut off," said Bunter.

"I?"

"Certainly. I suppose you know that the newest boy in the Form is always expected to fag," said Bunter, inventing the rule on the spot. "It's an old-established custom in Greyfriars. I suppose you're not going to try and get out of it, are you?"

"Not at all," said Alonzo. "I should be very sorry to attempt to avoid the performance of a duty, however painful." Alonzo Todd had been brought up in a secluded way among old-fashioned people, and he had a style of English all his own, as remarkable in its way as the wonderful language of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "My uncle Benjamin has always impressed upon me to make myself useful, even when it is not, strictly speaking, my duty to do so. And if it is my duty in this case——"

"Better buck up!"

"Certainly!" Todd rose. "Where is Loder?"

"In the Sixth-Form passage."

"Very good. You are sure he wants me?"

"He'll be up here in a minute if you don't go," said Bunter.

"Dear me! I'm so sorry I did not hear him before! I will hasten at once!"

And Todd left the study. Billy Bunter grinned softly, and went back to No. 1 Study, where in a few minutes he was deep in the delights of toasted cheese, and had forgotten all about both Todd and Loder.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Sportsmen of the Sixth.

LODER, the prefect, was not a sweet-tempered youth. And if anything annoyed him more than another thing, it was to have his call for a fag disregarded. He considered it a defiance of his authority as a prefect. If he had used his authority a little better, it would never have been disregarded, but that was a matter Loder never even considered. As it happened, he was in special need of a fag just now, and so he was in a towering rage by the time Alonzo Todd came downstairs.

At the sight of the junior Loder snapped his teeth.

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By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Excuse me Toddy!" said the Remove bully, taking out his pocket-handkerchief. "I can't help it. The thought of the happiness you are going to bring about makes me c-c-c-cry." (See page 12.)

"So you've come at last," he said.

"Yes, Loder," said Todd meekly.

"Come here."

Alonzo came, and Loder's first proceeding was to fasten thumb and a finger upon his ear, and proceed to twist that member until Todd shrieked.

"Ow, ow, ow!" yelled Todd. "What do you mean? That hurts! Yow!"

"That's for not coming before, you young cad!" said Loder, releasing his ear and glowering at him wrathfully.

Todd rubbed his ear.

"But I didn't hear you before," he explained. "I didn't know you were calling till Bunter came to tell me. Ow! You have hurt my ear!"

"Well, you should have heard, then," said Loder.

"Ow!"

"Shut up that row! You're not hurt, but you'll be hurt jolly soon if you don't look out!" said Loder, scowling.

"Look here, I want you to go down to the village for me."

Todd retreated a pace.

"I trust it is not to fetch cigarettes or tobacco for you, Loder?" he said. "I have thought the matter out, and decided that I cannot, consistently with my duty, break the rules of the school. It is also very reprehensible of you, as a prefect, to tempt juniors to disregard the rules."

Loder's face was a study.

Todd had spoken without lowering his voice in the least, and anybody passing along the passages might have heard him.

Fortunately for Loder there was no one.

"You young cub!" said Loder, between his teeth. "Hold your tongue!"

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NEXT WEEK: "THE POSTAL ORDER CONSPIRACY."

"I thought I ought to make that clear to you," said Todd. "If the errand is anything else, I shall be happy to oblige you. I do not like you personally, but my Uncle Benjamin told me to be always willing to oblige people even if I did not like them."

Loder gritted his teeth. He was strongly inclined to march Todd into his study and give him, then and there, the thrashing of his life.

But he reflected that this, however satisfactory it would be, would prevent his errand to the village being done.

"Hold your tongue!" he growled, mentally promising Todd the thrashing when he returned from Friardale.

"Listen to me! You're to go to the post-office."

Todd looked relieved.

"Oh, the post-office!" he said. "Very good! I shall be pleased to go to the post-office for you, Loder."

"I'm expecting a telegram," Loder explained. "It's been addressed to me at the post-office. You're to call for it."

Todd stared at him.

"A telegram!" he repeated.

"Yes."

"At the post-office!"

"Yes, dunny!"

"But why has not the telegram been sent on here?" asked Todd. "Is it not very peculiar to have a telegram addressed to you at the post-office, Loder? It seems to me quite odd. Why not have it sent here?"

"Any more questions to ask?" said Loder, between his teeth.

Todd shook his head.

"No, I think not," he said seriously.

"Look here," said Loder, in a low, concentrated voice.

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"you will do as you are told, and not ask questions, or it will be the worse for you. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, I think I understand, Loder."

"Then go and get the telegram."

"But—"

"Bring it back to me as quickly as you can; and mind, not a word to anyone."

Todd looked astonished.

"But—"

"Get off!"

"Am I to tell no one, do you mean, that you have sent me for the telegram?"

"That's it; and mind no one sees it, either!" said Loder.

"Bring it to my study as soon as you get it, and if anyone is there, you can keep it in your pocket till I am alone. Do you understand?"

"Yes, but—"

"Buzz off, then."

"Very well, but—"

Ionides, the Greek in the Sixth Form, came out of his study, and seeing Loder at the end of the passage, came towards him. Loder made Todd an angry gesture to go, and the Duffer of Greyfriars went, very slowly, and evidently still doubtful in his mind. Ionides nodded to Loder, and stopped.

"I expected you in my study," he said.

"I've been delayed by that stupid fag," said Loder. "I was just coming."

"What about Black Prince?"

"I've been thinking about it," said Loder. "I can't quite make up my mind."

Ionides laughed, as they walked together towards his study.

"Come in and have a smoke," he said. "You'd better make up your mind, as the race is run to-day, Loder. As a matter of fact, it must be over by now."

"Oh, hardly yet, I think."

"Anyway, it's run this afternoon, and the result will be in the evening papers," said the Greek.

Loder laughed.

"We don't get the evening papers," he replied. "We sha'n't know the result till to-morrow morning."

Ionides smiled.

"But we sha'n't leave the bet too late," he remarked. "There may be ways of getting an evening paper, or even a letter."

"Hang it all, Ionides—"

The Greek shrugged his shoulders.

"My dear friend, we are both up to the ways of this wicked world, I suppose!" he exclaimed, laughing. "Come! If the bet is to be made, it must be made now. You fancy Black Prince for the Haversham Stakes, and I fancy Rory II. If you're willing to back your opinion, there's my money."

And the Greek, with a magnificent wave of the hand, dropped a ten-pound note on the table. Ionides was the richest fellow at Greyfriars, and there was a sporting set in the Sixth which did very well out of him.

Loder's eyes glistened at the sight of the fluttering, crisp tenner.

"Plank down your fiver beside that," said Ionides. "I give you two to one."

Loder hesitated.

"Come, come," said the Greek, "are you afraid to back your opinion? I give you two to one, and it's your last chance. You are sure of Black Prince, you say."

"You are equally sure of Rory II," said Loder.

"I am."

"Well, five pounds is more to me than ten is to you," said Loder. "You're rolling in money. I must make up my mind."

The Greek laughed scoffingly.

"You have not made it up yet?" he asked.

"Not quite."

Ionides replaced the bank note in his pocket. He crumpled it carelessly in as if it were waste paper and of no value.

"Then the matter is ended?" he asked.

Loder shook his head.

"Hang it, no! Give me time to think."

"How much more time do you require?" Ionides asked contemptuously. "You have been thinking about it the whole day."

"Well, as I said, five quid is a big sum to me," said Loder. "I haven't got a rich father—at all events, he doesn't shell out like yours. Look here, I'll let you know in an hour at the latest."

"The race will certainly be run by then."

"That makes no difference to us; we sha'n't know the result."

"True; but—"

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NEXT WEEK: "THE POSTAL ORDER CONSPIRACY."

"I'll stick to that," said Loder. "I can't afford to chuck down a fiver as you do. If I decide to back Black Prince, I'll let you know."

The Greek glanced at his watch.

"In an hour's time?"

"Yes."

"Good! Shall we go in to the gym?"

"If—if you like," said Loder hesitatingly. "I was thinking of doing a little work in my study."

"Ah! You are taking to swotting—eh?"

"Not exactly; but I suppose a fellow must do some work." Ionides gave him another keen look.

"Good!" he said. "I'll come and smoke in your study while you work."

Loder stared at him.

"That won't be very amusing for you," he said.

The Greek showed his white teeth in a smile. When Ionides smiled, there was always a gleam of white teeth. They were handsome teeth, and very prominent, too; and when they gleamed, the Greek had a curiously catlike look.

"On the contrary," he said. "I shall find it very amusing."

Loder shrugged his shoulders.

"All right; come, then."

They went to Loder's study. The Greek was still smiling. Loder sat down to work, and Ionides to smoke, and there was silence in the study. Once Loder stole a glance at the Greek, and met Ionides's black eyes fastened upon him. And again the Greek's teeth gleamed in a smile.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Chance for Todd.

ALONZO TODD took his cap, and left the School House slowly, with a very perplexed expression upon his face. He was indeed perplexed. The Duffer of Greyfriars was not particularly bright, and he was far from suspicious. But he could not help seeing that there was something very peculiar in Loder having a telegram addressed to him at the post-office to be called for. If it had been Wingate, or Courtney, or any of the decent fellows in the Sixth, Todd would have been reassured. But Loder, prefect as he was, was the black sheep of Greyfriars, as many of the juniors well knew. He smoked, and he was suspected of drinking; and he was not above sending fags for his supplies to the Cross Keys or the tobacconist's in Friardale. Now the mysterious telegram was to be fetched, and Todd, in spite of his simplicity, could not help feeling that there was something wrong about it. Why was he enjoined to such strict secrecy, too?

Todd was perplexed and troubled as he left the house. He was strongly against doing anything underhand or deceitful, and he was resolved that even a prefect should not force him to break the laws of the college. But—

He had undertaken to fetch the telegram now, and, after all, it might be quite innocent. He went slowly across the Close.

The trouble was, that having undertaken secrecy, he could not ask counsel of any of the fellows on the subject. He was greatly inclined to confide the matter to Harry Wharton, and get his opinion.

As he went along, with his eyes on the ground, he suddenly staggered under a powerful slap on the shoulder, and uttered a gasping ejaculation.

"Oh! Really—"

"Penny for your thoughts!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

"Really, Cherry—"

"What's the trouble?" asked Harry Wharton, who was with Bob. "You look like a blessed Atlas, with a world on your shoulders, Toddy!"

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Todd stopped.

"I am feeling somewhat disturbed in my mind," he said. "As a matter of fact, I am in a state of considerable doubt and perplexity."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Good old dictionary!" he murmured.

"Did you speak, Cherry?"

"Wonderful flow of language you have, old fellow!" said Bob.

"Might a chap ask where you picked it up?"

Alonzo beamed.

"I have tried to model my manner upon that of my Uncle Benjamin," he replied. "My Uncle Benjamin is a very estimable gentleman."

"Good old Benny!"

"Really, Cherry, that is hardly a respectful way to speak of—"

"Bravo, Ben!" said Bob.

"Really—"

"But what's the trouble?" asked Harry Wharton. "Is somebody pulling your leg again, Toddy? You look as if you had a peck of trouble all your own?"

"I am in a dubious state of mind. I have been asked to go to the village, and as I am always trying to be obliging, I am going—"

"Well, chaps have been to the village before, and lived to tell the dread tale," said Bob Cherry comfortingly.

"Pray do not jest, Cherry," said Todd. "It is a serious matter, and I really wish you would not jest so—"

"Jest so!" assented Bob. "Sorry! I mean just so. Go ahead!"

"It is a secret," said Todd. "I am being sent to the village by someone—"

"Who?"

"That's a secret!"

"What for?"

"That's a secret, too!"

"My hat! He's a regular secret merchant," said Bob Cherry.

"I should very much like to ask you fellows to advise me about it," said Todd.

"Go ahead, then; unfold the harrowing tale."

"I cannot tell you more than I have told you already."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, you know—"

"You ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "You've told us nothing so far, except that it's a secret. That's not enough to advise you upon."

"I—I suppose not. I'm so sorry I can't tell you any more."

And Todd walked on, with a shake of the head. Wharton and Bob Cherry exchanged glances, and grinned.

"Somebody's pulling his leg again," Bob remarked.

"I suppose so," assented Wharton.

Alonzo was generally in a state of being "done" by someone. That was why he was called the Duffer of Greyfriars. But if Harry Wharton had known the exact facts of the case this time, he would probably not have dismissed the matter so easily.

Alonzo walked on, still deep in thought. Bulstrode and Skinner were standing at the gate, and as they saw Todd coming along they winked at one another. Bulstrode began to speak, pretending not to have seen the Duffer of Greyfriars approaching.

"The only thing is, that Todd might do something for them," he remarked.

"Todd?" repeated Skinner, keeping his back to the approaching junior.

Alonzo started as he heard his name. He glanced quickly at the two juniors, but they did not look towards him.

"Yes," said Bulstrode, intently studying the hedge across the road as he spoke. "I think that perhaps Todd might do something. You know what a good-natured chap he is."

"Yes; and so tactful, too."

"Yes, tact is his great gift," said Bulstrode. "Where a chap like one of us would go and make some awful blunder, Todd would go straight on and make everything right."

"Just so."

"Trust Todd for that. I never met a keener or more tactful chap," said Bulstrode. "If anybody can help Mr. Quelch out of this difficulty it's Todd."

"Yes, you're right. Shall we speak to him about it?"

"Well, I don't know," said Bulstrode, in a very thoughtful sort of way. "You see, Todd doesn't trust us. He might think we were rotting."

"Well, yes, but—"

"Excuse me," said Todd, coming up. "I'm so sorry, but I could not help hearing what you were saying, Bulstrode."

The two juniors swung round, and faced him with looks of the greatest astonishment.

"Todd!" gasped Skinner.

"Todd!" said Bulstrode faintly.

"Yes, I heard—"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Bulstrode. "He knows now. I—I hope I did not mention Miss Primrose's name, Toddy?"

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"Miss Primrose—the head-mistress of Cliff House?" said Todd, in surprise.

"Yes. Did I mention her name?"

"No," said Todd.

"Thank goodness! I must be more careful, or I shall be giving away the secret," said Bulstrode, with an air of great relief. "Mr. Quelch would never forgive me, too."

"You were saying—"

"Never mind what I was saying," said Bulstrode quickly. "You overheard it by accident, and you must be as mum as—as the grave."

"Certainly," said Todd; "most decidedly! I should never dream of repeating a word. But I understood you to say that Mr. Quelch was in some difficulty. I respect our Form-master very much, and if I could help him—"

"Shall we tell him, Bulstrode?" asked Skinner.

Bulstrode shook his head.

"No," he said—"no. We must not tell even Todd, though certainly he is the only person who could help Mr. Quelch. But, no, we will not tell him."

"But, really—" began Todd.

"No!" said Bulstrode firmly. "Not a word! Come, Skinner!"

And the two Removites walked away, leaving Todd staring after them. They remained perfectly serious till they were out of his sight. Then they chuckled.

"Do you think he took the bait?" asked Skinner.

"What-ho!" grinned Bulstrode. "Hook and all! He caught on, and he'll be after us till we tell him. My hat! It will be the most gorgeous jape ever japed at Greyfriars!"

And the two young rascals chuckled.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Todd Does Not Want to Give Trouble.

TODD stood in the gateway for some minutes in a doubtful frame of mind. As he had said, he respected his Form-master very much, and if Mr. Quelch was in any difficulty, and it was a matter in which Alonzo could help, Alonzo would have been glad to help. His desire to make himself useful, according to the precepts of his estimable Uncle Benjamin, was very strong. He was greatly inclined to follow Bulstrode, and ask him further questions, but he remembered Loder's telegram, and that the prefect had enjoined him to make haste. So he went down the road towards Friardale.

It was not a long walk to the post-office. The post-office in Friardale was also a grocer's shop, a provision merchant's, and an oil and Italian warehouse, according to the sign outside. In a little place like Friardale one tradesman played many parts. The post-office department was crowded up to a dark end of the counter. Todd blinked his way there, and tapped, and the postmaster, who was also grocer, provision merchant, and oil and Italian warehouseman as aforesaid, came out of the little stuffy parlour behind the shop. Mr. Coots, the postmaster, was evidently having his tea, for a whiff of fried bacon followed him from the parlour, and hung lovingly about him as he came to attend to Todd.

"If you please—" began Todd politely.

"How many?" asked Mr. Coots.

"Eh?"

"How many?"

"Only one," said Todd, in wonder. "But—"

"Penny or ha'penny?"

"Eh?"

"Penny or ha'penny stamps?"

"Thank you so much, but I do not want any stamps," said Todd.

"Wot did you say you did for, then?" grunted Mr. Coots.

"What do you want, then?"

"A telegram, please."

"Oh!" grunted Mr. Coots, foreseeing a long delay in getting back to his tea. "There's the forms over there. Tap on the counter when you've filled it in."

And he made two steps back into his little parlour, and closed the door before the astonished Duffer of Greyfriars could reply.

"Dear me!" said Todd. "How very odd! He will not allow me to finish what I have to say."

Todd tapped on the counter. He tapped again, and again. The parlour door opened, and Mr. Coots came out, with a fresh whiff of bacon, and a smell of coffee, too.

"Well?" he demanded.

"Please—"

"Where is it?"

"What?"

"The telegram, of course!" roared Mr. Coots. "Didn't you say that you wanted to send a telegram?"

"Dear me!" said Todd. "What a curious misapprehension! No, I did not say I wanted to send a telegram, my

good sir. I have no desire at all to send a telegram. That was not my wish."

"May I make so bold as to ask what you do want, then?" said Mr. Coots, in a tone of deadly and determined patience.

"Certainly. I want a telegram—"

"What?"

"I should say that I have called for a telegram," said Todd—"a telegram which was addressed here to be called for."

"Oh, I see!" said Mr. Coots, with a grunt. "Why couldn't you say so at first?"

"Really, you did not give me an opportunity. I—"

"What's your name?"

"Todd—Alonzo Todd."

"Tain't 'ere," said Mr. Coots. "No telegram for nobody of that name."

And he stamped back into the little parlour, and closed the door with a force that made the strings of onions on the walls and the piles of firewood before the counter shake and tremble with the shock.

Todd stared in surprise.

"How very odd!" he murmured, tapping again on the counter. "I think this person is a very hasty and unreasonable man."

Tap, tap, tap!

Mr. Coots threw open the parlour door and reappeared in a state of great exasperation. It was a curious circumstance, but people generally got exasperated when they had to deal with Alonzo Todd. Todd himself had noticed it, though no explanation of the circumstance had ever occurred to him.

"So you're a-knocking again!" said Mr. Coots wrathfully.

"What do you want? Why don't you go?"

"If you please, I have called for a telegram—"

"There ain't no telegram for you. Ain't I said that before in plain English?"

"Yes, but—"

"P'raps you think I can make 'em?" said Mr. Coots sarcastically. "P'raps you think I've only got to 'old up my 'and for it to rain telegrams?"

"The telegram was not for me," explained Todd. "I have called for it for another person."

"Then why couldn't you say so—"

"You did not allow me—"

"What name?" jerked Mr. Coots.

"The name of the person for whom the telegram is sent, do you mean?"

"Yes," said Mr. Coots. "Not the name of his grandmother, or the name of his deceased wife's sister, or the name of his pet dog."

"Really—"

"What's the name?"

"Loder."

"Oh, Loder!" grunted Mr. Coots, looking over his pigeon-hole behind the counter. "Loder."

"Yes, Loder of the Sixth, sir. He has sent me for the telegram."

"Well, 'ere it is," said Mr. Coots. "It ain't been 'ere a quarter of an hour."

He handed out the telegram in an envelope.

"Thanks, so much!" said Todd. "I am sorry to have troubled you, Mr. Coots."

"Not so sorry as I am!" growled the postmaster-grocer-provision-merchant-oil-and-Italian-warehouseman. "You're so bright and clever that you must be a joy to your parents and a comfort to your uncles and aunts—I don't think! Good-afternoon!"

And Mr. Coots went back to his bacon and coffee.

Todd put the telegram in his pocket and went to the door. Then a thought struck him, and he came back to the counter.

Tap, tap, tap!

There was some delay before Mr. Coots reappeared. His fat face became a deep shade in crimson as he saw Todd standing before the wire netting at the counter.

"You?" he ejaculated.

Todd nodded pleasantly.

"Yes, it has occurred to me while I am here I may as well get some stamps," he remarked. "I shall require some this week, and it will save troubling you a second time. My Uncle Benjamin always told me to give people as little trouble as possible. I think—"

"How many?" asked Mr. Coots, in a suppressed voice.

"Let me see. I think I had better have two penny stamps and two ha'penny ones," said Todd, in a thoughtful way.

"That will be threepence."

"Threepence, please!" said Mr. Coots, jerking the stamps off the sheets and passing them out under the wire.

"Thanks, so much!"

Alonzo took out a little leather purse, and carefully deposited the stamps in it. His Uncle Benjamin had told him, among other things never to be careless with anything of value, and Alonzo never forgot a precept.

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NEXT WEEK, "THE POSTAL ORDER CONSPIRACY."

Mr. Coots watched him, fuming.

"Threepence!" he repeated, in a higher key.

"Certainly. Wait a moment, please!"

"Will you pay for them stamps or will you not pay for them stamps?" asked Mr. Coots categorically.

"Of course I intend to pay for the stamps!" said Alonzo, in surprise. "I trust you do not imagine me capable of anything dishonest, Mr. Coots?"

"Threepence!" said Mr. Coots, in a choking voice.

"Yes, you have already told me the amount. Besides, I was already aware of it," said Todd, going through his pockets.

He found a penny in one pocket, and laid it on the counter. Then he found a halfpenny in another pocket, and laid it beside the penny.

Mr. Coots watched him, looking as if all the blood in his body was being slowly pumped into his face.

"Dear me!" said Alonzo. "I am afraid I am rather short of money, and I do not seem to have any more about me. It is very unfortunate."

"Are you going to pay for them stamps?"

"I am afraid I cannot do so," said Todd, in distress.

"Would you care to trust me for three-halfpence, Mr. Coots, until Saturday?"

Mr. Coots appeared to be about to suffocate.

"Pay for them stamps, or 'and them back!" he gasped.

"Very well." Todd made another despairing search through his pockets, but nothing in the shape of money came to light. "Certainly."

He fumbled for his purse and opened it slowly, and took out the stamps, and carefully selected a penny one and a halfpenny one, tore them off, and laid them on the counter. Mr. Coots drew them in and threw them into the stamp drawer. Then he strutted back to the parlour and slammed the door.

Todd was leaving the shop, but he suddenly stopped.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "How very odd! I forgot to look in my purse itself, and I am sure I have a shilling there. Yes, indeed, here it is. I can take the stamps after all, and avoid troubling Mr. Coots again. He seems to be a very unpleasant person to cause any trouble to."

And Todd marched back to the counter and tapped.

Mr. Coots opened the parlour door.

He gasped as he saw Alonzo Todd. The Duffer of Greyfriars greeted him with a beaming smile.

Mr. Coots felt behind the counter for a stick, and came towards the part of the counter which was formed of a lid, which, being raised, gave access to the shop.

"It's all right," began Alonzo cheerily. "I have found—"

"All right, is it?" roared Mr. Coots, suddenly throwing up the flap of the counter and rushing out, brandishing the stick. "All right—eh? I'll teach you to play your little games on me, you young scoundrel! Take that!"

And the stick rang across Alonzo's jacket.

"Oh! Ow! Dear me! I—"

"And that!"

Todd gave up the idea of repurchasing the stamps, and made a rush for the door. Mr. Coots dashed after him, and got in a late cut as the Duffer of Greyfriars swept out into the street.

Then the angry postmaster-grocer-provision merchant, etc., stood in the doorway, brandishing the stick.

"You come back 'ere with any of your larks, that's all!" he roared.

Alonzo Todd did not come back, and Mr. Coots went in to finish his tea, uninterrupted by the Duffer of Greyfriars.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

P.-c. Tozer is Suspicious.

"O H, dear!" gasped Alonzo Todd, stopping at a safe distance from the post-office, and rubbing his back as well as he could reach it. "Oh, dear! The man must be mad—quite mad! He is employed by the Government to sell stamps to the public, and he has assaulted me savagely because I desired to purchase stamps. How very odd! I think there can be no doubt that the man is mad!"

"Hallo, 'ere! Wot's all this?" said a deep, majestic voice.

And P.-c. Tozer, the representative of law and order in Friardale, and the terror of small boys and unmuzzled dogs, dropped his hand majestically upon the shoulder of the Duffer of Greyfriars.

Todd stared at him.

"Really—" he began.

"I've got my heye on you," said Mr. Tozer; and, as a matter of fact, he had both his eyes on Todd as he spoke. "I've got my heye on you. You can't bamboozle P.-c. Tozer!"

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.



The angry Mr. Coots flashed through the doorway, brandishing the stick. "You come back 'ere with any of your larks, that's all!" he roared. (See Page 6.)

"Really—"
"Cigarettes—eh?" said Mr. Tozer. "Smuggling cigarettes into the school—that's your game! Under age, eh?—and buying cigarettes!"
"I have never bought any cigarettes in my life," said Alonzo indignantly. "I trust I have not the appearance of a juvenile smoker."
"And them hover!" said Mr. Tozer.
"But—"
"And them hover!"
"I have none—"
"And them hover, before I search your pockets, as I am empowered to do by the lor!" said Mr. Tozer, in his most majestic way.
"But I assure you—"
"And them hover!"
"Sir—"
"Werry well," said Mr. Tozer; "then I'll search your pockets, and—"
Todd backed away.
"As a citizen of a free country, I decline to submit to this indignity," he said. "I have to consider my personal pride. My Uncle Benjamin—"
"Come 'ere—"

But Todd did not come there. He backed away, and as the stout police-constable reached for him, he took to flight. P.-c. Tozer started in pursuit. Down the lane to Greyfriars Todd went at top speed. Todd was not an athlete, but neither was P.-c. Tozer, and the race was a hard one. Todd ran on desperately, with the burly constable pounding on his track. P.-c. Tozer was fully convinced by this time that the junior was in possession of cigarettes, and he meant to bring the truth to light. Todd was in sight of the gates

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of Greyfriars, and was being watched with great interest by a considerable number of juniors gathered there, when a sudden thought occurred to him, and he stopped.

P.-c. Tozer had almost overtaken him, and was just behind, with outstretched hand, when Todd stopped.

The result was disastrous.

Mr. Tozer, unable to stop himself in time, crashed right into Todd, and sent him spinning forward upon his face, and rolled himself in the dust.

The bump with which the burly officer came down knocked all the wind out of him, and he sat in the dust gasping, his helmet on one side of his head.

"Lummy!" gasped Mr. Tozer. "Ho, oh, oh, ho!"

Todd staggered up.

"Dear me!" he panted. "How very odd! Surely, constable, you must know that you are exceeding your rights in assaulting me in this manner!"

"Oh, oh!"

"I shall certainly complain of your conduct," said Todd, blinking at the breathless constable. "You are far exceeding your rights and duty."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Go for him, Toddy!"

Todd blinked round at the crowd of juniors, who were upon the scene in next to no time. They were enjoying the proceedings immensely.

"The constable is quite in the wrong, my dear fellows," said Todd. "I think I ought to point that out to him. I was stopping to explain that I had suddenly remembered a precept of my Uncle Benjamin—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me never to

resist constituted authority, and so I was stopping, to allow this person to search me—"

"Search you!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Yes; he has somehow got an idea into his head that I am taking cigarettes to the school," explained Todd.

"Oh, is he on that again?" exclaimed Harry, turning a scornful glance upon the constable, who was struggling to his feet now. "Why can't you get something fresh, Tozer? You've made an ass of yourself over that before."

"I'm doin' my dooty," said Mr. Tozer, gasping. "I'm goin' to search that young rascal, and the cigarettes—"

"But I haven't any," said Todd. "You are welcome to look!"

And Mr. Tozer did look. He found many odd articles in Todd's pockets, including the telegram which he looked at very curiously. The juniors saw it, too.

"So that's what you were going down to the village for, is it?" said Bob Cherry.

Todd coloured.

"Oh, dear! Yes, certainly!"

"Which your name isn't Loder!" said P.-c. Tozer crushingly. "This 'ere telegram is addressed to G. Loder."

"I was fetching it for him," said Todd. "It is very unfortunate, as he wished me to keep the matter secret. Very unfortunate indeed. However, please return me the telegram, as I have to take it to Loder. He is in a hurry for it."

"Which I ain't satisfied," said Mr. Tozer doggedly.

Wharton turned on him quickly.

"You've found no smokes on Todd!" he exclaimed.

"You've no right to touch the telegram, and you know it. Give it him back."

Mr. Tozer frowned. He was always at warfare with the juniors of Greyfriars, and there were many grievances on both sides, and on which side the balance of right or wrong rested it would be difficult to say.

"Which I saw this young rascal bolting out of the post-office, and Mr. Coots after him with a stick," he said. "It looks to me as if he's taken a telegram that didn't belong to him."

"Rats!"

"Was Coots after you, Toddy?" asked Nugent.

Alonzo nodded.

"Yes, that is true. I think he is mad—at all events, he suddenly rushed at me with a stick, for no reason whatever that I could discover."

P.-c. Tozer sniffed incredulously.

"A likely story," he sneered. "Well, if this is for Master Loder, there's no 'arm in my taking it to him, and that's wot I'm going to do."

And Mr. Tozer strode in at the gates of Greyfriars, with the telegram in his hand.

Todd blinked after him in dismay.

"Oh, dear!" he said. "This is very unfortunate. Loder particularly wanted me to keep that telegram a secret, you know."

"Why?"

"I really do not know," said Alonzo, with a shake of the head. "But he was very particular about it, I know that."

"Something shady," said Bulstrode, with a sneer.

"Very likely," said Wharton quietly. "We know Loder. Something to do with the races perhaps. Well, it can't be helped now, Toddy. And I don't see that it matters; it's Loder's own look-out."

"But Loder may be angry," said Todd uneasily. "He is very brutal when he is angry. Perhaps I had better keep out of his way."

"Ha, ha, ha! I think you had!"

And Alonzo did.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Trotter Gives the Tip.

P.-C. TOZER walked on with a majestic step to the School House, looked at curiously by all the fellows in the Close. Mr. Tozer was well known as a man who overdid his duty, and for that reason he was not popular. Nothing ever happened at Friardale; Mr. Tozer's heart was never gladden by a robbery or a murder. As it was said from of old that a certain gentleman finds work for idle hands to do, perhaps he had found work for P.-c. Tozer. A timely robbery, even of a henroost, might have saved Mr. Tozer from becoming so terrible to little boys, and from cultivating so great a grudge against the Greyfriars juniors. But the robbery did not come. Harry Wharton & Co. were not slow to repay the attentions of the constable, and so the feud had grown and waxed. When the stout officer appeared at Greyfriars, it was known that he came with some complaint; and the juniors greeted him with suppressed hisses and catcalls. But Mr. Tozer marched on

unheeding, strong and stout in the consciousness of doing his duty, and never suspecting that he was doing it too well. Trotter, the page, came to answer his ring at the bell, and Trotter stared at him with as much impertinence as he dared.

"The 'Ead's occupied now," he remarked, before the burly visitor had time to speak.

P.-c. Tozer frowned.

"None of your cheek, my lad," he said. "I've had my hey on you for a long time. I want to see Master Loder."

Trotter started. Trotter, the page, had sometimes been tipped by Loder to make certain little expeditions into the village. There were few things that went on in Greyfriars without Trotter's knowledge. Trotter knew of the whisky-bottle in Loder's locker, and the box of cigars in Ionides' study. He knew of the communications that passed between Carne of the Sixth and the landlord of the Cross Keys, and he knew of the personal acquaintance between some of the Sixth Form sportsmen and Mr. Banks, the bookmaker. Trotter knew much—too much, some thought—and he knew most of all about Loder, who was certainly the blackest sheep at Greyfriars since Carberry had been expelled. And now, as P.-c. Tozer asked for the black sheep of the Sixth, Trotter quite changed colour. He thought that Loder's sine had found him out at last.

"Master Loder!" he faltered.

"That's the name!" said Mr. Tozer.

Trotter hesitated.

"Show me to his room, please," said Mr. Tozer commandingly.

"What's he done?" whispered Trotter confidentially.

P.-c. Tozer stared.

"Eh?" he said.

"What's he done?"

"You young rogue!" said Mr. Tozer. "Don't you ask impudent questions, but you just show me in to Master Loder."

"Oh, all right!" said Trotter.

Trotter's brain worked quickly. He usually showed a visitor for a member of the Sixth to the study of the person asked for. But he did not mean to do that for Mr. Tozer. Trotter was convinced that Loder had got himself into trouble of some sort with the law, and he did not mean to deliver him into the hands of the enemy.

Loder certainly was not a pleasant fellow, and he had a cuff for the page as often as a tip. Still, he had sometimes tipped Trotter liberally, and the Buttons felt that he would not desert the prefect in the hour of need.

"This way, sir!" he said.

P.-c. Tozer followed the page with his heavy tread. Trotter showed him into a room on the ground floor, where the French-master sometimes held a class, but which was of course quite empty now, lessons being long over at Greyfriars for the day.

"Wait 'ere!" said Trotter.

"I want to see Mr. Loder."

"I'll tell him you're 'ere."

"Why can't you show me to his room?" demanded Mr. Tozer impatiently. "I ain't got any time to waste."

Trotter did not appear to hear the question. He went out of the room, and closed the door, and P.-c. Tozer gave a grunt, and sat down on a form to wait.

Trotter dashed upstairs at top speed.

He ran quickly into the Sixth Form passage, and dashed fairly into the arms of Carne, who was coming out of his study. The cad of the Sixth gasped, and clutched him.

"You young hound!" he muttered. "How dare you!"

Trotter wriggled in the Sixth-Former's grasp.

"Hold on, Master Carne!" he exclaimed. "I—I mean, leggo! Ow! It's important! It's the—— Ow! Oh! Master Loder——"

"Well, what about Loder?" asked Carne, who was boxing the page's ears.

"Ow! Leggo! The police have come for him!" gasped Trotter. "I—I'm going to warn him."

Carne staggered back in surprise.

"The police?"

"Yes, yes."

"For Loder?"

"Yes. Let me go!"

"Wait a minute," gasped Carne. "What has he done?"

"I don't know. I——"

"Cut off!" said Carne quickly.

Trotter dashed on. Carne gave a low whistle, and went into his study again, and closed the door. His face was rather pale.

"My only hat!" he murmured. "It's come to this, then." Carne had been mixed up with Loder and Ionides in more than one shady transaction, and he was not slow to imagine that Loder might have overstepped the law in some direction. "What on earth has he done? What has

he been fool enough to do? My hat! He'll go after Carberry, and no mistake! I'd better keep clear of the whole affair."

And with that loyal and friendly resolve, Carne remained in his study. Trotter, in the meantime, dashed on to Loder's study. He dashed in without waiting to knock, and gasped in an atmosphere of tobacco smoke.

Loder was sitting at his table, at work, and Ionides, the Greek, was in the armchair at the open window, smoking. The number of cigarette stumps on the floor round him and on the ash-tray at his elbow showed that the Greek was an incessant smoker. He had had a cigarette between his lips ever since he had taken up his place in Loder's study. He had remained there untiringly, for reasons of his own. Certainly he could not have found it very amusing to watch the prefect at work.

Both the seniors jumped up in alarm as Trotter dashed in. "You rascal!" almost shouted Loder, grasping the page by the shoulder and shaking him. "How dare you burst into my room like that?"

"Ow! Ow!"

"Shake the life out of him!" said the Greek, hastily throwing his cigarette away. "Shake him till his teeth rattle! Shake him!"

"Ow! Yow!"

Loder was doing it. Trotter tried to gasp out why he had come, but he could only gurgle and gasp inarticulately.

"There, you worm!" said Loder, flinging Trotter from him at last. "That'll teach you manners. Now get out!"

"Groo-ooh!"

"Out of my study!"

"Groo! Yaroo! Ow!" gurgled Trotter.

"Give him a taste of the ruler," said Ionides, with his cruel smile.

Loder picked up the ruler. Trotter backed to the doorway, trying to get his breath.

"Don't!" he gasped. "Don't, Master Loder! I—I came here to warn you."

"What?"

"The—the police—"

"What are you babbling about?" asked Loder, in surprise.

"The—the police. They've come for you. I came to warn you," gasped Trotter reproachfully, "and—and this is how—"

"What are you driving at, you fool?" said Loder. But Ionides uttered a low exclamation of alarm, and closed the study door quickly.

"Let him speak, Loder," he said. "This is serious. Now, then, Trotter, explain yourself."

"Tozer, the policeman, has come for Loder!" panted Trotter. "I've left him in the French master's room while I came to warn you."

Loder changed colour.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "Nonsense! What could he want with me?"

"He said—"

"He said he wanted Loder?" asked Ionides.

"Yes," gasped Trotter.

"It's all rot," said Loder. "I've nothing to be afraid of."

"Are you sure?" said the Greek, in a low voice. "Is there nothing—nothing just over the line, you know?"

Loder made an impatient gesture.

"Nothing, of course!"

"Then what can Tozer want?"

There was a tap at the door. Trotter gave a gasp of fright.

"That's him! He's come up."

"Come in!" called out Loder, and in spite of himself his voice was unsteady.

More than one evil deed he had done, but none, he believed, that placed him within the pale of the law, or near it. Yet an uneasy conscience would not be denied, and he shivered internally at the knowledge that a policeman was seeking him.

The door opened, and the burly form of P.-c. Tozer presented itself. Skinner, of the Remove, was just behind him, grinning.

"Master Loder?" said P.-c. Tozer.

"I'm Loder," said the prefect.

And his voice almost died as he spoke.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Close Chum.

LODER stepped back, half unconsciously placing the table between himself and the policeman.

P.-c. Tozer stepped heavily into the study. He cast a severe glance upon Trotter, who seemed to be trying to flatten himself against the wall.

"I asked to see you, sir," said Mr. Tozer. "That young person took me into a class-room, and left me there."

"I—I—" stammered Trotter.

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NEXT WEEK: "THE POSTAL ORDER CONSPIRACY."

EVERY TUESDAY, The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

"This young gentleman kindly showed me up," said Mr. Tozer, with a nod towards Skinner.

"I found Mr. Tozer in the passage," said Skinner blandly. "He told me he wanted you, Loder, so I showed him up."

Loder snapped his teeth. Mr. Tozer's manner reassured him, and he saw that Trotter had jumped to a wrong conclusion. Skinner had evidently jumped to the same conclusion, and he had equally evidently shown the policeman up to Loder's study with great relish. Loder gave him a dark look.

"Sit down, Mr. Tozer!" Loder said. "You can go, Skinner. And you too, Trotter, you young fool. Get out!"

Trotter left, very crestfallen. He had taken a lot of trouble for Loder's sake, and put up with some ill-usage, but it was evidently of no use to expect thanks from a fellow like Loder.

"Shut the door, Ionides, will you?"

Ionides closed the door.

"You want to see me, Tozer?" said Loder.

"Yes, Master Loder."

"Well, go ahead. What is it?"

"I 'ad occasion to stop a boy belonging to this school," said Mr. Tozer. "I 'ad found 'im frequentin' the neighbourhood of a tobacconist's before, and I suspected him—"

"Was it Wharton?" asked Loder eagerly. Glad enough would the prefect have been to make up a case against the junior he disliked bitterly.

Mr. Tozer shook his head.

"No; I think his name was Todd."

Loder started.

"Todd!"

"Yes. I searched him for cigarettes," said Mr. Tozer. "That was my dooty. I didn't find anything of that sort, but I found something belonging to you, Master Loder, and I thought I'd better bring it to you myself."

Loder changed colour.

He knew that the policeman could only allude to the telegram.

"Just a minute!" he exclaimed. "Ionides, old man, I must ask you to excuse me."

The Greek nodded, and left the study. Loder breathed more freely as soon as the door had closed behind him.

"Now, what is it?" said Loder.

P.-c. Tozer looked surprised. He did not see why Ionides should have been dismissed before the telegram was produced. He was already groping in his pocket for it.

"There it is, Master Loder," he said, laying the buff envelope on the table.

"Oh, is that all?" said Loder indifferently. "I thought from your manner that it was something important—something that I should have to look into as a prefect."

"I—I thought—"

"I sent the boy to fetch the telegram," said Loder. "I had it addressed to me at the post-office, as—as—" He tried to think of an explanation. He was not bound to give one to Mr. Tozer, certainly; but he knew that the constable would be curious, and he did not want to start him speculating upon the matter. "As—as it's cheaper, you know. It's a shorter address—Loder, Post-office, Friar-dale—than— You see?"

Mr. Tozer did not see, but he nodded.

"Thanks for taking so much trouble, though," said Loder, pressing a shilling into the constable's hand.

"Not at all!" said Mr. Tozer. "Always happy to oblige you, Master Loder."

And he left the study with his heavy step.

As soon as the door closed behind him, the agreeable smile left Loder's face, and a look of angry spite and scorn replaced it.

"The fool!" muttered the prefect. "The meddling fool! He may have spoiled it all, the meddling fool!"

He took up the telegram. He was about to slit it open, when Ionides came in, without knocking. Loder had just time to thrust the telegram into his pocket. Ionides did not see the telegram, but he saw the action. Loder drew out his cigarette-case with the same movement, to disarm suspicion, and proceeded to select a cigarette with a hand that shook in spite of himself.

Ionides looked at him curiously.

"Well?" he said.

"Well," said Loder.

"What did the man want?"

"Oh, only his silly meddling!" said Loder, throwing

ANSWERS

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away the match, after lighting the cigarette very clumsily.

"He suspected Todd of—of fetching in cigarettes, and—"

"But he said he found nothing of the sort on him?"

"No, he didn't find any, and—"

"He said he found something belonging to you?"

"Ex-exactly."

"Well, what was it?" asked Ionides, in surprise. "What are you keeping it a secret for? What's all the mystery about?"

"There isn't any mystery," said Loder, as easily as he could. "As a matter of fact, the fellow found a—a letter I had given Todd to post. As it was addressed to my—my father, he thought it belonged to me, from the name, you see, and he took it away from Todd and brought it in. Of course, he knew very well that it was all right, and he only wanted to make himself officious and get a tip."

"Oh, I see! I don't see that it was necessary to get me out of the room for that," said Ionides.

"Well, I didn't know what he was going to say," said Loder, with an appearance of great frankness. "After what that fool Trotter said, I didn't know what might happen."

Ionides chuckled.

"You mean you thought something or other had been found out, and you were in a blue funk, and didn't know what you were doing," he suggested.

"Well, put it that way if you like," said Loder.

"Finished your work?" asked Ionides.

"Not quite. I don't want to detain you, though."

Ionides laughed.

"Oh, you're not detaining me. I'll stay with you; I'm fond of your company."

Loder muttered something.

"Oh, I won't interrupt your work," said the Greek. "I can smoke here without talking. You can get on."

"I don't know that I shall do any more," said Loder.

"May as well get out for a breather."

"Certainly."

"Are you coming?" said Loder ungraciously.

"Oh, yes, I'll come with you!" They left the study together, Loder very silent, and the Greek smiling in his cat-like way. "I find your company awfully interesting to-day, Loder, my friend."

Loder did not reply.

"By the way, have you decided about Black Prince, or have you been putting all your thought into your work?" asked Ionides.

"I haven't decided yet."

"Time's nearly up."

"Oh, hang it!" said Loder. "I suppose it doesn't matter to you when I make up my mind, does it, so long as it's in time?"

Ionides laughed.

"No. Only you must make it up before you know the result of the race."

Loder started.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"You know what I mean."

"I don't!" said Loder angrily. "Explain yourself. What are you driving at?"

The Greek's teeth gleamed again, as he shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, the race is run by now," he said. "The result is known at Haversham already, whether Black Prince has won or not."

"It's not known here, and that's all that concerns us."

"It might be known here by a letter to-night, or by a telegram," said Ionides, with a grin. "And then the bet would be very safe."

Loder turned crimson.

"So you suspect me—"

Ionides shrugged his shoulders again.

"No, no theatrical words!" he exclaimed. "I suppose we both know the world. You are going to back Black Prince, yet you put off the backing unaccountably. Very well! If you receive a letter or a telegram, you will open it in my presence, and let me see it, or the bet will not be made. There is such a thing as wiring the result of a race, you know, for a bet then to be made upon a certainty. Have you never heard of it?"

Loder turned white.

"I have heard of such things," he said. "But you dare not suspect me—"

Ionides's teeth gleamed.

"In matters of this sort, my dear fellow, I suspect everybody. I trust no one. If you had made the bet before the race was run, you would be above suspicion. Why have you left it?"

"Because a fiver means a lot to me. I can't decide, that's all."

"Very good. I believe you, only I remain with you all the same."

Loder turned white.

"I have heard of such things," he said. "But you dare not suspect me—"

Ionides's teeth gleamed.

"In matters of this sort, my dear fellow, I suspect everybody. I trust no one. If you had made the bet before the race was run, you would be above suspicion. Why have you left it?"

"Because a fiver means a lot to me. I can't decide, that's all."

"Very good. I believe you, only I remain with you all the same."

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the time, and if you receive a telegram or an express letter which I do not see, the bet is off."

"You suspect me—"

"Don't let us go over that again," said Ionides. "Talk of something else. I do not mean to throw my ten pounds away, if that is what you mean."

Loder bit his lip—and the two friends—such friends!—walked on in silence. The telegram, at which he had not yet looked—the telegram, still unopened, was still in Loder's pocket, and rustled under his hand as he walked.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

No. 1 Study Have a Little Scheme.

"HAVE you seen Bulstrode?"

Alonzo Todd tapped Harry Wharton on the arm as he asked the question. Wharton was going in from the cricket field, with his bat under his arm, and a healthy flush in his cheeks. He stopped.

"Bulstrode! Yes. He's with Skinner, in the gym., I think."

"Thanks, so much!"

Todd hurried off towards the gymnasium, and Wharton looked after him with a puzzled expression.

"Some new wheeze on, I suppose," he remarked. "What a duffer that fellow is! Somebody is pulling his leg again!"

"Wharton!"

It was the voice of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. He was looking out of his study door as Wharton came into the School House. Harry turned towards him cheerfully enough. He was not in Mr. Quelch's black books, that he knew of.

"Yes, sir!" he said.

"Come in to my study, Wharton."

"Certainly, sir!"

The captain of the Remove stepped into the study. There was a shade upon Mr. Quelch's face.

"I hear that a boy belonging to the Remove has been stopped by Mr. Tozer," he said. "This is not the first time it has happened. Do you know which boy it was?"

"Todd, sir," said Harry.

"Oh, Todd! He was suspected, I suppose, of being in possession of tobacco?"

"Yes, sir; but it was all right," said Harry eagerly.

"He had nothing of the sort about him, sir. Tozer looked."

"Very good. Mr. Tozer appears to be very zealous on this subject just now," Mr. Quelch said. "I know that such things as sending fags for smokes have happened, Wharton; and I must say that it is your duty as captain of the Remove to keep your eyes open on the subject."

Wharton was silent. He could have told Mr. Quelch a good many things of the little ways of Loder and Carne and their cronies. But he would have been branded as a sneak if he had done so. His duty as Form-captain stopped short of that.

"But it seems that Mr. Tozer came in to see the Head, after all," said Mr. Quelch. "You are aware, of course, that it is very unpleasant for me to have this sort of thing happening to boys in my Form."

"He didn't see the Head, sir," explained Wharton. "He came in to see Loder."

"Loder! Why?"

"Todd had something he was fetching for Loder, and Mr. Tozer brought it in," said Harry. "He pretended to think—ahem!—I mean he said he thought perhaps Todd had stolen it."

"What was it?"

"A telegram, sir."

"A telegram for Loder?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did Todd come to be bringing it in, instead of the telegraph-boy?" asked the Remove-master, in surprise.

"I—I think he had fetched it from the post-office, sir."

"In that case the telegram was addressed to the post-office for Loder?"

"I don't know, sir."

Mr. Quelch gave him a sharp glance.

"Very well, Wharton, that will do. I hope you will in future do your best to avoid Mr. Tozer, and especially to give him no excuse—ahem, I mean reason—for complaining to the Head. You may go."

And Wharton went.

Outside the study he frowned. It was too hard that Mr. Tozer's zeal should cause trouble like this. A desire for retaliation was growing up in Wharton's breast. He was thinking, too, about the telegram. It was certainly curious that Loder should have had it addressed to him at the post-office, as he had evidently done; and it was clear that Mr. Quelch was suspicious about it in some way. His compressed lips and glinting eyes had shown Wharton very

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clearly that he meant to make some inquiry about that telegram.

Harry Wharton went up to his study. It was getting dark, and he struck a match as he went in, and lighted the gas. A snore came from the armchair; Billy Bunter was curled up there asleep.

"Hallo, Bunter!" said Harry, throwing his bat into a corner.

The crash of the falling bat awoke the fat junior. He started up in the chair, blinking and rubbing his eyes, and then adjusted his big spectacles.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I've been asleep! Is the post in yet?"

"Not yet."

"Ah! I'm sincerely sorry for that! I'm expecting a postal-order by to-night's post," said Bunter, getting up. "Could you lend me five shillings for an hour or so, and take the postal-order when it comes?"

"No fear!"

"I could make a bob do," said Bunter. "I've woke up hungry. It may have a serious effect on my constitution if I go about hungry. I've got the kind of constitution that needs keeping up with continual nourishment."

"You've had your tea, porpoise."

"Oh, really—"

Nugent and Hurree Singh came into the study, with their bats. Both of them were looking a little excited.

"Heard the news?" said Nugent.

"No," answered Harry, while Billy Bunter pricked up his ears. "What is it?"

"About Loder?"

"Loder! No."

"I suppose it's all rot," said Frank. "But some of the fellows are saying it—they say they had it from Skinner, some of them—and some say it came from young Trotter. They're gassing about Loder being arrested for debt or something."

"Loder arrested!"

"That's it! It seems pretty certain that Tozer went in to see him," said Nugent. "But he certainly isn't arrested, for I just saw him walking in the Close with Ionides, the other cad. Snoop says he thinks Loder bribed Tozer to give him a chance. He says he gave him ten shillings, but he can't explain how he knows."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton.

"Hallo! What's the joke?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cut the cackle!" said Nugent. "What is it?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I know why Tozer went in to see Loder—he found a telegram for Loder in Todd's pocket when he was searching him for smokes. He took it to Loder himself."

Nugent gave a snort of disgust.

"My hat! Is that the whole story?"

"I believe so. A good many of the fellows saw him take the telegram from Todd—I among the number; Bob was there, too, and Bulstrode."

"Well, I said it was all moonshine, didn't I, Inky?" said Nugent.

"The saidfulness was terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "My honourable chum made the esteemed remark that he was not surprised that Loder had been caught at last."

Wharton laughed, and Nugent reddened. Hurree Singh's words hardly bore out his claim to have scouted the story all along.

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, his round eyes glistening behind his spectacles. "There may be something in it, you know. We all know what Loder is."

"There's nothing in it," said Wharton.

"There might be," said Bunter. "I'm jolly well going to look into it. I—"

"What business is it of yours, anyway?"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I suppose we're all called upon to stand up for the—the honour of the school, and—and its reputation, you know, and—and that sort of thing."

"You inquisitive young bounder—"

But Billy Bunter was gone. Billy Bunter could always work hard at one thing—minding other people's business—if at nothing else. Bunter meant to know the beginning, middle, and end of the Loder story without delay; and he was certain to spread all he learned, with many imaginative additions of his own, too.

"Well, if there's anything to be found out, Bunter will nose it out," said Nugent, with a grin. "What was Todd doing with a telegram belonging to Loder?"

"He'd fetched it from the post-office."

Nugent whistled.

"Oh, I know the game—telegram from a bookie," said Nugent. "Loder dared not have it sent to the school. I know he's had telegrams kept for him in the post-office before. Nice for him if the Head chanced upon it."

"It was like the esteemed cheekfulness of the esteemed police-sahib to display his interfeerfulness," remarked the

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"THE POSTAL-ORDER CONSPIRACY."

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ONE
PENNY.

Nabob of Bhanipur. "I for one am growing fedfully up with the cheeky rot of the esteemed ass!"

"Just what I was thinking," said Frank. "It's really about time that we put it quite plainly to Tozer to mind his own business."

Wharton's eyes sparkled.

"I've been thinking about that," he said. "I've got a dodge—"

"Hurrah!"

"The hurrahfulness is terrific!"

"It's up to us to take him down a peg or two," said Harry. "We've had him on our track long enough. I've got a plan for taking him in, and making a fool of him—making him look an ass before everybody."

"Hurrah!"

"If you chaps like to take a hand in it—"

"What-ho!"

"Yes, what-ho!" said a voice, as Bob Cherry came in. "What's the wheeze—something up against the Tozer bird?"

"That's it."

"Then count me in!"

"Good!" said Harry. "Then we shall have to write a letter to-night to Mr. Bates in the village, and enclose a postal-order."

"What the—"

"Look here."

Harry Wharton dipped his pen in the ink, and wrote. The chums of the Remove looked over his shoulder as he indited the letter.

"Dear Mr. Bates.—I have decided to take the football you showed me yesterday, and I will call for it to-morrow—Wednesday—afternoon. As I shall be in a great hurry, will you please leave it on the showcase outside, so that I can pick it up in passing, and take it away with me. Do not wrap it up in any way. I enclose a postal-order for twelve shillings. Please send receipt by return of post—Yours truly,

"H. WHARTON."

Wharton blotted the letter, folded it up, and slipped it into an envelope. Then he took a postal-order from his pocket-book.

"My uncle sent me this to get a new footer," he remarked. "Nothing like being ready for the season in time, you know."

He slipped the postal-order into the letter and sealed the envelope. His chums stared at him in blank astonishment.

"That's all very well," said Nugent, at last. "But what on earth has your new footer to do with taking in P.c. Tozer?"

"That's the point."

"Blessed if I can see the point," said Bob Cherry. "And what do you want him to leave the footer on the showcase outside for?"

"Thereby hangs a tale."

"Blessed if I can see it."

"Same here," said Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific."

Wharton put a stamp on the letter and rose.

"I'll shove this into the letter-box at once," he said. "Better get it posted. I shall have Bates's receipt to-morrow. You don't see the wheeze?"

"No!"

"Then I'll explain."

And Wharton explained as they went down to the letter-box, and, to judge by the chuckles of the juniors, they judged the "wheeze" to be a good one, and considered the fate of P.c. Tozer as sealed.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Laying the Snare.

"BULSTRODE!"

Bulstrode did not appear to hear. He was sitting on a bench in the gym., chatting with Skinner, and he did not look round as the Duffer of Greyfriars approached. Alonzo Todd came up to them, blinking in his good-natured, uncertain way.

"Bulstrode!"

The Remove bully looked round lazily at last.

"Hallo! Is that you, Todd?" he said.

"Yes," said Todd. "You may remember what you were saying at the gate when I went out some time ago—"

"Mind, that's a secret," said Bulstrode, wagging his forefinger warningly. "You overheard us by accident, and you're bound not to repeat it."

"Yes, yes—certainly, Bulstrode. I hope you feel yourself

able to place reliance upon my personal honour," said Todd.

"Well, mind you're careful, that's all."

"I shall be extremely careful, of course. My Uncle Benjamin has always told me to be very careful," said Todd.

"But you were saying—"

"Never mind what I was saying; keep it dark."

"Yes; but you said that Mr. Quelch—"

"Hush!" said Bulstrode mysteriously.

"Mr. Quelch was in a difficulty of some sort," went on Todd, lowering his voice, "in which I could help him."

"Well, it's quite true," said Bulstrode.

"I also understood you to hint that the difficulty was one which concerned Miss Penelope Primrose, the head-mistress of Cliff House School, in some way, Bulstrode."

Bulstrode looked at Skinner.

"Shall we tell him, Skinner?" he asked, in a hushed voice.

"Well, we've agreed that Todd is the only chap who can help in the matter," said Skinner. "I think we ought to tell him, and let him do as he thinks best. The best of it is, that Miss Primrose admires him very much, because he pulled Marjorie Hazeldene out of the river that time, you know; and because she knows him to be such a fine character."

"Dear me!" said Todd.

"I heard her say so to Miss Locke," explained Skinner mendaciously. "Her words were: 'What a misfortune it is that there are not many more boys with the same fine character that Alonzo Todd has.'"

"I'm sure she was very kind," said Alonzo.

"Not a bit of it," said Skinner. "She was only saying what everybody thinks. There's not a more popular fellow in the school than you, Toddy. And why? Because you're so good-natured—always ready to do anybody a good turn—and because you're so tactful."

Alonzo nodded with a pleased look.

"I am sure I do all I can to make the fellows like me," he said. "My Uncle Benjamin always told me to be as obliging to everybody as I could, and always to make myself useful. I have never been called tactful before, I admit; but I have always tried to be. That is why I have come to ask you about this matter, Bulstrode—because from what you said, I felt that I could be useful to Mr. Quelch, and that is what I am very anxious to be."

"I suppose I had better tell him," said Bulstrode, with another very thoughtful look at his confederate.

"Certainly," said Skinner.

"Sit down, Toddy, old man," said Bulstrode, making room on the bench between himself and Skinner. "Sit down! Mind, if you decide not to help Quelch, all this is to be the same as if it has never been said. It's in strict confidence."

"That's understood," said Todd.

"Well, perhaps I'd better begin," said Bulstrode. "You see, I know one part of the story, and Skinner knows the other, and we've been comparing notes. What I know is about Mr. Quelch." Bulstrode lowered his voice mysteriously: "Mr. Quelch is in love."

Todd started violently.

If Bulstrode had told him that Mr. Quelch was a murderer, he could not have been more astonished. He sat blinking at Bulstrode.

"Mr. Quelch!"

"Yes."

"In—in love!"

"Desperately in love!" said Bulstrode solemnly.

"Dear me!" said Todd. "How very odd!"

"Well, yes, I suppose he's a little—well, a little fully grown, we'll say, but you fall in love at any age," said Bulstrode. "Look at Bob Cherry, for instance—"

Todd looked round the gym.

"Cherry is not here," he said.

"I didn't say he was!" growled Bulstrode. "I meant look at him—he's smitten, you know—he's moony about Marjorie Hazeldene, and he's not fifteen yet."

"Oh, dear! I did not think Cherry was so silly."

"Well, he is—and if a kid under fifteen can act the giddy goat like that, there's nothing to be surprised at in Quelch doing it."

"I—I suppose not. But—but who—"

"Who is he in love with? Ah, that's it!" said Bulstrode, in a cautious whisper. "I knew he was in love, of course; I have heard him muttering about it in the class-room, and if you saw him looking up at the moon, and blowing kisses in the air—well, my hat!"

"How very odd!" said Alonzo. "I've never noticed anything of the sort."

Neither had Bulstrode, as a matter of fact; but he suppressed a chuckle, and went on with deadly solemnity, in the same cautious tone.

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"Only last night, I looked out of my study window, and there was Quelch, staring at the stars—"

"It was very cloudy last night," said Alonzo. "I remember that it was impossible to see any stars. How very odd!"

"Staring at the sky, I mean," went on Bulstrode, without the change of a muscle. "Staring at the sky, and all of a sudden I heard him say: 'If I could but meet her alone and tell her of my love! Oh, my sweet—my sweet Penelope! Just those words.'"

"Dear me! Mr. Quelch does not seem to be that kind of man at all," said Todd, deeply interested. "But you never know. I remember hearing my Uncle Benjamin say once that you never know. My Uncle Benjamin—"

"Exactly. Well, I told this to Skinner, and then he told me what he knew," said Bulstrode. "Tell it to Todd exactly as you told it to me, Skinny."

"Certainly," said Skinner. "I had been over to Cliff House to take some flowers to one of the girls—"

"Which one?" asked Todd, who had rather a mind for details.

"Miss Clara! Well, I had taken the flowers, and was leaving through the garden, when I suddenly caught sight of Miss Primrose. She was sitting on a garden seat, and she didn't know anybody was near. She was talking to herself, but quite aloud—and I heard her say: 'Oh, my beloved Horace, if he but knew the depth of my boundless love!'"

"Dear me!"

"You know Quelch's front name is Horace," said Skinner.

"Really—"

"And Miss Primrose's Christian name is Penelope," added Bulstrode. "Of course, as soon as Skinner compared notes with me, we both knew what was the matter. Mr. Quelch and Miss Primrose are dying of love for one another, but they're too shy to speak, or to make an opportunity of getting the matter settled. It's a shame."

"A rotten shame," said Skinner. "Two loving hearts disunited—"

"For want of a friend to bring them into—into loving unison," said Bulstrode.

Todd nodded slowly.

"It seems very hard," he agreed.

"We've thought it over," said Bulstrode. "We feel that we ought to do something. We all like and respect Mr. Quelch, and we like Miss Primrose very much. Something ought to be done. But I feel—and Skinner feels—that we're not the chaps to do it. A fellow of great tact and good judgment is really wanted."

"Just so!" assented Alonzo.

"As a matter of fact, you're the chap," said Skinner.

"I should be very happy to make myself useful," said Alonzo. "My Uncle Benjamin has always told me to do so. I am especially anxious to oblige Mr. Quelch, who has been very kind to me. But—"

"You'll manage it," said Bulstrode. "It only needs tact."

"And Todd has heaps of tact," said Skinner solemnly.

"You are very kind, I'm sure," said Alonzo. "You fellows would really advise me to do what I can in the matter?"

"Certainly!" said the humorists of the Remove together.

"Then I will do my best," said Todd, rising. "I will think it out, and I will do my best to—to disperse this cloud between two loving hearts, and bring them together."

"Good man!" said Bulstrode, taking out his pocket-handkerchief. "Excuse me; I can't help it. The thought of the happiness you are going to bring about makes me c-c-cry."

Todd was very much touched.

"I'm sure that shows you have a very kind heart, Bulstrode," he said. "I beg your pardon for having thought sometimes that you were a rough and bad-natured boy."

"Don't mention it, Toddy. But I think I'll go to my r-r-room now," said Bulstrode.

And he left the gym with Skinner. He did go straight to his study, and Skinner went with him. He shut the door, and then the two young rascals fairly threw themselves on the carpet and howled with laughter.

"Do you think he'll do it?" shrieked Skinner.

Bulstrode gasped.

"Sure to. He's fairly hooked."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

Tom Brown came into the study, and found them shrieking with laughter. The New Zealand junior stared at them in surprise.

"What's the joke?" he demanded.

But they did not tell him.

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THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Two to One in Sovereigns!

LODER walked into his study in the Sixth Form passage with almost a hunted look in his eyes. Ionides walked in with him, his teeth gleaming in a smile. The two seniors had been strolling in the Close, and then they had been in the gym. together. Then Loder suggested a smoke in the study, and they had come in, in company. All the time Loder had had no opportunity of opening the telegram. Ionides did not know that he had it; but any suspicious movement would have put the keen-witted Greek upon the track. Inside that buff envelope was information which was worth ten pounds to Loder if he could only get at it without the Greek's knowledge; but as yet he had not dared to make the venture. The telegram seemed to burn in his pocket.

Loder lighted the gas and pulled down the blind. Then he groped in the drawer of the table for a box of cigarettes, and laid them before Ionides, as the Greek threw himself into an easy-chair.

Ionides was smiling in his feline way. The situation amused him. That his honourable friend would cheat him if he could the Greek had no doubt. Not that he believed Loder had planned it. But he thought it possible; and Ionides, the Greek, was the last person in the world to be easily hoodwinked or over-reached.

But, if he ever met his match, it was likely to be in Gerald Loder. Loder looked round the study for a box of matches, and felt in his pockets. He felt the telegram there, not the matchbox.

"Never mind, I have some of my own," said Ionides.

"It's all right," said Loder. "There are some safety-matches in the cupboard."

He went to the cupboard, and opened the door. His hand, as it came out of his pocket, had the telegram crumpled up in it, out of sight.

The Greek senior had his back partly turned towards Loder, and he was engaged in lighting a cigarette with one of his own matches. In any case, however, he could hardly have suspected what Loder was doing.

The prefect moved two or three things to and fro in the cupboard, as if searching for matches. In doing so he opened the telegram, tearing the envelope open, and the white slip inside came out.

There were only two words written upon it, in the familiar dead-black lettering.

"Black Prince!"

Loder's eyes danced.

He needed only one glance at the telegram, and then the paper was crushed in his hand again, together with the torn envelope.

Then he moved about two or three more articles in the cupboard, and uttered an exclamation in an annoyed tone.

"The matches aren't here!" he exclaimed. "I'll lick that young scoundrel Snoop. I told him to get me a fresh lot."

He thrust his hands into his jacket pockets, as if to make a final search for the matches. In doing so he left the crumpled telegram and its envelope in one pocket, and his hands came out empty.

"Can't find the blessed things!" he exclaimed.

"Use mine," said Ionides carelessly.

"Oh, all right!"

Loder sank down into the armchair opposite Ionides, selected a cigarette, and lighted it. He smoked calmly and cheerfully.

He had seen the inside of the telegram now. It was a telegram sent him from the racecourse immediately after a certain race had been run, and contained the name of the winner. There are gentlemen in connection with the Turf who run quite a thriving business in this way—by getting rapid information of the result of a race, and then backing the horse that has already won among their acquaintances, who naturally have no suspicion of the game. This lowest of low-down tricks was what Loder had thought of, being particularly hard up just then, and in great need of money, and egged on, too, by the "swank" of the rich senior, who flashed his money about in the most ostentatious way.

The five-pound note Loder now possessed was not his own, as a matter of fact, but represented most of the funds of one of the Sixth Form clubs of which he was treasurer, and he would never have dared to use it to bet with except upon a certainty—not one of the dead "certs" of the tipsters, but a real certainty, as in the present case. Black Prince having already won the race, there could be no risk in backing him.

Loder felt wonderfully at his ease.

The Greek had been keen and suspicious, but Loder had pulled the wool over his eyes completely. He puffed at his cigarette with much satisfaction.

"Well?" said the Greek, his teeth gleaming over his cigarette. "Have you made up your mind yet?"

"About what?"

"About the race, of course."

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ONE
PENNY.

"Oh, as far as that goes, I was going to back Black Prince all the time," said Loder carelessly. "But I'm hanged if I like your suspicions, that's flat. I don't feel much inclined to bet at all with you after what you've said."

Ionides shrugged his shoulders.

"Take your choice about the matter," he replied. "I should like to have the bet on, for I am certain of Rory II. But as you like."

"Well, I'm pretty certain of Black Prince."

"Put your money on him, then," said Ionides. "I have a ten-pound note ready. Bah! You are afraid to back your opinion."

"Afraid!" exclaimed Loder, simulating anger very well.

"Yes, that's what I said. If you're not afraid to back your opinion, put your money on the horse you fancy, and let Carne hold the stakes."

"I'll show you whether I'm afraid," exclaimed Loder angrily, throwing the five-pound note upon the table. "There's my money!"

The Greek laughed.

"So you have decided at last. There's mine."

He placed the ten-pound note beside the five.

"Carne can hold the stakes," said Loder, "and hand them over to the winner. Let's go to his study."

"Very good."

The two seniors proceeded to Carne's study. They found the senior talking to Walker, and there was a haze of smoke in the room.

"Oh, it's you!" said Carne, relieved. "Come in and have a fag. Anything on?"

"Yes," said Ionides. "Loder and I are making a bet on the Havorsham Stakes, and we want you to hold the money."

"The race is run long ago," said Carne.

"But the result is not yet known."

"No, that's true."

"Ionides is offering me two to one, in quids, against Black Prince," said Loder. "I'm taking him on. I've had it straight from the stable that Black Prince will win, and I'm ready to back it with my money."

"Well, I'll hold the stakes," said Carne. "Hand it over."

And he locked up the banknotes in a drawer.

"They're Loder's if Black Prince wins, and mine if he loses," said Ionides, showing his teeth. "I have booked the bet. I think they will be mine."

Loder laughed confidently. He had reason to be confident, with the name of the winner of the race inscribed upon the crumpled telegram in his pocket.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Alonzo Nearly Does It.

ALONZO TODD wore a very thoughtful look as he went up to bed with the Remove that night.

Bulstrode and Skinner grinned quietly as they looked at him. They could see that the Duffer of Greyfriars was turning over the problem in his mind. He was evidently in earnest; and when Alonzo Todd was in earnest, in his desire to make himself useful, he generally went ahead regardless of obstacles. And if he went ahead in the delicate matter of bringing Mr. Quelch and Miss Penelope Primrose together, the two young rascals could foresee whole oceans of fun. Probably trouble, too, for the well-meaning Todd, in the long-run; but of that Bulstrode and Skinner thought nothing. They were not in the habit of considering others very much.

"Penny for your thoughts, Toddy!" said Bob Cherry generously, giving the Duffer of Greyfriars a slap on the back in the dormitory.

Todd gasped.

"Really, you know—"

"Still bothering about the telegram?" asked Bob Cherry. "Loder seems to have taken it all right."

"No, I was not thinking about that, Cherry. I have a much weightier matter on my mind—a matter that concerns the lifelong happiness of two people I respect very highly," said Alonzo solemnly.

"By Jove!" said Bob Cherry.

"Hence the shade of reflection on my brow, which you have doubtless observed," said Alonzo.

"Swallowed a dictionary. I always said he had," murmured Tom Brown.

"Go to bed and sleep on it, then," said Bob Cherry consolingly. "When you wake up, I hope you will be quite sane again."

"Really, Cherry—"

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, blinking round the dormitory through his big spectacles as he unlaced his boots. "It's quite true about Loder."

"Eh?"

"Loder's in a jolly lot of trouble," said Bunter. "I know for a fact that Tozer came here to arrest him, and it was only bunkum about the telegram, to get to his room."

"How do you know?"

"I've deduced it," said Bunter. "I can do these things. I ought to have been a detective. Loder bribed Tozer to clear out and give him a chance."

"Rats!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I'm certain of it. Snoop saw him spit on a shilling, and see if it was good when he left Loder's study."

"Well, that was a tip."

"It was part of the bribe, of course. I shouldn't wonder if Loder had been committing a robbery. I know I saw a five-pound note in his purse, when he opened it in the tuck-shop this morning."

"Well, can't a Sixth-Former have a fiver without stealing it, you young ass?" asked Nugent, laughing.

Bunter shook his head.

"Not Loder. We know he's not rich, and he gambles away all the money he has."

"Gamblers win sometimes," said Bulstrode. "Besides, Loder is treasurer of the Sixth Form hockey club, and the beagles, and it may be the club funds he carries about with him, to keep up appearances. I know fellows who do that."

"Well, you mark my words," said Bunter, who, like other people, used that formula when he had no solid arguments to advance—"you mark my words, that's all. Loder will be sacked from Greyfriars before any of us are very much older!"

"Rats!"

"The ratfulness is terrific!"

"I really hope Mr. Tozer conveyed the telegram safely to Loder," said Todd uneasily. "It did not occur to me that he might have failed to do so."

"Oh, Loder's got it all right!" said Wharton.

"I should like to be sure of that," said Todd. "I really think I had better ask Loder, to make sure."

"Better keep clear of Loder, you young ass!" growled Bob Cherry.

"But really——"

"Shut up! Here's Wingate."

The captain of Greyfriars came in, with his usual pleasant look.

"Not in bed yet?" he said good-humouredly. "Tumble in!"

"Right you are, Wingate!"

The juniors tumbled in.

Wingate extinguished the light, and retired. There was some whispering and chuckling among the Removites. The Famous Four were very much pleased over their intended jape upon the great P.-c. Tozer. Bulstrode and Skinner were chuckling over their jape on the Duffer of Greyfriars.

A voice was heard in the darkness a few minutes after Wingate had retired. Alonzo Todd sat up in bed.

"I think I had better go down and see Loder," he remarked.

"Oh, go to sleep!"

"Shut up!"

"I think I had better go," said Alonzo firmly, slipping out of bed. "My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me never to leave a duty undone."

"You ass!" said Tom Brown. "I saw Ionides go into Loder's study as we came up, and Carne. They'll be smoking, and they'll skin you if you go in."

"Yes, I trust I shall avoid any ill-usage, but I must go in any case," said Todd, slipping his trousers on. "I think it is my duty."

"Rats!"

"Leave it till the morning, anyway," said Harry Wharton.

"Impossible!" said Todd. "My Uncle Benjamin——"

"Oh, blow your Uncle Benjamin!"

"Always told me never to put off till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day," Todd went on firmly.

"Good old Benny!" said Bob Cherry.

"Really, Cherry——"

"Oh, get to bed!" said Ogilvy. "We're getting fed up with Uncle Ben!"

"I am going to see Loder."

"You'll get licked, look you," said Morgan.

"I suppose I must risk that."

And Todd put on a muffler and a jacket, and quitted the dormitory. He went quietly downstairs, desirous of avoiding any possible meeting with a master, who would want to know what he was doing out of his dormitory at that time. He reached the Sixth Form passage, and tapped at the door of Loder's study, and opened it.

Loder, Carne, and Ionides sat there, smoking cigarettes—their usual habit at an hour when they felt safe from interruption by the masters—and chatting on such congenial subjects as the latest races and a fellow's chances at banker. All three of them hastily lowered the smokes as the door was opened, and threw them into the grate. The haze in the study would have betrayed them, however, if it had been a master.

It was not a master, to their great relief; but as they saw Todd, their relief changed to anger. Loder sprang to his feet.

"What the dickens are you doing here?" he exclaimed. "It's past your bedtime."

"Yes, I've come down from the dormitory," said Todd, blinking in the light.

"You cub——"

"I felt that I ought to come," said Todd. "You see, I am uneasy——"

"Get up to bed!" said Loder angrily. "Don't come bothering me! Get out! If you aren't gone in two seconds, I'll——"

"But I've come to ask you——"

"What? Be quick!" said Loder, thinking that perhaps Todd might have had some business in coming to the study after all. "What is it?"

"Mr. Tozer stopped me coming back from Friardale," said Todd, in explanation. "He suspected that I had cigarettes——"

Loder changed colour.

In a flash it dawned upon him that Todd was about to blurt out the whole story of the telegram in the presence of Ionides and Carne—Ionides who had made the foredoomed bet, Carne who was holding the stakes.

"It's all right," Loder interrupted hastily, with dry lips. "I had it all from Tozer. You can go back to bed."

"But did he give you the——"

"Get out, I say!"

"Bunter thinks he may not have given you the——"

Loder rushed at the Duffer of Greyfriars, seized him by the collar, and shook him so savagely that the words were choked in his mouth.

"There, you rat! Take that—and that!"

Todd spluttered and choked.

"Oh! Ow! Yoop!" he gasped. "I—I only wanted to know if—if you had received——"

"Out you go!"

Loder flung the junior out into the passage. Todd staggered across it, and crashed against the opposite wall, and slid to the floor, where he sat dazed.

"Get up!" yelled Loder. "By Jove! If you don't buzz off, I'll tickle you with a cane! Hand me out that cane, Carne!"

"Certainly!" grinned Carne.

But Alonzo Todd did not wait for the cane. He leaped up and dashed away at top speed, and simply flew upstairs.

Look out for

"THE POSTAL ORDER CONSPIRACY,"

NEXT TUESDAY.



The study door opened, and the burly form of the village policeman presented itself. "Master Loder?" said P.-c. Tozer. "I'm Loder," said the prefect, his voice almost dying as he spoke. (See Page 9.)

He burst into the Remove dormitory, and slammed the door behind him with a slam that made the juniors jump in their beds.

"My hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "Who's that?"

"It's me—I mean it's I—Todd!"

"Oh! Did you catch it?"

"Loder is a beast! He did not even allow me to say what I had come to say," gasped Todd. "He is a rough and very brutal rotter!"

"What did we tell you?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Why couldn't you let well alone?"

Todd crept into bed, still gasping.

"I shall certainly not mention the matter of the telegram to Loder again," he said. "I consider him a low and rough beast. I shall take no further notice of him. My Uncle Benjamin warned me to be careful to avoid bad characters."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And that yell of laughter was all the consolation Alonzo Todd received from the Removites.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Loder's Luck!

LODER was not, as a rule, down early in the morning. The Sixth Form fellows at Greyfriars went to bed at what time they chose, and Loder was generally up late; with the result that he came down in the morning at the last possible minute, with heavy eyes, and in a bad temper. But on this particular Wednesday he was down early. He was down with the earliest housemaid, who started to see him, having never seen him so early before, to

her recollection. Loder looked out into the fresh morning air of the Close, and called to the housemaid who had ceased work with her broom in her surprise.

"What time is the morning paper left here, Nelly?"

"At eight o'clock, Master Loder."

Loder grunted.

"Not earlier?"

"No, Master Loder."

"You're down over an hour early, then!" said Ionides, coming downstairs. "Getting a little anxious about Black Prince—eh?"

Loder gave him a warning glance, with a look at the housemaid.

"Come for a stroll down the road, Ionides," he said.

"Certainly," assented the Greek.

And the two seniors went out into the Close.

Ionides was smiling calmly. He believed that Loder was suffering from a keen anxiety, and it amused his catlike nature. As a matter of fact, Loder had not the slightest anxiety on the subject of the result of the race; he knew that already. But he was anxious to feel Ionides's crisp tenner in his fingers.

That was his only cause for anxiety. But he felt that it was only prudent to keep up a show of doubt before the Greek.

"It's rotten that we can't get the papers earlier here!" he exclaimed.

"Bah!" said Ionides. "What matters? The result is the same whether you learn it early or late."

"Then you don't feel anxious about your tenner?"

"Not at all. If it is lost, it is lost."

"Well, I can't afford to throw money about," said Loder.

"You should not bet then."

"That's my business."

They left Greyfriars, and walked down the road to Friar-dale. There they would either meet the newsagent's lad on the road, or arrive at his shop, where they could purchase a paper for themselves.

Ionides, in spite of his boastful talk, was very keen to know the result of the race. He had plenty of money, but he was not generous. As a matter of fact, he was very anxious to deprive Loder of his fiver.

They walked fast, talking but little on the way. They reached the newsagent's shop, but Mr. Byles had no comfort for them; he had not received the London papers yet.

Loder gave a growl.

"Rotten!"

"Sorry, sir," said Mr. Byles. "I have yesterday's number of the local 'Gazette'—"

"You can keep it."

"Yesterday's 'Daily Mail'—"

"What's the good of that to-day?"

"Ah! You want to see some special news, I suppose?" said the newsagent, with a twinkle in his eye, guessing very well what the special news was.

"Yes," growled Loder.

"We get them at half-past seven, sir. I'll send up to the school immediately—"

"It's all right—we'll call in again."

"Yes, sir."

Loder and Ionides left the shop. In the street they met P.-c. Tozer, who exchanged a good-morning with them. The worthy constable seemed inclined to talk, and Loder hurried his companion on. He was afraid that some incautious word might be dropped respecting the telegram. He had been living on tenterhooks lately lest that unlucky telegram should come to the ears of Ionides. He had not dared to leave the school to fetch it from the post-office himself the previous day, because he had known that the Greek's suspicious eyes were upon him—and his sending a fag for it had not been wholly a success. But it was said of old that the way of the transgressor is hard; and Gerald Loder was finding it so.

The two seniors strolled about in the fresh morning, without much enjoying its freshness and beauty. They were thinking of other things. By the time they returned to the newsagent's shop Mr. Byles had the morning paper ready for them.

Loder took it eagerly, threw down a coin, and left the shop. There was a keen eagerness in Ionides's manner now.

"Let's look!" he exclaimed.

"Here you are!"

Loder turned to the racing news page.

He opened the paper, and two pairs of eyes scanned the columns.

"Here it is," said Loder, indicating with his finger. "Haversham Stakes—"

Ionides uttered an exclamation as he read the names of the first three.

"Black Prince, Angelus, and Rory II."

"Phew!" said Loder.

Ionides face was dark with anger.

"My horse has come in third," he said. "And I was certain of him. I had it as a sure tip."

Loder laughed.

"I know those sure tips and dead certs," he replied. "Well, Black Prince has pulled it off, and I've won the bet, Ionides."

The Greek nodded sullenly.

"You have won," he said. "How rotten! If any other horse had won, not even Rory II., it is very curious that Black Prince should win."

"Why?" said Loder. "He was a good horse, and many people were backing him."

"True! But—you laid your five pounds against the whole field and won," said the Greek, with a gleam of his white teeth. "It is very curious."

"I don't see anything curious about it," said Loder, folding up the paper. "Anyway, Black Prince has won, and the tenner's mine. Let's get back."

They walked back towards the school. The Greek's eyes gleamed under his black brows.

Loder hummed a tune.

"It is very curious!" broke out Ionides again, at last.

Loder turned on him irritably.

"What is curious?" he demanded. "What are you repeating that for like a giddy chorus? I don't see anything curious about it at all. I backed the horse, and it won. You backed the field against me, and Black Prince beat the field. That's all there is about it."

"Is that all?"

"Of course."

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"It was after the race was run, and won, that you backed Black Prince," said Ionides. "You would not lay the bet in the afternoon, though I asked you."

"I've had all that before, and you know my reasons," said Loder. "I suppose you're suspecting again that I had private information. But you were watching me all the time. You ought to be satisfied upon that point."

"Yes," said the Greek slowly. "I suppose I ought to be satisfied upon that point."

"Then let's hear no more about it."

Ten minutes later Loder was knocking at Carne's door. The senior was not yet up, but he called out to his visitor to come in. He sat up in bed, and Loder showed him the paper.

"You've won?" asked Carne.

"Look for yourself—Black Prince is at the top."

"Good!"

"Hand over the stakes, sonny," said Loder, in great good-humour.

"Yes, hand them over," said Ionides; "I suppose it is all right."

Yet a lingering suspicion in the manner of the Greek seemed to him that he was not really quite satisfied that it was all right.

"This is a bit of luck for me," said Loder. "I don't often pull off a thing like this. I shall stand something decent out of it. You'll come, Carne—and you, Ionides."

"What-ho!" said Carne; and the Greek nodded.

Carne unlocked his drawer, and took out the two bank-notes, which he handed to Loder. The prefect deposited them carefully in his pocket-book.

"Thanks!" he said.

And he left the study with a cheery face. Ionides followed with a lowering brow. Carne was left looking puzzled.

"Blessed if I know how Loder pulled that off!" he muttered. "I suppose it's all right. Anyway, it's none of my business."

And Carne dismissed the matter with a shrug of the shoulders. But Heracles Ionides did not dismiss it quite so easily. In spite of his boastful manners, ten pounds was a considerable sum to him, and he felt the loss. And in his suspicious mind there was a lingering doubt that there had been foul play.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Alonzo's Little Plot

DURING morning school that day there was a cloud of thoughtfulness upon the brow of Alonzo Todd. Bulstrode and Skinner noticed it, and exchanged winks occasionally. The Duffer of Greyfriars was evidently thinking of the problem he had set himself—of uniting the two supposed loving hearts which were still asunder. The rascals noticed that Alonzo watched Mr. Quelch, at times, very earnestly. Doubtless he was seeking to find some sign in the Form-master's manner of absent-mindedness, or of thoughts wandering to an absent loved one. They chuckled at the idea.

Mr. Quelch certainly would never have given an observer the impression that he was in love. He was calm, keen, businesslike, and his mind never wandered for a moment. But that only showed Alonzo how carefully he hid his feelings.

Suddenly, in the midst of an excursion into the heart of Africa—on the map—Alonzo uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Good!"

Every eye in the class turned upon him at once. Mr. Quelch lowered his pointer, and stared at Todd.

The Duffer's face went crimson.

He had uttered that ejaculation quite involuntarily as a thought had darted into his mind, and he now sat blushing in confusion.

"Todd!" exclaimed the Remove-master.

"Ye-e-es, sir!" faltered Alonzo.

"What do you mean?"

"Mean, sir?"

"Yes; what do you mean by exclaiming like that?"

"Exclaiming, sir!"

It was an old habit of Todd's to repeat what was said to him, when he was startled or frightened. Some found it an irritating habit.

Mr. Quelch took a tighter grip on his pointer.

"Yes, Todd. Explain yourself."

"Explain myself, sir!" stammered Alonzo.

"Yes, at once!"

"At—at once, sir—"

"Todd!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Ye-e-e-es!"

"Is that meant for deliberate impertinence?"

"D-d-d-deliberate impertinence, sir."

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Boy! Take fifty lines!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

Mr. Quelch turned from him with a heated brow. He was very near giving Alonzo some of the pointer, but he refrained. Todd blushed all over, but he was glad to escape with the fifty lines. It was rather hard, certainly, to receive fifty lines from the man he was going to help, just because he had thought of an excellent plan for helping him. But it was one of the things a really well-meaning fellow had to put up with.

Bulstrode grinned at Skinner, and whispered:

"He's got it, Skinny!"

"What-ho!" murmured Skinner.

"He's going ahead."

"My hat!" murmured Skinner. "There will be fireworks!"

When the class was dismissed the two young rascals joined Alonzo Todd going out. The Duffer of Greyfriars was looking very thoughtful.

"Well," said Bulstrode, "have you thought of a plan?"

Alonzo nodded.

"Yes," he said, "I should like to ask your advice."

"Come here, where we can talk quietly," said Bulstrode; and he drew the Duffer of Greyfriars into an empty classroom and closed the door. "Now, then, go ahead."

"I've thought of a good scheme, I think," said Todd, blinking at him. "It seems that Mr. Quelch is in love with Miss Primrose, and Miss Primrose is in love with Mr. Quelch, and they are too shy and nervous to tell one another."

"Exactly," said Bulstrode.

"I remember reading something of the sort in Shakespeare," said Todd. "It's in 'Much Ado About Hamlet,' I think—or is it 'Measure for Macbeth,' or 'Julius and Cleopatra,' I forget. It is very romantic, isn't it?"

"Awfully romantic," agreed Bulstrode.

"Something ought to be done to bring those loving hearts together," said Skinner, in a tone of deep feeling.

"Quite right, and Todd's going to do it."

"Just so," said Todd. "I'm so sorry for both of them—I really feel as if I ought to do something obliging, you know, and make myself useful. Under the circumstances, don't you think a little plot would be justifiable, to clear up doubts, and—bring the two loving hearts together?"

"Certainly!"

"The very thing!"

"Well, then," said Todd, with a beaming smile, "I have thought of a little plot. In the first place, Mr. Quelch and Miss Primrose must be brought together."

"Yes, rather!"

"And each must be made aware of the other's passion!"

"Exactly!"

"Now, suppose Mr. Quelch received a telegram—a telegram, you know, because a letter would reveal by the handwriting who had written it—"

"Reveal!" said Skinner. "That's a good word, and quite in keeping. Good!"

Bulstrode stamped on his foot, and Todd went on:

"Suppose Mr. Quelch received a telegram, to the effect that someone who loved him was waiting for him in a certain spot. Then, suppose Miss Primrose received a telegram, that someone who loved her was waiting for her in the same spot. They would both go—recognise one another—and the trick would be done. Afterwards, they would wonder who had sent the telegrams, and I could reveal myself or not, as I chose. I should be quite satisfied with having united two loving hearts, without obtaining any glory."

Bulstrode nearly choked.

"Good!" he said. "The telegram would fetch Miss Primrose, I think—but I don't know about Quelch. He would think it a jape."

Todd rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"But as he is in love—" he argued.

Bulstrode shook his head.

"He's a wary old bird," he replied.

Todd reflected. He was evidently pleased with his plan, but he was willing to modify it. Todd was always very modest about sticking to his own opinion, and it was easy to guide him.

"I think I could make a suggestion," said Skinner diffidently. "You know Quelch always sits in the summer-house in the doctor's garden on a fine half-holiday, and goes over his manuscripts—that rotten book he's writing. If Miss Primrose could be got there—"

"First chop!" said Bulstrode. "That's right! Let the telegram to Quelch simply say that one who loves him will see him to-day, and the one to Miss Primrose can tell her that her adorer waits for her in the doctor's summer-house. She'll come like a shot!"

Todd nodded.

"Very good!" he said. "I will send the telegrams."

Bulstrode laid a hand on his arm.

"If there's any gratitude going, you're welcome to all of it," he said. "Mind, we don't want to be mixed up in the matter at all."

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"That's understood."

"Our names are not to be mentioned under any circumstances whatever. You promise that, honour bright?"

"Honour bright!" said Todd.

And Bulstrode was satisfied. Duffer Alonzo Todd might be, but there wasn't a fellow at Greyfriars with a stricter sense of honour.

"I will go and send the wires before dinner," said Todd.

"Good!"

And the Duffer of Greyfriars departed. Bulstrode and Skinner remained in the empty class-room, and stared at one another.

"My only hat!" murmured Bulstrode. "Did you ever—"

"No, I never!" gasped Skinner.

"Isn't he simply gorgeous! I wonder what Quelch will think when he gets that wire?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Miss Primrose—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"She'll come like a shot," said Bulstrode, grinning. "You know there's something between her and the mathematics-master here. Old Phipps is always so attentive to her in church on a Sunday, and the fellows have often seen them taking walks by the cliffs. Of course, it's all very solemn and serious, but we all know what it means. Phipps is wondering whether it's worth while. You know what a deep bounder he is, the way he catches us up in mathematics. Miss Primrose will think the wire is from Phipps, and she'll come, and we must be on hand to see the meeting."

"Gorgeous!" murmured Skinner.

And the plotters departed, chuckling. Alonzo Todd was already on his way to the post-office.

There Mr. Coots, the post-master, received him with a far from friendly brow, not having forgotten the adventure of the previous day. Mr. Coots looked surprised when Todd handed in the telegrams, but he could not decline to send them; but he made a mental note of the circumstances, and of Todd, which was destined to be of disadvantage to Todd later on.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Little Joke on Mr. Tozer.

HARRY WHARTON took a letter from the rack, and waved it in the view of his chums, as they came out of the dining-room. It was a letter with the local postmark on it, and addressed in the handwriting of Mr. Bates, the local sports outfitter.

"That the receipt?" asked Bob Cherry.

Wharton opened the letter.

"Look!" he said.

It was a receipt from the outfitter, for twelve shillings for a new football. Wharton grinned, and folded it, and put it in his pocket.

"Now we're off!" he said.

Mark Linley and Tom Brown met them as they left the House.

"Coming down to the cricket?" asked Mark.

"Not just yet," said Harry. "We're going to see Tozer the Great. If you want to see some fun, you can be looking out of the gates in an hour or two's time."

Mark laughed.

"All right! Come on, Tom!"

And the Lancashire lad and the New Zealander went down to the nets, where most of the Remove were gathering. The Famous Four left Greyfriars, and strolled down to the village. They reached the quaint old High Street, and lounged outside Uncle Clegg's tuckshop, discussing ginger-beer, till Bob Cherry gave warning.

"There he is!"

The juniors looked quickly in the direction of Bob Cherry's nod. The portly form of Police-constable Tozer had heaved in sight.

The juniors exchanged a grin.

"There he is!" said Harry. "Good! Now to business! Mind, don't let him see that we've seen him. He mustn't smell a rat."

"What-ho!"

The juniors paid for their ginger-beer, and strolled on down the street. Mr. Tozer's eyes gleamed as he saw them. Mr. Tozer's business was to protect the law, but it is probable that he would have given a great deal to see Harry Wharton & Co. break it at that moment. He wondered whether he would ever have a chance with those elusive juniors.

He watched them gloomily. He started as he saw them stop outside Tucker's. Tucker's was the local tobacconist's.

Mr. Tucker sold sweets as well, but as he dealt in tobacco, the shop was placed out of bounds by the Head of Greyfriars.

"Ho, ho!" murmured P.-c. Tozer. "I've got my heye on you."

And the portly constable drew as much out of sight as he could, in the shade of a big tree that grew at the corner of the street, in the high hope of seeing the juniors enter the tobacconist's.

Certainly their movements were very suspicious.

They stayed outside the shop, looking in at the window, and looking up and down the street, apparently not seeing the half-hidden form of the constable.

P.-c. Tozer chuckled softly to himself.

That the juniors were going for cigarettes, and that he would soon catch them in the act, with the contraband goods upon them, he was sure.

Then what a triumph for Horatio Tozer!

If he marched the culprits red-handed into the presence of the Head, even Dr. Locke would have to admit that he had not been over-zealous, and that his strict attention to duty was extremely meritorious and worthy of a considerable tip.

And Mr. Tozer waited and watched.

The four juniors hung about outside the tobacconist's, talking together in low tones. Mr. Tozer would not have felt so satisfied if he had known what they were saying.

"The blessed porpoise is watching us like anything," Bob Cherry remarked.

"I believe he thinks we can't see him," chuckled Nugent.

"Ho doesn't seem to know that he's twice as wide as the tree."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The ha-ha-ha-fulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton grinned.

"I think matters are about ripe now," he remarked.

"We've wound him up properly. You chaps remain here while I go and do the burgling act."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Tozer doesn't jump right into the trap, I'm a giddy duffer, that's all."

"Oh, he'll jump!"

"The jumpfulness will be terrific!"

Harry Wharton sauntered on. Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh remained outside the tobacconist's, their elbows leaning on the shop front, chatting. P.-c. Tozer watched them curiously, and his glance followed Wharton.

He wondered what Wharton was going to do. Harry passed Mr. Bates's shop, which was a few doors down, and glanced at the goods outside. There were many articles displayed for sale there, in the sunny weather—cricket necessities, bats and balls, poles and nets, tennis rackets, and humming-tops and spinning-tops, and several footballs. Harry looked over the stock, and then looked into the shop with such a quick, suspicious glance that P.-c. Tozer involuntarily started as he saw it.

"My heye!" murmured Mr. Tozer. "Blessed if I don't think the young willain is going for to steal something!"

Mr. Tozer's heart beat at the thought. How his character would be vindicated if he could catch the hero of the Greyfriars Remove in the very act of theft!

And Harry certainly looked like it!

His manner was stealthy, suspicious, uneasy. It did not occur to Mr. Tozer that he was dealing with the best actor in the Greyfriars Junior Dramatic Society. Harry Wharton was playing his part to perfection, and reflected in the shop window he could see the constable watching him intently.

A customer came out of the shop, and Harry hastily retreated, and pretended to be looking into the next window. P.-c. Tozer chuckled softly. He needed no further proof, and now he watched with all his eyes.

The customer walked away, and Harry strolled past the shop again. Again that suspicious glance into the shop, and then—then the act P.-c. Tozer was fairly waiting for! With a quick motion of his hand, Wharton grabbed a football from the shopboard outside, and ran down the street with it.

P.-c. Tozer fairly gasped.

Never had he seen or heard about such a flagrant theft, in the broad daylight, too, in the very High Street!

But he was ready for action!

From his cover behind the tree, like an arrow from a bow, P.-c. Tozer shot in pursuit, and as Harry ran down the street, the policeman pounded after him.

"Stop!" yelled P.-c. Tozer. "Bring that ball back, you young thief! Stop!"

Harry glanced back over his shoulder. His jaw dropped as he saw the fat constable in full pursuit, and a look of terror came over his face—the same look that he had used as Hamlet, when he saw the Ghost, in some of the representations of the Junior Dramatic Society.

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"Oh!" he gasped.

He did not stop.

Instead of that, he increased his speed, and dashed away down the lane, the football hugged tight under his arm.

P.-c. Tozer dashed after him.

They were out of the village in a second or two, in the direction opposite to Greyfriars, and dashing down the road to Courtfield.

Harry Wharton fairly flew.

If he had been a shoplifter, with stolen property in his possession, and a policeman on the track, he could not have run more swiftly.

The portly constable pounded after him, puffing and blowing, gasping for breath, with streams of perspiration trickling down his fat face.

P.-c. Tozer was not in good condition for a foot race. The chase of Todd, on the previous day, had been enough for him. But to chase a runner like Harry Wharton was a far more serious matter. The champion junior athlete of Greyfriars could simply have walked away from Mr. Tozer if he had chosen.

But he did not choose. He meant to give the constable a good run. As soon as he saw that he was gaining, he slackened speed.

P.-c. Tozer saw it, with great satisfaction. The pace was telling on him, and he was already slackening himself.

He began to overhaul the fugitive.

They drew near to the village of Courtfield, and Mr. Tozer had hopes of getting Wharton stopped by someone in the street. But before they reached the village, Wharton turned off into a byroad, a rough and rutty lane, and the fat constable swerved and chased after him.

The going here was very rough, and it told upon Mr. Tozer.

He gasped and panted more than ever, and his fat face was drenched with sweat, and resembled in colour a freshly-boiled beetroot.

But he stuck gamely to the chase. He was determined to capture Wharton red-handed, with the stolen property upon him. It was worth a run to do that!

Wharton turned through another lane, and another. He knew the country well; many a run he had had over it. He was still very nearly as fresh as at the start, though he had covered nearly two miles. His pace was much slower, not because he was weakening, but because he wished to keep Mr. Tozer following him.

He looked back several times, and Mr. Tozer heard him pant and gasp—artistic panting and gasping which gave the impression that he was almost on his last legs.

Mr. Tozer had ceased to call upon Wharton to stop now. Wharton wouldn't stop, and the stout constable needed what breath he had for running.

On they dashed, and another turning brought Wharton out into Friardale Lane again, and he ran on towards the school. The football was still tightly clutched under his arm. It did not seem to occur to him to throw it away, and so get rid of the proof of his guilt.

The tower of Greyfriars came in sight, and P.-c. Tozer gave a gasp of relief.

Wharton was evidently heading for home. He was probably so terrified that he hardly knew what he was doing. Tozer thought. He would be run down in the Close at Greyfriars.

At the gates of Greyfriars a group of juniors had collected. Nugent, Cherry, and the nabob were there. They had collected with a crowd of others to see Wharton come in. A general grin greeted the appearance of Harry Wharton, with the fat constable labouring at his heels.

"Go it!" shouted Bulstrode.

"Buck up!"

"Well run!"

"Hurrah!"

"Two to one on the fat 'un!"

Amid these yells and loud laughter the pursuer and pursued drew close to the gateway.

The juniors opened out for Wharton to rush through, and he panted on into the Close.

P.-c. Tozer found the gateway blocked as he rushed up.

"Lemme pass, you young rascals!" he gasped. "Lemme in!"

The juniors did not move. P.-c. Tozer squeezed and elbowed his way through, and looked round for Wharton.

His pace had slackened to a walk, and he was sauntering coolly on towards the School House.

Mr. Quelch was coming out of the School House with a bundle of manuscript under his arm.

He stopped as he saw the policeman come panting into the Close.

"Dear me! That man again!" muttered the Remove-master, with a frown. "What can he want? I am really growing tired of all this."

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P.-c. Tozer staggered up, and touched his helmet with one hand to Mr. Quelch, while his other hand dropped upon the shoulder of Harry Wharton.

"What does this mean?" demanded Mr. Quelch acidly.

"It means that I arrest this person, sir."

"What!"

"I arrests him, sir. I takes him into charge."

"For what?"

"Stealing, sir."

Mr. Quelch could scarcely believe his ears.

"Are you mad, constable?" he exclaimed. "How dare you make such an accusation against one of my boys? I shall report you for this."

"Which he won't dare to deny it, sir," said Mr. Tozer, with dignity. "I had my heye on him, sir, having, as I may say, suspected him for some time. I saw him steal that there football, sir, from outside Mr. Bates's shop."

And the burly officer, having discharged his thunderbolt, gasped for breath, and mopped the perspiration from his face with a big red handkerchief.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Fairly Done!

MR. QUELCH looked at Mr. Tozer and looked at Harry Wharton. He was so utterly astounded that he hardly knew what to say or do. That Harry Wharton was a thief, that he had stolen a football from a shop, seemed incredible. Yet—

A crowd had gathered round in little more than a second. The juniors from the gateway, and juniors and seniors from all sides, gathered round thickly, and more than half Greyfriars was round the group of three—Mr. Quelch, Harry Wharton, and the constable. P.-c. Tozer's hand was still on Harry's shoulder.

"Impossible!" said Mr. Quelch at last.

"I saw him, sir."

"You actually saw him?"

"Yes, sir, with my own heyes," said Mr. Tozer. "With my hown heyes," he added, still more emphatically.

"I do not understand this."

"He was watchin' the shop, and I was suspicious of him," said Mr. Tozer. "All of a sudden he made a grab for the football and bolted."

"Stuff!" said Wingate, of the Sixth, audibly. "I don't believe a word of it."

"Silence, Wingate!" said Mr. Quelch, while P.-c. Tozer's face grew a shade more purple. "This matter must be thrashed out. What have you to say, Wharton? Do you deny having taken this ball from outside the shop?"

"No, sir," said Harry meekly.

"You took it?"

"Yes, sir."

"There you har!" said Mr. Tozer triumphantly.

Mr. Quelch stared blankly at Wharton.

"Do you admit, Wharton, that you stole this football?" he almost gasped.

Wharton shook his head.

"Certainly not, sir. I said that I took it, not that I stole it. I certainly did not steal it."

"I do not understand this, Wharton. You took it?"

"Certainly."

"It was the property of Mr. Bates?"

"No, sir. He had sold it to me."

"Oh!"

P.-c. Tozer gasped.

"Tain't true, sir," he remarked. "I takes him in charge for stealing. Why, sir, Mr. Bates wasn't to be seen all the time, sir. He just grabbed the ball and bolted. But I had my heye on him, sir."

"You say the ball was sold to you, Wharton?" said Mr. Quelch quietly, and without looking at the puffing officer.

"Yes, sir."

"Will Mr. Bates bear you out in that statement?"

"It is not necessary, sir; I have his receipt. But he would certainly corroborate my statement if you asked him."

"Show me the receipt."

Wharton took it from his pocket and handed it to Mr. Quelch. The Form-master read it over, and then held it out to the constable.

"This is a receipt for twelve shillings, received for a football, and signed by Mr. Bates, and dated to-day," said the Remove-master icily.

Mr. Tozer glared at the receipt.

He began to feel the ground slipping away under his feet, as it were, and he grew a little more purple in his uneasiness.

"I don't understand that, sir," he said. "I only knows that I saw Master Wharton grab the ball and bolt."

"Perhaps you can explain, Wharton. If you had the receipt for the ball in your pocket, why did you act in that decidedly suspicious manner?"

Wharton faced the Form-master firmly. He had no hesitation in speaking out.

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ONE
PENNY.

"Because I wanted to get my own back on Mr. Tozer, sir," he said. "We can't go to the village without his watching us, as if we were going to commit some crime. If we pass the tobacconist's he thinks we're going for smokes, and follows us. He has searched several of the fellows lately for cigarettes, and never found any. We're getting fed up with his cheek."

"My heye!" gasped Mr. Tozer.

A chuckle went through the crowd. Mr. Quelch tried to frown, but in spite of himself he smiled instead. There was something refreshing in Wharton's candour.

"I bought the ball by post," went on Harry deliberately, "and asked Mr. Bates to leave it outside his shop for me."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wingate suddenly. Then, as Mr. Quelch's eye turned upon him, he coloured and stammered.

"Sorry, sir; I—I couldn't help it."

The juniors were all chuckling.

"Go on, Wharton," said the Remove-master quietly.

"Well, sir, I went to Friardale this afternoon and took the ball, that's all. Mr. Tozer had no right to jump to the conclusion that I was stealing it. He ought to have known that a decent chap was incapable of stealing. I thought I'd teach him a lesson for his cheek in watching us up and down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar of laughter from the crowd. P.-c. Tozer's face was a study. Even Mr. Quelch could not help smiling as he saw it.

"Is that all, Wharton?" he asked.

"That's all, sir."

"And we can prove it all, sir," said Nugent. "We were all in the game, sir—the four of us."

"That's so," said Bob Cherry.

"The so-fulness is terrific, honoured sir."

"Which I've been took in," gasped Mr. Tozer, more purple than ever. "The young willains!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Young willains, I say!"

"That will do, Mr. Tozer," said the Remove-master quietly. "I suppose you are willing to admit that you have unjustly suspected Wharton?"

"I—I—I s'pose so, sir," said Mr. Tozer, as reluctantly as if each of the words was a tooth being painfully extracted.

"You do not desire to take him in charge?"

"N-n-n-no, sir."

"Very well. Then your business here is concluded. If I might offer you a word of advice, you might turn your zeal in other directions, and not give my boys quite so much of your attention in future."

Mr. Tozer answered not a word. He hadn't a word to answer. He walked away towards the gate, with a walk very unlike his usual imposing stride, and a shriek of laughter followed him.

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes upon Wharton.

"You have acted very recklessly," he said. "I cannot approve of it; but under the circumstances I shall say nothing, except that it must not occur again."

"Yes, sir."

And Mr. Quelch walked away towards the Head's garden. The juniors shrieked with laughter as they watched the portly form of P.-c. Tozer disappear at the gates. Never had they seen such a triumph over their old enemy. Mr. Tozer went down the dusty lane a sadder and wiser man, resolving in his mind to take Mr. Quelch's advice, and let the Greyfriars juniors severely alone.

Bob Cherry wiped his eyes.

"Oh, my hat!" he almost sobbed. "I sha'n't forget his face when he saw the receipt. It was a thing for a cinematograph. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think we've done with him for a bit," grinned Harry Wharton.

"The donefulness is terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the crowd broke up, laughing. There was no doubt that Mr. Tozer had been fairly "done" that time.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Telegram for Mr. Quelch.

IT was a long time before the Greyfriars juniors ceased to chuckle over the absurd adventure of P.-c. Tozer. Bulstrode and Skinner, however, though they enjoyed the discomfiture of the portly constable to the full, did not forget the little joke they had in hand themselves. As the crowd broke up after the departure of P.-c. Tozer, the two humorists of the Remove strolled down to the gate to meet Alonzo Todd. The Duffer of Greyfriars was not long in coming. He came along the dusty lane looking warm and fatigued, but with a smile of well-meaning satisfaction upon his face. Alonzo Todd had evidently done a

good deed that afternoon, and—as was usual when Todd tried to make himself useful—there was trouble in store for somebody.

"It's all right," grinned Bulstrode, as he caught sight of the Duffer of Greyfriars. "He's sent the telegrams."

"Looks like it," chuckled Skinner.

Todd nodded to them as he came up to the gates.

"All serene?" asked Bulstrode.

"Quite," said Todd. "I trust that what I have done may have the effect of uniting two loving hearts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Todd surveyed them in mild surprise.

"I do not see anything comic in the matter," he remarked.

"Surely it is a most serious crisis in the lives of Mr. Quelch and Miss Penelope Primrose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, you know——"

"Of course, it's a serious matter," agreed Bulstrode. "We're only laughing because—because it's so touching, you know. It takes us like that—sort of hysterics. Come on, Skinner!"

They walked away, leaving Todd staring after them dubiously.

"However, I have done right," he murmured. "It was certainly a delicate matter for an outsider to interfere with, but my Uncle Benjamin has always impressed upon me to make myself useful. I feel quite satisfied."

Todd hung about the gates for some time to see the telegraph-boy arrive. Bulstrode and Skinner watched, too, from a distance. They did not want to be too much with Todd now, in case of the discovery of his part in the transaction. Bulstrode and his comrade meant to lie very low if there was an inquiry.

The telegraph-boy arrived at last. He came into the Close, and crossed directly towards the School House. The three juniors watched him enter the House, and then he came out again, with the buff envelope in his hand.

"Looking for Quelch," murmured Bulstrode.

"What-ho!"

A maid appeared in the doorway, and pointed out to the telegraph-lad the direction, and he went into the Head's garden.

"He's taking it to Quelch," said Bulstrode. "This is where we come on in the scene. Come on, kid!"

They scuttled away to the Head's garden, and reached it before the telegraph-boy. The summer-house was at the end of the garden, close by a big elm-tree. Behind the tree the two young rascals took cover, and thence, through the openings in the summer-house, they could catch glimpses of Mr. Quelch. He had his manuscripts on a little table before him, and had a fountain-pen in his hand. Mr. Quelch was never so happy as when he had a few hours free and could devote them, in a quiet spot, to the book which he hoped to complete, perhaps in ten years. The telegraph-boy reached the summer-house, and the Remove-master looked up.

"Mr. Quelch, sir."

"Yes," said the Remove-master.

He took the telegram, and opened it.

Bulstrode and Skinner, from their place of concealment, watched breathlessly.

They saw Mr. Quelch look at the telegram, and watched his face grow in amazement as he read it.

He read it once, and he read it again, and then he read it a third time.

His face was a study.

"Any answer, sir?" asked the telegraph-boy, after waiting some time, during which Mr. Quelch did not break the silence.

The Form-master started.

"What—er—no," he replied. "No; no answer."

"Thank you, sir!"

The lad departed, and Mr. Quelch was left alone with his amazing telegram.

Bulstrode and Skinner were about six yards distant, peeping round the elm. They were getting a little frightened at their near proximity; but they dared not make a movement to retreat, apart from their desire to see the effect of the telegram upon Mr. Quelch.

The expression upon the Form-master's face alarmed them. They hardly breathed as they watched him.

"Dear me," said Mr. Quelch at last—"dear me! I do not understand this in the least, but I suppose it is a joke."

Bulstrode grinned.

Then, to the delight of the hidden juniors, Mr. Quelch proceeded to read the telegram aloud, slowly, conning over every word, as though trying to make out what it all meant.

"Dear Friend,—Will come to-day. I return your love. Wait for me."

Mr. Quelch rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

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"What can it mean? It must be a joke—a jape, as the boys would say. Surely no boy in Greyfriars could have the impudence to send me such a telegram!"

Mr. Quelch paused, and a crimson flush spread to the very roots of his hair at the thought.

The absurdity of the thing, and the fact that the "jape" was evidently known to the post-master in Friardale, and by him would probably be retailed to others, made the Form-master writhe inwardly.

Who had dared to play this joke upon him? For that it was a joke was certain to the mind of the Form-master.

That any lady had fallen in love with him, and was making an assignation with him, did not cross Mr. Quelch's mind for a moment.

He put the telegram in his pocket at last, and stood considering whether to make inquiries into the matter at once or to go on with his occupation. He decided upon the latter. Inquiries could be made at any time.

He sat down at the little table, and drew his papers towards him again.

But several times as he wrote and corrected, he stopped, and raised his head, with a look of perplexity upon his face.

It was evident that the curious incident of the telegram was still in his mind, in spite of his efforts to think of his work.

Bulstrode and Skinner cautiously retreated. At a safe distance from the summer-house, hidden in a thick shrubbery, they paused.

"It's going strong," murmured Bulstrode.

"There will be a row," said Skinner.

Bulstrode shrugged his shoulders.

"That won't hurt us."

"I suppose not."

"Wait till Penelope comes, then the fun will begin," said Bulstrode, with a soft chuckle.

Skinner rubbed his hands.

"Oh, I hope she'll come!"

"I'm sure of it," said Bulstrode.

And Bulstrode was right.

The two young rascals waited in the cover of the shrubbery for what seemed to them a very long time, but at last their patience was rewarded.

The lock of the garden-gate clicked.

Bulstrode started up.

"You heard that, Skinny?"

"Yes; it was the gate."

"Come on, then!"

"It mayn't be she."

"We'll see, anyway."

Skinner nodded, and followed his comrade. They crept cautiously through the shrubbery, and silently approached the elm-tree that shadowed the summer-house. Bulstrode suddenly grasped Skinner's arm, and stopped him as they came in sight once more of Mr. Quelch through the openings of the foliage round the summer-house.

"Look!" he whispered.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Dr. Locke is Very Much Surprised!

"MISS PRIMROSE!"

It was Marjorie Hazeldene who spoke, in the garden of Cliff House.

The girl came down the garden-path with a telegram in her hand, and Miss Primrose, the head-mistress of Cliff House, looked up from her needlework. Miss Primrose, when she was not teaching, was always engaged with her needle, thus setting an excellent example to youth—which youth did not always follow.

"Yes, Marjorie dear?" said Miss Penelope Primrose.

Marjorie held out the telegram.

"This has just come, Miss Primrose."

"Thank you, my dear!"

Miss Primrose carefully laid down the article which she was engaged upon, and which she had been engaged upon for months without any apparently great progress with it, and took the telegram.

Marjorie went down the path again, and Miss Penelope opened the envelope.

Miss Primrose did not really like receiving telegrams. They threw her into a flutter. She passed a very quiet existence, and a telegram was like the noisy world knocking at the door of her quiet life.

She opened the envelope with fluttering fingers.

Then she adjusted her glasses, and read.

The astonishment Mr. Quelch had shown on receipt of his telegram was nothing to that Miss Primrose displayed.

But mingled with astonishment there was another emotion, absent in Mr. Quelch's case.

A simpering smile came over the calm, middle-aged face of Miss Primrose, and her eyes beamed a little.

Her whole attitude bore a resemblance to that known as

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"bridling," as she read the telegram through for the second time.

"Bless me!" she murmured.

Miss Penelope was considered "awfully good" by her youthful pupils. But the good lady, like most of us, grew older outside than inside. Time had written its wrinkles upon her, certainly; but her heart was still young, her spirit cheerful and somewhat romantic.

It is a thing the young find it difficult to understand; and many a lad of fifteen would be greatly surprised to find that his old uncle was really quite a gay young fellow at heart, only a little crusted outside with years. Miss Primrose, at twenty, had dreams like most of us, and they had not left her yet, though many and many a year had passed since then.

"Bless me!" said Miss Primrose again.

She toyed with the telegram, and a soft pink blush overspread her cheeks. Miss Primrose looked very pretty then.

For a third and a fourth time she read the telegram.

It ran as follows:

"I must see you and tell you all. Dare I hope that you will be in the summer-house at Greyfriars this afternoon?"

That was all.

There was no signature; even Alonzo Todd had stopped short of that. But Miss Primrose had little doubt as to who the telegram was from.

Mr. Phipps, the mathematics-master at Greyfriars, who also gave instruction in that interesting science at Cliff House, had always been most attentive.

Lately, Mr. Phipps had been a little unwell and had been obliged to miss his usual visit to Cliff House, and Miss Primrose had missed him. Here was a proof that he had missed her also.

Doubtless he did not feel equal to coming over to Cliff House, but he was very eager to see her and tell her "all."

That was the explanation that naturally occurred to Miss Primrose.

The good lady rose at last, and went into the house.

She did not emerge for more than half an hour; and when she did, she was clad in her sweetest gown and a wonderful bonnet.

Miss Locke, the second mistress at Cliff House, glanced at her as she went out. Miss Primrose gave her an embarrassed smile, but no explanation.

The good lady walked over to Greyfriars like one in a dream. She reached the school, and entered the Head's garden without going to the house.

Miss Primrose was an old friend of the Head's, whose sister was her assistant-mistress at Cliff House, and visits were often exchanged. Miss Primrose knew the garden from end to end.

Mr. Quelch was busy with his manuscripts when the gate clicked.

But the Form-master had succeeded in dismissing the matter of the telegram from his mind, and had concentrated his thoughts at last upon the work before him.

He did not notice the click of the gate, nor hear the sound of footsteps and a rustling dress in the garden. Neither was he aware that two young rascals belonging to the Remove were watching him with keen eyes.

Miss Primrose reached the open doorway of the summer-house.

She stood there, framed in the thick clusters of creepers that formed the doorway, and her shadow fell across Mr. Quelch's table.

But he was so busily occupied that he did not observe it.

Miss Primrose stood silent, watching him.

Her surprise was great to see Mr. Quelch there instead of Mr. Phipps. Mr. Phipps was the only gentleman at Greyfriars who had shown her the particular attention which might lead to business, so to speak, and she had never thought of the Remove-master in that light at all.

Mr. Quelch, true, was her own age, or a little older, and she respected him very much, and they were on very good terms. Certainly this was very flattering. Upon the whole, there was no doubt that the Remove-master was a very much superior man to Mr. Phipps. Miss Primrose felt her heart flutter.

For a lady of uncertain years to have two devoted admirers was really a little out of the common, and, for the moment, Miss Primrose could not make up her mind which of the two she liked the better.

She waited.

Mr. Quelch worked on.

Miss Primrose's face softened very much. Poor fellow—he was so anxious about his fate, that he had brought papers with him, to work and occupy his mind during the period of suspense, while he waited for her coming.

That was clear to Miss Primrose.

And naturally it touched her heart. As she thought of it, she felt that she liked Mr. Quelch better than Mr. Phipps.

But the waiting was growing irksome. She wished that Mr. Quelch would look up.

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EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

She wondered if she could venture upon a slight cough. The good lady made several little attempts, but she was too timid to let them become audible, and Mr. Quelch did not look up.

Miss Primrose moved slightly at last, and there was a rustle of the wistaria. Then the Remove-master raised his eyes from his papers.

He started at the sight of the form standing before him.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Miss Primrose!"

The lady blushed and nodded.

"It is I!" she said.

"I did not hear you."

"No?"

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet, and stood regarding the lady. His look showed surprise; he wondered what she had come to the summer-house for, concluding naturally that she was at Greyfriars on a visit to the Head.

But Miss Primrose attributed the surprise in the Form-master's face to another cause. She thought he was surprised at her kindness in coming in person in answer to his telegram.

She smiled sweetly.

"Yes," she went on, with a nod. "I had your telegram."

"My telegram?"

"Yes."

Mr. Quelch stared at her.

"M-m-my telegram?" he murmured again.

"Yes. It was so sweet of you."

"Sweet?"

"So sweet."

And Miss Primrose smiled and blushed. She rather expected Mr. Quelch to advance and hold out his arm to her. She was debating what she should do if he did. But he didn't.

He stood and stared.

Miss Primrose's words puzzled him; but her looks and her manner puzzled him still more. He had never seen a lady smile and nod in that manner before, and if he had not known and respected Miss Primrose so much, he would have suspected that she had been drinking. That was impossible; and the other, and only other explanation was, that she was a little weak in the head.

Mr. Quelch felt very embarrassed.

He had had to deal with all sorts and conditions of boys in his time, and men, too, but a middle-aged lady with a wandering mind was a new experience to him.

What to do he had not the faintest idea.

And Miss Primrose was blushing and smiling on in the most embarrassing manner.

"It was a surprise to me," added Miss Primrose.

"Indeed?" stammered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, indeed. But a pleasant surprise."

"Oh!"

"And I came."

"Ah—yes—I see you have come," murmured Mr. Quelch.

"How very kind of you to—to come."

Miss Primrose beamed.

"But I am very pleased to come," she said softly. "And you are really glad to see me, Horace?"

Mr. Quelch jumped.

Horace!

Miss Penelope had never called him by his Christian name before, and she simply astounded him by doing so now.

Horace!

He could hardly believe his ears.

Was he dreaming?

In spite of himself, he coloured, and Mr. Quelch's blush made Miss Primrose think that Horace was really very handsome when he had a little colour.

"You may call me Penelope, if you like," she said.

Mr. Quelch gasped again.

Penelope!

Certainly, if Miss Primrose called him Horace, there was no reason why he should not call her Penelope; but—

The Remove-master felt like a man in a dream.

"You do not speak!" murmured Miss Primrose.

"Really, madam—" stammered Mr. Quelch.

"Madam—to me?" murmured Miss Primrose reproachfully.

"Madam!"

"Horace!"

Mr. Quelch looked round helplessly.

"May—may I take you to the Head?" he murmured.

"The Head!"

"Yes—yes!"

"Horace!"

"Dear me," murmured Mr. Quelch, "she is certainly out of her mind. What a dreadful situation."

"So—so kind of you to send me the telegram," said Miss Primrose. "But why did you not write?"

"Write?"

"Yes. You could have said more."

"But—"

"But the telegram was very gratifying—"

"But—I—I did not send you a telegram, madam," gasped the unhappy Remove-master. "There—there is some mistake!"

Miss Primrose took the telegram from her bag.

The Remove-master looked at it. He felt as if his head was going round and round.

She held it out to him.

He read it.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed.

"Mr. Quelch!"

"I did not send that, madam!"

Miss Primrose turned quite faint.

"You did not send it?"

"Certainly not!"

"But—but—"

"It is not signed, madam!"

"But—"

"It is from someone else—"

"But—but you are here—"

Mr. Quelch wiped his damp brow.

"Madam! I—I am sorry—it seems to me that we are both the victims of a joke," he said stammeringly. "A—such a cruel and practical wicked joke. I also have received an absurd telegram this afternoon."

"Oh!"

"Some villainous practical joker is at the bottom of it," said Mr. Quelch. "I never sent that wire, and never thought of doing anything of the kind!"

"Oh!"

"The matter shall be inquired into and the culprit severely punished," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh!"

Miss Primrose swayed, and Mr. Quelch stepped quickly forward and caught her as she fell. She had fainted.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

He held the unconscious lady in his arms, almost distracted, and wondering what to do. There was a step on the path, and a majestic figure paused before the summer-house.

"Mr. Quelch!" exclaimed a surprised and shocked voice.

It was the Head.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not Pleasant.

DR. LOCKE stopped, and stared in amazement at the Remove-master.

The last sight he would have expected to see was Mr. Quelch supporting a female in his arms in the open doorway of the summer-house.

For a moment he did not see that Miss Primrose had fainted.

The doctor stared at Mr. Quelch.

"Mr. Quelch!" he repeated severely.

The Remove-master gasped.

"Dr. Locke—"

"I must ask you what this means, Mr. Quelch."

"Sir—"

"Most unseemly—"

"Dr. Locke—"

"My wife, sir, or my little daughter might have passed at any moment," said Dr. Locke, "and to see you embracing this lady—"

Mr. Quelch turned scarlet.

"Doctor!"

"I repeat it, sir, embracing—"

"Miss Primrose has fainted."

"What!"

"M-m-m-m-m!" murmured Miss Primrose faintly.

"She is coming to, thank goodness."

"M-m-m-m-m!"

"What does this mean, Mr. Quelch? I did not know that Miss Primrose was here—and what reason can she have had to faint?"

"I—I don't know, sir. I—I mean—a practical joke has been played."

"Eh?"

"A telegram was sent to Miss Primrose, hinting that I—I wished to propose to her, sir!" said Mr. Quelch with a scarlet face.

"Bless my soul!"

"I need not say that there was not the slightest foundation for it," said Mr. Quelch hurriedly.

"I—I presume not."

"Now Miss Primrose has fainted—"

"M-m-m-m-m!"

"Pray help her into the house," said Dr. Locke, "Mrs."

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Locke will look after her. This is a most extraordinary occurrence, Mr. Quelch."

"Most extraordinary, sir."

"A practical joke, you say."

"And a very wicked and cruel one."

The Head frowned.

"The practical joker shall be made to feel sorry for it, if it is within my power to punish him," he exclaimed.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"Yes, sir; I shall look into the matter at once."

"Pray help Miss Primrose to the house now."

"M-m-m-m-m."

Mr. Quelch hesitated.

"Perhaps the sight of me m-m-m-may increase Miss Primrose's distress when she recovers," he suggested nervously.

"Perhaps you would not mind taking charge of her."

The Head backed away.

"I—I have had no experience in dealing with fainting ladies," he said hastily.

"Neither have I, sir."

"However, you—"

"But you—"

"No, you, Mr. Quelch—"

"But you—"

"Really—"

"I must say—"

"M-m-m-m-m-m," mumbled Miss Primrose. "Where am I? What has happened?"

She opened her eyes.

Mr. Quelch promptly placed her upon a seat, and backed out of the summer house. He even forgot his precious manuscripts on the table.

Dr. Locke made a movement to follow him.

But it was impossible to leave the unfortunate lady alone.

"Mr. Quelch!" he called out feebly.

But Mr. Quelch either did not hear or did not heed. He hurried on through the shrubbery, and was gone in a few seconds. Dr. Locke resigned himself to his fate. Mr. Quelch breathed more easily as he escaped from the garden.

He went into the house for his coat and hat, and then strode away to the village of Friardale, with a grim and determined expression of countenance.

He knew that he could learn from Mr. Coots who the sender of the telegrams was, and he meant to find out at once.

And if the sender of the telegrams belonged to Greyfriars, there was a reckoning in store for him.

Mr. Quelch was not long gone to the village.

Mr. Coots, as mentioned before, had remarked Alonzo Todd at the time that he took in the telegrams to be sent, and he was quite willing to give information; all the more because of his grudge against the Duffer of Greyfriars.

In a few minutes talk with Mr. Coots, the Remove-master elicited Todd's name, and then he strode back to Greyfriars in vengeful mood.

He came back looking for Alonzo Todd, and if Todd had seen the expression upon his face, he would have done his best to keep out of the way.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Is Willing.

BUNTER!

Loder, the prefect, called up the stairs that led to the Remove passage, in a voice that was clearly audible in No. 1 Study.

Billy Bunter heard it, but he did not heed it.

Bunter had no doubt that Loder wanted a fag again, and Bunter did not mean to fag, and so the fat junior lay low.

"Bunter!"

Billy Bunter, who was devoting his attention to the contents of a bag of jam tarts, shifted a little uneasily.

"Why can't he call somebody else?" he growled. "It isn't fair to pick on me in this way. I'm jolly well not going."

"Bunter!"

The fat junior munched tarts in silence.

Loder did not call again, but there was a sound of quick footsteps on the stairs. Billy Bunter jumped up in alarm.

The prefect was coming up for him.

There was no time to be lost. Leaving the bag of tarts still on the table, and with a half-eaten one in his hand, Billy Bunter slipped under the table, the cover of which almost concealed him from view.

There, with wildly-beating heart, he remained as quiet as he could.

The door of the study was flung open the next moment.

Loder looked in.

"Bunter!" he rapped out.

"He's not here," said another voice, which Billy Bunter recognised as that of Ionides, the Greek.

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

Loder growled angrily.

"Snoop said he was in his study, and I saw him come up-stairs myself," he said. "Bunter! Bunter! Bunter!"

"Here's his bag of tarts still on the table," said Ionides.

"He's been here lately. I wonder——"

The Greek paused.

He had a keen ear, and the sound of Bunter's stertorous, suppressed breathing was faintly audible from under the table.

The Greek grinned and made a sign to Loder.

"He thinks you want him to fag, and he's hidden himself," he remarked, in a whisper. "Can't you hear him snorting under the table?"

Loder nodded and grinned.

Ionides drew a little back from the table and looked down. Now that he knew Bunter was there, he could make out part of the fat junior's form, between the edge of the cover and the floor.

He drew back his right foot.

"I fancy there's a dog under the table, Loder," he remarked.

And he kicked.

The kick took effect upon the plump body of the junior, and Billy Bunter gave vent to a wild howl.

"Yaroooh!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed the Greek, in apparent surprise. "It isn't a dog—it's Bunter."

"Yow!"

"Is that you, Bunter?"

"Yaroooh! Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Ow! I'm hurt!"

"Come out, you fat young rascal!"

"Yow!"

Bunter crawled out from under the table, looking very flustered, and rubbing himself where the Greek senior's kick had taken effect.

"What were you doing under the table?" demanded Loder.

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"I—I got down there to—to look for a tart I dropped," he stammered.

"Liar!"

"Oh, really, Loder——"

"You got there to hide when you heard me coming," said the prefect. "You know I wanted you to fag for me."

"I—— Oh, really——"

"Don't tell lies, you young ass," said Loder, contemptuously.

"Well," said Bunter, shifting his ground, "I don't see why you should pick on me to fag for you. Why couldn't you call Nugent or Inky?"

"I want you to cook," said Loder.

Bunter's expression changed at once. His fat face brightened up wonderfully.

"Cook!" he repeated.

"Yes."

"You're standing a feed?"

"Just so."

"Now you're talking!" said Bunter emphatically. "Why, you know how willing I always am to oblige a fellow I like. I like you. I'd cook anything for you with pleasure. If you want any shopping done——"

"I do."

"Good! I'll do it. I'd rather not have tea in this study, really. The fellows here are awfully mean with me," Bunter explained confidentially. "I never get enough to eat, and it's no good my explaining to them that I've got a weak constitution, that has to be kept up with constant nourishment. They only laugh."

"I'm standing the feed," said Loder. "I want you to get in the things, and do the cooking, and have everything ready by seven."

Bunter rubbed his hands.

"Certainly, Loder. I shall be very pleased. I suppose you want me to come to the feed, too, don't you?"

Loder sniffed.

"I'm not likely to have a fag to a Sixth-Form feed," he said; "but you can clear away after we have done, and you can have the leavings."

Bunter blinked doubtfully.

"Well, I dare say that's all right," he remarked. "Give me the money, and I'll cut off to Mrs. Mimble's at once."

"I'll give you a list of things, and you can improve on it, if you like," said Loder. "I'll settle with Mrs. Mimble myself; I have to change a ten-pound note. Look here, there's the list."

He threw a scribbled paper to the fat junior.

Billy Bunter picked it up, put his spectacles straight, and blinked over the list.

"You haven't dough-nuts down here," he said.

"I don't want dough-nuts."

"But I do," said Bunter. "Better have some. And cream puffs——"

"Leave those out."

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"But they're good, and——"

"And you like them," grinned Loder.

"Well, as a matter of fact——"

"Well, leave them out; don't bring one, or I'll laun you," said Loder. "Now, get to business, and don't waste time. I want that feed ready at seven."

"All right," said Bunter. "By the way, I suppose I can have a snack to go on with? I don't suppose I shall be able to do my best cooking unless I have a snack. You see, I've got a delicate constitution, and——"

"Oh, shut up!"

"But——"

"Get that feed ready, and don't touch a morsel, or I'll take it out of you with a cricket-stump," said Loder.

"But——"

The prefect made a threatening gesture.

"Cut off!" he exclaimed.

Billy Bunter scuttled out of the study.

He ran down the corridor, and bumped into Alonzo Todd, who was coming along to his study. The short-sighted junior had a way of bumping into people, but he never held himself to blame for it.

He staggered back, and caught at the wall.

"Oh, really Wharton——" he exclaimed.

Todd blinked at him.

"I'm so sorry," he said, "I——"

"Oh, it's you, you ass!" growled Bunter.

"Really, Bunter——"

"You chump!" said Bunter, setting his spectacles straight. "You're always blundering somehow. You might have injured me seriously, running into me like that."

"But you ran into me," said Todd. "Really——"

"Oh, shut up! Look here, you might come and help me carry some parcels," said Bunter, "I've got a lot of shopping to do for Loder."

"Certainly," said Todd; "I am always ready to be obliging. My Uncle Benjamin always said to me——"

"Well, come on," said Bunter, ruthlessly cutting short the reminiscences of Uncle Benjamin; "I'm in a hurry."

"Certainly, Bunter."

And Billy Bunter led the way to the school shop. For once Billy Bunter was willing to do something for somebody. Had Loder wanted any other fagging done, Bunter was the least promising person to ask to do it; but preparing a feed was a different matter. There Bunter was in his element. And if the trouble had been twice as great, Billy Bunter would have been willing.

THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

Todd Helps.

HARRY WHARTON came in from the cricket-field, his bat under his arm, with Nugent and Hurree Singh. He met Billy Bunter and Todd as they were going out, and he signed to the fat junior to stop.

"Hold on, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him with a new expression. As a rule, he was always politest at meal-times, and he never remembered offences against anybody who could be induced by any possibility to stand a feed.

But when Bunter had no immediate need of his friends, he generally developed a rugged independence of character, upon which he prided himself very much.

At the present moment Loder's feed, and his own expected share in it, filled up his mind, and he was inclined to be very lofty with his study-mates in the Remove.

"Did you speak, Wharton?" he asked, with his little fat nose very high up in the air and his spectacles glimmering over it.

Harry Wharton looked at him in surprise. He never could get quite used to Bunter, or fully understand his character.

"Yes," he said; "it's nearly tea-time."

"Is it?" said Bunter indifferently.

Nugent whistled.

"What's happened?" he exclaimed. "Bunter's forgotten a meal-time! Who was it said the age of miracles was past?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Don't be an ass, Bunter!" said Wharton good-naturedly. "You know it's tea-time, and you must be hungry—you always are. We're going to have eggs and ham for tea, too, and so you can cut up and get the frying-pan ready."

Bunter sniffed.

"Sorry I sha'n't be able to join you at tea, you fellows," he remarked, in an airy way.

"What!"

"Getting deaf, like Dutton?" asked Bunter. "I thought I spoke plainly enough. I'm sorry I sha'n't be able to join you at tea."

"You're not going to have tea in Hall?"

"Oh, no!"

"Nor miss it? You're not ill?"

"Certainly not! I've got another invitation," said Bunter loftily. "Sorry I sha'n't be able to join you. Ta-ta! Come on, Toddy!"

And Bunter walked away with the Duffer of Greyfriars. Harry Wharton & Co. stared after him in surprise.

"Somebody must be feeding Bunter on a large scale to make him turn up his nose at ham and eggs," remarked Nugent.

"The scalefulness of the feed must be terrific."

Wharton looked puzzled.

"Blessed if I know who can be feeding him, then," he said. "Still, it doesn't matter—we can cook the things ourselves; and, after all, it will be better without Bunter. Let's get up to the study."

"Right you are."

And the chums of the Remove went up to No. 1 Study, and soon forgot about Billy Bunter and his remarkable refusal to be present at a meal.

Bunter lost no time in getting to the tuckshop. He ordered all the articles on Loder's list, and some more, too, and they were made up into two very considerable parcels.

Bunter and Todd took one each, and carried them off to the School House. They met Skinner and Bulstrode on the way, and were promptly stopped.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "Here's Bunter going to ruin his health by reckless gorging again."

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"I really think it's our duty to stop him," said Bulstrode, jerking Bunter's parcel away from him. "Halves!"

"You'd better leave it alone, Bulstrode!"

"You cheeky young ass, are you going to jaw with me?" demanded Bulstrode, putting on his most bullying expression.

But for once the fat junior was not daunted.

"The things belong to Loder," he said.

"Oh!"

"You'd better give them back," grinned Bunter.

"Look here—"

A finger and thumb closed on Bulstrode's ear, and he twisted round, to find himself looking at Loder.

"Ow!" he gasped.

"What are you going to do with my grub?" demanded Loder.

"Ow! I—"

"He's going to carry it to your study, Loder," said Bunter, with a grin.

"Go ahead, then!"

And Bulstrode did. Bunter followed, empty-handed. The bully of the Remove departed scowling, leaving Bunter and Todd in the senior's study.

"You can stay and help me, if you like, Todd," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I've got a lot to do to get the tea ready for seven."

Todd nodded assent.

"I will help you with pleasure, Bunter. I shall be very glad of an opportunity to make myself useful."

"Scrape out the grate, then, and get the fire going."

"Certainly!"

And Alonzo started. Bunter laid the cloth and unpacked the eatables. He had just finished when Master Mimble, the hopeful son of the tuckshop-keeper, appeared at the doorway of the study.

"Master Loder here?" asked Mimble.

"Can't you see he isn't?"

"Mother says the bill was wrapped up in the things, and it comes to one pound seven-and-sixpence."

"I'll give it to Loder."

Young Mimble hesitated. The truth was that Mrs. Mimble had her doubts about letting Loder have so much without immediate payment, and she also had a suspicion that Bunter might have used the prefect's name to get a feed. The boy hung about the study door, evidently undecided whether to go.

Bunter blinked at him impatiently.

"Well, what do you want?" he rapped out.

"Mother said I was to take back the money."

Bunter snorted.

"Oh, rats! Come again when Loder's here, then, or look for him in the Close."

The boy departed, evidently very doubtful in his mind.

Todd rose from the grate with a burning face.

"There! I've managed it!" he said, as the fire roared up the chimney. "Shall I go and fill the kettle?"

"Yes; and buck up."

Todd filled the kettle, and jammed it on the fire. He propped it up with coals, and as they were dislodged in the burning, the kettle swooped over to one side. There was a

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rush of water on the fire, and immediately the study was filled with steam and an acrid smell.

Bunter gave a yell.

"You ass! What are you doing?"

"I'm so sorry," gasped Todd. "The kettle appears to have lost its balance a little, and I fear that some of the water is—"

"Well, why don't you take it off the fire, you chump!" roared Bunter.

"Dear me! Of course, that would be the most advisable course to pursue under the circumstances."

And Todd made a dash for the kettle.

The handle had been licked by the flames for some time, and was very hot, but Todd did not know that, or think of it.

He plucked the kettle off the fire and burnt his fingers, and allowed the kettle to drop, uttering a fearful yell.

Crash went the kettle on the hearthrug, and what was left of the water streamed out over the carpet.

"Ow!" yelled Todd, sucking his fingers. "Ow! Ow!"

"What's the matter, idiot?"

"Yow! I've burned my fingers! Ow!"

"You've slopped all over the carpet!" howled Bunter. "Shove that kettle in the grate, you ass, and get that water mopped up before Loder comes, or he'll skin you!"

"Ow!"

"Don't make that row over a little pain," said Bunter scornfully. "You disgust me. Why can't you show some pluck!"

"Ow!"

"Oh, shut up!"

Alonzo Todd lifted the kettle into the fender with the tongs, and then, sucking his burnt fingers, he used the other hand to mop up the wet with a cloth.

Meanwhile, Bunter was preparing the feed, Todd mopping away industriously. Loder looked into the study and sniffed.

"What a scent you've got here!" he exclaimed.

"It's only Todd been upsetting the kettle in the fire," said Bunter. "Tea's nearly ready."

"I see you've got dough-nuts," said Loder grimly, looking at a plate of them, from which Bunter had been helping himself every few minutes.

"Er—yes. You said dough-nuts, didn't you?" stammered Bunter.

"No; I didn't."

"I—I thought you did, you know. Anyway, they're nice." Ionides came into the study.

"Well, here I am," he said. "It's time."

"Nearly ready," said Loder. "Where's Carne?"

"Here I am," said Carne, following the Greek senior in; "and I've missed my tea specially to have a good appetite."

"Good!"

"Buck up, Bunter!"

"Nearly ready," said the fat junior cheerfully.

There was a sound of hurried footsteps in the passage. Carne looked round towards the door.

"Got any more guests coming, Loder?"

Loder shook his head.

"No."

"Well, here's— By Jove! It's Quelch!"

Mr. Quelch, with a pale and angry face, appeared in the open doorway of the study. He glanced round the room.

"Is Todd here?" he exclaimed.

THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

Too Obliging.

ALONZO TODD was kneeling by the hearth, still engaged in mopping up the water, and Mr. Quelch did not see him for the moment. If Todd had seen the Form-master's face he would probably have been tempted to crawl under the table instead of getting up. But as he heard Mr. Quelch asking for him he rose to his feet. He looked a rather forlorn object as he stood blinking at the Form-master, with the sopping rag in one hand and the fingers of the other crammed into his mouth.

Mr. Quelch looked at him with a brow of thunder.

"Ah, you are here, Todd!" he said grimly.

"Yes, sir," said Todd timidly. "Making myself useful, sir."

The three seniors drew away towards the window. They could see that Mr. Quelch was very angry—exceeding even his usual "tantrums." What was the matter they did not know, but they preferred not to attract the attention of Mr. Quelch when he was in that mood. He had a bitter tongue when he was annoyed, and he was more than annoyed now. His eyes were fairly gleaming.

"I have been to the post-office, Todd," said Mr. Quelch,

speaking as though he was alone with Todd; and, indeed, he was hardly aware, for the moment, of the presence of the others.

"Indeed, sir," said Todd casually.

"Yes," thundered Mr. Quelch; "and I have spoken to Mr. Coots, and he has given me your name!"

"Has he really, sir?"

"Yes. You sent two telegrams to-day!"

Todd started.

He had not wished that matter to get to Mr. Quelch's ears; not because he was afraid of any consequences, but because he did not wish to appear in search of glory. He could not understand why the Remove-master should be angry, even if he had discovered the truth about the telegrams.

"Yes, sir," he repeated meekly.

"You sent a telegram to me, purporting to come from someone else," said Mr. Quelch sulphurously.

"I—I—"

"You sent a telegram to a lady, purporting to come from me."

"I—"

"What was your motive in doing this, Todd?"

"I wished to bring two loving hearts together, sir," said Todd cheerfully.

Mr. Quelch jumped.

"What!" he shouted.

"I wished to bring two loving hearts together, sir. The fact that you loved Miss Primrose in secret—"

Mr. Quelch staggered back.

"What!" he said feebly.

"And that Miss Primrose had long loved you, sir—"

"Boy!"

"Came to my knowledge," went on Todd. "My Uncle Benjamin always told me, sir, to make myself useful in every possible way, and to do obliging things to everybody. I have always tried to benefit by his precepts, sir. I wish you knew my Uncle Benjamin—"

"Todd!"

"How could I make myself more useful, or be more obliging, than by bringing two loving hearts together?" exclaimed Todd enthusiastically.

Mr. Quelch appeared to be suffocating.

"I hope the result will be happy, sir," went on Todd. "I trust I shall be allowed a small portion of the wedding cake; not to eat, sir, I am not greedy, but to keep as a souvenir of the happiness I have been the means of bringing about, in effecting the union of two loving hearts—"

"Silence!" shouted Mr. Quelch.

"Ye-es, sir!"

"I do not know who has been practising on your credulity this time," said Mr. Quelch, breathing hard through his nose. "From what I have observed of you, I think you did not play this wicked trick from sheer malice—"

"Oh, sir!"

"And I can only conclude that you have been deceived by some would-be humorous person."

"Oh!"

"Did anyone tell you this ridiculous story?" demanded the Remove-master.

"I—I was certainly informed as to the state of your affections, sir, and—"

"By whom?"

"I—I promised not to tell, sir."

Mr. Quelch snapped his teeth.

"Todd, you have insulted me, your Form-master, and you have cruelly insulted a very estimable lady," he said.

"Oh, sir!" Alonzo was almost in tears. "I—I'm sure I meant to make myself useful, sir. It's very odd, but—"

"You must give me the name of the person who deceived you, or you must take the full punishment of your outrageous conduct, Todd."

"I—I'm ready to take the punishment, sir," said Todd meekly. "I—I suppose I deserve it, but—but I meant well, sir."

Mr. Quelch turned upon Loder.

"It was not you, by any chance?" he exclaimed.

"I, sir!" exclaimed the prefect, with a start, and turning red. "I am not likely to play such a trick, I hope, or to impose on a silly boy."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"I am not so sure of that," he said. "That you have imposed upon a silly boy, and that boy is Todd, I am already aware, Loder."

"Sir!"

"I know what I am saying," said Mr. Quelch sharply. "Yesterday you sent Todd to the post-office for a telegram which had been addressed to you there."

Loder turned deadly pale. He made a movement forward as Mr. Quelch began, as if he would somehow have stopped him; but he could do nothing. He felt rather than saw the glance of savage suspicion that Ionides turned upon him.

The truth was out now with a vengeance.

Loder turned cold at heart.

"I am glad to have an opportunity of speaking to you

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about this matter, Loder," said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Here, before your friends, I want to give you a plain warning. If that telegram was of a perfectly innocent nature, there was no reason why it should not have come directly to Greyfriars. The conclusion is that it was not of an innocent nature. I suspect that it had something to do with racing. I do not know, and I shall not inquire. But I warn you plainly that I consider your conduct open to the gravest suspicion, and that if any matter of the sort comes to my knowledge again, I shall lay the whole facts before the Head."

And Mr. Quelch, making a sign to Todd to follow him, left the study. The Duffer of Greyfriars followed him gloomily. He was about to suffer for good intentions, as people frequently do in this world; but at all events he had pluck to take his punishment, and to keep his promise to Bulstrode.

He left a dead silence behind him in the study. Carne looked at Loder and Ionides, and then turned to the window. He knew that a storm was coming; he guessed what Loder had done, and he was none too good for such a trick himself. He felt that it was rough on Loder to be found out, that was all.

Billy Bunter was eating cake, with no sound but an active munching of the jaws. He was keenly interested in the proceedings, with a view to retailing them in the junior common-room later; but he did not mean to lose time. The cake was good, and the eyes of the seniors were not upon him just then.

Ionides fixed his black eyes upon Loder; his lips parted in a kind of snarl, and he showed a gleam of prominent teeth.

"So that was it?" he said, breaking the silence.

Loder tried to bluster.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "I don't understand you."

The Greek's gleaming eyes never left his face.

"You had a telegram yesterday, after all, and you had it sent to the post-office, so that I should not know," he said. "Fool that I was—I see all now! Todd fetched it for you, and it was that, and not a letter, that the policeman took from him and brought to you. That was why you sent me out of the study when Tozer began to speak."

"I—"

"That telegram reached you, and must have reached the post-office after the race was run. That was why you were willing to bet on Black Prince. It was because you already had the result of the race in your hand."

"I deny it! I—"

The Greek shrugged his shoulders.

"You can deny it if you like," he said. "I know the truth, and so does Carne. You cheated me of ten pounds. I was not satisfied all the time, but I did not see how you could have got information from the racecourse without my knowing it, as I was watching you all the time. Now I know how you did it."

"I tell you—"

The Greek held out his hand.

"Give me my banknote."

"What!"

"Give me my ten-pound note," said the Greek savagely.

"Do you think I am going to be robbed? Give it me at once."

"I won't! I—"

The Greek set his teeth.

"You will!" he said, in a concentrated voice. "Otherwise I go straight to the Head!"

"You—you beastly sneak! It will be as bad for you as for me then, and—"

Carne turned round from the window.

"Give it to him, Loder," he said quietly.

"But—"

"Don't be an ass!" said Carne. "Can't you see the game's up? You can't possibly keep the stakes under the circumstances. It's all out now."

Loder drew the ten-pound note from his pocket, and flung it on the table.

"Take it—and go!" he snarled.

Ionides picked up the banknote, put it in his purse, and left the study without another word. Carne gave Loder a curious look, and followed him. It was pretty clear that there would be no feed now—except for Bunter.

Loder ground his teeth. The money was gone—and he was found out. It was not a pleasant situation. It was not made any more pleasant at that moment by young Mible putting his head in at the door with a message from Mrs. Mible.

"If you please, Master Loder, mother says will you pay for the things now, or she wants me to take them back."

Loder smiled grimly. He had no money to pay for the things now; and he certainly did not feel like standing a feed to his two dear friends, Ionides and Carne.

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WEEK:

"THE POSTAL ORDER CONSPIRACY."

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By FRANK RICHARDS

"Take the rubbish back, and be hanged to you!" he growled.

"Some of it's gone," said Mimble. "And——"

"Oh, hold your tongue, you brat!"

"I—I say, Loder," said Bunter, in alarm, "this won't do, you know! Aren't you going to stand a feed? I'm jolly hungry, you know, and I've taken a lot of trouble to get this feed ready. I think—ow—yow!"

Loder sprang towards the fat junior. He was glad of a victim just then. His grasp closed upon Billy Bunter's collar.

"You fat rotter, get out!" he growled. "I've stood enough, without standing anything from you. Out you go!"

"Ow! Yow! Yow!"

Loder flung the fat junior through the doorway. Billy Bunter brought up against the opposite wall, and slid to the floor. He sat there blinking.

"Ow," he groaned—"ow! I'm injured! My legs are broken, and my ankles are sprained awfully, and three of my ribs are—ow—yow—gerroh!"

Bunter leaped up as the angry prefect kicked him, and darted down the passage. He fled at top speed, and did not stop till he was in the lower hall. There, near the door of Mr. Quelch's study, he paused to take breath.

"Ow!" he murmured. "The beast! Yow! The rotter! I've been swindled! And it will be too late for tea in the study now! Yow!"

The door of Mr. Quelch's room opened, and Alonzo Todd came out. He was rubbing his hands very hard together, and his face was a little white. He gave Bunter the ghost of a grin, and walked past him without speaking. Alonzo Todd had evidently reaped his reward, and Bulstrode and Skinner were, for the present, at least, unpunished. But perhaps their time was coming.

Billy Bunter blinked unsympathetically at Todd; he had no feeling just then for anybody's troubles but his own. He drifted away disconsolately towards the Remove passage, and blinked into Harry Wharton's study. The three chums were

there just rising from the table, with the unmistakable expression upon their faces of fellows who had had a good feed.

They looked at Bunter, and he blinked at them.

"Come to do your prep?" asked Harry Wharton cheerfully. "We've finished tea—you can have your whack of the table."

"I—I've come to tea," grunted Bunter.

"Hallo! What's the matter with the other invitation?"

"It's—it's all off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"So is tea here—quite off!" said Nugent, with a roar of laughter. "Between two stools you've fallen to the ground, Bunter. Ha, ha, ha!"

"But——"

"The ha, ha, ha-fulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Singh, with a beaming smile.

"I—I say, you fellows, isn't there anything left?" groaned Bunter.

"Ha, ha! Nothing!"

"Not an egg?"

"Not one!"

"Nor a slice of ham?"

"Not the ghost of a slice!"

"Nor—nor anything?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Nor anything!"

"I—I think I shall expire!" said Bunter faintly. "I—I——"

"Well, there's no objection to that, that I can see," said Nugent thoughtfully. "But would you mind doing it out in the passage. Close the door after you; thanks."

Bunter closed the door with a slam.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday, entitled: "THE POSTAL ORDER CONSPIRACY," by Frank Richards. Please order your copy of THE MAGNET LIBRARY in advance. Price One Penny.)



STANLEY DARE

The Boy Detective

INTRODUCTION.

Stanley Dare, the boy detective, is investigating a strange case near the West India Docks, on behalf of a man named Gilbert. Fleming, the bearer of a pocket-book containing valuable papers belonging to Gilbert, has been murdered. Stanley Dare, disguised as a merchant seaman, visits the lodging house where the deed was committed. The young detective soon finds the missing pocket-book; but he is surprised and overpowered by a Chinese half-caste, who, after drugging Dare absconds with the pocket-book. On recovering consciousness Stanley Dare questions the proprietor of the lodging house concerning Peters—the Chinese half-caste—movements.

(Now go on with the Story).

On the Track.

From Eckermann's account it appeared that Peters was a ship's steward, that he had served on yachts, and that he was lately home from the Mediterranean.

"But I do not know the name of his last ship," concluded the German. "When I ask him, he says, 'That is my business. Your business is to provide me with board and lodging; I will pay you well.' After that I ask no more questions, for he was a good customer."

"Curious that he should object to tell you the name of his last ship," said Dare. "That is not like a sailor. But never mind that now. Of course, you saw him go away after breakfast. Did he go in a cab?"

"Yes; a four-wheel cab."

"Did you notice the number or the driver?"

"The number? No. But the driver was a man with a brown beard and a white hat."

"That description will be near enough," said Dare.

After refreshing himself with a wash, the young detective paid his bill, and went out to make inquiries at the nearest cab-rank for the driver who wore a white hat. As good-luck would have it, he found him without much difficulty.

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He had just returned from driving his fare—the half-caste—to Waterloo Station.

He answered Dare's questions readily enough, but he had little enough to tell. He had driven him to the main line platform at Waterloo, but did not hear where he was going to.

"He told the German he was going to Hull," said Dare to himself. "An obvious lie, as he can't book to Hull from Waterloo. The idea was to put me off the scent. I wonder he didn't think of something smarter than that."

Dare jumped into a hansom, and drove off at once to Waterloo. Here again he learnt all that he expected to be able to find out, without much trouble. The porter who had taken charge of the half-caste's luggage said that he had left in the Southampton express.

"His luggage was labelled for Southampton," added the porter, "and he had a ticket for Southampton, for I happened to see it."

"Then Southampton must be my next destination," thought Dare, as he tipped the porter and hurried out of the station.

It was by this time one o'clock. He drove to his rooms in order first of all to change into his ordinary clothes, then

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snatch a hasty lunch before returning to Waterloo in order to catch the three o'clock train to Southampton.

While he was having lunch, who should come in but Professor Seth MacAndrew, his old friend and adviser in many a complicated case.

"I received your note, laddie," said the professor, after the usual greetings had been exchanged. "How are ye getting on wi' the business?"

As briefly as possible Dare outlined the case as far as it had gone.

"Your half-caste loon is smart in some things, but no that smart in others," observed MacAndrew. "Ye'd think he would have taken mair trouble to cover up his tracks. I shall come doon wi' ye to Southampton. I've my bag already packed. It's in the hall."

"That's the best news I've heard to-day," laughed Stanley Dare. "I was hoping you would turn up."

No incident worthy of note occurred during the journey down, but on arriving at their destination a disappointment awaited them. On reaching Southampton it had evidently occurred to the half-caste that he had hitherto not taken sufficient precautions to cover up his trail, and that mistake he remedied most effectually.

They could not trace him beyond the station. One porter remembered seeing a man answering to his description standing on the platform, but that was all. It was meagre enough information, but as half-castes are by no means rare in shipping ports, the man referred to may not have been Peters.

At all events, he had disappeared, baggage and all, without leaving a trace behind him.

"If he went away from the station in a cab," said Dare, after he had made the most exhaustive inquiries, without result, "he must have bribed the driver pretty heavily to know nothing."

"That is my opeenion exactly," replied MacAndrew.

This was a very decided check to the investigations, and the young detective was brought to a dead stop. But at five o'clock on the following afternoon hope revived again. The professor came into their sitting-room in the quiet hotel where they were staying flourishing an evening paper.

"See here, laddie!" he cried. "This advertisement in the Agony column! I'm thinking it'll refer to our mon."

Dare read the advertisement. It ran as follows:

"H. C. to S. P. Shall anchor off Cowes to-night. Proceed to old rendezvous to-morrow. If you can't join, communicate."

"S. P. are the initials of your half-caste—Samuel Peters," said MacAndrew. "It may only be a coincidence, but it's worth acting upon."

"We'll go over to Cowes by the mail-boat," replied Dare. "As this is not the yachting season, there will be no difficulty in finding out what yacht has anchored in the roadstead."

Shortly after eight o'clock that evening they reached the famous headquarters of yachting men, which is somewhat quiet and dreary-looking during the winter months.

There they learned that the only yacht which had arrived in the roadstead that day was the Amazon, a steam-yacht of about 200 tons. They hired a boat, and rowed off to it. Discipline appeared to be rather lax on board the Amazon, for there was nobody keeping a look-out on her deck, which they reached unchallenged.

There was a light in the cabin. The professor walked softly across the after-deck and peered down the skylight. He gripped Dare's arm as the latter joined him, and then silently pointed down into the saloon.

The Owner of the Amazon—in a Trap—Adrift.

There was only one man in the saloon—the steward, to judge by the clothes he wore and the duty he was at that moment performing. He was clearing away the dinner-things from the table. The man's side-face was visible from where they stood, and Dare recognised him at once. It was Peters, the half-caste. Now, the question which the young detective naturally asked himself was: "Who is H. C. of the advertisement?"

If it was the Amazon's skipper, it was pretty evident that the owner was not on board. If, on the other hand, it was the owner, then his relations with his steward were of an unusually intimate character, so much so as to warrant the supposition that they were accomplices in the paths of crime. The advertisement in the "Agony" column was in itself of a suspicious nature.

"It is the man I want," whispered Dare to the professor. "If we could take him by surprise—"

Professor MacAndrew shook his head.

"Nay, laddie, that can scarcely be possible aboard a yacht at this time of the evening," he said. "There'll be others doon below. Dinner is only just finished."

"Yes, we shall have to deal with others. Perhaps an

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accomplice. Indeed, I am inclined to say, certainly an accomplice.

The scent of a cigar was wafted to them on the light breeze. They turned, and saw a man in immaculate yachting rig approaching them from the other end of the deck. He was smoking a cigar, and as he lounged up he tapped the ash off with a movement of his little finger.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, in an unpleasant, sneering voice, "may I ask who you are, and who you wish to see on board my yacht?"

"Ay, ay, ye shall learn a' about us," replied Professor MacAndrew. "Here's my caird."

"And here," said Dare, "is mine."

"Ye'll learn muckle frae those two bits o' pasteboard," added the professor.

The yacht-owner—as he proved to be—glanced at the cards, and shrugged his shoulders with an air of indifference; but Stanley Dare, who was watching him very closely, concluded that his indifference was only assumed.

There was a look in his cunning eyes, an expression on his pale, dissipated face which betrayed decided uneasiness.

"A professor and a private detective," he said. "Well, I don't require the service of either one or the other. My studies are long since finished, and I have not been troubled by any criminal who has intentions either on my life or my money."

"And yet you are harbouring one," replied Dare. "Let us hope, for your sake, unknowingly."

"What do you mean?"

"We will explain our meaning more fully in the cabin," said Dare, "in the presence of your steward, Samuel Peters, the half-caste."

The yacht-owner was on the point of refusing to allow them down into the cabin, but there was something in the young detective's cool and assured bearing which caused him to think better of this determination.

"Very well," he replied; "follow me. I am curious to hear your explanation."

They descended into a small, comfortably-furnished saloon. Peters, who was doing something at the after end of the cabin, turned round as they entered. It may have been that he did not recognise Stanley Dare now that he had removed his disguise, but he displayed neither surprise, fear, nor any other emotion on seeing him. He had a most wonderful command over his features.

"Now, gentlemen—" began the yachtsman; but his remark, whatever it was going to be, was interrupted by Stanley Dare, who leaped forward and made a snatch at a leather pocket-book which was lying on the cabin table.

The half-caste was, however, too quick for him. The pocket-book was close to his hand, and he picked it up, and with a sharp movement passed it to his master, or associate.

"That belongs to this gentleman," he said to the young detective. "It is private property."

"Then he will have to prove his ownership," Stanley Dare retorted.

"You are becoming offensive," exclaimed the yacht-owner angrily; "and as you don't appear to be drunk, I can only conclude that you are mad. Quit this vessel at once, and consider yourself lucky that you are not thrown back into your boat, instead of being allowed to walk down the side ladder to it in the ordinary way."

"I'm thinking, Mister Harper Custance," observed the professor quietly, "that ye'd be weel advised if ye adopted a different tone. I'm no' liking the way you speak tae my young friend."

"Who told you my name?" snapped the yachtsman.

"Naebody," answered MacAndrew. "It is your name, so we needna waste time ower that matter. Ye'll dae weel tae listen tae what Mr. Dare has to say."

"What I have to say will not take long," said Dare. "I accuse this man, Samuel Peters, of the murder of John Fleming; and further, of having stolen that pocket-book from the room in which the murder was committed."

"You hear the accusation, Peters," said Custance.

"What have you to say to it?"

"Only that the accusation is too ridiculous to need a serious answer," replied Peters.

"No doubt you are right so far as regards yourself," pursued Harper Custance. "But I have something to say in this matter, too. That pocket-book is my property, and I will not give it up to anybody. Let that be clearly understood."

"That will be a matter for the official police to decide," replied Dare. "Your steward, if that is the position which this man Peters holds on the yacht, will be handed over to their custody on the charges which I shall prefer against him."

"Will he? I think you will find yourself very much mistaken on that point."

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A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.
By FRANK RICHARDS.

They were facing each other across the cabin table as they spoke. The half-caste was further aft on Dare's right. Happening to glance in his direction, the young detective noticed a look in his eyes which caused him to turn round suddenly towards the entrance of the cabin. In an instant he saw that he and the professor were trapped.

"Look out, Mac!" he yelled. "Behind you!"

His warning came too late. A powerful-looking seaman had noiselessly entered the cabin, no doubt acting on previous orders given him by Custance. He had a long strip of canvas in his hands, and at the very moment that Dare shouted out his warning he flung the canvas over MacAndrew's head and jerked him backwards.

With remarkable quickness he pulled open a small hatch in the cabin floor, and as the professor was struggling to rise to his feet again, the fellow pushed him clean down through the aperture into a hold, or store-room.

Stanley Dare had, of course, made a rush forward to his companion's assistance, but before he could do anything to aid him he found himself gripped by the half-caste, and the next instant he was engaged in a furious struggle on his own account.

Had he only had one antagonist to deal with, there would have been no reason to fear the result; but Custance had joined in the fray, and with a cowardly blow of a stick which he had snatched up felled the young detective to the deck. The blow rendered him unconscious.

"What are we to do with them?" demanded Peters.

There was an expression of such fiendish malignity on his face as he asked the question that even his accomplice shrank from him.

"We must get rid of them somehow," replied Harper Custance; "but not the way you are thinking of, Peters—not the way you are thinking of. No bloodshed. I hate the sight of blood. For the present, the Scotsman is safe enough down below. Put on the hatch, Corbett."

The big seaman obeyed, thus shutting the professor down below.

"This other one," pursued Custance, pointing to Stanley Dare, "can be locked in a spare cabin. He won't give us any trouble for an hour or two, at all events."

"That may be all right for the present," snarled the half-caste; "but, as soon as we get out to sea, the best thing will be to silence them for good and all! It can be easily done, and is the only safe plan. Remember that if they get their liberty again they won't rest till they get the hangman's noose round my neck! Bear in mind, too, that I am not the sort of man to suffer alone!"

When Stanley Dare recovered consciousness, a monotonous throbbing noise was the first sound, or series of sounds, which attracted his attention. He listened to it in a dull, unthinking way for some minutes, having no idea what it was, and, indeed, not caring much on the subject at the time, for his head was aching terribly.

But as his brain cleared, and the pain in his head from the blow which Custance had dealt him abated somewhat, he became aware that the monotonous throbbing noise proceeded from the yacht's propeller, thrashing the water as it revolved.

The Amazon was under way, and, what was more, she was out in the open sea. The slight rolling motion was sufficient proof of that.

"That scoundrel Custance is every bit as bad a villain as the half-caste," Dare said to himself. "He simply employs the latter to carry out crimes which he is either too cowardly or too cunning to commit himself; but his cunning hasn't made it clear to him that he has put himself in the half-caste's power, and his associate may turn on him at a critical moment. However, that does not concern me so much as the fact that MacAndrew and I are trapped; and as the yacht is evidently at sea, there is no easy way out of the trap."

He slipped out of the bunk in which he had

been lying, and tried the door of the cabin. It was locked—as, indeed, he supposed it would be—and, unfortunately, he had no skeleton keys with him.

In the main cabin he could hear the voices of men in conversation, apparently in argument, though carried on in a low tone. Under the circumstances, this was certainly not the time to make an attempt to break open the door. All that he could do would be to wait in patience, and allow his opponents to make the first move.

The small circular port was fastened down, with the iron "bad-weather" plate screwed over it. The cabin was, in consequence, in darkness. He had a box of wax matches in his pocket, and he struck one softly.

By the feeble light he searched in the berth for something which might serve as a weapon. There was nothing.

A couple of hours passed, during which time he dozed once or twice. From the increasing motion of the yacht, it was evident that the sea was getting rougher. He could hear the dull roar of the wind, and occasionally the "swish" of water on the deck overhead as a wave broke on board.

Then suddenly the door was unlocked and opened. The ruffianly seaman who had overpowered the professor was standing in the doorway. Behind him was Peters. Harper Custance was at the other side of the cabin. They were all armed.

Dare stepped out into the main cabin.

"What have you done with Professor MacAndrew?" he demanded.

"I'm here, laddie!" came a reply in the Scotsman's well-known voice, which Dare was only too delighted to hear again.

He was standing near the door of the main cabin, with his hands secured behind him. His face was pale and haggard.

"Thank Heaven you are alive!" exclaimed Dare. "I was afraid the cowards had murdered you!"

"You have murder on the brain!" sneered Custance. "We are more tender-hearted than you suppose, for we are going to set you at liberty."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. As you came aboard without my permission, I am not going to consult your convenience, of course, as to when and where and under what circumstances you quit the Amazon. It suits my convenience that you should leave now. That is all I have to say. Corbett, escort our guests on deck."

The big sailor grinned with malicious enjoyment on the scene. He seized hold of Dare's arm with his muscular fingers, but the young detective shook himself free of his grasp.

"Keep your dirty hands away from me!" he said. "I can walk on to the deck without your assistance."

"Hurry up, then!" growled the fellow.

When Dare and the professor reached the upper deck, they found that there was a tolerably high sea running, and that it was blowing nearly half a gale of wind. The grey sky lowered threateningly. There was no land in sight.

Dare glanced at a clock in the companion-way. The hour was seven in the morning.

A boat was being cleared away by a couple of men, and a side ladder was hung over the yacht's rail.

Custance went on to the bridge, and moved the engine-room telegraph down to "Stop." The Amazon came to a

standstill head on to wind and sea. The boat was lowered into the water.

"I am making you a present of a boat!" called out Harper Custance from the bridge. "You can show your appreciation of the gift by getting into it as quickly as possible."

"There are no oars!" exclaimed Dare. "And no mast or sail! We can't manage a boat in such weather as this without—"

"You will get nothing else," interrupted Custance. "If you don't like the boat as it is, you can jump overboard and swim!"

(Another long instalment of this thrilling detective story next Tuesday.)



For Next Week

"THE POSTAL ORDER CONSPIRACY."

Billy Bunter has a birthday, and a series of postal orders. Joy of B.B., but—there is a big BUT in the way when it comes to handling the cash! Alonzo is all there as well!

The Editor

**THIS
IS
THE
CHAP!**

Quite a Sensation!

Alonzo!

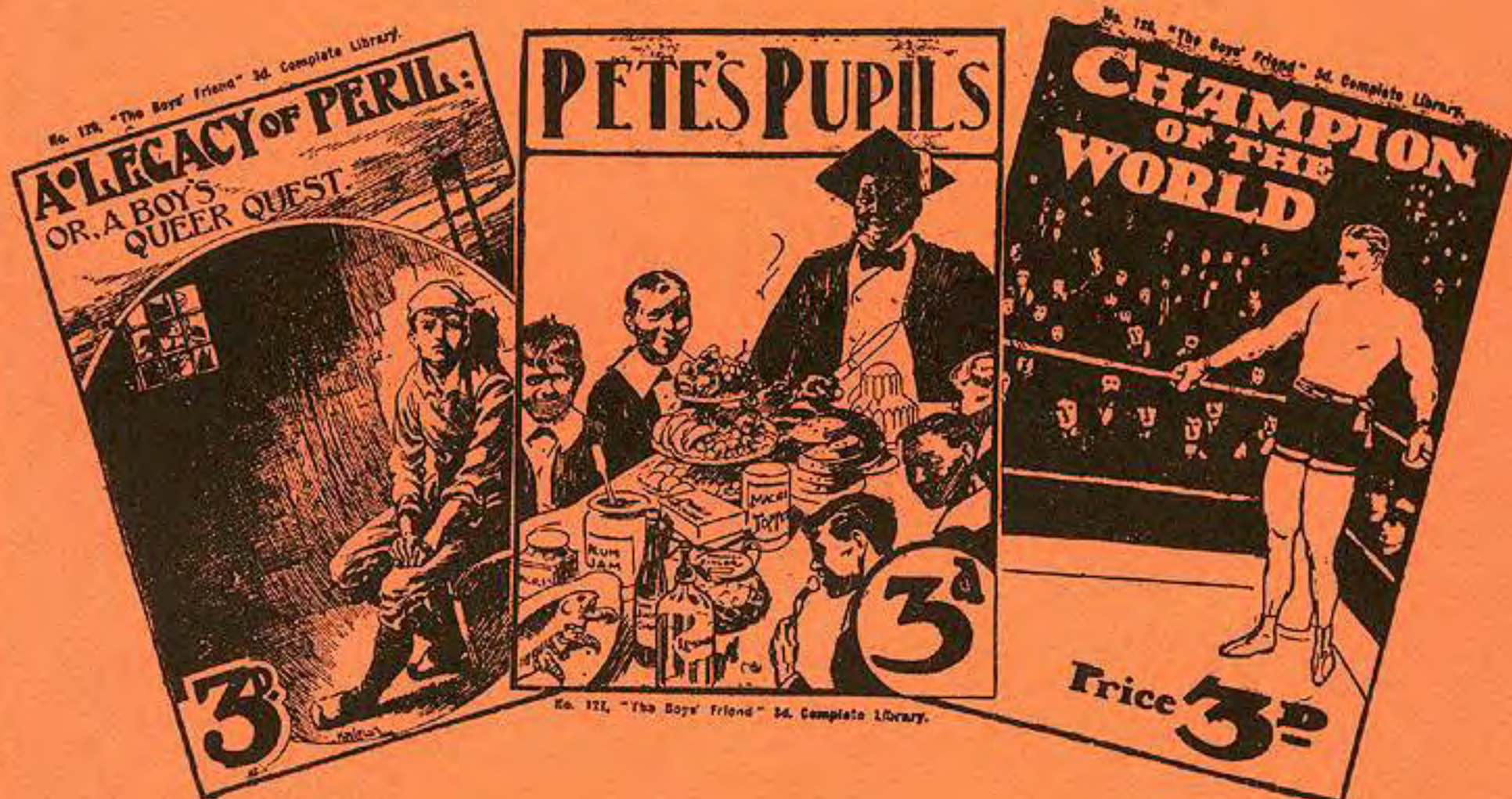


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