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THE FIRST CHAPTER.

"By Order!"

"By order of the Form!"

"Good!"

"I think that sounds all right!" said Bob Cherry, standing back from the table to survey his handiwork.

"What do you think?"

"Ripping!"

"First chop!"

"Oh, good!"

"Stunning!"

It was a chorus of approval. All the fellows gathered in No. 1 Study in the Remove passage at Greyfriars seemed to be of the same mind. Bob Cherry had, in the general opinion, deserved well of his Form; that was evident. And Bob was looking rather pleased with himself. He had expended a great deal of trouble upon the paper he had been

By Order of the Form.

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

drawing up, and he really thought it had turned out pretty well.

"No mistake about that!" said Harry Wharton, reading the paper over as it lay upon the table, with the ink still wet. "It's plain English."

"Plain as your face," said Frank Nugent.

"Look here, Nugent——"

"Ahem! I didn't mean exactly that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's no making a mistake about it, at all events," said Bulstrode, the captain of the Remove. "The Sixth Form can't pretend to misunderstand."

"No fear!"

"Who's going to stick it up on the notice-board?"

There was a pause.

Bob Cherry, with the aid of half a dozen members of the Remove Form, had drawn up that stunning, ripping, first-chop paper—to borrow the Remove adjectives. But sticking it up on the notice-board in the hall was another matter. It was quite certain that if any member of the Sixth caught a

junior sticking such a notice up there would be trouble, for the notice, drawn up with so much care by the Removites, amounted practically to a declaration of war with the Sixth, and the Sixth were not likely to take it in good part.

The Removites had plenty of justification for their action. Matters were not going to their satisfaction, and they kicked. In a free country, as Johnny Bull of the Remove declared amid cheers, every fellow had a right to kick when things were not going to his satisfaction.

Accordingly, the Remove kicked.

Grand
Competition
on page 11.

FIFTY
MONEY
PRIZES!

And this notice was the outcome of it. It was addressed to the Sixth Form at Greyfriars, and it was couched in terms which assuredly no junior Form had ever used in addressing the Sixth before.

The Remove had had trouble with the Sixth before, and—wonderful to relate—had had the best of it. Only lately they had entered into a tussle with the Fifth, and the defeat of the Fifth had been complete and crushing. It is just possible that success was getting into the heads of the Removites, and they were just a trifle inclined to play the part of cock of the walk. As a great philosopher has remarked, we are all human at times.

"We'll go in a body, and stick it up," said Bob Cherry. "If the seniors interfere, there will be a row."

"Good!"

Harry Wharton threw open the door of the study. Bob Cherry blotted the notice carefully, and picked it up. Harry Wharton & Co. marched out of the study, Bob going ahead with the paper in his hands. They descended the stairs, and entered the big lower passage, where there were a good many fellows standing about and talking. The sight of half a dozen Removites marching up to the notice-board with a paper attracted some attention. There was a chorus of inquiry, especially from the juniors.

"Hallo! What have you got there, Bob Cherry?"

"Footer match postponed?"

"What's it about?"

"Read it for yourselves, my sons," said Bob Cherry solemnly. "Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. Wait till I've stuck it up."

"But what's it about?"

"What's the row?"

"Anybody got a pin?" asked Bob Cherry, without answering the questions.

"Here you are!" said Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. "I guess I have!"

"Give it to me, then. Yaroo!"

Bob Cherry dropped the precious paper on the floor, and swung round suddenly. Fisher T. Fish had given him the pin—by the point.

"You ass!" yelled Bob Cherry. "You frabjous dummy!"

"I guess—"

"You howling chump!"

"Well, I guess you asked for it," said Fisher T. Fish, grinning. "You didn't say how you wanted it, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—"

Bob Cherry made a rush at the American junior. Fisher T. Fish skipped round the group of juniors, and dodged away.

"Hold on, Bob!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, laughing. "You're trampling on the notice!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!" Bob Cherry stooped, and picked up the paper, allowing the humorous Fish to escape for the moment.

"I'll—"

"Stick the thing up!" exclaimed Bolsover. "We want to read it."

"Yes, rather!"

"You're wasting time, Bob Cherry."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Bob Cherry. "Anybody got a pin?"

"I've got one," said Hazeldene. "Where will you have it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly well—oh, thanks!" Bob Cherry took the pin from Hazeldene, and pinned up the notice on the board.

"There you are, you dummies. You can read it now."

And the juniors crowded round to read. They could easily guess that the notice was upon some subject of unusual importance, and did not deal merely with a footer match or a rehearsal of the Remove Amateur Dramatic Society. And when they read it, the general exclamations showed that they were surprised.

"My hat!"

"What cheek!"

"There'll be a row!"

"Phew!"

"Great Scott!"

"Begad!"

The notice was, indeed, a startling one, all things considered. Considering that the Sixth were the top Form of Greyfriars, and half of them prefects, and that the Remove were the Lower Fourth, there was an amount of cool "cheek" in the notice that was calculated to take one's breath away. The Remove were the most unruly Form at Greyfriars, and always ready for a row, and they seldom stopped to consider the strength of an adversary. But many of them looked serious and solemn, as well as amazed, as they read the notice Bob Cherry had pinned on the board. It ran:

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"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER!"

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"NOTICE!"

"The Remove have decided not to put up with any more nonsense from the Sixth. Prefects are warned to keep off the grass.—By Order of the Form."

"Phew!" said Bolsover. "If that doesn't take the cake!"

"The cheek!" said Hazeldene.

"Nerve!" ejaculated Ogilvy.

"What will the Sixth say?"

"What will they do, rather?" grinned Russell. "I fancy there will be trouble if this notice is left on the board."

"Better take it down, Cherry," advised Trevor.

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry.

"There'll be trouble."

"More rats!"

"Cave!" exclaimed Mark Linley suddenly. "Here comes Wingate!"

Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars, had just come in. Seeing the crowd round the notice-board, he had stopped, and was looking in their direction, wondering what was the cause of the excitement.

"Look out!" muttered Nugent.

There was a pattering of feet, and the juniors were gone.

The space before the notice-board was left empty and deserted, and the Removites lurked in the distance, as the head prefect of Greyfriars advanced to the notice-board, and halted before it, and fixed his eyes upon Bob Cherry's prominent handiwork.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Loder Is a Little Too Hasty!

WINGATE stopped before the notice-board, and looked at the Remove paper.

From the distance the chums of the Remove regarded him breathlessly.

Wingate was, in the eyes of the juniors, the most important person at Greyfriars. The Head, of course, was a great man. The masters were personages who had to be taken seriously. But the head prefect, the head of the Sixth, the captain of the school—he was the fellow who loomed largest in the general eye, so far as the lower school was concerned, at all events. And if all the seniors had been like Wingate there never would have been any trouble, so the juniors said. It was fellows like Loder and Carne, prefects like Walker and Loder, who caused the juniors to get their backs up.

Wingate stared blankly at the notice. He read it, and the Removites heard the exclamation he uttered.

"My aunt!"

Wingate looked round. The juniors made themselves as small as possible. There was a frown creasing the brow of the captain of Greyfriars.

"Hallo! What have you got there, Wingate?" called out Courtney of the Sixth.

"Come and see," said Wingate grimly.

Courtney joined him, and several other Sixth-Formers came up, and an astonished group of them read the notice on the board.

"My hat!" exclaimed Loder.

"Well, if this doesn't beat the record!" said North, with a whistle.

"The young rascals want a licking all round," remarked Valence.

"Well laid on!" said Carne.

"The cheek!"

Wingate laughed.

"Well, it's only cheek," he said. "I don't think the Remove have got so far as fagging the Sixth yet."

There was a laugh.

"The young rotters ought to be brought to their senses," said Loder angrily.

"Yes, rather!"

"What are you going to do, Wingate?" demanded Valence, with the evident opinion that the captain of Greyfriars was called upon to do something.

Wingate shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"Nothing!" he replied.

"You're going to allow this to pass?"

"I'm not going to be ass enough to take any notice of it," said Wingate. "It would only be making some importance of the young duffers."

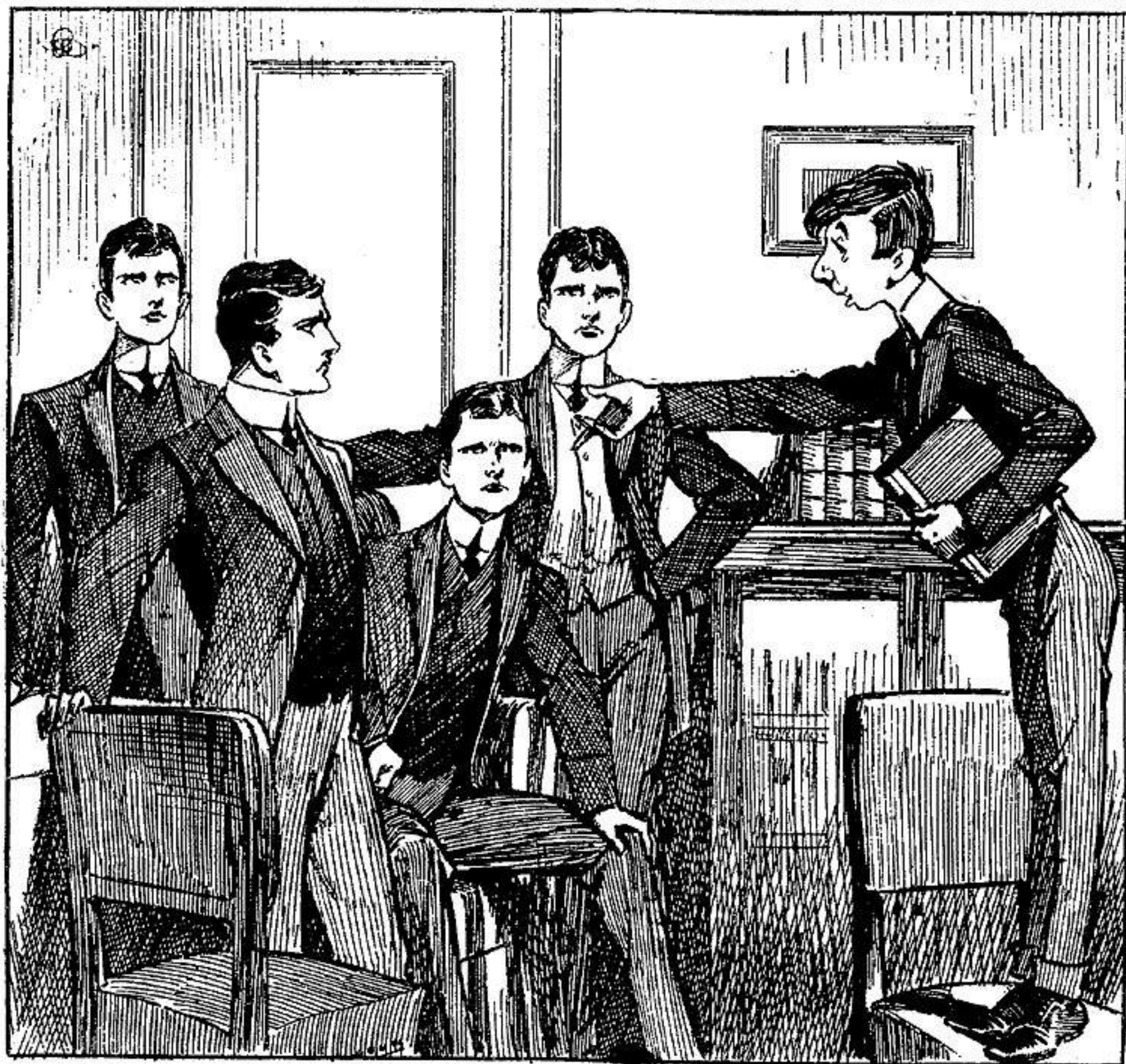
"Quite right," said Courtney.

"But if it's allowed to pass, there will be more cheek," said Loder.

"Certain to be!" exclaimed Carne.

"I don't see what the kids are getting their backs up again for," said Wingate, with a puzzled look. "Fagging the Remove has been abolished, and I should think they would be satisfied with that. What is the matter with them now?"

"Oh, the young brutes are never satisfied!" growled Loder.



"My dear Loder, it is to you that my observations will be especially addressed," exclaimed the duffer of Greyfriars severely, pointing at the black sheep of the Sixth. "I have heard that you have very wicked ways and that you play bridge and smoke. This would be regarded with utter scorn by my uncle Benjamin. Loder, reflect upon the error of your ways. (See Chapter 17.)

"Perhaps they've been fagged, in spite of the abolition of fagging," Courtney suggested, with a look at Loder and Carne.

Loder flushed angrily.

"Perhaps they have!" he retorted. "But if I were captain of Greyfriars they wouldn't get their ears up in this way without being made sorry for it."

"Well, you're not captain of Greyfriars, or likely to be," said Wingate drily.

And he walked away.

But there were a good many of the seniors, especially the prefects, who agreed with Loder.

They stood in an angry group before the notice-board, reading again the paper pinned up by Bob Cherry, and commenting upon it.

"What we want is a new captain of Greyfriars," said Loder savagely. "The juniors will always be getting the bit between their teeth in this way so long as Wingate is so easy with them."

"Prefects are empowered to deal with insubordination of the juniors," said Walker. "Anybody know who wrote this paper?"

"One of those whelps in No. 1 Study, I've no doubt."

Loder turned round, and looked towards the Removites in the distance. Loder had been deprived of his post as a prefect, and it had only been restored to him quite lately. He

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had owed his temporary loss to the Remove, and he remembered it.

"Wharton!" he called out.

"Hallo!" answered Wharton, across the hall.

"Who put this paper up here?"

"We did."

"Who wrote it?"

"I did," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Pretty plain, ain't it, Loder?"

"Come here!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Thanks! I'm pretty comfortable where I am," he said.

"I'd rather not come any nearer, if you don't mind, Loder."

"Come here!" roared Loder.

"Rats!"

Loder clenched his hands hard. He never could get respect and obedience from the juniors as the other prefects did. It was his own fault; he did not deserve respect, and, in consequence, he did not get it. Loder had not learned the valuable lesson that to be respected one must earn respect.

He strode across the hall towards the group of Removites.

They scattered promptly.

"Come back, Cherry!" shouted Loder, as Bob made a break for the open door leading out upon the sunny Close.

"Some other day, dear boy!" sang out Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

NEXT
TUESDAY. "THE PARTING OF THE WAYS!"

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Loder dashed after the junior.

Bob Cherry made a spring for the doorway, and ran down the steps, with the prefect pounding upon his track.

There was a yell of encouragement from the juniors.

"Go it, Bob!"

"Run for it!"

"Put it through!"

"Hurray!"

Bob Cherry was sprinting across the Close at top speed. Loder panted on his track. He knew that he was looking ridiculous, but that made him only the more determined to capture the junior and administer condign punishment.

Bob Cherry was making for the Cloisters. In that shady old quarter of Greyfriars he had no doubt that he could dodge the angry prefect. He ran in under the old stone arches, and blinked at the sudden change from bright sunlight to dusky shade. He halted, with a sudden exclamation, as he almost ran full tilt into Monsieur Charpentier, the French master of Greyfriars. Monsieur Charpentier was walking in the Cloisters, reading a newspaper from his beloved "patric" as he walked, and the newspaper hid all of him excepting the top of his head and his fat little legs. Bob Cherry stopped just in time to avoid bumping into the newspaper.

The junior grinned.

He dodged round one of the pillars, and stopped, breathing hard. Monsieur Charpentier had not seen him, and he was too interested in his newspaper from Paris to look up from it. If Loder came dashing into the Cloisters at top speed, Bob Cherry wondered what would happen. He thought he could guess.

There was a crash of heavy footsteps, and Loder came dashing in.

He was dazzled by the sudden change from light to shade, and he did not see Monsieur Charpentier in time. He was running harder than Bob Cherry had been.

Crash!

The newspaper crumpled up as Loder rushed into it, and he cannoned with a terrific impact upon the little Frenchman.

"Oh! Ah! Ciel! Mon Dieu!"

Bump!

Monsieur Charpentier, completely bowled over by the crash of the heavy Sixth-Former upon him, went over on his back, and Loder sprawled upon him helplessly.

"Oh!" gasped the prefect.

"Ciel! Help! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry.

He had waited only to see the collision. He darted off, and was gone in another moment. Loder would gladly have followed him, but he couldn't.

Monsieur Charpentier was the best-tempered of little men, as a rule; but a man of the most angelic temper might have been excited and annoyed by being suddenly bumped over in that way.

As Loder strove to rise, Monsieur Charpentier clutched hold of him.

"Ah, rascal!" he gasped out. "Ah, it is you, Loder! It is you, of ze Sixt' Form, who play ze silly trick like ze junior!"

"Leggo!" roared Loder.

"Ciel! I zink—"

"It was an accident!" yelled the senior. "I didn't see you. What the dickens do you walk about reading a paper for, you silly ass?"

"Mon Dieu!"

If Loder had been cooler he would never have addressed a master, even a French master, in those terms. But he was not cool. He was in a fury, and he struggled violently to escape from the grasp of the little Frenchman. But Mosco, slight as he was, was wiry, and he was very excited, and he had no intention of allowing the prefect to escape.

"Ha! You call me ze silly ass, is it?" he spluttered. "You play ze silly trick, and call ze master ze silly ass!"

"Leggo!"

"I zink zat I punish you before zat I let go, ain't it?"

"Yaroo!" roared Loder, as the little Frenchman, still grasping him, struggled to his feet and began to box his ears right and left. "Ow! Yow! Chuck it! Yo-o-o-op!"

"Take zat, and zat, and zat!"

"Ow, ow! Stop it, you old duffer! Oh!"

"You call me ze duffer, hein?" Smack, smack, smack! "You insult ze master!" Smack, smack, smack! "You are a vicked poy!" Smack, smack, smack! "Take zat, and zat, and zat!"

"Yaroo!"

Loder took them—he could not help it. He wrenched himself furiously away from the little Frenchman. He hardly dared to strike the master, much as he wished to do so. He glared furiously at the excited little man.

"I tell you it was an accident!" he roared.

"It is not ze accident zat you call me ze silly ass," said

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 203.

Monsieur Charpentier. "It is not ze accident zat you say duffer, hein!"

"So you are!" shouted Loder. "Silly ass! Yah!"

"Mon Dieu! I zink—"

Monsieur Charpentier made a rush at Loder, but the prefect did not mean to let him get to close quarters again. He backed away, and ran, leaving little Mosco almost dancing with rage, and shaking his fist after him.

Loder looked for Bob Cherry again after that. But he might as well have looked for a needle in a bundle of hay. Bob Cherry had excellent reasons for not appearing in public for a while; and he didn't.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Todd Has No Time.

THE latest departure on the part of the Remove formed the general theme of conversation at Greyfriars, among the boys at all events.

Some of the seniors were amused, and some were very angry, as Loder was. There was no doubt that it was like the "check" of the Remove; but most of the seniors agreed with Wingate that it was better to take no notice of the cheeky declaration of war, and to refuse to be "drawn."

Wingate, too, knew that the juniors had enough right on their side to make them obstinate and determined.

In spite of the abolition of fagging, so far as the Lower Fourth were concerned, some of the Sixth persisted in fagging the Remove. Removites were willing enough to fag for Wingate or Courtney. But for fellows like Loder and Carne and Walker they would not fag. That was a rule in the Remove, and it was like unto the laws of the Medes and Persians—it was not subject to alteration under any circumstances.

But that was not all. Some of the Sixth were black sheep of the shadiest variety, and it was perfectly well known at Greyfriars—excepting to the masters—that smoking and card-playing went on in some of the Sixth Form studies. Juniors had been fagged to fetch cigarettes from the village, in spite of the great law at Greyfriars that smoking was allowed to nobody, not even to the captain of the school. The Remove were quite right in "kicking" against that kind of thing, and Wingate knew it. So far as he was able, Wingate put his foot down upon all irregularities; but he was not omniscient, and he erred, perhaps, on the side of being good-natured.

But when a prefect like Loder inflicted punishment on a junior for eating sweets in the dormitory, and was known at the same time to smoke cigarettes in his own study, it was natural that the juniors should be indignant.

If Wingate kept them in order, it was well and good, because Wingate played the game himself. If Wingate discovered a mass of sticky indigestibility in the Remove dormitory and threw it out of the window, the juniors did not like it, but they stood it patiently. It was the skipper's duty, and they bore it without a murmur. But when Loder did anything of the sort, they became restive. It was too much to expect them to take correction patiently from a fellow who set the example of breaking the most important rules of the school.

That was how the Remove looked at it, and no doubt they were quite right up to a certain point.

But Loder was not inclined to admit it. Loder's only idea of keeping fags in order was to lick them, and the more they grumbled, the more he believed in licking them. And Loder's views led to trouble.

There were only two fellows in the Remove Form to whom Loder & Co. showed anything like civility, and they were Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, and Lord Mauleverer. Vernon-Smith was as big a blackguard as Loder himself, and so they had much in common. Lord Mauleverer was a kind and simple youth, with much more pocket-money than was good for him, though he never did anything worse with it than wasting it.

For a long time Loder and Carne and the rest of the black sheep in the Sixth had had their eyes upon Mauleverer.

His lordship had received more than one pressing invitation into Loder's study to pass a pleasant evening, but under the influence of Harry Wharton and his friends the school-boy earl had generally avoided the smart set of the Sixth.

For that reason, as much as any other, Loder was "up against" No. 1 Study, and he neglected no opportunity of scoring over them.

And a prefect, of course, had many opportunities of punishing juniors, in a way that made it appear that he was only carrying out his duties in a spirit of thoroughness.

Nobody is perfect in this most imperfect world, and the heroes of the Remove were very far from imperfect, but a more judicious prefect would not have taken notice of every little fault and failing.

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But Loder had an axe to grind, and he ground it. The outcome was the notice that Bob Cherry had pinned up on the board in the hall, and that notice meant that there was going to be trouble.

The trouble had commenced; but Loder, as he rubbed his ears that still smarted from the smacks of the French master, could not think that he had had the best of it so far.

He had torn down the Remove notice from the board, and that was all that he had been able to do.

He kept a wary eye open for Bob Cherry; but Bob Cherry was also keeping a wary eye open for him, and the time came for afternoon lessons without Loder having had a chance of taking vengeance upon the junior.

And a duplicate notice had appeared on the board again.

As Loder was going down the passage to the Sixth Form class-room, he glanced at the board, and there was the notice again.

"NOTICE!

"The Remove have decided not to put up with any more nonsense from the Sixth. Prefects are warned to keep off the grass! Loder is advised to mend his ways!

"BY ORDER OF THE FORM."

Loder ground his teeth. The new line had been added for his especial benefit, and he knew to what it referred.

He looked quickly round the hall. Alonzo Todd, of the Remove, was hurrying towards the Remove-room, with his books under his arm. Loder called to him.

"Todd, who put this notice up here?"

Todd blinked at him.

"Pray excuse me, my dear Loder!" he said. "I have no time to speak now, as it is time for class. My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me never to be late for class. Unpunctuality is the thief of time, my dear Loder."

Loder glared at him. Alonzo Todd was a somewhat old-fashioned and ponderous youth, and his education under the care of his estimable Uncle Benjamin had supplied him with all sorts of ways of unintentionally irritating people.

"You silly chump!" roared Loder.

"My dear Loder——"

"I asked you a question——"

"I'm so sorry I have no time to answer, my dear Loder," said Todd, apparently oblivious to the fact that his explanation was filling up more time than his answer could possibly have done. "But it is time for class, and I should be so sorry to appear to Mr. Quelch neglectful of my duties. My Uncle Benjamin says—— Yow!"

Todd hopped, and his books were scattered over the floor as Loder's open hand smote him on the back of the head. He staggered forward, gasping.

"Ow! Ow! Yow! Ow! My dear Loder—— Ow!"

"You young sweep——"

"Ow! I—I—— Oh! Help!" yelled Alonzo, as Loder grasped him and began to shake him. "I—— Oh! My dear Loder—— Help!"

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, looked out of the Form-room doorway. He stared at the sight of the prefect boxing the unfortunate Alonzo's ears in the most unmerciful manner.

"Loder! Stop that instantly!"

Loder stopped it. Mr. Quelch strode towards him with an angry brow.

"How dare you treat a junior in that way, Loder?" he rapped out.

"He checked me," said Loder sullenly.

"Indeed, I—I did not!" said Alonzo, gasping. "I did not intend to do so, my dear Loder. I was merely explaining as concisely as I could that as I was due in the Form-room I really had no time to expend in conversation, although at any other time I should have been delighted——"

"Go into the Form-room, Todd."

"Yes, sir. But——"

"Go in at once!"

"Oh, certainly, sir!" said Todd.

And Alonzo ambled into the Remove-room. Mr. Quelch fixed a stern look upon the red, angry face of the prefect.

"You have no right to strike any junior in that way, Loder, especially an unoffending boy like Todd," he exclaimed. "If I see any more of this I shall report your conduct to the Head."

Loder bit his lip.

There were bitter words upon his tongue, but he dared not utter them to a Form-master. Mr. Quelch strode back into the Form-room, and shut the door sharply, and Loder went on, gritting his teeth.

In the Remove-room the Removites were in their places at

EVERY
TUESDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

their desks, and they turned a chorus of inquiry upon Todd as he came in.

"What was the row, Toddy?"

"My dear friends——"

"Silence!" said Mr. Quelch, as he came in.

And the curiosity of the Remove had to remain unsatisfied. Alonzo Todd made a good-natured effort to supply information in whispers, and being detected in doing so, was rewarded with a hundred lines, after which Alonzo understudied the oyster, and was mum.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Looking After His Lordship.

LORD MAULEVERER wore a very thoughtful expression during afternoon lessons that day. That his expression of thought was not caused by deeper devotion than usual to his studies was proved by his answers to Mr. Quelch. Having informed that gentleman, much to his astonishment, that the first King of Rome was named Gerald Loder, and that a favourite game of the Ancient Romans was bridge, he received a hundred lines in reply, and was bidden to attend to his work, and not think of other matters in the class-room. But Lord Mauleverer could not help thinking of other matters. Other matters persisted in occupying his mind to the exclusion of the early history of Rome. And when the class was dismissed after afternoon lessons, that shade of thought was still upon the aristocratic brow of Lord Mauleverer.

Harry Wharton passed his arm through Mauleverer's as they came out of the Form-room. Wharton was on very friendly terms with the schoolboy earl. Indeed, it was difficult not to be friendly with the kindly, good-natured lad. There were a few fellows whom he did not like, such as Vernon-Smith, and Snoop, and Billy Bunter, but as a rule Lord Mauleverer pulled well with everybody, and his total absence of "side" helped him to do so. He was the only titled fellow at Greyfriars, but he did not appear to value himself in any way on that account.

"Anything amiss, Mauly?" asked Wharton.

Lord Mauleverer looked worried.

"Begad!" he said. "I've been thinking about that notice you put up on the board, my dear fellow."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Nothing in that to worry you," he replied. "That's to worry the Sixth."

"Yaas. But——"

"But it hits at Mauleverer's special friends," said Snoop, with an ill-natured grin. "He doesn't want bridge and smoking stopped in the Sixth studies."

"My dear fellow——" began Lord Mauleverer.

"He's got an invitation from Loder to spend the evening there to-night," said Snoop.

Wharton looked sharply at Lord Mauleverer. The latter coloured under his gaze. He began to understand why Lord Mauleverer was looking troubled.

"You see——" went on Snoop.

"Oh, shut up!" said Harry. And he drew the schoolboy earl away from the cad of the Remove. "I don't want to listen to that cad, Mauly, but is it true—are you getting on chummy terms with Loder and his set?"

"Well, don't you know——" began Lord Mauleverer uneasily.

"They've been after you ever since you came to Greyfriars to get you to go and play cards in their study," said Harry anxiously. "Hang it all, Mauly, a decent chap doesn't do things like that!"

"Well, no. But——"

"You're not going there this evening?"

"Well, you see, Loder was so doocid polite about it," said Lord Mauleverer. "A chap hates to say no to a chap who's nice, you know."

"Now, look here, Mauly, you know you oughtn't to go," said Harry Wharton. "I don't want to interfere in your affairs, but you know you oughtn't to go. Anybody in the Remove will tell you so. As for Loder being nice, you're the first junior who ever found him so."

Lord Mauleverer nodded, but the thoughtful frown on his face showed that he was still undecided as he left Harry Wharton and strolled down the passage. He nodded to Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. Vernon-Smith was smiling in his satirical way.

"Wharton been preaching to you?" he asked.

Lord Mauleverer looked very troubled.

"Not exactly preaching," he replied. "He doesn't like the idea of my going to Loder's study for the little party this evening."

"What business is it of his?" said the Bounder angrily.

ANSWERS

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"Well, he's my friend, you know."

"It will be all right," said Vernon-Smith. "I shall be there—you won't be the only junior. And I think it is going to be a ripping, jolly little party, and you will enjoy it. Better than bolting roast chestnuts in Wharton's study."

"Wharton thinks—"

"Oh, blow Wharton!"

And Lord Mauleverer strolled on away from Vernon-Smith. Harry Wharton had joined his chums, Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull, with a frowning brow. Wharton was always very careful to keep from interfering in the affairs of others, but he felt that with the schoolboy earl it was a different matter. Lord Mauleverer was rolling in money, and he had a kindly and unsuspecting nature which made him the easy victim of more cunning fellows. Not that he was by any means a fool, but he was a great deal of a slacker, and he was extremely confiding. Harry Wharton & Co. felt it their duty to see that he did not fall into the influence of the black sheep of the Sixth, and they were certainly right.

"Going to Loder's study for the evening?" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "It won't do! Just when we've started our campaign to reform the Sixth, too!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I don't know whether we shall succeed in reforming the Sixth," he remarked, "but we're going to stop Loder's little games somehow. But about Mauleverer, I'm blessed if I know quite what to do. He's old enough to look out for himself, so far as that goes."

"Oh, he'll have to take the advice of his uncles!" said Bob. "He sha'n't have tea with Loder, and he sha'n't play bridge in his rotten study!"

"Hang it all," said John Bull, "I think we should almost be justified in reporting that sort of thing to a Form-master."

Wharton shook his head.

"Can't be done," he said. "Sneaking is sneaking always, and two wrongs don't make a right."

"Well, that's so."

Bob Cherry chuckled softly. An idea had evidently come into his head; his blue eyes were gleaming, as they always did when he had thought of a "wheeze."

"Well, what have you got in your noddle?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Screws!"

"Eh?"

"Screws!"

"Screws!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in astonishment. "What on earth are you talking about?"

"Do you mean that you are a screw loose?" demanded Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha! No. Suppose, when Loder's little party arrives to-night, they can't get into his quarters?"

"But why—"

"Suppose, for instance, that the door was screwed up?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That would rather make the little party a frost, I think," said Bob Cherry. "We can get some nice long screws from Gosling at double price, and we can borrow a screwdriver. Russell's got a good screwdriver in his tool-chest. I rather think that would be a good first step in the campaign."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It did not take the Famous Four long to decide upon the plan of campaign. Russell's tool-chest was visited for the screwdriver, and Gosling, the school porter, sold screws to the juniors cheerfully at an enhanced price. Gosling did not ask what was to be done with them. He knew perfectly well that some jape was intended, but on occasions when he could turn an honest penny Gosling could be as blind and deaf as was desired.

Loder's little party, as Nugent learned from Lord Mauleverer, was to gather in the study at half-past seven. About seven o'clock the chums of the Remove were on the warpath. The first thing was to discover whether Loder was in his study, and that was soon discovered. Bob Cherry looked in, and a book whizzing at his head showed that the prefect was at home. Bob Cherry scudded back to the end of the Sixth-Form passage, where Wharton and Nugent and Bull were waiting in the window recess. The early winter evening had long set in, and the passage was lighted, but the window recess was very dusky, and made a most convenient retreat for the Remove raiders.

"Loder's at home," said Bob Cherry. "He's alone in the study, so far. He's got the tea-table set, and it looks like a feed."

"He's got to be got out."

"Yes, rather!"

"Go and fetch him out, one of you," said Johnny Bull.

There was a pause.

"It's the old story, who's to put the bell on the cat," said

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Harry Wharton, laughing. "One of us will have to get him out. I'm willing to try."

"No, I'll do it," said Bob Cherry. "Loder's got a special love for me to-day, and he's bound to follow me if I worry him. I'll get him out of the study, and make him chase me up to the box-room."

"Suppose he catches you?"

"He won't."

"Well, it's a good idea," said Nugent. "Keep him as long as you can, and give us a chance to put the screws in."

"Right you are!"

Bob Cherry trod softly down the Sixth-Form passage again. Most of the Sixth were downstairs in the common-room, though some of them were in their studies, some at tea, and some at work. Bob Cherry was running a very big risk by venturing into the enemy's quarters in this way, for if Walker or Valence or Hayes came out of their rooms at the same time he would certainly be caught among them. But it was a case of nothing venture, nothing have.

Bob Cherry threw open Loder's door without the formality of knocking, and grinned in at the prefect of the Sixth.

Loder was sorting out two packs of cards from a drawer, and as his door opened he thrust them hastily out of sight—so hastily that he knocked his knuckles on the drawer, and uttered an exclamation of pain. His glance turned furiously towards the hero of the Remove.

"You young sweep—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "What's the little game to-night, Loder—bridge or poker?"

"Get out of my study!" roared Loder.

"My dear chap—"

"Outside!"

"Oh, rats!" said Bob Cherry. "I've come to point out the error of your ways. I've been reading 'Derrick; or, Scrap by Scrap,' and I know all about these things now. Turn, oh, turn from the sinful path while there is yet time—"

Whiz!

A Latin grammar came whirling through the air, and Bob Cherry dodged, and it flew past him into the passage and dropped there. Bob Cherry "fielded" it in a moment, and hurled it back with unerring aim.

Biff!

It caught Loder full on the chest. The prefect gave a wild howl as he was bowled over. He sat down with considerable violence upon the hearthrug, and gasped.

"Well fielded, by Jove!" said Bob Cherry. "Let's try again, Loder."

Loder did not reply.

He sprang to his feet, caught up a cane and made a wild rush at Bob Cherry. Bob dodged away, and in a moment was sprinting up the passage at top speed, with Loder tearing furiously behind him.

From the end of the Sixth Form passage Harry Wharton & Co. watched them go, chuckling. Pursuer and pursued disappeared up the passage and into the side corridor and vanished from sight.

"Come on!" exclaimed Johnny Bull.

And in a few seconds the juniors were at Loder's door—and at work!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

No Admittance!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. lost no time.

How long Loder would be detained they did not know; but he might be back any minute, and they had no time to waste.

The study door was drawn shut, the key being first changed to the outside of the lock. Wharton locked the door on the outside and put the key in his pocket. Even without the screws, that was likely to make it difficult to re-enter the study. Nugent drove holes into the thick, hard wood with an awl, and as fast as he made the holes Johnny Bull drove in the screws with the driver.

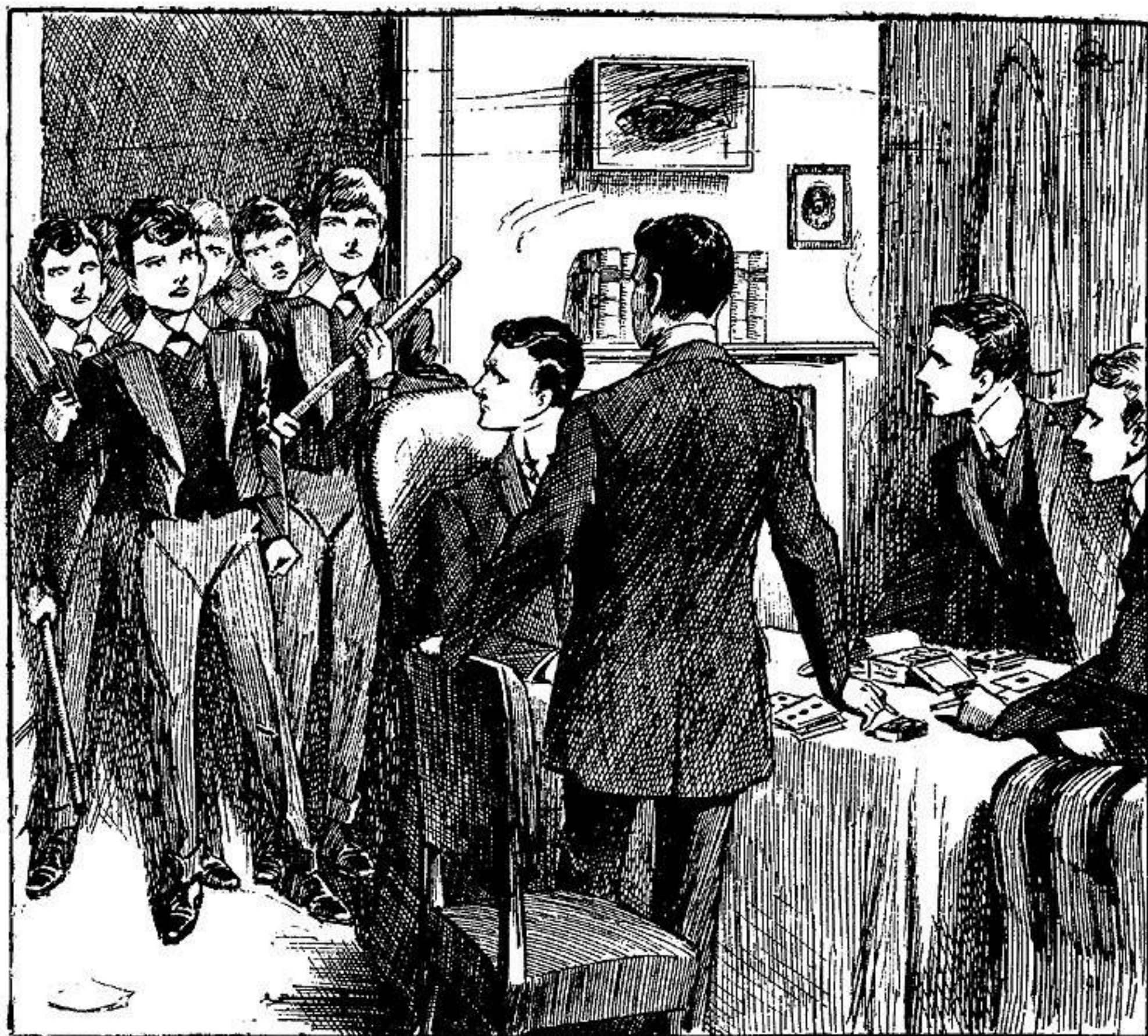
The juniors were quite handy at this kind of work. Johnny Bull was quite an amateur carpenter, and he had a strong wrist and a steady hand. Hard as the wood was, the screws went in apace.

Wharton kept watch in the passage, ready to give warning of danger. But the other Sixth-Formers were in their studies, with the doors closed—and Loder did not return. Wharton thought he heard sounds of trouble in the distance, from the direction of the box-rooms, and he hoped that Bob Cherry was not suffering for his devotion to the common cause.

"How many have you got in, Bull?"

"Five."

"Oh, good!"



Into the doorway poured a crowd of Removites. They were armed for war. They had cricket stumps or bats; every right hand was armed, and they looked quite prepared to use their weapons. "You utter cad!" said Harry Wharton, glancing scornfully at Loder, as he caught sight of the cards on the table. (See Chapter 15.)

"I'll shove the lot in if there's time," gasped Bull, red with his exertions. "As they're nearly three inches long they won't be got out in a hurry, especially as I'm hammering the tops flat as I go on."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Nugent. "The chap will never get the door open again at all, I think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Another screw was driven in. Then there was a sound of footsteps hurrying into the passage from the upper end, and the juniors stood ready to flee. But it was Bob Cherry, not Gerald Loder, who came hurrying back.

Bob Cherry was red and panting.

"It's all right!" he gasped. "I've dodged him!"

"Did he get you?"

"Jolly near—on the stairs," panted Bob. "But I shoved him, and he rolled down. I think he must have been hurt—he made row enough."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better buzz off now. How many screws in?"

"Six—and the door locked on the outside."

"Oh, good! Come on! Here he is!"

There was a tramp of feet, and Loder came in sight. The prefect's face was white with rage, and it would certainly have gone hard with a junior who had fallen into his clutches at that moment. He caught sight of the heroes of the Remove and dashed towards them.

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"Cut!" yelled Bob Cherry.

And the Removites cut promptly.

They raced away; and Loder dashed on as far as his study door and paused. It was twenty minutes past seven now, and his guests for the little party were due in ten minutes. But his temper had quite got the better of him, and, after a moment's pause, he rushed on in pursuit of Harry Wharton & Co.

"Run for it!" gasped Nugent. "If he gets near us now there will be trouble. I've never seen him look so ratty."

"Buck up!"

The juniors ran out of the Sixth Form passage, and darted into the Close. In the Remove quarters Loder might have run them down, but in the open Close, after dark, they did not anticipate much difficulty in throwing the enraged prefect off the track.

Wingate opened his study door and glanced out. But the juniors had disappeared by that time, and the Greyfriars captain went in again and closed his door.

Five minutes later Walker came out of his study and came along to Loder's. He tapped at the door and turned the handle.

The door, naturally, did not open.

Walker knocked again. There was no reply from within, and Walker looked puzzled. As the key was gone he could not see, of course, that the door was locked, and the screws

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well driven home, did not show in the dark wood. Walker bent down and called through the keyhole:

"Hallo, Loder! At home, old man?"

No answer.

"Well, it's a nice way to receive guests, this, I must say!" grumbled Walker. He looked at his watch. "H'm! I'm a few minutes early! Dash!"

And he waited.

He had been waiting about a minute when Valence came along the passage. He nodded in a very friendly way to Walker. Both of them were invited guests for that little celebration of Gerald Loder's.

"Loder out?" he asked.

"Yes!" growled Walker. "And I suppose the door's locked, as I can't open it."

"Well, he can't be long now. There goes the half-hour," said Valence.

There rang out from the clock-tower of Greyfriars the chime of the half-hour. It was half-past seven, the time fixed for the convivial meeting in Loder's study.

"Here's the kid!" said Valence, in a low voice.

Lord Mauleverer came along the passage with Vernon-Smith. The latter was looking as cool and self-possessed as usual; an invitation to a Sixth Form study was not likely to flurry the Bounder of Greyfriars at all. But Lord Mauleverer was looking uneasy. He was not satisfied in his mind about his visit to the prefect's study, against the wish of his friends in the Lower Fourth.

The two seniors nodded genially to the Removites.

"Here you are, then!" said Walker.

"Yaas," said Lord Mauleverer. "What are you waiting outside for, my dear fellow?"

"Loder doesn't seem to be in."

"Begad!"

"He can't be long," said Valence. "He told us to be here at half-past seven."

Vernon-Smith frowned.

"Rotten bad form, being out when his guests arrive, anyway!" he exclaimed. "I should think that Loder might play the game a bit better than that!"

Walker and Valence looked at him. They were greatly inclined to box his ears for his cheek in setting up to criticise a Sixth-Former—one of themselves. But they did not want to quarrel with the millionaire's son.

"Oh, he won't be long!" said Walker.

Carne of the Sixth came along a few minutes later and joined the group outside Loder's study. He was the last of the party to arrive. He was ten minutes late, but he was evidently too early for Loder.

"Hallo! What are you fellows waiting outside here for?" he exclaimed.

"Can't get in!" growled Walker, whose temper was beginning to become just a little edgewise.

"Ain't Loder at home?"

"No!"

"Queer!" said Carne.

"Here he comes!" exclaimed Valence, as Loder was seen hurrying up the passage, very red and breathless and excited.

"Begad, yaas!"

Loder came up, breathing hard.

"You fellows been waiting?" he exclaimed.

"Yes!" snapped Walker.

"I'm sorry! It was the fault of those Remove brats—ahem!" said Loder, as he looked at Lord Mauleverer and the Bounder. "One of them came and buzzed a book at me in my study, and I've been looking for him."

"I hope you found him!" said Valence.

Loder clicked his teeth.

"No, I didn't," he said. "But I will give him something another time. I had to leave them alone and hurry back, as I guessed you'd be here. But why don't you go into the study?"

"How can we get into the study when you've locked the door?" demanded Walker acidly.

Loder looked astonished.

"I haven't locked the door!" he exclaimed.

"You haven't?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, somebody has!" said Valence. "We can't get in!"

"Oh, stuff!" said Loder, who was not in a very amiable temper himself. "I suppose the lock's a bit stiff, that's all!"

"Well, try it!" growled Walker.

Loder was grasping the handle of the door. He gave it a sharp, jerking turn, and shoved at the door. It did not budge. He gritted his teeth.

"It's locked!" he exclaimed.

"I told you so!"

Loder uttered an exclamation of rage.

"The young sweeps!" he shouted. "That was why Bob

Cherry came and checked me in my study! They wanted to draw me while they played this beastly jape!"

Walker grinned.

"And you fell into the trap, of course," he said.

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"You must have been an ass, Loder——"

"Shut up!"

Loder did not err on the side of being offensively polite to his guests. He wrenched at the door again, in the faint hope that it might come open. But it remained as firm as a rock.

"I've got it!" exclaimed Carne suddenly. "The key of my door fits your lock, Loder——"

"Good!" exclaimed Loder, in great relief. "Get it here, will you?"

Carne hurried up the passage. He returned in a few moments, with a key in his hand, and handed it to Loder.

Loder inserted it in the lock and turned it.

"All serene now!" he exclaimed.

"Open the door, then!"

Loder was pushing at the door, with a puzzled expression. It did not open. He pushed, and pushed, but the door did not budgē.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Loder's Little Party is Off!

LODER'S face was growing crimson with rage. Although the door was now unlocked, it would not open, and the prefect could not understand it. The screws, buried deep in the wood, were undetected. The group of fellows in the passage were amazed, and they were growing impatient.

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Walker.

Loder ground his teeth.

"Blessed if I know!" he muttered.

"Somebody must be in the study, keeping the door shut!" Carne exclaimed.

Loder's eyes glittered.

"If he is we've got him," he said. "By George, I'll take the skin off his back! It must be Wharton or Bob Cherry."

"My dear fellow——" began Lord Mauleverer.

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Loder.

Lord Mauleverer looked indignantly at the prefect. He was a great stickler for politeness, and he did not like Loder's mode of address.

"My dear fellow——" he began again.

"Hold your silly tongue!" roared Loder.

Lord Mauleverer flushed.

"Very well, begad!" he exclaimed. "You need not trouble to give me another invitation to your study, Loder. I've had enough, begad!"

And his lordship walked indignantly away.

Loder hammered at the door.

"Open this door, you young scoundrels!" he shouted.

There was no reply from within the study. If the juniors were there, they were keeping very quiet. Not a sound could be heard, till a faint hissing and crackling became audible.

Loder knew what that was. He had left the kettle on the fire when he quitted the study, and now it was boiling over.

He kicked furiously at the lower panels of the door.

"Open this door!"

No answer.

Wingate looked out of his study.

"What's the row there?" he demanded.

Loder turned a furious glance towards the captain of Greyfriars.

"Some more of the result of your backing up the fags," he yelled. "They're in my study, and they won't open the door."

"Oh, rot!" said Wingate.

"Look for yourself."

Wingate frowned, and came along the passage, and tried the door. It did not open, and he tapped upon it.

"Who's in there?" he called out.

Silence.

"They won't answer you," said Carne.

"Rubbish!" said Wingate curtly. "If there are any juniors there, they will not disobey me."

"Well, try them and see."

Wingate tapped on the door again.

"Open this door!" he called out.

Silence.

"Is there anybody in this study?"

Silence.

"There's nobody there," said Wingate.

"Then why doesn't the door open?" shouted Loder. "I've unlocked it."

Wingate looked puzzled. There was a gaslight burning in the passage, but it was not very bright. Wingate struck a match, and looked over the outside of the door. Then a smile broke over his face.

"Well?" snapped Loder.

"The door is screwed up," said Wingate quietly.

"What?"

"Screwed!"

"Look for yourself."

Loder looked, and ground his teeth with rage. He had not suspected it before, but there was no doubt about it. Vernon-Smith broke into a chuckle. Loder turned upon him furiously.

"Stop that cackling, you young fool!"

The Bouncer shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not the only fool here, anyway," he said, "and I've had about enough of your company manners, Loder. I'm off."

"Go to the dickens!"

Vernon-Smith gave another shrug, and walked away.

"Who did this?" asked Wingate.

"Wharton and the rest."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I know they did! I'll skin them—"

"You won't!" said Wingate quietly. "Not unless you can prove that they did it, Loder."

Loder looked at him savagely.

"I'm a prefect, and I shall punish the juniors if I like," he said.

Wingate shook his head.

"You won't!" he replied. "And even if they did it, I want to know why they did it before they're punished."

"Look here, Wingate—"

"You are a prefect," said Wingate quietly, "but you've been chucked out of it once, and you may be again. If I find you bullying the juniors, Loder, I shall report it to the Head, and you won't be a prefect long."

"Of course, you back up those young cads."

"I want to know the circumstances of the matter before they're punished," said Wingate. "If you think Wharton did it, I'm willing to question Wharton, and get at the whole story."

Loder bit his lip.

"You can leave it to me," he said.

"I certainly shall not leave it to you."

"Then let the matter drop."

"Very well."

Wingate returned to his study. The four black sheep of the Sixth looked after him savagely, and then there was silence. Carne broke it.

"You're not going to let the matter drop, Loder?" he asked.

Loder ground his teeth.

"Not much!" he replied. "But it's no good dragging Wingate into it. If Wharton's questioned about it by Wingate, the whole story will come out. It's pretty clear why the young cads have done this—to keep Mauleverer away."

"I suppose so."

"But I'll make them smart for it, all the same," said Loder. "But the question is now, how to get the confounded door open."

"That won't be easy," said Walker, with a shrug. "There seem to be five or six screws in the blessed door."

"They've got to be got out."

"All right; you can give me a call when you've done it," said Walker, who had no liking for that particular form of labour. And he went back to his study.

"Give me a call, too," yawned Valence, "that is, if you ever do get the screws out."

And he, too, walked away.

Carne hesitated.

"Well, are you going too?" demanded Loder savagely.

"I'll lend you a hand if you like," said Carne, not very enthusiastically. "It will be a dickens of a job to get those screws out."

"I'll get a couple of screwdrivers."

"Oh, all right!"

It was easy enough to get the screwdrivers, but it was not easy to move the screws. On examination, it was seen that the tops had been hammered, so that the edge of the screwdriver could not be inserted into the slit to turn the screw.

Loder laboured over one screw, and Carne over another, but they did not succeed in getting either of them loose. They desisted at last, panting and furious.

"We can't do it," said Carne.

"Am I to be kept out of my study for good, then?" roared Loder.

Carne shrugged his shoulders.

"Blessed if I know!" he said. "Better get Gosling to deal with it. He'll manage it somehow, if you tip him a couple of bob."

"I'll—I'll smash those young scoundrels!"

"Well, you can't get into the study now," said Carne; "and, excuse me, Loder, I've had enough of this. I didn't come here to take on a job as a carpenter."

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And Carne strolled away. Loder was left raging in the passage, and saying things which, if the Head of Greyfriars had heard them, would certainly have led to his being expelled from the old school.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter is Seriously Hurt.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were very much on their guard that evening. They expected Loder to be looking for them; but the prefect had apparently let the matter drop. As a matter of fact, Loder was a little alarmed, as well as enraged. The juniors were not likely to take punishment quietly, and an inquiry into the affair was not likely to be pleasant for Loder. If it came out that he indulged in card-playing in his study, there would be serious trouble for him. There was no doubt upon that point. Loder had only recently regained his position as a prefect, and he did not want to risk losing it again. He fully intended to make the chums of the Remove smart for what they had done, but Loder preferred to avenge his injuries by "ways that are dark."

The Famous Four saw nothing of Loder that evening; but they were not deceived by the apparent forgetfulness of their enemy.

"We shall have a visit in the dorm," Bob Cherry remarked.

Harry Wharton nodded assent.

"Most likely," he said. "It's easy enough for a prefect to pretend that he's heard a row in the dorm, and to come with a cane to restore order."

"And sometimes there is a row in our dorm," Bob Cherry remarked.

"Yes, sometimes," laughed Harry.

"We shall have to be ready for Loder, that's all," said Nugent.

"My dear Nugent—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Toddy!"

"My dear Cherry, if Loder comes to the Remove dormitory to-night, with vindictive intentions, I am perfectly willing to take the matter in hand," said Alonzo Todd. "My Uncle Benjamin says that patient and gentle remonstrance is the best way of dealing with tyrannical or bad-tempered people."

"Ahem!"

"The soft answer turns away wrath," explained Todd. "I have no doubt that Loder's wrath could be turned away by a soft answer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear Wharton—"

"Loder isn't that kind of a bird," Bob Cherry explained. "We can turn his wrath away by a soft pillow, or a hard cricket-stump, but not by a soft answer."

"But my Uncle Benjamin—"

"Oh, give Ben a rest!" said Johnny Bull. "Hallo, here's Wingate!"

The Greyfriars captain looked into the common-room.

"Bed-time, you young sweeps!" he said, fixing a very peculiar look upon Harry Wharton & Co. "Tumble up!"

"Certainly, Wingate!"

The juniors were never lacking respect to Wingate. They would as soon have thought of screwing up the Head's door as Wingate's. They marched off to bed with exemplary obedience. Loder passed them in the passage, but he did not even look at them. But the juniors caught the gleam in his eyes as he passed, and they knew that the prefect had not forgotten. He was not likely to forget. It had taken Gosling, the porter, a whole hour to remove the screws from his door, and it had cost Loder half-a-crown as a tip. And when he entered his study, the prefect had found the kettle boiled dry, and the whole room covered with blacks from

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the water having boiled into the fire. Loder's state of feeling towards the heroes of the Remove might easily be guessed.

The whole Remove had chuckled over the story; but they looked more serious as they went up to their dormitory. A prefect had a great deal of power in his hands, especially in dealing with juniors, and it was always easy to make an excuse for bullying. And, as a matter of fact, the Remove dormitory was the least orderly in the house. Frequently enough pillow fights or raids from the Upper Fourth disturbed the serenity of that part of the house after lights out. A pretext for condign punishment would be easy to find, and Loder was a prefect, empowered by the rules of the school to cane juniors who misbehaved. The Removites anticipated trouble.

"Better be quiet as lambs to-night, anyway," said Bulstrode, as he kicked off his boots.

"Yes, rather!"

"Not that it will make much difference, if we are," said Tom Brown.

"We shall have to be ready for him, that's all," said Harry Wharton.

"The rotter may wait till we're asleep."

"Some of you chaps can stay awake and watch!" said Bolsover.

"H'm!"

"I guess I'm sleepy," said Fisher. T. Fish, with a yawn.

"If anybody comes, you can call me."

"And me," yawned Ogilvy.

"And me."

"And me."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, if we all go to sleep, there will be trouble for some of us," he remarked.

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Snoop. "If you screw up a prefect's door, you must expect him to cut up rusty."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"It's your own look-out," said Vernon-Smith, with a sneer. "As far as I'm concerned, I hope you will get a licking. You fellows want taking down a peg or two! Oh!"

Whiz!

A pillow caught the Bounder of Greyfriars in the chest, and put a sudden end to his remarks. He sat down.

"Oh! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who threw that pillow?" roared Vernon-Smith, staggering up and clutching the pillow and glaring round him.

"I did," said Bob Cherry cheerfully.

Whiz!

The pillow came whizzing back, and Bob Cherry ducked his head, and it flew past him. It is said that every bullet has its billet; and that pillow found a mark. It passed Bob Cherry, and plumped upon a fat junior who was sitting on the next bed, unlacing his boots.

"Yaroo!" roared Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow! Oh!"

Billy Bunter was bowled clean over. He went backwards over the bed, and bumped upon the floor on the other side. He did not rise again. He lay there groaning.

"Oh! Ow! Yow!"

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

"Ow! I'm hurt!" groaned Bunter. "Ow! I—I—I'm hurt! Come and help me, you—you fellows! My backbone's sprained."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!" moaned Bunter faintly.

The Removites roared. Bunter was never touched without complaining of serious injuries, and if his accounts were to be believed, he had been at the point of death many times. He groaned unheeded on the floor of the dormitory. Bunter made so many demands for sympathy that he had long ago exhausted all the sympathy that the Removites were disposed to waste upon him. He groaned in vain.

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Oh, stop that row!" said Bolsover.

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Shut up!"

"Groo! My right leg is broken and my arm twisted!" groaned Bunter. "I don't suppose I shall ever recover! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate reopened the door of the dormitory and looked in. Bunter's deep and deadly groans had reached him as he chatted with Courtney in the passage.

"What's the matter?" asked Wingate.

There was a deep, hair-raising groan from Bunter. The Greyfriars captain started, and looked round him. But the bed Bunter had fallen behind hid him from the captain's gaze, and Wingate could not see who groaned.

"Good heavens," exclaimed Wingate, "who is that?"

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"Bunter," said Bob Cherry.

"Bunter! What's the matter with him?"

"Sprained his backbone," explained Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What?" exclaimed Wingate.

"Well, he says so; and it's his backbone, so he ought to know."

"Don't be an ass, Cherry!"

Groan!

"Bunter!"

Groan!

"He must be hurt, to groan like that," said Wingate, striding towards the fat junior. "Did you fall off the bed, Bunter?"

"Ow! Yes! Groo!"

"Try to get up," said Wingate, stooping over him anxiously.

Groan!

"Bunter, where are you hurt?"

Billy Bunter blinked at the captain of Greyfriars through his big spectacles. He had found someone to take notice of his terrible sufferings at last, and he meant to make the most of it.

"Ow! It's—it's all over!" he groaned.

"Well, if it's all over, what are groaning about?" asked Ogilvy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Wingate sharply. "What do you mean, Bunter?"

"It's all over. I—I've sprained my leg, and twisted my arm, and hurt my back, and got a crick in the neck, and a bump on my head, and—"

"My hat, what a casualty list!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"I—I forgive them!" said Bunter faintly. "I was knocked over by somebody buzzing a pillow at me, but I forgive him. Oh! Ow!"

Wingate looked at him anxiously. If Bunter was malingering, he was doing it extremely well. He might have been expiring in agony from his look.

"Ow, ow! Oh!"

"Bunter!"

Groan!

"My poor fellow—"

Groan!

"Help me lift him on the bed, Cherry," said Wingate anxiously. "Cannot you get up, Bunter?"

"Ow! No!"

"Help me with him, Cherry—gently!"

"Gently does it!" said Bob cheerily.

"Don't be unfeeling, Cherry!" said Wingate sharply.

"Oh, all right!"

Bob Cherry bent over Bunter. He knew, as all the Removites did, that Bunter was only pretending to be hurt, and was no more than slightly bumped by his fall off the bed. The Greyfriars captain did not know Bunter so well as the Remove did. Bob extracted a pin from his jacket as he bent over Bunter.

"Take his feet, and I'll take his shoulders, and lift him up," said Wingate.

"Yaroo!" roared Bunter, as Bob Cherry bent over his fat legs. "Yow!"

He did not wait to be lifted up.

He leaped to his feet as if he had been suddenly electrified, so suddenly that the back of his head caught Wingate under the chin, and the Greyfriars captain staggered back with a yell of pain.

"Ow—ow! Yaroo!" roared Bunter.

And he clasped his hands to one fat leg, and danced upon the other, while the Remove roared with laughter.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Wun Lung Has an Idea.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Yaroo! Yow! Oh!"
Wingate stood holding his chin with both hands. Bunter's head was hard, and it caught the Sixth-Former a sounding crack on the chin. Wingate felt for the moment as if his jaw had cracked and his teeth were all loosened.

"Bunter!" he gasped.

"Yow! Yaroo!"

"How—how dare you!" gasped Wingate.

"Ow! Somebody stuck a pin in me!" yelled Bunter.

"Yaroo! It was Cherry! Yow! He's stuck a pin in my leg! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Then—then you weren't hurt at all!" shouted Wingate, rubbing his chin. "You lying young rascal, you were only pretending!"

"Yow! I wasn't! Yow! Oh, my leg—oh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You said you couldn't get up!" shouted Wingate.
"Well, I couldn't—I mean—ow—I—I—ow!"

It dawned upon Bunter that he had given himself away. He ceased to dance upon one leg, and sank upon his bed in an attitude of exhaustion and great pain. Billy Bunter was not a very keen youth. He did not see that it was too late to go on with the deception.

"Oh," he groaned, "I feel frightfully bad! Ow! I've got a sprain in my backbone, and—"

"You lying rascal!" said Wingate angrily. "You're not hurt at all, or you couldn't have jumped up like that."

"Oh, really Wingate! Ow! I'm suffering fearfully! Ow!"

"Then I'll make you suffer a little more!" said Wingate angrily.

Smack, smack, smack!

The Greyfriars captain's heavy hands smacked upon Billy

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Bunter's large ears and on his fat shoulders, and the fat junior roared, with real pain this time.

"Ow—ow! Stop it! Yaroo!"

Smack, smack, smack!

"Oh—oh! Ow! Yow!" roared Bunter.

Smack, smack, smack!

Billy Bunter rolled over the bed, and off it to the floor, and squirmed away under the next bed, where he lay, gasping.

Wingate was gasping, too. He had made himself quite tired in administering that little correction to the Owl of the Remove.

"Yow—ow!"

Bunter's wail came from under the bed, and Wingate laughed breathlessly.

(Continued on page 19.)

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And it quite spoiled the tragic effect. The audience giggled and chuckled, and even Dr. Looke could not suppress a smile.

When Mark Antony came in, at his own, he bowed bravely at Brutus. But he managed to get through his lines without making any longer.

At the end of the scene Potter and Stoddard linked arms with him off the stage to keep him from committing suicide and history upon Mr. Stoddard.

"He's doing it on purpose!" growled Coker. "If it were possible, I should think that the Romans would have got at him and buried him to keep up the show."

"Oh, yes," said Potter. "How could they?"

"Well, I suppose they couldn't," agreed Coker. "but—"

"It was an accident, jabbing Cressida like that—"

"Well, he's had too many accidents!" snapped Coker. "If he has any more I'll give him an accident he won't get over in a hurry!"

"He's been playing jolly well," said Bland. "He's the best actor in the place, with one exception."

"Excepting you, do you mean?"

"Well, no, I was thinking of myself," said Bland innocently.

"Am?"

"Falsely!"

"Order!" said Stoddard. "Time!"

"If that silly fellow—"

"The audience are waiting!"

"Oh, how the audience!" growled Coker.

Mr. Stoddard gave a look to his watch. He intended to do a splendid business in the seats to the people after the death of Caesar, and he did. Coker watched him from the wings and lowered.

"The blunderer seems to get on all right with the audience!" Coker growled. "Blunderer! I know way!"

Potter grinned.

"He's a good actor, Coker, all said and done," he answered.

"Jolly good thing Coker selected a man as useful," said Stoddard, pouring oil on the troubled waters, so to speak.

"Well, yes, he's useful when he behaves himself," said Coker, somewhat mollified.

"But, really, Coker, old man! Mind how you do that funeral oration!" said Potter.

"What! I can do it myself!"

"Don't mix it with the soliloquy from 'Hamlet,' as you did in the rehearsal the other day."

"Oh, hush!"

"Get on!" said Nelson from the stage.

It was Coker's cue. Brutus had retired, and it was time for Mark Antony to address the mob over the body of Caesar.

Coker would be liked.

"Antony should be made of sterner stuff!"

"Loudly!"

"You—you—!" stammered Coker, beginning to forget his lines in his rage and excitement. "You—you all did share him once—"

"Love him, you say?" whispered Potter, from the prompt side.

"Love him, you say?" said Coker, confusedly.

"What could withhold you, then, from—?"

"Love him, you say?"

"Oh, judgment, then, let's bid to brotherly hearts, and men have lost their reason! Begg with me! My heart is in the coffin there, with Caesar, and I must pause till it come back to me!"

And Coker passed.

It was then, as he was almost choking with rage, and growing confused and mixed. The remarks of the crowd of common sense gave him a chance to pull himself together, and he put a furious glare towards the wings, which did not pass unnoticed by the audience. When he resumed he caught the eye of Mr. Stoddard II. fastened on him from behind the scenes, and he almost choked over the words. He knew that there was more to come.

"How many thousands of my poorest subjects—" began Coker, inadvertently directing a look from "King Henry IV." which the Fifth Form Dramatic Society had lately been rehearsing.

"Wrong!" came in a stage whisper from Potter.

"Alone!"

"He, he, he!"

Coker tried to remember his lines. Lines from "King Henry IV." and from "The Merchant of Venice" came confusedly into his mind, and he blundered them out, hardly knowing what he was saying, with surprising effects.

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"Alone!"

"He, he, he!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Potter to Brutus."

"Oh, it's too funny!"

"And we shouldn't be allowed to laugh if the Head's there," said Tom Brown.

"Not even to pick a lecture egg or two!" remarked Ogilvy.

"Shame!"

"They've done us in the eye!" said Beldrode. "But I'm blotted if I feel like sitting down and taking it quietly! The Fifth will cheer us on!"

"There's what Wingate suggested," said Wharton slowly.

"What is that?"

"We could forestall the Fifth by giving the play tonight, properly."

"How?"

"No time!"

"We haven't got a room to give it in. The lecture-hall is being used to-night. Old Proof, of the Fifth, is giving one of his rotten geographical lectures."

"What?"

"The Owl of the Remove blundered awfully at the lecture, and

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"I was going to offer to take the part of Brutus—"

"He, he, he!"

"Look here," exclaimed Billy Desser, blinking wrathfully at the juniors through his big spectacles, "you know what kind of an actor I am—"

"He, he, he!"

"I'm a dab at amateur theatricals, and I don't think I ought to be kept out of the cast by payment jealousy. As Brutus—"

"You can have the part of Brutus's father," said Beldrode.

"Brutus's father?" he exclaimed. "I didn't know he appears in the play."

"He doesn't," said Beldrode sweetly.

"Oh, really, Beldrode—"

"He, he, he!"

The Owl of the Remove blundered awfully at the lecture, and

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"What?"

"Now, go to bed, you young rascals!" he exclaimed. "And if there is any more nonsense from you, Bunter, I shall give you a real licking next time!"

And the Remove turned in. Billy Bunter peered out cautiously from under the bed; but as Wingate made no further hostile movement, the fat junior ventured out, and crawled into bed, still gasping and snorting.

Wingate extinguished the lights, and quitted the dormitory. Some of the Removes were still chuckling. A deep groan came from Bunter's bed.

Bob Cherry sat up. "Bunter!" he called out. "Ow! Yes? Ow!" "Shut up!" "Oh, really, Cherry—" "If you don't want to be yanked out of bed and bumped on the floor, you had better stop it!" said Bob Cherry. "We're fed up! Don't you understand?" "Oh, really—" "Dry up!"

And Billy Bunter "dried up," though this time his groaning was not entirely without cause, for Wingate's smacks had been very hard.

Some of the Removes settled down to sleep, but Harry Wharton & Co. did not feel inclined to sleep just yet. They were anticipating trouble from Loder, and they did not want the bully of the Sixth to take them by surprise. Bob Cherry was willing to stay awake and keep watch; but as he was pretty certain to fall asleep while so engaged, his offer was not received with confidence. While the chums of the Remove were discussing the matter, a still small voice proceeded from Wun Lung's bed. The little Chinese had been thinking the matter out, too.

"Me knowee!" "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What's your idea, Wun Lung?"

The little Celestial chuckled softly. "Tie stling across in front of dool," he explained. "Lodel comee in, he tumblee ove, and wakee us up."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Good egg!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "Who's got a cord?"

"Me gotee." "Come on, then!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, jumping out of bed.

Bob Cherry lighted a candle-end, and a dim glimmer of light pervaded the dormitory. Wun Lung, grinning gleefully, produced a thin but strong cord; he had evidently brought it to the dormitory for the purpose. Bob Cherry gave him an appreciative slap on the shoulder.

"Good for you, you giddy heathen—" "Ow!" gasped Wun Lung, squirming away from the hearty Bob. "Ow! No hitee Wun Lung!"

"Ha, ha, ha! That's only a mark of esteem." "Wun Lung no likee," said the little Chinese, getting to a safer distance from the exuberant Bob. "Lats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" It did not take long to fasten the cord in position. One end was fastened to the leg of a bed, and the other to a staple stuck in the wall, and the cord stretched across in front of the doorway, taut and strong, at a height of six inches from the floor. It was as complete a trap as could be desired, for it would be invisible in the darkness, and anybody entering the dormitory could not possibly detect it unless he carried a light—which an intruder with hostile intentions would not be likely to do.

Bob Cherry chuckled as he surveyed it. "It's ripping!" he exclaimed. "And if anybody comes in and tumbles over that cord, it's bound to wake us up, and we shall be justified in concluding that it is a burglar."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Burglars breaking into junior dormitories must naturally expect to be rather roughly handled," said Bob. "In this case it is bound to happen. Wun Lung, you're a giddy pig-tailed genius."

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent. Bob Cherry blew out the candle, and the juniors returned to bed, satisfied that they could slumber in peace.

(Continued on page 18.)

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

COCKER & CO. of the Fifth, came in from football practice looking very rusty and very excited with themselves. Cocker & Co. were very far from considering that they had played it "low down" as the Removes, from the sublime heights of the Fifth, they seemed to regard the Remove, or Lower Fifth, as a crew of troublesome lads, who were to be tolerated as patiently as possible, but not otherwise than as such. The more ideas of the Remove's acting themselves was characterized by the Fifth as "cheek." And if their play had been taken out of their hands, they really ought to feel rather pleased and flattered than otherwise at the Fifth recognizing their existence in this way. That was how Cocker & Co. looked at it, or allowed to look at it.

Cocker and Pettit had nibbled and Greene passed in the hall to look at their notes. They knew how it had happened the Remove, and they had a suspicion that the juniors might have done some damage to it. Cocker uttered a sharp exclamation as he glanced at the board. The Fifth Form Dramatic Society's notes were not to be seen.

"My hat!" "They've covered it up!" bawled Pettit. The Fifth-Formers stared wrathfully at the board. The notes they had passed up there had a front sheet pinned over it, and the second sheet contained a notice written in the firm, clear handwriting of Harry Wharton.

"Oh, read it!" said Greene. The notice made the Fifth-Formers moist. It ran:

NOTICE.

"Notice is hereby given to the Remove play, to give it on Wednesday night, the Remove have decided to give it on Tuesday, instead. "Julius Caesar" will be performed in the Remove Form-room this evening, commencing at seven sharp. All are invited. Fathers who want to see their people's boys are invited to come, to learn how to keep quiet and not bring coffee or butter to their pockets to eat during the performance."

Signed,

"H. WHARTON,
President Remove Dramatic Society."

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Cocker. "The cheek of it!" said Pettit. "They're going to give away the play!"

"They're jolly well not!" said Cocker wrathfully. "Not after we've been to the expense of engaging a real actor to come down and take the part of Brutus! Why, this would mean up the whole thing!"

"Of course it would!" "No good giving it to tomorrow, if those cheeky lads give it to night," said Pettit.

"Not as easily as that!" "They're not to be stopped!" Cocker tore the notice down, and tore it into pieces. The Fifth-Form notice was discarded underneath, but it was not unobserved. Across it was scribbled, with a brush dipped in ink, the expressive message:

RAT! Cocker turned crimson with rage. "We shall have to write out a fresh notice!" he said, with forced calmness.

"I-I suppose so." "Ha, ha, ha!" The Fifth-Formers turned round angrily. A group of Removes in the hall were talking with laughter. Cocker shot his eye at them.

"You young rascals—" "No good putting a new notice up," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "We'll paint 'Rat' across it as fast as you put it up!"

"You young villain!" yelled Cocker. "Nobody's allowed to interfere with notices on the notice board, you know that!" "You're just from one up yourself!"

There was no denying it. Cocker had been the Remove notice to pass, and the fragments lay at his feet. "We'll have them sticking up together, if you like," said Blundell. "For play's a jewel. Give and let live!"

"Oh, go and get lost!" Cocker stamped away to rewrite his notice. When he returned he found that a duplicate of the Remove paper had already been passed on the board. His head went up to it. The Magnet Librarian.—No. 100.

At last he hesitated. Finally, he pinned his paper up beside Harry Wharton's and the two notices flourished side by side, for all Gryffindors to read.

Most of Gryffindors read them. The Sixth read them, and confidentially to give whether at the school of the Remove, or the ambition of the Fifth, or Cocker's spelling, we cannot say. The smugness of them, Mr. Quish, of the Remove, and Mr. Pious, of the Fifth, peered together in front of the board, and read the notice with smiling faces. But it was observed that Mr. Quish smiled more than Mr. Pious did. Harry Wharton's well-written and very neat paper, contrasted strikingly with the sprawling handwriting and bad spelling of Cocker of the Fifth. Mr. Pious even frowned a little over Cocker's orthography. Cocker was not a pupil for a Form-master to be especially proud of.

Even the Head placed to glance over the paper, and a smile was seen on his kind old face as he read them.

The notices were still on the board when the juniors went to afternoon lessons, thinking more about the death of Lear and the speech of Mark Antony than about the various schemes of knowledge which it was Mr. Quish's duty to impress into their minds. The school actors worried their heads over them, much to the detriment of the work. Mr. Quish had never found his class so uninterested in early Roman history, in Latin, or in any other subject. He snugged at Bob Cherry after speaking to him three or four times.

"Cherry?" "Oh! Yes, Mr. Quish," replied Bob, coming to himself.

"What do you come into this classroom for, Cherry?" he wondered Mr. Quish severely.

"I come to buy Caesar, not to print him!" replied Bob. "I-I mean—" Mr. Quish stared at him.

"Cherry?" "Oh! I'm sorry, sir! I-I was thinking of 'Julius Caesar'!"

"Take this line!" "Yes, sir," said Bob. "You come into this classroom to learn, not to muddle," said Mr. Quish. "If more attention is not given to work, I shall detain the whole class one hour."

The Removes gasped. Being detained one hour would mean that the rehearsal would have to be cut! From that moment Mr. Quish had a model class, and if he had not known the Gryffindor Remove as well he would certainly have imagined that they were really keen on study.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

YOUNG MR. WHARTON.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came out of the Remove Form-room greatly relieved to find that none of them had been detained after all. There was only one subject in their minds now—a dramatic rehearsal for "Julius Caesar." The juniors hurried up at once to No. 1 Study to get into costume, and go over their parts to make sure that all was right for the performance. The eyes of Cocker & Co. were on them as they went; but the juniors shadowily ignored the Fifth. Cocker, however, was not to be ignored. He came to the staircase as the Removes went up, and shouted after them:

"Wharton, hold on a minute!" "Sorry! No time to talk to different!" said Harry.

"You cheeky young rascals—" "Rat!" "Look here!" bawled Cocker. "Are you thinking of giving that rotten play to night, as you are only rotting. If you're going to make fools of yourselves—" "We're not!"

"Then you're given up the idea?" "Never had it; we know that in the Fifth," said Wharton firmly. "You are ever so much better at it than we are."

"Are you going to play 'Julius Caesar'?" yelled Cocker. "Oh, yes!" "Then I tell you—" "Sorry I can't stop!"

And Wharton hurried upstairs after his chums, without waiting to hear what Cocker of the Fifth had to tell him. Cocker rejoined his comrades in a flaming temper.

"We can't let them do it!" he said. Pettit shook his head decidedly.

"Certainly not!" he exclaimed. "It would spoil the whole thing. We've got to consider Blundell, too—after engaging an expensive actor, we can't have the thing done over our heads, and our show ruined, by those rascals!"

And the Fifth-Formers put their heads together over the matter. Meanwhile, Harry Wharton & Co. were changing into stagey in No. 1 Study. Although the stage-manager,

He studied the rush of the Fifth-Formers, and dodged round the crowd of Remove notices. Cocker succeeded in getting hold of his mantle, but a drive in the ribs made Cocker let go, and he fell upon the steps with a crash. His tin cased clattered down and burst, and he gasped on his back, while the audience rose to their feet and stared.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "On the ball, Mark Antony!" "On the ball, Mark Antony!"

There was a wild cheer round the stage. Brutus was headed off at last, and escaped into the wings. The curtain was rung down and wild roars of excitement and applause from the audience. Dr. Foulke was laughing as much as the rest. He could not help himself.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "This is most extraordinary! What boy is taking the part of Brutus, Mr. Quish?" Mr. Quish looked at the programme.

"Mr. Alfonso Blundell," he read out. "Ah, that is the London actor who has come down to assist Cocker and his friends in the performance, sir."

"Blas my soul! He has chosen a very singular way of assisting them!" "I need say no more," agreed Mr. Quish.

The audience yelled. "He, ha, ha!" "Come on again, Brutus—" "Give Brutus a chance!"

The Head rose and made a sign for silence. The laughter died away, but the sound of irrepressible chuckling broke forth frequently. Even the Head's presence could not wholly suppress the mirth of the audience.

But as soon as silence was somewhat restored in the hall, voices could be heard raised in loud and angry altercation behind the scenes.

"You disgraceful rotter! You're drunk!" "Blas!" "How dare you—" "What do you mean?"

"You're mucked up the whole thing!" "Do you call yourself an actor, you failed?"

"You blithering idiot!" And the audience grunted. Feeling was evidently running high behind the scenes. Cocker & Co. as a matter of fact, were utterly exasperated, not, indeed, without reason. Mr. Blundell, instead of being a help, was considerably more than a hindrance. How to reduce the audience to a properly grave and attentive frame of mind again was a puzzle the "Julius Caesar" Company could not solve. Whatever they did now the audience were pretty certain to take it in a comic spirit and laugh.

"You ought to be strangled, you silly man!" said Cocker, shaking his fist at Mr. Blundell. "What on earth made you break out like that?"

"He's drunk!" said Greene. "Blas!" ejaculated Mr. Blundell. "I am a strict teetotaler. Has not the immortal Shakespeare exclaimed 'Oh, that new should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains!'? But, I am as sober as yourself!"

"Well, you'd better be a bit more careful!" growled Cocker. "If you break out again you'll get kicked out of the place, as I warn you!"

"Blas!" "Another word to the audience, and we'll smash you!" said Pettit.

"Blas!" "Let's get on with the washing," said Blundell. "The audience seem to have calmed down a bit. We've got to make the thing go somehow."

"The Remove will never let us hear the end of this!" growled Cocker.

"Blas!" "You've come a worse mucker than they did, so far," said Blundell.

"Let's get on." "Up with the curtain!" said Cocker, in a growling voice. "Mind, Blundell, any more out, and you get smashed!"

Mr. Blundell folded his arms majestically. Cocker would gladly have kicked the gentleman from London off the stage there and then. But what was he to do without Brutus? "Julius Caesar" without Brutus would certainly be like "Hamlet" with the Prince of Denmark left out. But Cocker desisted his hands as he said to himself that if there was any more "rot" from the London man he would make him rot for it. If the play was mucked up, there would be some satisfaction in backstopping Mr. Alfonso Blundell.

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THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Yet according to Programme.

THE audience watched with keen interest as the curtain rose and the play proceeded. They were waiting for some further outbreak on the part of Brutus. There was no doubt that the greater part of the audience preferred a comedy to a tragedy, and liked "Julius Caesar" better in a farcical spirit.

The Removes, especially, were watching with all their eyes. The scheme that the Famous Four had schemed was working without a hitch. The Fifth-Formers had considerably mucked up the Remove's performance of "Julius Caesar," but it was pretty certain that they would come a worse mucker than themselves before Harry Wharton had finished with them.

The play proceeded with more or less success as far as the amusement of Caesar. Brutus played his role with gravity up to that point, perhaps not above the satisfaction of playing it well to so large an audience.

There was no doubt upon the subject that when Brutus took his part seriously he was by far the best actor in the cast. In spite of the strange outbreak on the part of Mr. Blundell, the audience concluded that Cocker & Co. had done really in strengthening the cast with a London actor. Only the Removes knew that it was a member of the Remove Dramatic Club who was in reality playing the role, and they groaned as they heard the whistling comments of the rest of the audience.

They were not sorry for it to be obvious that a Remove was a better actor than any of the Fifth, for, of course, it would come out before the end of the evening who Mr. Blundell really was. At the same time, they were growing impatient for some more fun. It was all very well for Wharton to show a Remove's powers as an actor, but he was not there to make the play a success.

The Remove began to get impatient. "Oh, is Brutus?" sang out Johnny Bull suddenly. Wingate rose and looked round with a frown.

"Blundell!" he yelled out. Johnny Bull gasped. "Blas my soul!" whispered Frank Nugent. "Wharton's only hiding his time."

"Faith, and you're right," murmured Micky Diamond. "Look at the coward!" "Fear old Greene!" They're going to murder him!"

Greene's hour had come—the Julius Caesar, of course. The conspirators scabbed him, and at last he came to Brutus's turn to strike. Greene prepared to murder himself in his mantle and fall with Caesar-like dignity, but as Brutus stabbed he gave a wild yell.

"Oh!" There was a gasp from the audience. With so many slabs in his person Julius Caesar must certainly have felt hurt, but honestly he never, certainly, experienced "Oh!" as he fell. He was supposed to say "Et te, Brutus!" But Greene didn't. He said "Oh!"

"You are!" muttered Pettit—Caesar. "Say your line!" "You! I'm murdered!" "Blas!"

"Groop!" "It's that idiot Blundell again!" murmured Blundell-Jane.

"Blas!" "You! The idiot's nearly beaten my ribs!" roared Julius Caesar. "You! Oh!"

The audience yelled. "He, ha, ha!" "Groop!" "Oh, you cheeky!" muttered Cocker from the wings, times showing himself to the audience in his anxiety. "You are!" It's easy for you to die, you silly failed!"

"Groop!" "Oh, you failed! Die quick!" "Greene drew his mantle round him and died. He fell gracefully at the foot of Pompey's statue, but under his mantle his hand could be seen moving, rubbing his damaged ribs, though he was now quite dead—or should have been."

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Ten o'clock rang out from the clock-tower, and by that time most of the Remove were asleep. The others dropped off one by one, and by half-past ten the whole Form was buried in slumber.

It was not till half an hour later, however, that cautious footsteps were heard in the passage outside the dormitory. They were not heard by the Removites, who were all fast asleep. In the passage, where the light had been extinguished, and all was dark, two shadowy forms stopped outside the dormitory door.

Loder put his ear to the door.

"The young scoundrels are fast asleep," he muttered. "I can't hear a sound—excepting Bunter snoring."

"Good!" said Carne.

"It won't take us five minutes," went on Loder sourly. "I know which fellows are in the beds, without a light. Mind, Wharton and Cherry and Nugent and Bull are to have the lickings—and I think we shall make them sit up. And remember, we heard a row going on in the dormitory, and came here to stop it."

Carne chuckled.

"All right!"

And Loder opened the door of the Remove dormitory softly and silently.

All was quiet in the long, lofty room. From the beds came a sound of steady breathing; from Bunter's a steady snore. There was a dim glimmer of moonlight in at the high windows, only clear enough to show up the beds as black masses in the gloom. Not a junior in the room was awake.

"All serene," whispered Loder.

"Right!"

The bullies of the Sixth trod softly into the dormitory towards the beds. Then there was a sudden wild yell and a crash.

Bump!

"Yaroooh!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Burglars!

HARRY WHARTON started up in bed.

He had been deep in slumber—the healthy slumber of youth—and a slight sound would not have awakened him. But it was not a slight sound that rang through the Lower Fourth dormitory. It was a wild yell, and the bump on the floor startled even Billy Bunter into broad wakefulness.

"Yaroooh!"

"Oh!"

Bump—bump!

"What the—"

"How the—"

"Oh!"

Bob Cherry jumped up with a shout, and grasped his pillow.

"Burglars!" he yelled.

"Burglars!"

"Jump up!"

"Go for 'em!"

On the floor, in the darkness, two forms were rolling blindly. Loder had caught his foot in the cord first, and had fallen forward helplessly; and Carne, the next moment, had come crashing down on top of him. The bullies of the Sixth hardly knew what had caused their overthrow, so utterly taken by surprise were they. They were gasping dazedly on the floor when the Removites turned out of bed.

The juniors lost no time!

The whole Form turned out to the work, grasping pillows and bolsters.

Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton led a rush towards the two shadowy forms that were struggling to their feet.

"Go for 'em!"

"Burglars!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Hurrah!"

Biff! Biff! Smash! Crash! Bump!

Loder, almost upon his feet, was swept over by a swinging bolster, and crashed down again, and after that he had no chance of getting up. As fast as he tried to rise he was smitten over again. Carne tried to squirm out of the doorway, but a hand grasped his ankle and dragged him, yelling, back.

Pillows and bolsters smote and swiped, and the two seniors roared with pain and rage. They had no chance whatever against the juniors—in fact, the numbers of the Removites were not only too many for the seniors, but too many for themselves, and many of the Remove received terrific swipes in the darkness that were intended for Loder and Carne. But if Loder and Carne received only half the blows that were levelled at them, they were well punished.

Quite forgetting that they did not want to raise a general alarm, Loder and Carne roared and yelled and shrieked, dazed and bewildered by the sweeping attack.

"Oh! Ow!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"Help! Yah!"

"Go for 'em!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Burglars! Yow! Yah! Go for 'em!"

"Ha, ha!"

"Give 'em beans!"

"Pile in!"

The terrific uproar in the Remove dormitory might have awakened the dead, and it was not long in awakening the Greyfriars School House. Lights flashed along the passage, and voices were heard calling, excitedly demanding what was the matter.

Loder and Carne were not in a state to explain. They had been bundled into a corner of the dormitory, and were on their knees, feebly defending themselves with their hands from the sweeping shower of blows. They were hemmed in by Removites, and had no chance of escape, and their defence was very feeble against the attack.

Wun Lung, with his silent chuckle, unfastened the cord which had been the undoing of Loder and Carne, and slipped it out of sight. Lights gleamed in the passage, and Mr. Quelch, in dressing-gown and slippers, with a cane in his hand, loomed up in the doorway. He felt for the electric light switch and turned it on, and a flood of light fell upon the excited scene.

"Go for 'em!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Don't let the villains escape!"

Mr. Quelch strode into the dormitory.

"What is this about?" he exclaimed angrily.

"Burglars, sir."

"What!"

"Two frightful ruffians, sir, broke into the dormitory!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It's a mercy we weren't all murdered in our beds, sir!"

"W-what!"

"We've got 'em, sir! They can't get away!" gasped Bulstrode. "Telephone for the police, sir!"

"Ow!" gasped Loder. "Help! Keep those young fiends off! Ow!"

"Stop this instantly!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "They are not burglars; they are Loder and Carne, of the Sixth!"

"They can't be, sir!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "They must be burglars, or they wouldn't have come creeping into the dorm. in the middle of the night."

"Stop that instantly!"

"Very well, sir. But don't you get too near them, sir. They are desperate."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

The Removites surged back from their victims. Loder and Carne looked in a very deplorable state—red and flustered and dishevelled. They had had a punishment such as they had seldom or never experienced before.

Mr. Quelch eyed them sternly.

"Loder! You are a prefect! Answer me! What are you doing here—"

"Those young demons—"

"That is not a proper way to speak, Loder. Moderate your language, sir!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Now kindly explain what you were doing here, and why these juniors attacked you. They seem to have mistaken you for burglars."

"We—we—" gasped Carne.

"Let Loder speak!"

"There was a row here, and I came to stop it," said Loder, gasping for breath. "Carne came with me; that's all. As soon as we were inside the dormitory the brats—ahem!—the Remove set on us like—like a lot of wild beasts."

"Just so!" gasped Carne.

"My hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What a whopper!"

"Cherry!"

"Sorry, sir. But Loder must have been dreaming. There wasn't any row going on here, excepting Bunter snoring, and Loder couldn't hear that from his study."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You had better be serious, Cherry," said Mr. Quelch, with a frown. "Do you say that the dormitory was quite orderly?"

"Quite, sir. We were all fast asleep when we heard a fearful row all of a sudden that woke us up."

"Faith, and it's thue for ye!" said Micky Desmond.

"Quite true," said Harry Wharton. "I don't believe there was a single chap awake in the dormitory when Loder and Carne came in."

"Begad, and that's quite right, my dear fellow."

Mr. Quelch looked puzzled.

"They're lying!" shouted Loder. "They had something fixed inside the door to make us fall over as we came in—"

"Then you came in in the dark, Loder?"

"Ye-es."

"Why did you not turn on the light? The switch is within easy reach of the doorway. If you came here to put an end to a disturbance, you surely did not intend to do so in the dark?"

"I—I—I—"

"I trust, Loder, that your statement is correct, and that you did not come here to play a silly trick like a junior?"

"Mr. Quelch!"

"You were evidently mistaken about having heard a disturbance here, at all events," said the Remove-master quietly.

"They are lying, sir!"

"They are doing nothing of the sort!" said Mr. Quelch sharply. "It looks to me as if you were raiding the dormitory, after the manner of juniors, and that the Remove expected you, and were ready for you. If you choose to act in a flighty and foolish way, Loder, you must expect the juniors to treat you accordingly. A prefect has no business to creep into a dormitory in the dark at a late hour of the night. You had better go!"

Loder gritted his teeth. But he realised that the Remove-master was right. He had better go. And he went, his face pale with rage. Carne followed him, without a word. He was glad enough to get away without further trouble.

Mr. Quelch turned a stern eye upon the Removes. He had a pretty accurate idea of the whole business by this time, and he could hardly blame the Removes for having defended themselves. He did not.

"Go to bed," he said, "and don't let me hear any more noise from this dormitory, or you will be in trouble."

"Yes, sir! Good-night, sir!"

"Good-night!" said Mr. Quelch, rather abruptly.

He turned out the light and retired. Left to themselves, the Removes chuckled long and gleefully.

"That's one in the eye for Loder!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I don't think he'll come poking into the dormitory at night again in a hurry!"

"No fear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Remove chuckled themselves to sleep. Bob Cherry was right. Loder did not come again. He had had enough.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Be Good.

BOYS, according to a very old saying, will be boys. The Greyfriars Remove were no exception to the general rule. They were boys, and they would be boys, and very boyish boys. And it is just possible that their success had got into their heads, and made them feel a little too proud of themselves. Certainly, they seemed to have lost sight of the fact, for the time being, that the Lower Fourth could not really be considered as the most important Form in a school. The Remove was generally in evidence, in some way or another, at Greyfriars; but they had never been so much in evidence as they were now. Cheeking the prefects was a dangerous pastime for juniors, but it was one in which some of the Remove began to indulge, and some of the fags in the Lower Forms followed their example.

True, it would probably have come to an end if Wingate had put his foot firmly down; but Wingate was in two minds about the matter. Loder & Co. were bullies—and worse—and he could not blame the juniors for resisting them, and where justifiable resistance ended and cheek began was a debatable point.

Wingate was undecided, and he let the matter alone for the present. Towards Wingate himself, the juniors never failed in respect. Any fag who had cheeked Wingate would have been promptly ragged by the other fags.

Loder & Co. had to fight their own battle, and they found, much to their astonishment, that the Remove

were quite able to take care of themselves, and in fact, more than able.

The Remove were not content to defend themselves; they were bent on carrying the war into Africa, so to speak.

The choice spirits of the Lower Fourth seemed to have undertaken the task of reforming the bad manners of the Sixth, and they began with Loder.

Loder certainly had bad enough manners, which needed reforming. He was a black sheep, and everybody knew it. He was the head of a fast set in the Sixth, who would probably have been expelled in a bunch if the Head had known them in their true colours.

The Head did not know them; but the juniors did. More than once a Remove had been licked for refusing to fetch tobacco from the village for Loder or Carne. And even that was not the limit of Loder's sinning. He led Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, into many of his bad ways, and he had never ceased from attempting to effect the same with Lord Mauleverer.

Vernon-Smith, indeed, was a bad egg enough before Loder bestowed the honour of his acquaintance upon him, and he was, perhaps, little the worse for knowing Loder; but with Lord Mauleverer it was very different.

Harry Wharton & Co. liked the kind, good-natured school-boy earl very much, and they were extremely wild at the idea of his being initiated into smoking and playing bridge in Loder's study.

The juniors had agreed that the Sixth needed reforming, and the success they had started with encouraged them to go on. It was quite probable that they would go a little too far, and have a fall.

Loder appeared to be letting them alone for the following day or two. Perhaps the prefect was hiding his time, or perhaps he felt that Mr. Quelch's eyes was turned suspiciously upon him.

But he did not let Lord Mauleverer alone. As a matter of fact, Loder's plunging never ended very satisfactorily for him, and he found life rather expensive. He was, as he regarded it, seeing life in making bets on horse-races, and smoking with a set of gambling rascals in the Cross Keys tavern in Friardale after lights out. But those sporting gentlemen were not showing him life merely for the fun of the thing. They had their living to make, and they made some of it out of Loder. And just as Loder was fleeced by his friends at the Cross Keys, so he was thinking of fleecing Lord Mauleverer in turn, to indemnify himself. And the school-boy earl was a tempting victim, for he had almost unlimited pocket-money, and Loder's was limited—very much limited since he had commenced operations on the turf.

More than once the chums of the Remove caught sight of Lord Mauleverer in conversation with Loder, of the Sixth, and if they had needed any incentive to keep them on in the way they were going, that would have been enough.

It was not of much use talking to Lord Mauleverer. He agreed with all they said to him, but when he was with Loder he agreed with all that Loder said to him. Lord Mauleverer was a slacker, and he was accustomed to following the line of least resistance. It was easier to agree with fellows than to disagree with them, and so he always agreed. As for playing cards for money, he did not want anybody's money, and he did not care if he lost his own—in fact, he did not care for anything except having an easy time and not being bothered.

"But we're going to save him from Loder!" Bob Cherry remarked.

And his chums replied, with emphasis:

"We are!"

And after some cogitation, the chums of the Remove drew up a warning for Loder, of the Sixth, which was pinned on his study door, to greet him when he came there after lessons in the afternoon.

Loder came along the passage with Carne and Walker, and several other fellows, after leaving the Sixth Form room, quite unconscious of what awaited him. He paused outside his study, and Walker, who noticed the paper first, burst into a chuckle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

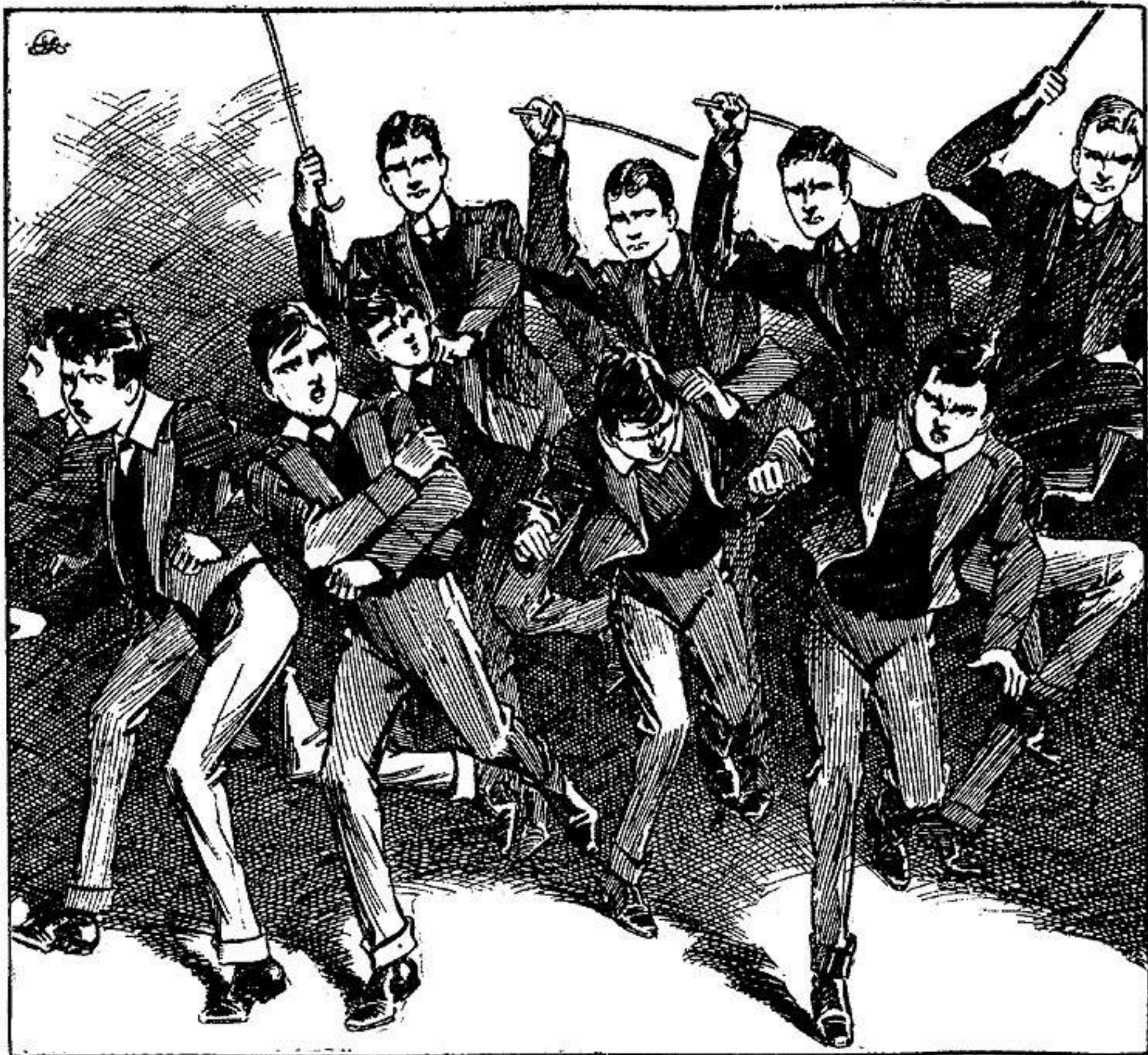
Loder stared at him. He had been speaking about the

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With the prefects' canes lashing behind them, the juniors of the Remove scattered and bolted out into the passage. "There! I think that will be the finish of this little affair!" gasped Wingate, of the Sixth. (See Chapter 19.)

next senior football match, and there was nothing in his remark to evoke merriment.

"What's the joke, Walker?" he asked.

"Look at your door."

Loder swung round, and stared at his study door. A red flush came over his face, and his eyes gleamed with rage.

In bold characters, readable at quite a distance, the warning of the Remove reformers stared him in the face:

**"PLAY THE GAME, AND DON'T DISGRACE
GREYFRIARS ANY MORE!"**

"By Order of the Form."

Loder ground his teeth. The other fellows burst into an irresistible chuckle. They could not help it.

Loder gave a snarl.

"Funny, ain't it?" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha! Yes!" said Walker. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up!" shouted Loder. "Don't cackle like a giddy old hen! I don't see anything funny in cheek from a junior."

"I do," said Valence. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cheese it! I—I'll smash the young cad that put that up!"

"Do you know the writing?" grinned Walker.

"No. It's one of the Remove cads, of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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"Oh, stop cackling! Here, Wingate!" The captain of Greyfriars had just come into the passage, and Loder shouted to him angrily. "Wingate!"

Wingate looked along the passage.

"What do you want?" he asked. "Anything the matter?"

"Yes!" shouted Loder. "Come and look at this!"

Wingate came along the passage. He read the notice pinned on Loder's door, and smiled.

Loder regarded him with a furious expression.

"Well?" said Wingate.

"Well," shouted Loder, "is that a proper way for juniors to treat a prefect?"

Wingate shrugged his shoulders.

"It depends on the way a prefect treats the juniors," he replied. "What have you been doing?"

"I! What have I been doing? What do you mean?" roared Loder. "Do you think that fags in the Lower Fourth have a right to call me to account?"

"I think that you place me in a rotten position by not playing the game," said Wingate sharply. "If the fags backed up against Courtney, or North, I should interfere at once, knowing that the prefects ought to be supported. But in your case it's different. The juniors have got something up against you, and they're right."

"What!"

"You heard what I said."

Loder clenched his hands with rage.

"Then you don't mean to take any notice of this?" he exclaimed.

Wingate shook his head.

"The best thing you can do is to follow the advice they give you," he said. "It's cheeky, but it's good advice. Take their tip."

"What!" yelled Loder.

"Play the game, and don't disgrace Greyfriars any more," said Wingate, reading the notice out. "It's jolly good advice! Take it!"

And he walked back to his study.

Loder went into his room, with feelings too deep for words. He tore the offending notice from the door, and rammed it into the fire, and then slammed the door with a terrific slam that rang and echoed from one end of the Sixth Form passage to the other.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Wun Lung's Little Joke.

GET out of the way, you pigtailed sweep!"

Loder was not in a good temper, and if Wun Lung had seen him coming he would certainly have got out of the way without being told.

But Wun Lung was standing on the lowest step of the School House, watching a group of juniors punting a ball about, and the prefect came out behind him. Loder gave the little Chinese a rough push, and Wun Lung toppled off the step. There was a splash as he fell on his knees in a puddle left by recent rain.

"Ow!"

Some fellows who saw the Chinese's fall burst into a laugh. Little Wun Lung jumped up, with wet mud streaming from his baggy garments, and turned his almond eyes upon the bully of the Sixth, with a gleam in them.

"Lodee beastee!" he murmured, in his peculiar English.

Loder grinned.

"You shouldn't stand in the way, you blessed heathen!" he remarked.

"Lodee lotter!" said Wun Lung. "Me telle masteo 'bout Lodee havee cigar in pocket. What you tinkee?"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Wingate, coming down the steps. "What's that?"

Loder laughed. As a matter of fact, he had no cigars in his pockets, and not even a cigarette.

"Lodee beastee!" said Wun Lung. "Smokee big cigarce! What you tinkee?"

Wingate looked hard at the prefect.

"I suppose there's nothing in that, Loder?" he exclaimed.

Loder sneered.

"Would you like to have me searched?" he asked. "It would amuse your friends the fags to have a row with a prefect here under all the windows."

"Look here—"

"Lodee cally cigars in pocket," said Wun Lung. "Me showee—"

He stretched out his slim, yellow hand towards the prefect. Loder started back, with an angry exclamation:

"Don't you touch me, you heathen!"

"Lodee flaidee!"

"I'm not afraid!" growled Loder. "But—"

"Me showee!"

"Look here, Wun Lung, if you're not talking rot, point out the pocket the cigars are in," said Wingate, frowning.

"Me pointee."

"It's all lies!" said Loder savagely.

Fellows were gathering round from all sides now, and looking on with interest. There were a good many there who would have been quite glad to see Loder shown up in public.

"Me showee!" said Wun Lung again. And he thrust his thin hand suddenly into Loder's breast-pocket.

The hand came out again, with a cigar between the fingers.

Wingate uttered a sharp exclamation. Loder stared at the cigar like a fellow in a dream.

"Lookee, lookee!" said the little Chinese triumphantly.

"My hat!"

"It's a cigar!"

"What have you got to say now, Loder?" exclaimed Wingate sharply.

Loder gasped.

"I—I don't know how it came there!" he exclaimed. "I—I certainly don't carry cigars in my pockets!"

"Lottee more!" said Wun Lung.

"You lying heathen—"

"Lookee!"

Wun Lung's slim fingers penetrated into Loder's waistcoat-pocket. Again a cigar was brought to light.

The prefect almost staggered. He was so amazed that he could not speak. And the little Chinese, with a grave face,

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extracted cigar after cigar from his pockets, till he had dozens collected.

"My hat!" exclaimed Courtney. "I think that's pretty plain!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, Loder?" said Wingate grimly.

Loder stammered.

"I'll swear I don't know anything about them!" he gasped. "I—I— The young thief must have put them into my pockets before I put my jacket on!"

"And into your waistcoat, too?" asked Courtney sarcastically.

"Too thick, Loder!"

"You're given away, old man!"

Loder almost staggered.

"It's a trick!" he said hoarsely.

"Rot!"

"Nonsense!"

"Give me those cigars, Wun Lung," said Wingate, holding out his hand.

The little Chinese hesitated.

"Me keepee," he said.

"Nonsense!" said Wingate sharply. "You cannot keep them. Give them to me at once!"

"But me—"

"Hand them over, I tell you!"

Wun Lung reluctantly handed the cigars to the captain of Greyfriars.

Wingate looked at them, and gave a slight start; and then a grin came over his face.

"You young rascal!" he exclaimed.

Wun Lung, with an uneasy eye upon Loder, backed away through the crowd of juniors. Loder stared at Wingate inquiringly.

"They're not real cigars!" said the Greyfriars captain, laughing. "I forgot that Wun Lung was a conjurer. The young rascal has been playing a trick on you!"

Loder gave a yell.

"Not real cigars?"

"No. Look!"

There was a shout of laughter.

When the cigars were looked at closely it could be seen that they were made of rolled brown paper. Wun Lung was a conjurer, and his powers of extracting yards and yards of tape from his ears, and white mice from his sleeves, and live rabbits from fellow's hats, had often amazed and amused his Form-fellows.

The crowd burst into laughter. But Loder did not laugh; he glared round furiously for the little Chinese.

"Where's the young villain got to?" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wun Lung—"

But Wun Lung was gone!

The crowd roared with laughter, and Loder stalked away in a rage.

Wun Lung had played that little trick upon him to avenge the push off the steps, and he had certainly scored over the prefect.

A shout of laughter followed the prefect as he stalked away, Wingate laughing as loudly as the juniors. He tossed the imitation cigars away; and Bob Cherry, grinning, picked them up to return them to the little heathen.

Wun Lung was careful to avoid Loder after that. It would not have been quite safe for him to come into contact with the prefect.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Coker is Quite Determined.

"CHEEKY young beggars!" said Coker.

Coker of the Fifth delivered his opinion in his usual way—as if nobody else's opinion was of much value in comparison.

But Coker's companions quite agreed with him.

Coker and Potter and Greene had just come into their study in the Fifth-Form passage, and they had found a sheet of exercise-paper pinned upon the table, and upon the sheet was scrawled in Bob Cherry's hand:

"NOTICE!

"The Rag being required for a rehearsal of the Remove Dramatic Society this evening, the Fifth are warned to keep out.

"By Order of the Form."

"Cheek!" said Potter.

"Impudence!" said Greene.

Coker gave a snort.

"It's about time those Remove kids were brought to their senses!" he exclaimed. "They can cheek the Sixth as much

as they like, but they're not going to get their cars up with the Fifth!"

"No fear!"

Coker jerked up the paper from the table and threw it into the fire.

"We didn't want the Rag this evening," Coker remarked. "But as they're so cheeky we'll go there and keep the room, and then we'll see whether their giddy rehearsal comes off!"

And Potter and Greene heartily agreed.

The "Rag" was a room which both seniors and juniors used occasionally for meetings of dramatic societies and hobby clubs and cricket committees and debating societies, and so forth. Why it was called the Rag was a mystery, unless it was from the number of rags that had been perpetrated there. The Fifth, as a senior Form, naturally considered that they had the first right to the Rag when they wanted it, and to be ordered off by the Remove put their backs up at once.

Coker & Co. of the Fifth were very much down on the Remove. The latest outbreaks of that unruly Form had been viewed with grave displeasure by the Fifth. Coker had remarked that if he were a prefect he would soon teach the young beggars manners, and Potter and Greene and Blundell and Bland, and the Fifth generally, fully agreed with him. But they were not prefects; and they could not disguise the fact either that when they entered into hostilities with the Remove they were by no means sure of coming off best.

Perhaps that was because they generally followed Coker's lead—and Horace Coker was not a great general. Coker was big and strong and ready to hit out at a moment's notice at foe or friend—too ready, perhaps. But his abilities ended there. In matters of strategem and finesse there were fags in the Remove who were miles ahead of Coker, and a contest usually ended in Coker's discomfiture. He could only lick the juniors; and they could make him look ridiculous, which was worse. Coker was quite convinced that the Remove badly wanted putting into their place, but he had never yet solved the problem of how to put them there.

"I'll jolly well let them know whether they're going to have the Rag to-night!" said Coker, and he left the study, with a frown upon his brow.

He looked out for the chums of the Remove, and found them in the passage.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent were standing there chatting, as if they really wanted to give Loder an opportunity of speaking to them. Coker came up, with a frowning brow, and the juniors left off talking and turned their attention upon him.

"Which of you young beggars stuck a paper on my table?" demanded Coker.

"Your humble servant," said Bob Cherry, with a bow.

Coker glared at him.

"So you're going to have the Rag this evening for a giddy rehearsal—eh?" he asked.

"That's the programme."

"At what time?" asked Coker.

"Sharp seven!"

"Well, look here," said Coker, wagging a thick forefinger at the juniors, "you won't have the Rag this evening."

"Why not?" demanded Bob truculently.

"Because at seven sharp I shall be there," said Coker.

"Rats! You don't want the room!"

"We're going to make it a point to want it," said Coker.

"Look here—"

"You kids have been altogether too cheeky lately," said Coker. "You can rag Loder, I dare say; but you'll find me a different sort of chap."

"Go hon!"

Coker frowned darkly.

"I shall be in the room at seven with a few friends," he said; "and if you Remove kids come there you'll get a warm reception. That's all!"

And Coker stalked away, with his nose very high in the air.

The juniors looked at one another and grinned.

"The bait is taken, my sons!" said Bob Cherry. "Good old Coker! Never sees anything an inch past his nose! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker turned round.

"Where's the joke?" he demanded.

Bob Cherry pointed to where Coker was standing.

"There!" he replied.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," said Coker angrily, "you are asking for a good hiding all round, and you'll get it soon. Just poke your noses into the Rag this evening, and you'll see!"

"Oh, we'll bring a prefect along to see fair play!" said Bob Cherry blandly.

"Rats! You can bring fifty prefects; but they won't get into the Rag!" said Coker.

"Gas!" said Nugent.

"Swank!" grinned Wharton.

Coker sniffed.

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"I'll show you whether it's gas or swank," he said. "The Fifth are going to have the Rag this evening, and fags and prefects and everybody else will be barred. Not that any prefect is likely to back up you cheeky young rotters!"

"We'll ask Loder," said Bob.

Coker chuckled.

"He's more likely to knock your heads off than to back you up!" he said.

"You'll see!"

Coker stalked away. The merriment of the juniors made him inclined to go for them on the spot, but he refrained. He resolved inwardly that if anybody tried to take possession of the Rag that evening they should see what they should see.

"Well?" said Potter and Greene together, when Coker came back into the study.

"The cheeky young rotters!" growled Coker. "They say they're going to have the Rag, and that Loder will back them up. We'll see."

"Yes, rather, we'll see," said Potter and Greene.

"We'll have a rehearsal ourselves," said Coker. "It's about time we went through Julius Caesar again. The last performance was a frost, owing to those Remove kids; but we shall have to give one to show that we can do it. All of you fellows had better turn up in the Rag at ten to seven, and we'll see what we'll see."

And Potter and Greene agreed that they would; and, indeed, so far, Coker's statement was indisputable. They would undoubtedly see what they would see!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Order of the Boot.

SEVEN o'clock rang out from the clock-tower of Greyfriars, and Loder of the Sixth rose from his tea-table.

"There goes seven!" he exclaimed. "Time for the meeting."

Carne and Walker, who had been having tea with Loder, rose also, and stretched themselves. The three seniors were looking very serious. It was Loder's idea to call a meeting of the seniors to discuss the state of affairs, and to take measures for putting down the recent rebelliousness on the part of the Remove.

Loder had a scheme at the back of his mind for turning the matter to his own advantage, and to Wingate's disadvantage, with the idea of ousting Wingate from his position as captain of Greyfriars. That had long been a secret ambition of Loder's, and Wingate's attitude recently had certainly made many of the Sixth exasperated with him.

If Loder & Co. worked matters carefully, there was a good chance of getting a majority of the Sixth round to the opinion that a new captain of the school was a thing to be desired, and if a new election could be brought about while the Sixth were dissatisfied with Wingate, there was a chance of Loder's getting in as captain. Even if he failed in that, it was something to excite a party in the Form against Wingate, for the more Wingate was down, the more Loder was "up." And Carne and Walker were prepared to back the prefect up all along the line.

Half the Sixth had promised to come to the meeting, and, in fact, all but George Wingate's personal friends were most likely to give it a look-in. Loder was to be chairman, and he hoped to carry the meeting with him, and, if possible, to get a deputation of the Sixth to call on Wingate and ask him to resign.

It was Billy Bunter who had discovered the intended meeting. Bunter had a wonderful way of hearing things that were not intended for his ears, and Loder had intended to keep the meeting a secret from all outside the Sixth until it was over. Bunter had brought the news to the Remove, and had been "slanged" with considerable emphasis by Bob Cherry & Co. for listening to the seniors. But the chums of the Remove felt that they were justified in making use of the information, all the same—hence their "notice" to Coker & Co. For Loder's great meeting was to be held in the Rag, no study being large enough for the purpose, and it was arranged for half-past seven.

"We'd better be there first," said Loder, looking into his desk for a paper on which he had noted down the principal points of a speech he intended to address to the Sixth-Formers. "I hope there will be a good attendance. As for Wingate, he can hear of the meeting afterwards, and I hope he'll like it."

"It would be ripping to get rid of him as captain," said Carne thoughtfully. "Only if there's a new election, Loder, I don't see how we're to hoist him out, as all the juniors have votes in electing the captain of the school. Most of the juniors would plump for Wingate against any other candidate."

"Get him out—that's the first step," said Loder. "If it's

known that the Sixth are against him, that will have a lot of influence on the fags, and, after all, any chap in the Sixth can make his fag vote as he likes, or lick him! I think there's a good chance; and, anyway, it will be one up against Wingate. And I for one am fed-up with his high and mighty airs."

"Same here!" said Walker heartily.

"Well, let's get along."

The three seniors quitted Loder's study, and went down to the Rag. The door of the room was closed, and from within came a sound of voices. The deep, heavy bass voice of Coker was heard above the others.

"That you have wronged me doth appear in this—

You have condemned and noted Lucias Pella,

For taking bribes here of the Sardians."

"My hat," ejaculated Walker, "that's Coker's voice! There's a rehearsal going on."

"The silly asses!" growled Loder. "We'll soon stop that!"

"Well, they'll have to get out, of course," said Carne. "They can have the room afterwards, if they like; but we must have it now for the meeting."

"Of course."

Loder turned the handle of the door. It did not open. The Fifth Form Dramatic Society had locked it on the inside. Loder knocked angrily on the door. Coker's voice went on uninterruptedly.

"Wherein my letters, praying on his side

Because I knew the man, were slighted off."

Knock, knock, knock!

Loder was getting impatient. He had not come there to hear Horace Coker spouting lines from Julius Cæsar, but to hold a most important meeting, and he was expecting Sixth-Formers along to the meeting at any moment. He wanted to have all ready for them when they came. But the knocking at the door did not appear to have the slightest effect upon the amateur actors of the Fifth. Coker had finished the speech of Cassius, and Potter replied with the lines of the noble Brutus.

"You wronged yourself to write in such a case."

Knock, knock, knock!

Coker-Cassius took up the tale again.

"At such a time as this, it is not meet

That every nice offence should bear its comment."

Knock, knock, knock! Thump! Carne and Walker now were knocking on the door as well as Loder, and there was a sound of a chuckle from within. But Potter-Brutus replied as if nothing were happening.

"Let me tell you, Cassius, you yourself

Are much condemned to have an itching palm,

To sell and mart your offices for gold

To undeservers."

Thump! Kick! Bang!

"Open this door, you babbling young duffers!" yelled Loder through the keyhole. But the voice of Coker-Cassius went on cheerfully.

"I, an itching palm!

You know that you are Brutus that speak thus!

Or, by the gods, that speech were else your last!"

"Will you open this door, Coker?" shouted Loder. "We want the room. You can have it afterwards for that silly bosh."

"Open this door, Potter!" shouted Walker.

But the voice of Potter-Brutus went on serenely:

"The ides of March, the ides of March, remember!

Did not great Julius bleed for justice sake?

What villain touched his body that did stab,

And not for justice! And shall we

That struck the foremost man of all the world——"

Bang! Crash! Kick! Bang!

"Open this door, you silly asses!" shrieked Loder through the keyhole. "I tell you you can't have the room now. You can spout that rubbish in your own studies."

But the steady flow of Potter's language did not cease.

"But for supporting robbers, shall we

Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,

And sell the mighty space of our large honours

For so much trash as may be grasped thus!

I had rather be a dog——"

Bang, bang, bang!

"I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon,

Than such a Roman!"

"My only hat," said Loder, between his teeth. "The cheek, to keep Sixth-Formers out in the passage while they spout that piffle! How can we get the door open?"

"The lock's not specially strong," said Walker. "We could easily get it open with a chisel. But that would bust the lock."

"Oh, blow the lock!"

"I'll get the chisel, then."

Walker soon returned with a strong iron chisel. The three seniors pushed upon the door, and the lock gave sufficiently for the chisel to be introduced between the door and the jamb. Then Loder put his strength into a powerful wrench upon the chisel, and the door sagged open, the lock giving way under the strain. Probably it had been damaged in some of the rags that had given the room its name.

Loder kicked at the door, as the Fifth-Formers, breaking off the rehearsal to stop the invasion, rushed to the door and shoved at it.

"Let us in!" roared Loder.

"Rats!" said Coker, jamming his heavy boot against the inside of the door. "You're not coming in here!"

"We'll smash you!"

"Yah!"

"I'll—I'll——"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Shove hard!" said Loder, through his teeth.

The three Sixth-Formers shoved with all their strength. Coker was pushed back, and the door swung open, and Loder and Carne and Walker rushed into the room. But they rushed into the arms of a crowd of the Fifth.

"Chuck them out!" roared Coker.

"Hurray!"

"Kick them out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were a dozen or more of the Fifth. Loder & Co. simply had no chance. They were grasped, and, in spite of their struggles, whirled off their feet, and rushed back through the doorway.

There was a shout from the distance. Down the passage Harry Wharton & Co. were looking on, and they yelled encouragement. Coker had not the slightest doubt that Loder and Carne and Walker were there to clear the room out for the Removites, though why he should do so was a mystery. But Coker knew nothing of the intended Sixth Form meeting, and he was not given to deep thinking at any time. He only knew just now that the bully of the Sixth was interrupting his rehearsal, and trying to turn him out of the Rag; and he did not care two pins, as a matter of fact, what Loder's motives might be. All he knew was that he wasn't going to be turned out by anybody, prefect or no prefect. He wouldn't have yielded up possession of the room for Wingate, and certainly not for Loder.

"Go it!" roared Bob Cherry. "Have them out, Loder!"

"Yank the cads out!" shrieked Nugent.

Coker glared along the passage.

"You come and lend them a hand, that's all!" he roared.

"Oh, we'll leave it to Loder!" said Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Loder!"

"Pile in, Walker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three Sixth-Formers were struggling furiously in the doorway. But the Fifth were too many for them. They were hurled out into the passage, and they rolled on the floor, sprawling and panting.

"Out you go!" gasped Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Valence and Hayes of the Sixth came along the passage together. They were the first to appear for the meeting. They stared in astonishment at the sight of the chairman of the intended meeting and his two friends sprawling on the floor of the passage.

"What the dickens——" began Valence.

"My hat!" ejaculated Hayes.

Loder staggered to his feet.

"Lend a hand," he gasped. "Those Fifth cads have taken the room, and——"

"And we're going to keep it!" shouted Coker.

"Yes, rather!"

"Go and eat coke."

"He'd rather come and eat Coker!" sang out Bob Cherry, and there was a yell of laughter from the crowd of Removites.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder made a furious rush at the crowd of Fifth-Formers in the doorway of the Rag. But Coker & Co. had lined up to receive him, and he was grasped and hurled forth again. He bumped on the floor, and lay gasping.

Coker slammed the door of the Rag, and Potter jambed the back of a chair under the broken lock, holding the door shut quite as securely as a bolt could have held it.

Loder staggered up. Valence and Hayes were grinning, and several more of the Sixth who had come along to the meeting grinned, too. They could not help it. The projected meeting seemed destined to be a frost. Loder rubbed the dust out of his eyes, and glared furiously at the Sixth-Formers.

"Can't you lend a hand?" he roared.

Hayes shrugged his shoulders.

"I didn't come here for a row with the Fifth, to amuse the juniors," he replied. "Looks to me as if the meeting's off, and I'm off, too."

And he walked away up the passage.

Loder stood trembling with rage. The meeting certainly was off; the Sixth-Formers who had come to attend it strolled away laughing, and Loder was left alone with Carne and Walker—and Walker soon strolled off after the rest, while Loder was dusting himself down, undecided what to do next. From within the Rag came the voice of Coker—Cassius—already rehearsing again, as if nothing had happened.

"Brutus! Bay not me!

I'll not endure it! I am a soldier, I.

Older in practice; abler than yourself

To make conditions!"

"May as well get off," said Carne drily. And he went.

Loder glared after him, and then glared at the shut and fastened door of the Rag—and then made a movement towards the group of juniors laughing at the end of the passage. The juniors promptly vanished. And Loder, with aching bones, and a black scowl on his face, went back to his study. The meeting of the malcontents of the Sixth was evidently "off." In the Rag, the Fifth-Form rehearsal went on cheerfully, and Coker & Co. prided themselves upon a victory, and in the Remove passage the Removites roared over the defeat of the bullies of the Sixth, and the use they had made of Coker & Co. in bringing it about.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

His Lordship's Guardians.

HORACE COKER grinned when he encountered Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry later in the evening. Coker was feeling very pleased with himself. He had shown that he—Coker—was not to be trifled with, any way, and that he would not be "done" even by a prefect of the Sixth. He had gained his point, and he had put even Loder into his place, and he was feeling extremely satisfied with himself.

"Well, you didn't get the Rag," he remarked, stopping. He could not resist the inclination to gloat a little over the heroes of the Remove.

The two juniors chuckled.

"No, we didn't!" Bob Cherry assented. "We didn't want it, either. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton.

Coker snorted.

"Oh, rats!" he exclaimed. "Tell that to the Marines! You know jolly well that you wanted it, and you got Loder to come and turn us out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you mean to say that you didn't?" demanded Coker.

"Yes, rather! We didn't want the giddy Rag—but we knew that Loder intended to hold a meeting of the Sixth there at half-past seven!" Bob Cherry explained.

"Wh-what!"

Coker's face was a study.

"It was a most important meeting," said Wharton, grinning. "I believe Loder was going to make a great speech. It was rather a joke for you chaps to have taken possession of the room, and to have you determined to keep out all comers, wasn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young rascals!" gasped Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Wharton and Bob Cherry walked away laughing. They left Horace Coker almost in a dazed state. Such a stratagem as that had never dawned upon Coker's mind, and he could hardly believe it now. Instead of scoring a victory he had been used by the Removites for a rag on the Sixth, and he had fallen blindly into the trap.

"Well, my only aunt!" ejaculated Coker at last. "The young villains! My word!"

He did not say anything to Potter and Greene about what he had discovered. But they soon learned it from other sources.

They told Coker in plain English what they thought of his intelligence; and the terms they used were not complimentary.

"You were taken in as much as I was!" said Coker. "Who'd have thought of such a trick? Those young rascals are as deep as a blessed well."

"Oh, you ought to have seen through it!" growled Potter.

"You didn't see through it," said Coker.

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here——"

"Bosh!"

"If you say bosh to me, Potty——"

"Bosh!"

The next moment, if anybody had been passing Coker's study, he could have heard sounds of warfare; and it was observable later in the evening that both Coker and Potter

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had signs of damage upon their countenances, and were on very distant terms.

Loder's meeting was very much "off." After the story of what had happened in the Rag had been laughed over by the whole school, Loder did not feel inclined to call a meeting of the Sixth again—not for a time, at all events.

As a matter of fact, Loder was growing "fed up" with hostilities from the Remove. He had begun to wish that he had let that troublesome Form well alone, and certainly it would have been wiser of him to do so. But he had no intention of letting Lord Mauleverer alone. The day after the affair of the Rag, Billy Bunter looked into No. 1 Study when Wharton and Nugent were doing their prep. in the evening. The fat junior blinked at them warily as Nugent picked up a Latin dictionary.

"I give you two seconds!" said Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

Whiz!

Bunter popped his head out again, and the dictionary dropped in the doorway. The next moment Bunter was blinking into the study again.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked. "Don't play the giddy goat, you know. I've got something to tell you!"

"Rats!" said Nugent. "We know you're expecting a postal-order, and that you'd like us to advance some cash on it. We know that, so you needn't tell us. Buzz off!"

"It's about Mauleverer."

"Oh, have you been trying to raise some money from him?"

"No, I haven't," said Bunter indignantly. "The fact is, I think he ought to be looked after. Can you lend me a bob, Wharton?"

"No," said Harry. "What's the matter with Mauleverer?"

"Sorry I can't stop to explain——"

"Hold on, you young ass!" Wharton extracted a shilling from his pocket. "Look there! If you've got anything to tell us, you can have it."

"Of course, I should take it only as a loan!" Bunter explained. "I could not accept——"

"Oh, cheese it! What's the matter with Mauleverer?"

"Nothing, only he's going to a bridge party in Loder's study this evening——"

"How do you know?"

"I heard Loder say so to Carne. Carne's going."

"Listening again, you mean sneak," said Frank Nugent, in disgust.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Look here, is that the truth?" said Harry Wharton abruptly. "A fellow who would listen, would tell lies."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"We can ask Mauly," said Frank.

"Yes, good. Here, take your shilling, Bunter, and go."

Bunter caught the shilling.

"Of course, Wharton, this is merely a loan——"

"Oh, shut up!"

"I decline to receive favours from you," said Bunter, with dignity. "I will repay this out of my next postal-order, or put it down to the old account, whichever you prefer. It is impossible for me to accept favours from you."

"Get out!" roared Wharton.

He picked up a ruler, and Billy Bunter beat a hasty retreat. In two minutes he was in the school tuckshop, expending the shilling in solid and liquid refreshment—and within ten minutes he was vainly seeking to persuade Mrs. Mimble to supply further tarts and ginger-beer on the credit system.

Meanwhile, Wharton and Nugent left their prep. and their study, and walked down the passage to Lord Mauleverer's room. The schoolboy earl had a room to himself in the Remove passage, and his cheery voice, in response to Wharton's knock, showed that he was at home. Wharton opened the door.

"Come in, my dear fellows!" said his lordship hospitably.

"Sorry I can't stay more than a minute or two. Is it anything important?"

"Yes," said Harry.

Lord Mauleverer was putting on a new tie. He was always well dressed, but he was a little more spick-and-span than usual now. It was easy to see that he was going somewhere where he wished to make a good impression.

"Going out?" asked Nugent.

"Yes."

"Loder?"

Lord Mauleverer coloured uneasily.

"Well, yes."

"Bridge party?" asked Wharton.

"Begad, you know——"

"Is it a bridge party?"

"Well, yes," said the schoolboy earl weakly. "Suppose it is, my dear fellow? Everybody plays bridge nowadays."

"For money?" asked Nugent.

"Well, I don't suppose Loder would play for buttons or cherry-stones," said his lordship, with a feeble attempt at humour.

But the chums of the Remove were not laughing. They were not in a humour for that. They were angry—angry with Lord Mauleverer, and still more angry with Loder, who was leading the easy lad into his own rascally ways.

"You ought not to go," said Wharton abruptly. "You know it's gambling."

"My dear fellow——"

"Now, Mauleverer, old man, chuck it up!"

The schoolboy earl shook his head.

"I—I can't very well," he said. "I've promised Loder. Besides it's only for nominal stakes; Loder said so. Just to make it a real game."

"Loder is a cad."

"My dear fellow," remonstrated his lordship, "I can't hear you slanging a chap whose invitation I've accepted. You must excuse me now."

And Lord Mauleverer quitted the study rather abruptly. He took his way towards the Sixth-Form passage.

Wharton and Nugent exchanged glances.

"It won't do!" said Frank.

"No fear!"

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to smash up Loder's bridge-party," said Wharton grimly. "We'll get a crowd of the Remove and wade in while they're playing."

"My hat!"

"You're game, Frank?"

Nugent laughed.

"Yes, rather! After all, we're up against Loder & Co. all the time, and it will be only one more move in the game. And we've got to save Mauleverer from making a fool of himself."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Mauly's an ass," he said. "But he's too good a man to be left to Loder to make a blackguard of. We'll have him out of Loder's study whether he likes it or not. Let's go round and call up the fellows!"

"Good!"

And the chums of the Remove lost no time—and they found the Removites quite ready.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Loder's Little Party.

LODER greeted Lord Mauleverer with great courtesy. Loder could be very civil when he liked; and he liked, whenever it was to his interest to be so; and it certainly was to his interest now. That little bridge-party in his study was to recuperate him for all his losses of the past few weeks; it was to be an easy and polite method of transferring some the schoolboy earl's superfluous wealth to his own pockets. He could afford to be polite to Mauleverer.

Vernon-Smith was not in the party this time. The Bounder of Greyfriars was a little too keen for the cads of the Sixth. He had plenty of money, and was always willing to risk it in any game of chance; but he was not to be "done." He would take his chance—but he would not be cheated, and so he was of no use to Loder & Co., when Loder & Co. were bent upon raising money by fair means or foul. As for Lord Mauleverer, it had apparently not even occurred to him that a fellow could possibly cheat at cards. He certainly was not on his guard against anything of the sort. That three fellows would sit down to play with him, and that his partner would play deliberately into the hands of the other two, the proceeds to be divided afterwards, was something that Lord Mauleverer had yet to learn.

Carne and Walker and Valence were in the study. Walker was somewhat silent; he was by no means so bad as the others, and he did not intend to take part in the game. He was a looker-on, and closed his eyes to the fact that Lord Mauleverer would probably be relieved of his sovereigns in a manner on a par with picking his pocket. But Walker owed Loder money, and he had not cared to refuse the invitation to be present. As Walker was a prefect, it made the whole thing safer for Loder to have him there. Walker sat in an arm-chair by the fire, smoking cigarettes, and apparently taking no interest in the game.

"Jolly glad to see you, Mauly," said Loder, very familiarly, as he shook hands with the schoolboy earl. "It's really kind of you to come."

"Not at all, my dear fellow," said Lord Mauleverer. "Kind of you to ask me."

"Here's your chair," said Carne, placing a chair for the youthful nobleman. "Not too near the fire—eh?"

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"Not at all."

"You will have a fag?" asked Valence, producing a cigarette-case.

Lord Mauleverer hesitated.

The good-natured lad was always the creature of his surroundings, and under the influence of the nearest person; but he thought of his chums in the Remove, and he did not want to take the cigarette.

"Better light up," said Loder. "It's more sociable. Of course, we don't smoke as a matter of habit. But over a game of cards it's all right."

"Oh, quite!" said Walker.

"Very well; thanks!" said the junior.

And he accepted a cigarette. Valence gave him a light, and he blew out a little cloud of smoke, with a somewhat troubled expression upon his face. He compromised with his conscience by allowing the cigarette to go out, and declining another light. But he kept it between his lips.

Loder locked the door—a very necessary precaution under the circumstances—for if a master had chanced upon them, and discovered what was going on, it would have meant immediate expulsion for the black sheep of the Sixth. Then the cards were produced, and Loder shuffled them carelessly.

Valence was Lord Mauleverer's partner, and Lord Mauleverer, though he was far from keen of observation, could not help noticing that he played badly. And when Carne was his lordship's partner, he played badly too. So did Loder. In fact, the three rascals might have been set down as three remarkably bad players, but for the peculiar circumstances that when they were opposed to Lord Mauleverer they played very well indeed. The only time the schoolboy earl had a look-in was when he was dealer, and played dummy's hand himself.

If that game had reached a conclusion, the schoolboy earl would have found himself very much out of pocket. But Loder & Co. were not destined to carry out their little scheme to a successful conclusion.

There was a tread of feet in the Sixth Form passage, and a hand tried the door of the study. Loder started up, his cards in his hand.

Knock!

"Who's there?" called out Loder.

"We are!"

Half a dozen voices made the reply, and among them the tones of Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent and Bob Cherry could be recognised.

Loder gritted his teeth.

"What do you want?" he shouted.

"Lord Mauleverer."

"Did you ask them to come here, Mauleverer?" exclaimed Loder.

Lord Mauleverer shook his head.

"Begad, no!"

"You don't want them?"

"Well, you see——"

"Get away from my door, you fags!" Loder called out.

"If you're not off at once, I'll come out with a cane."

"Rats!"

Loder clenched his teeth with rage.

"Will you go?" he shouted.

"No!"

"Not much!"

"No fear!"

Knock! Thump! Crash!

There was a loud, rending, grinding sound, and the lock of the door split open. The Removites had evidently come prepared for a locked door, and ready to deal with it. The lock was forced, and the door flew open.

The players sprang to their feet.

Into the doorway poured a crowd of Removites. They were armed for war. They had cricket-stumps, or bats, or pillows, or knotted handkerchiefs; every right hand was armed, and they looked quite prepared to use their weapons.

The rascals of the Sixth were fairly caught.

Money and cards gleamed in the light on the table, in the full view of the invaders, and the cads of the Sixth had cards in their hands.

There was no disguising what had been going on.

Wharton fixed his eyes, gleaming with scorn, upon Loder.

"You utter cad!" he exclaimed.

"Wharton——"

"This is the kind of thing you're teaching to a kid of fifteen!" Wharton exclaimed. "You ought to be put in prison!"

"Get out of my study!" roared Loder.

"Rats!"

"I'll—I'll——"

"We've come here to take Mauleverer away——"

"Begad, my dear fellow——"

"Shut up," said Bob Cherry. "You're coming with us, whether you like it or not. By order of the Form!"

READ

the splendid school tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled:

"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER!"

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"Oh, I say——"

"Come here, Maury."

"Begad!"

"Get out!" shouted Valence. "By George——"

"Over with the table," said Harry Wharton. "We're going to wreck the study, you cads, as a warning to you, and if you interfere you'll get hurt."

"Outside!" yelled Loder.

"Bah!"

The Removites swarmed into Loder's study.

There were a score of them, and more were in the passage, and the gamblers were evidently hopelessly outnumbered.

Loder & Co. had no chance unless the Sixth came to the rescue; and that was hardly a thing to be desired, for Loder was, of course, particularly anxious to keep his little bridge-party a secret.

The juniors pressed on, and violent hands were laid upon the table. Loder hit out at Wharton, and was promptly seized by Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Mark Linley, and whirled over into the fender.

Crash!

The table went flying, and cards and money and cigarettes and ashtrays whirled on the floor in confusion.

Carne and Walker and Valence rushed at the juniors desperately, but they were driven back under a shower of blows.

They had no chance.

Loder was pinned down with three or four juniors sitting upon him, and the other three were penned in a corner of the study, and kept there by a ring of juniors, while the other fellows proceeded to wreck the room.

They did it thoroughly.

Furniture was dragged about and overturned, the mantelpiece was swept clear, the ashpan was emptied over Loder, and ink showered over Carne and Valence and Walker.

It did not take many minutes; but it was thoroughly done. Then the invaders, yelling with laughter, streamed out of the study, with Lord Mauleverer in their midst.

Loder & Co. were left in their wrecked study, gasping with rage and exertion. Loder jumped up in time to slam the door in Wingate's face, as the captain of Greyfriars came along the passage. He did not want Wingate to see the cards.

"My—my—my hat!" gasped Walker. "This beats the deck! Those young scoundrels ought to be expelled for this! You'll complain to the Head, of course, Loder?"

Loder snarled.

"Don't be an ass! If I complain to the Head, it will come out about the bridge, and Mauleverer being there. Do you think I want to be expelled?"

"Phew!"

"We'll have to shut up about it, I suppose," groaned Carne. "But we'll make those little demons suffer for it somehow."

And the gasping, groaning cads of the Sixth agreed that they would "somehow." But the "how" was not quite clear.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Lord Mauleverer's Punishment.

LORD MAULEVERER was rushed away by the raiders to the Remove passage. His lordship was so startled and bewildered by what had happened, and by the rapidity with which it had occurred, that he hardly knew whether he was upon his head or his heels. He was gasping as the Removites halted at last in their own quarters.

"Begad! Really, my dear fellows! Begad, you know!" Bob Cherry jammed him against the wall, and he gasped again.

"Oh, begad! Oh!"

"You ass!"

"My dear fellow——" said his lordship feebly.

"You fathead!"

"Look here, Bob Cherry——"

"You frabjous ass!"

"Faith, and ye're right! It's a silly spalpeen he is, and I vote that we frog's-march him all along the passage for disgracin' the Form, intirely," said Micky Desmond.

"Really, my dear fellows——"

"How dare you go to Loder's study and gamble?" demanded Harry Wharton sternly.

"It—it wasn't gambling," stammered Mauleverer.

"What was it, then?"

"A little flutter!"

"What's the difference?"

"Well, you see——"

"You're a disgrace to the Form," said Nugent. "You're as bad as Vernon-Smith. You ought to be sent to Coventry."

"Begad!"

"Frog's march the spalpeen up the passage——"

"I—I object to being frog's marched," gasped his lordship. "I say, you know, you fellows are rather hard on a

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chap, don't you know. Come to think of it, perhaps I shouldn't have gone to Loder's study. But——"

"You'll have to promise not to go again," said Harry Wharton.

"Really——"

"We're not going to have you disgracing the Remove."

"Oh, come, that's pitchin' it rather strong, you know——"

"No stronger than you deserve," said Harry. "Now, are you going to promise not to gamble again, or are you going to be ragged bald-headed?"

"I—I give you my word."

"That's all right, then."

"Anythin' for a quiet life," said Lord Mauleverer, setting his collar straight as the juniors released him. "I don't care for playin', you know. Only Loder was so doocid polite."

"Mind, it's a promise."

"Yaas, that's all right!"

"Perhaps it would do Lord Mauleverer good if I addressed a few words to him," said Alonzo Todd modestly.

"My uncle Benjamin said——"

"Yes, serve him right," said Bob Cherry. "Go ahead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That is not exactly the way to look at it, my dear Cherry," said Todd, in a tone of mild reproof. "I wish to do Mauleverer good, with some of the wisdom I have imbibed by means of the honoured instructions of my Uncle Benjamin. If Lord Mauleverer will have the kindness to listen to me for an hour or so——"

"Oh, begad!" murmured his lordship.

"Good!" said Harry Wharton. "He deserves that, for giving us all this trouble."

"Really——"

"Shut them up in Maury's study together," said Bob Cherry, grinning. "Alonzo can pitch into him without bothering us."

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, I say!" gasped Lord Mauleverer, in dismay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer's objections were not listened to. All the Remove felt that he deserved some punishment for his fall from grace, and a homily from Alonzo was just the thing. Any other fellow in the Remove would have pitched Todd out of the study, neck and crop, rather than have listened patiently to the second-hand wisdom of Todd's Uncle Benjamin, but Lord Mauleverer was wonderfully polite. It was a matter of curiosity to the juniors how long he could stand Todd without breaking out.

Lord Mauleverer was bundled into his study, and Todd was pushed in after him, and Harry Wharton drew the door shut.

The Removites waited, grinning, in the passage, and listened to the rumble of Alonzo's eloquent voice inside the study.

"My dear Mauleverer, I must beg and implore of you to reflect upon the error of your ways. You have entered upon the downward path——"

"But I've switched off now, my dear fellow," said Lord Mauleverer. "Do let a chap alone."

"My Uncle Benjamin says——"

"Will you have some toffee, Todd?"

"You cannot silence the words of rebuke by an offer of toffee, Lord Mauleverer. It is my duty to tell you what your conduct is like. It would shock, nay, disgust, my Uncle Benjamin."

"Now, look here, old fellow——"

"If my Uncle Benjamin were here, I am sure he would applaud my intention of pointing out to you the error of your ways," said Alonzo Todd firmly. "Under the circumstances, Lord Mauleverer, you should be grateful for a word in season. The desperate course upon which you have entered——"

"Oh, I say——"

"Can only lead to crime and depravity——"

"Oh, begad!"

"And you will plunge headlong into the depths of——"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said the unhappy Lord Mauleverer. "Would you mind going out into the passage and talking to the other fellows for a bit, Todd?"

"My dear Mauleverer——"

"There's Vernon-Smith, you know, and Bunter, both badly in want of sermons," Lord Mauleverer suggested. "You could give them your Uncle Benjamin's views——"

"It is my duty to continue. Reflect——"

"Oh, dear!"

Bob Cherry chuckled in the passage.

"Todd's in splendid form," he murmured. "He could go on like that for hours. It serves Maury right, too."

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors chuckled as they listened. Todd's droning voice droned on in the study, interrupted every few minutes

by the ejaculations of Lord Mauleverer. The Removites knew that Todd would never tire; but they wondered how long Lord Mauleverer would endure it without resorting to violence.

"Hark!" Bob Cherry exclaimed suddenly.

The schoolboy earl's patience had evidently given out at last.

There was a sound of struggling and scuffling in the study.

The door was flung open, and a whirling form came whizzing through the doorway, and it bumped into the juniors with wild gasps.

Then the door was slammed shut again, and the key was turned in the lock.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Oh!" gasped Todd.

The Duffer of Greyfriars was hanging upon Harry Wharton, with his arms round Wharton's neck for support, and he seemed quite bewildered. The juniors yelled with laughter as Alonzo blinked dazedly round.

"Dear me!" gasped Todd. "Oh, dear! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lord Mauleverer is growing very bad-tempered and violent," gasped Todd. "Oh, dear! I think perhaps I may have inadvertently said something to offend him, for he suddenly hurled himself upon me, and ejected me from the study with violence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear Wharton—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind; I'll lend you some Elliman's, Toddy," said Bob Cherry.

"Thank you very much, my dear Cherry. My Uncle Benjamin would—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"My Uncle Ben"—Bob Cherry walked away—"jamie would have said 'dear me, they are all gone!'" said Alonzo Todd, blinking round in surprise. "How very odd!"

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Word in Season.

"THAT'S what they want," Bolsover remarked thoughtfully. "A word in season—and Todd's the chap to give it to them!"

It was the day after the bridge party in Loder's study. Bolsover, of the Remove, was chatting with Ogilvy in the passage, and Todd came out of the Form-room. Todd paused, as Bolsover intended he should, on hearing his name mentioned.

"Here he is," said Ogilvy cordially. "I say, Todd, are you willing to take the matter in hand, and speak a word in season to those misguided chaps in the Sixth?"

Alonzo looked at Ogilvy in a doubtful manner. His recent experience at the hands of Lord Mauleverer had raised certain misgivings as to the course he had been pursuing.

"I hope I should never hesitate to speak a word in season, my dear Ogilvy," he said. "But do you really think the Sixth would like it?"

"Yes, rather!" said Bolsover. "And don't they jolly well need it!"

The dare to be a Daniel spirit flashed up in Alonzo Todd's eyes again. Bolsover and Ogilvy saw at once that he "was theirs." Alonzo had there and then determined upon bearding the Sixth in their own den.

"They want a jolly good talking to," said Ogilvy, clinching matters. "Fancy prefects playing bridge, and I don't know what other rotten games—"

"Yes, indeed!" agreed Alonzo heartily. "I think I shall be right in assuming that my Uncle Benjamin would approve of the course you fellows suggest. The Sixth are very evidently in want of the word in season, and I must put everything on one side to administer it to them at once—"

"No time like the present, Toddy," said Bolsover.

"You are right, my dear Bolsover," said the Duffer, with a beaming smile. "Thank you so very much. I will go now."

And suiting the action to the word, Alonzo Todd departed in the direction of the prefects' room, leaving Bolsover and Ogilvy to laugh it off.

"My only hat!" murmured Bolsover. "He's really going to do it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Alonzo Todd turned his head.

"Did you speak, my dear Ogilvy?"

Ogilvy had just time to turn his laugh into a cough.

"Groo-oo!" he gasped. "No! Buck up, Toddy!"

"Very well, my dear Ogilvy."

And Alonzo Todd trotted down the passage to the prefects' room, and pushed open the door and entered.

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The room was pretty full, as most of the prefects were there, and some of the Sixth who were not prefects. The room was reserved to the use of the prefects, and juniors were barred with an impassable bar. Excepting to carry a message, no junior ever set foot within the sacred precincts—if he did, it was only to leave the apartment abruptly "on his neck."

Every eye in the room was turned upon Alonzo immediately.

The Duffer of Greyfriars walked cheerfully in, with his book under his arm—"Good Stories for a Good Boy"—a really valuable volume which had been presented to him by his estimable Uncle Benjamin.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Wingate. "What do you want here, Toddy?"

Alonzo blinked at him.

"Want, my dear Wingate? Nothing!"

"Then what have you come here for?" exclaimed Valence.

"To speak a word in season, my dear Valence."

"What?"

"I have remarked that some of you fellows of the Sixth have been falling into bad ways," said Alonzo, with a smile of beaming beneficence. "It is my intention to show you the error of your ways."

"My hat!"

The seniors stared blankly at Todd. They knew that the Duffer of Greyfriars was a peculiar sort of fellow. But they had never dreamed that he would carry his peculiarity to this length.

Todd did not seem to notice the gaze bent upon him from every part of the room. He approached a chair, and mounted it, and gazed benignly upon the seniors.

"What are you doing with that chair?" roared Courtney.

Alonzo looked at him in surprise.

"Standing upon it, my dear fellow," he exclaimed. "I should have imagined that your unassisted vision would have been adequate to acquainting you with that fact, my dear Courtney."

"I—I—I—"

"Pray be silent, my dear fellows, while I speak a word in season," said the Duffer of Greyfriars, raising his right arm solemnly. "My Uncle Benjamin—"

"Great Scott!"

"The cheek!"

"Kick him out!" roared Loder.

"My dear Loder, it is to you that my observations will be especially addressed," the Duffer of Greyfriars exclaimed severely. "I have heard that you have very wicked ways, and that you play bridge and smoke. This would be regarded with utter scorn by my Uncle Benjamin."

"You—you—"

"If my Uncle Benjamin could witness your conduct, my dear Loder, he would be shocked—nay, disgusted."

"Get out, you ass!" shouted Wingate.

"My dear Wingate—"

"Get out!"

"Knock him over!"

The angry seniors gathered round the Duffer of Greyfriars. Todd regarded them with uneasiness, but not with fear. Had not his Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon him never to shirk the path of duty? Todd was there to address a word in season to the sinners of the Sixth, and he was going to do it.

"In the first place, my dear friends, pray reflect—"

There was a roar.

"Kick the duffer out!"

"My dear friends—oh!"

Bump!

The chair upon which Alonzo Todd had mounted was kicked away from underneath him, and the Duffer of Greyfriars bumped upon the floor with a terrific concussion.

"Oh! Ow! Yaroo!" roared Alonzo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get out, you young ass!" growled Wingate. "How dare you come and play the giddy goat in the prefects' room? Get out at once!"

"My dear Wingate—oh—oh!"

Walker had planted the end of his boot in the Duffer's ribs, and Todd rolled over on the floor. Many feet helped him on his progress to the doorway, and he was kicked through into the passage. Loder picked up his valuable book, and tossed it after him, and Todd roared as he caught it—with his ear.

"Oh—oh! Yaroo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Todd scrambled up. The prefects were roaring with laughter in the doorway, and the Duffer of Greyfriars blinked at them in mingled indignation and dismay.

"Reflect," he gasped—"reflect upon the error of your ways—"

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"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER!"

In this week's "GEM" Library. Price One Penny.

"My hat," ejaculated Walker, "he isn't finished yet! Stop him!"

"Collar the young ass!"

Three or four seniors rushed into the passage. Even Alonzo realised that it was time to go, and he went.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Little Too Thick.

"THIS won't do!"

Wingate, of the Sixth, made the remark. Courtney nodded.

The two Sixth-Formers were in Wingate's study a few days after the oration of Alonzo Todd in the prefects' room.

Affairs had been progressing in the school in the interval. There was no doubt that success had got into the heads of the juniors to some extent, and that some of the Remove were in danger of suffering from "swelled head," if they were not suffering from it already.

Harry Wharton & Co., doubtless, remained cool enough; but there were many fellows in the Remove with less evenly balanced minds, and such fellows—Bolsover, for example—did not know where to stop.

To raid a bridge-party in Loder's study, to bump even a prefect who was bullying and ragging the Remove, might be overlooked; but "cheek" to the Sixth for cheek's sake was, as the prefects angrily declared, altogether too "thick."

Wingate had hesitated about interfering in the trouble. He knew that Loder & Co. were for the most part in the wrong. But Loder & Co. seemed to have put their ears down now.

Loder appeared to have given up ragging the Remove. He might be only biding his time, but at all events he seemed bent upon peace.

And the Remove, having once tasted, as it were, the sweets of liberty, did not seem disposed to obey the bridle again.

The juniors, in fact, after having been in the right, were in danger of going on in the same way until they placed themselves in the wrong; and it was being borne in upon Wingate's mind that the time had come to interfere.

Wingate and Courtney were standing at the former's study window, looking out into the Close. There had been a fall of snow at Greyfriars, and a crowd of juniors were in the Close, after morning lessons, snowballing one another. Loder and Walker, of the Sixth, had gone out, and the juniors had at once ceased snowballing one another, to bestow that kindly attention upon Walker and Loder.

Wingate frowned as he saw it.

Juniors were never allowed such liberties as snowballing seniors, and Walker and Loder were both prefects, which made it all the worse.

"The kids don't know when to stop!" Courtney remarked.

"No, that's it."

"Hang it all, we can't have prefects snowballed in the open Quad!" Courtney exclaimed. "The kids will be starting on me next—perhaps on you."

Wingate smiled.

"I don't think they'd have the cheek to start on me," he said; "but they are certainly getting out of hand, and I think it's about time I put my foot down."

"I think so, too!"

Wingate threw open the window.

Loder and Walker had made a rush at the juniors, and Loder had slipped over in the snow. The juniors, yelling with laughter, surrounded him, pelting him with snowballs so fast that he could not rise.

Walker retreated from the volleys that were poured upon him, and backed away to the wall under Wingate's window, putting up his arm to protect his face, and shouting to the Remove to stop.

Loder struggled to his feet, but Bolsover caught him by the ankles, and he bumped down in the snow again.

There was a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Roll him over!"

"Bump him!"

A dozen pairs of hands grasped Loder. He was rolled over in the snow till he was blinded and almost suffocated. He struggled furiously, knocking the snow up in little clouds, but he could not escape from his tormentors.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hurray!"

"Roll him over! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" roared Loder. "Help! Ow! Groo! Oh! Ow! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop that!" shouted Wingate, from his window. "Do you hear?"

There was no reply. Either the juniors did not hear, or they did not want to hear. They rolled Loder into deeper snow, yelling with laughter. The prefect struggled furiously but vainly in their clutches.

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NEXT TUESDAY: "THE PARTING OF THE WAYS!"

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Wingate turned red with anger. He leaned out of the window, and shouted angrily to the excited Remove.

"Stop that at once."

"Rats!"

"What!"

"Rats!"

Wingate could scarcely believe his ears. He could not distinguish who shouted that answer from the crowd of juniors, but that any junior should venture to reply "Rats!" to the captain of the school was an amazing thing.

"You—you cheeky young sweeps!" he shouted. "I'll come out to you in a minute."

Whiz!

Squelch!

A snowball from the thick of the crowd whizzed in at Wingate's window with unerring aim. It caught the captain of Greyfriars full in the mouth, and he staggered back.

Whiz!

Another snowball, in the eye this time! Wingate sat down on the floor of his study, gasping. Courtney hastily closed the window. Another snowball flattened on the glass.

"My hat!" gasped Wingate.

He staggered to his feet.

Courtney whistled.

"That's rather thick!" he remarked. "The kids are quite out of hand now, old man. You don't know which one did it, either."

Wingate grasped a cane.

"I'll soon see!"

He rushed from the study. Courtney followed him, and in a minute or less they were out in the Close. But they did not find the juniors there. The Remove had prudently retired, and it was only Loder, struggling in the snow, and Walker, gasping against the house wall, that Wingate found.

Loder staggered up, looking very much like a snow man, so smothered was he. He gouged snow out of his eyes and nose and mouth, and glared at Wingate.

"This is the kind of thing we have to put up with from the fags!" he yelled. "I think the school wants a new captain, who can keep fags in order."

"Oh, shut up!" said Wingate crossly. "It was your own fault, in the first place. You and your set started all the trouble."

"You've been snowballed yourself," sneered Loder. "I saw Bolsover plank a snowball right in your face, and serve you right, too!"

"It was Bolsover?"

"Yes; and Stott, too. Serve you right!"

"Oh, shut up!"

Wingate returned angrily to the house. The bell was just ringing for afternoon lessons, and there was no time to deal with the Remove then. But it was impossible to pass over what had happened. If the captain of the school were to be snowballed by fags with impunity, there would not be much discipline left. And Wingate resolved to make an example of Bolsover when lessons for the day were over.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Wingate Puts His Foot Down.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were looking very serious that afternoon. It had been quite against the wish of the chums of the Remove that Wingate had been snowballed, and they felt that there would be trouble. Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, had started it, and Stott had followed suit, and then another thoughtless fellow had joined in.

That Wingate would "put his foot down" was certain now, and that meant trouble. All the Remove had been concerned in ragging Loder and Walker in the snow, but they should have desisted at the order of the Greyfriars captain. They had placed themselves in the wrong, and yet the Remove felt that they were bound to stand by Bolsover and defend him. He had been reckless, but he had only gone one step further than the others, and to leave him to his punishment would not be exactly "playing the game." Wharton's brow was wrinkled with thought about the matter during afternoon lessons.

When Mr. Quelch dismissed the Remove, they went into the junior common-room. It was still snowing, and quite dark already in the Close, and there was no going out of doors.

Bolsover was looking a little sullen. He knew that the greater part of the Form condemned his action, and he cared little. Condemnation had little effect upon Bolsover, save to make him bad-tempered.

Billy Bunter came into the common-room a few minutes after the rest of the Form, and he brought a message from Wingate.

"I say, you fellows, Bolsover's wanted in Wingate's study."

Bolsover started.

"Do you mean to say that you've given me away, you fat rotter?" he exclaimed, seizing Bunter by the shoulder, and shaking him savagely.

Bunter roared.

"Ow! Oh! Leggo! D-d-don't sh-sh-shake me like that, Bolsover, or you'll m-m-make my gi-gig-gi-glasses fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them! Yow!"

"Let him alone!" said Harry Wharton. "What did Wingate say, Bunter?"

The Owl of the Remove gasped for breath.

"He stopped me in the passage to tell Bolsover to come to his study at once, about the snowballing."

"Then he knows it was Bolsover?" said Nugent.

"My dear Bolsover," said Alonzo Todd, looking mildly at the scowling bully of the Remove, "it was a very reckless action on your part—"

"Oh, ring off!" growled Bolsover.

"My dear—"

"Shut up!" roared the Remove bully.

"I dare say Wingate saw him, or perhaps Loder did," said Bob Cherry. "You'd better go, Bolsover. You know you oughtn't to have done it, and you'd better take your gruel quietly."

Bolsover sneered.

"I sha'n't go!" he said.

"Wingate will come for you."

"Let him!"

"Look here—" began Harry Wharton.

"You look here!" interrupted Bolsover angrily. "We're up against the Sixth, ain't we? You chaps rolled a prefect in the snow, and I snowballed the skipper! It's six of one and half a dozen of the other! You ought to stand by me!"

"That's all very well! But—"

"Play the game!" said Bolsover savagely. "We're all in this together. Besides, we've brought Loder to heel, and we can bring Wingate to his senses, too. If he comes here, let's bump him, and show that we won't stand any of his rot!"

"Oh, rats!"

"We're not going to touch old Wingate!"

"Well, I shall, if it touches me!" said Bolsover. "And you fellows can stand by me or not, as you like; but if you don't back me up, you're a set of cads and cowards!"

"You're not going?"

"No."

And Bolsover did not go. There was a painful silence in the common-room. The Remove had the room to themselves now. But most of them anticipated a visit from Wingate, probably accompanied by all the prefects. And in that case—

Yet they could hardly refuse to stand by Bolsover.

They waited.

Coker, of the Fifth, looked into the common-room. There was a peculiar grin upon the rugged features of Coker, of the Fifth.

"Wingate wants you," he said.

"Rats!" said Bolsover.

"What?"

"Tell Wingate to go and eat coke!"

"W-w-w-what?"

"We're fed up with prefects," said Bolsover. "We're not going to stand any more rot from the Sixth. Tell Wingate so."

"My only aunt!" gasped Coker, in amazement.

"And get out yourself!" growled Bolsover. "Get out before we chuck you out!"

"You jolly well couldn't!"

"You'll see!"

And Bolsover rushed at Coker, of the Fifth, and three or four Removites followed him.

The burly Fifth-Former was grasped, and whirled off his feet, almost before he knew what was happening.

"Chuck him out!" roared Bolsover.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

Coker, of the Fifth, sprawled upon the linoleum in the passage outside the common-room. He lay there gasping for a full minute, while the Removites crowded in the doorway and laughed.

Coker staggered to his feet at last, panting for breath.

"M-m-my only aunt!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll be sorry for this!" said Coker.

"Rats!"

"Buzz off!"

And Coker tramped away, breathing fury.

The Remove waited anxiously. Bolsover and the more reckless fellows in the Form were whistling carelessly. But

Harry Wharton & Co. were anxious enough. They felt that things were going too far, that the Remove had passed the point in which they were justified in offering resistance, and it troubled them. They were not afraid, but they did not know what to do. Bolsover was dragging the whole Form into trouble, and the accustomed leaders of the Form did not seem to be able to help it.

The Remove did not have long to wait.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and Wingate, with a cane in his hand, appeared in the doorway. Behind him were all the prefects of Greyfriars, and after them came some more of the Sixth, who had evidently come along to render assistance if it should be required. They all had canes in their hands.

"Bolsover here?" rapped out Wingate sharply.

"Yes, I'm here."

"Come here! You are to be caned!"

"I won't!"

"Are you fellows backing Bolsover up?" asked Wingate, glancing sharply over the rest of the Remove.

"Well, you see, Wingate—"

"Yes or no?" rapped out Wingate.

"Yes, we are!" said Stott.

"You see—" said Harry Wharton.

"Very well," said Wingate. "It is time you kids were taught a lesson! I am going to cane the whole Remove."

"Oh!"

Billy Bunter slid under the table. Snoop slid behind a curtain. The rest of the Remove drew together, looking alarmed, and angry, and dismayed. Resistance to a prefect or two—Loder or Walker—was one thing, but resistance to the captain of the school, backed up by the whole body of prefects, was quite another. If they resisted, they had no chance—not the ghost of a chance; but they were not at all inclined to give in. The triumphant grin on Loder's face was enough to make them determined to resist.

"You first, Bolsover," said Wingate.

"Rats!"

"You refuse?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Pull in, you fellows!"

No more was said. The prefects rushed into the room. Wingate's iron grasp fell upon Bolsover, and the Remove bully struggled furiously; but he was a child in the powerful grasp of the Greyfriars captain. Wingate's cane rose and fell fast, and Bolsover roared with pain.

The rest of the prefects were not idle. Wingate had declared that the whole Form was to be caned, and caned they were.

Canes seemed to be rising and falling everywhere. The air seemed to be filled by a forest of canes. Some of the juniors resisted, some did not; but whether they resisted or did not resist, they were caned all the same.

Bolsover, wrenching himself away from Wingate at last, set the example of flight, and the juniors scattered.

With the lashing canes behind them, they fled, dodging round chairs and tables, and bolting cut into the passage.

Wingate paused at last, breathless.

The room was empty, save for himself and the prefects. The Remove were gone—scattered—and were nursing their injuries in distant corners of the School House.

"I think that will be the finish!" gasped Wingate.

And Wingate was right. It was the finish.

For after that scene in the common-room, and the punishment that had been handed out so liberally, the Removites realised very clearly that discipline was discipline, and that it was no use backing up against it. And the better fellows in the Form did not want to back up against it, either. After all, they had effected their purpose. Loder & Co. had been worsted, and they had been defeated themselves when Bolsover had dragged them into conflict with the captain of the school. Upon the whole, they had reason to be satisfied, and satisfied they were when the effects of their castigation had passed off, which was not for some little time. But no more commands were issued to the Sixth "By Order of the Form."

THE END.

NEXT WEEK!

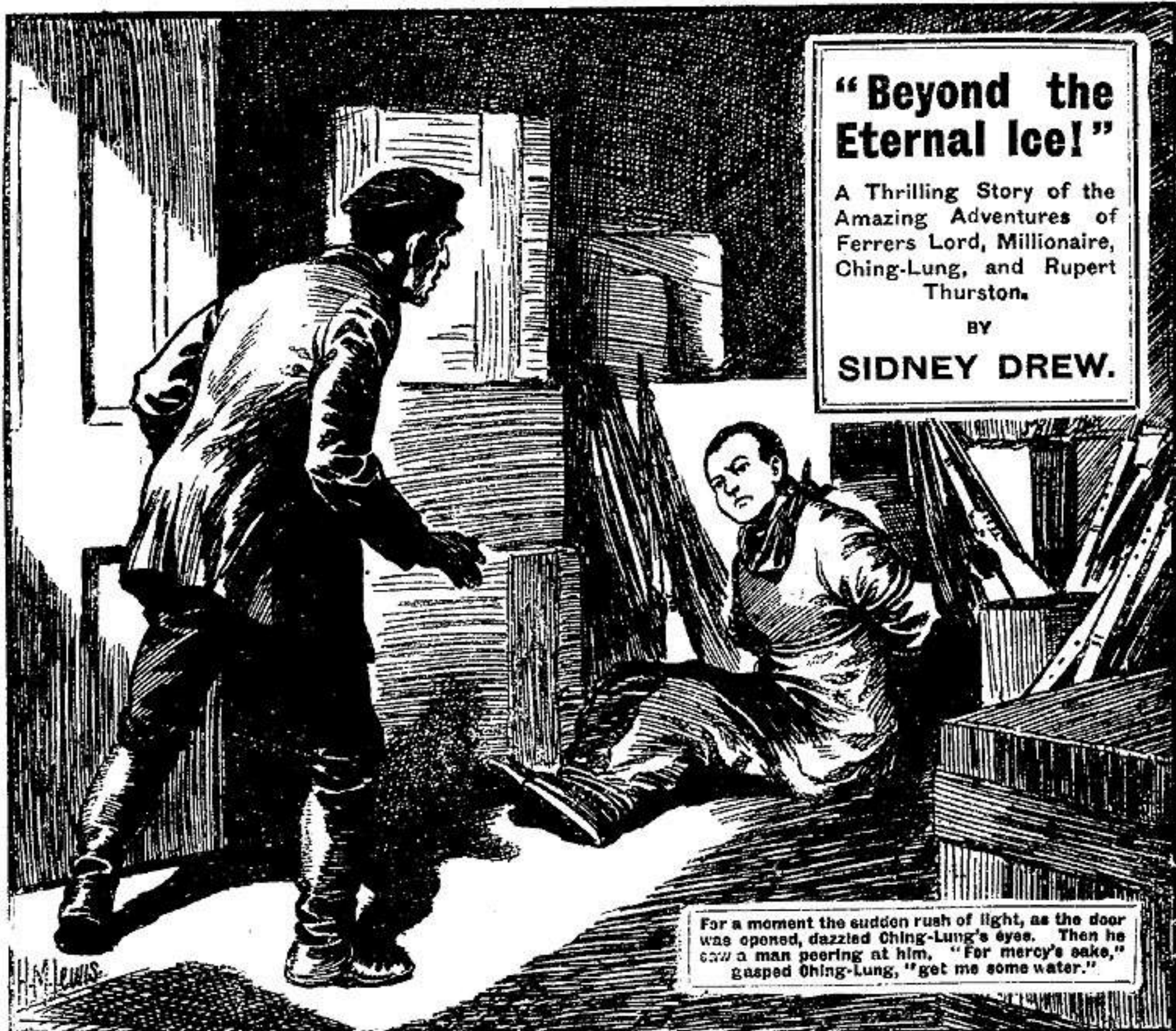
"THE PARTING OF THE WAYS."

A grand, long, complete tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

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READ the splendid school tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled:

"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER!" In this week's "GEM" Library. Price One Penny.



"Beyond the Eternal Ice!"

A Thrilling Story of the
Amazing Adventures of
Ferrers Lord, Millionaire,
Ching-Lung, and Rupert
Thurston.

BY

SIDNEY DREW.

For a moment the sudden rush of light, as the door was opened, dazzled Ching-Lung's eyes. Then he saw a man peering at him. "For mercy's sake," gasped Ching-Lung, "get me some water."

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

When Professor Hugley, the renowned American scientist, startles the world by announcing that he is off to find the North Pole in his wonderful air-craft, the Cloud King, there is only one man who dares to enter the lists against him on behalf of Great Britain, and that man is Ferrers Lord, the famous millionaire and inventor. Lord pits his wonderful submarine, the Lord of the Deep, against the Cloud King in the most amazing race the world has ever seen; the goal is the North Pole, and the prize a million pounds!

The preliminaries are soon settled, a judge is appointed to accompany each of the competitors, and the great race commences.

With Ferrers Lord are Ching-Lung, Rupert Thurston, and Gan Waga, an Eskimo, while Hugley is accompanied by Paraira, a Cuban, and Estebian Gacchio, a huge negro. These latter soon show themselves in their true colours, and the Cloud King no sooner reaches the region of ice than Hugley, and such of the crew as are loyal to him, are murdered, and Paraira and Gacchio assume control of the airship.

Ferrers Lord reaches the Pole through an underground tunnel which he discovers, and finds there a beautiful city called Shazana. They are welcomed by Vathmoor, the king. The Cloud King arrives at the Pole exactly twenty-four hours twenty-eight minutes after the Lord of the Deep, and the papers, certifying that the race has been fairly won, are signed, in the presence of Vathmoor. Ferrers Lord arrests Estebian Gacchio for murder on the high seas. Gacchio escapes, captures Ching-Lung, and takes him to the Cloud King. When Ferrers Lord discovers that Ching-Lung is missing, he sets off alone to rescue him.

(Now go on with the story.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 203.

NEXT
TUESDAY:

"THE PARTING OF THE WAYS!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.
Please order your copy early.

Ching-Lung Finds a Friend and Saves His Life—The Tables Turned—A Shot and a Leap for Freedom.

Jose sat cross-legged on the Cloud King's deck, and blew puffs of smoke from a large cigarro. The deck was littered with empty brandy bottles, relics of the last night's debauch. Jose alone was able to lift his head. He had not drank so deeply as the rest.

He sat and pondered with the cigarro between his white teeth. Strange and dreadful things had happened. Both his officers were wounded, feverish, and helpless. For that day, at least, the men, too, were not fit to stir. Some of them had begun drinking again.

"Caramba!" thought the Spaniard. "This is choice and pleasant! If those pigs had sense enough to understand, I might broach my plans. But what are my plans?"

There was a shrill scream from the tent. It was Paraira shrieking out in his delirium. Jose had tied him down to the camp-bed.

The Spaniard laughed softly. A young fellow slouched unsteadily out of the wheelhouse. He was about three-and-twenty, and his face did not look vicious, though it bore the marks of dissipation. He had a wet cloth wrapped round his aching head.

"You are the first to find your feet, then, Cashel?"

"Yes. My head is going like a hammer. What fools we are!"

"Speak for yourself!" laughed the Spaniard. "Do you know what happened last night?"

The young fellow shuddered.

"Yes," he said; "Mantaro killed Aqualio. What was it all about?"

"Caramba, some drunken quarrel! But there is more than that. Paraira has stabbed Gacchio!"

"And is he dead?" asked Cashel hoarsely.

"No; but badly mauled, camarado. It is an ugly gash. They lie together in the same tent. Death of my life, it is an ugly business! Who's turn will it be next?"

Cashel shuddered again. He was not so hardened as the others, but he was weak and easily influenced. He was beginning to loathe his companions, the ship, the expedition. From the hour the Cloud King had sailed the voyage had been one catalogue of horror. Only last night another man had been stabbed and thrown into the sea.

"Jose," he said, "I believe there is a curse upon us."

Jose bared his white teeth, and shook his head until the massive gold earrings began to jingle.

"Gently, amigo—gently!" he laughed. "There is a curse here, and that is the drink. But a curse—bah!—we make it for ourselves. We have had bad luck, that is all. Are you tired of it, Cashel?"

"Heartsick, Jose."

Jose laughed again.

"Carajo, is it so bad as that? Wait until your head has ceased to ache, amigo, and the sting of the brandy has left you. Put your head in a bucket of water, and drink a pint of soda-water. I want you to feed the prisoner."

"Prisoner! What prisoner?"

"Drink a quart of soda-water, instead of a pint!" grinned the Spaniard. "The young Chinese prince Gacchio trapped and brought aboard. We must not let him die of hunger and thirst, amigo. Bah! I am as tender-hearted as a little child. I cannot bear to see anyone suffer!"

Jose was as wily as an old fox, and as cruel as a wolf. He was playing his own game. Though he could not read the future, he left nothing to chance. He was covering his retreat in case of accident. Something might go wrong; he might even fall into the hands of Ferrers Lord. It was a crafty move not to treat the prisoner harshly. No doubt Paraira and Gacchio would have gloried in shooting Ching-Lung, and the crew would have applauded the murder.

But Jose was too cunning. He had no quarrel with the lad. If they lived, Gomez Paraira and Esteban Gacchio could please themselves. He would protest loudly against the cold-blooded murder. By doing so he had nothing to lose, and perhaps nothing to gain; but he argued that it might save his own life if ever he was captured by Ferrers Lord.

Ching-Lung had been flung into a narrow, dark room. Unloaded rifles were stacked round the room. He had succeeded in getting the cruel gag out of his mouth, but his tongue and lips were dry and blistered, and every bone in his body ached.

Had he possessed his usual strength, the bonds would not have held him a moment. He could have wriggled out of the bonds as easily as a small eel could pass through the meshes of a herring net. But he had no strength. Thirst was choking him, his wrists and ankles burned as if the cords were red-hot. Gacchio had flung him down on a sack of wheat.

And there he lay in agony until the four suns were above the peaks.

How long would it last? How long could he bear it? He hated himself for being caught by such a simple bait. Once he heard a shot, several times he heard shrieks and cries. He knew that the vessel was not in the air, for there was no buzzing of screws and wings and no vibration. He had no hope of rescue or mercy.

Gacchio would either shoot or hang him.

At last a streak of light shone at the bottom of the door. Day had come. The vessel was wrapped in silence. An hour passed. He could bear the awful thirst no longer. Ching-Lung uttered a hoarse shout. It was answered by unsteady footsteps, and the door opened.

For a moment the sudden rush of light dazzled Ching-Lung's eyes. Then he saw a man peering at him. It was Cashel.

"For mercy's sake, get me some water!"

"Let's have a look at you. Thunder! How long have you been here?"

"I don't know," gasped Ching-Lung. "It seems an age. Get me some water if you have a heart in you at all. I'm choking—burning! For Heaven's sake, bring me some water!"

"Brandy in it?"

"No; water only."

"Poor devil!" growled Cashel, turning on his heel. "This sort of thing is getting too much for me!"

He brought a jug and a tin pannikin. Ching-Lung gulped the water down greedily. It was ice-cold, and it gave him new life.

"More! More!"

"Not a drain!" said Cashel. "You've had enough for a bit. Let me have a look at you. You ain't dangerous, are you?"

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READ the splendid school tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled:

"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER!" In this week's "GEM" Library Price One Penny.

His voice was harsh, but not unkind. Ching-Lung could not help laughing at the question.

"I'm more dead than dead," he answered, "and horribly cramped and numbed!"

"I don't wonder. Keep still a minute!"

Ching-Lung shivered as he saw the flash of a knife. Then the light shone on Cashel's face. There was a rough look of pity there, and Ching-Lung breathed again. The knife had not been drawn for what he feared.

The blade severed the tight cords.

"Can you stand up?"

Ching-Lung tried but failed, and sank back again with a groan.

"You're not shamming?"

"No such luck!" groaned Ching-Lung. "I'm as stiff as a telegraph-pole!"

"Well, you've got pluck, anyhow, for your size. Try and put your right arm round my neck. That's better. I'm going to take you and doctor you a bit. Promise me you won't try to give me the slip."

"For how long?"

Cashel looked down at his prisoner doubtfully. As he had told Jose he was heartsick. He hesitated. He wished Ching-Lung no harm; his soul revolted at Gacchio's wanton cruelty. At present the crew of the Cloud King owned no leader. He was responsible to none for his actions, and in a quarrel he was quite able to hold his own.

"For six hours, youngster," he answered, "then you can slip your moorings if you can. I don't want to keep you."

He carried Ching-Lung on deck. Jose was sitting in the same attitude, still smoking and pondering.

"What are you going to do, amigo?"

"Shut your mouth, and mind your own business!" snapped Cashel.

Jose's teeth gleamed as he grinned. He was too wise to resent the young fellow's words. He knew that Cashel was an ugly customer in a fight.

"The brandy has not improved your temper, comrade."

"Shut up!" said Cashel again.

He dived below, and returned with a bottle of salad oil.

"Ankles first," he said. "The brute! He's messed you up a bit. Is that better?"

"Splendid, thanks!"

The oil eased the pain at once. Every moment Ching-Lung expected to see the dark, cruel face of Gacchio. He saw the bottles lying about, and heard the sound of coarse voices. The vessel was in disorder, telling of long neglect. It reeked of stale brandy and tobacco-smoke.

"They've started again, amigo," said Jose, jerking his thumb in the direction of the companion.

"Mantaro, too?"

The Spaniard nodded.

"Then there will be more murder before the day is out!" growled Cashel. "Drink makes him raving mad. You ought to have shot him last night when he stabbed Aqualio. He's not safe."

"No, senior," replied Jose thoughtfully. "that is true. But what can we do? We're all captains aboard this vessel. I'm no more afraid of Mantaro than I am afraid of you. We'll go together. If we don't do something he'll be blowing the ship and us sky high."

Ching-Lung started. He heard a long-drawn cry, followed by a burst of laughter.

"Paraira had better not give us too much of that!" snarled the Spaniard. "I'm tired of this noise."

Cashel shrugged his shoulders.

"It wouldn't do the world any harm to stop his noise altogether. Now, if you've got the pluck, come with me and see what we can do with Mantaro. If we can't tie him up, I'm going to get out of this ship. Steady how you go. He's sure to have his barkers."

Jose had little stomach for the task. Mantaro was a Mexican half-breed, with all the bad faults of both races, and none of the good qualities. Drink made him a maniac. Jose made sure that his ugly knife was not wedged in the sheath.

"And what are you going to do with him?" he asked, pointing to Ching-Lung.

"What's that got to do with you?"

"Nothing, amigo!"

"Then keep your tongue at home," growled Cashel. "I tell you I've had enough of this confounded ship and her crew. Last night's work settled me. This youngster can stop here. I can answer for him if anything goes wrong. It's for his sake that we're going to settle with Mantaro. He'd shoot the lad like a dog, if he clapped eyes on him. I'm old enough to take care of myself, Senior Jose. I'm a bad lot, and a tough lot, and I've got Satan's own temper in me to-day. Mind how you talk to me. I'm not safe."

"Gently, amigo—gently," said Jose soothingly. "We have always been comrades—"

"Comrades, you Spanish pig! Oh, shut your mouth!" Jose's eyes flashed, but he was wisely silent. Cashel was in an ugly mood, and it was neither safe nor wise to cross him. There were dark rumours about him among the men. He had joined the Cloud King to evade the grip of the law. They did not know what crime he had committed, and he did not boast of his crimes and glory in them like the rest.

Ching-Lung did not miss a word as he sat chafing his legs. Hope—the hope of escape—was swelling high in his breast. Some providence was watching over him. Even on board the Cloud King he had found kindness and compassion.

There was no more shrieking and wild laughter, but Ching-Lung was too quick-witted not to understand that Paraira was stricken with fever. But where was Estebian Gacchio? He longed to ask that question, but it was wise to hold his tongue.

"Six hours," said Cashel, looking at him.

"I have pledged my word."

"And do you never break it?"

"Never."

"Then you are either a liar or a gentleman. Hanged if I won't let you off. You can get away as soon as you like, if you promise not to meddle with anything on the boat. I mean guns and machinery. Do you take me?"

"Yes, and thanks. I promise to interfere with nothing and touch nobody except in self-defence. I don't know how I'm going to escape, but I know that if I do escape I'll not forget you."

Jose uttered a curse under his breath. He did not like the terms affairs were taking. He clutched Cashel by the arm, and spoke volubly in Spanish.

"Pest!" he said. "The brandy has made you as mad as Mantaro. What are you about to do, amigo? Look at the drunken hogs we have below. We cannot work a vessel between us, and we cannot get aid from them. Fool to let this lad go. He will point out our hiding-place, and before we know it Ferrers Lord's shells will be crashing about our ears. Think twice before you trust that yellow hound. They are born liars! Carajo, amigo, will you ruin us?"

Cashel quickly loaded his revolver.

"Shut your mouth!" he growled. "I've had enough of your prattle!"

Still, Jose's words had sunk deep, and he felt the force of them. There was good left in him still, and, vile blackguards that his comrades were, he hated the thought of betraying them. Ching-Lung's fate hung in the balance, and Jose decided it.

"I won't have it, amigo," he said. "Put him in irons again!"

"And who are you?" said Cashel fiercely. "What have you got to do with it? Do you think I'm going to take orders from a miserable Spaniard? Speak another word, and I'll drag your ears out by the ear-rings you wear! You won't have it, won't you? We'll see about that."

Jose bit his lips and fingered his knife. He looked like a serpent about to strike. Cashel turned round. Ching-Lung had risen to his feet at last.

"I wish I could trust you," growled Cashel. "If I say you can go, will you—"

"Look out!"

Cashel sprang just in time. The knife, aimed between his shoulder-blades, cleaved the empty air. A second later Jose lay stunned on the deck. Ching-Lung had felled him with a blow from an empty bottle. The knife had broken against the metal plating of the deck.

"The murdering coward!" growled Cashel. "I didn't think he'd nerve to try that game on me. Thanks for your warning. You were pretty smart that time. Now what am I going to do about letting you go?"

Ching-Lung burst into a laugh.

"You don't seem to know that I am master of the situation."

"Master of what?"

"The situation," said the prince. "Where's your revolver?"

Cashel looked down at his belt, thunderstruck. Both knife and revolver were gone.

"I have borrowed them," said Ching-Lung. "So you must own that I hold the trumps. I have you at my mercy. I have only to knock you on the head and set the engines going. If any of the drunkards below care to taste the fresh air, I can easily pick them off as they come up the companion."

Cashel whistled and kicked Jose thoughtfully.

"That's true," he said; "you hold the trumps. But do you think you're playing quite fair? I meant to do you a good turn. Aren't you taking a mean advantage?"

"Perhaps I am. Where is Estebian Gacchio?"

"Paraira was mad with fever last night, and stabbed him badly, so Jose says. He won't be able to get on his legs for weeks. Paraira won't shake his fever off for a few weeks, either. What are you going to do now that you have the whip-hand?"

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NEXT TUESDAY: **"THE PARTING OF THE WAYS!"** By FRANK RICHARDS. Please order your copy early.

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

"Please shut the door of the wheel-house."

The man obeyed. He knew that the revolver was covering him. Ching-Lung knitted his brows. What was he to do? Fortune's wheel had turned with a vengeance. Two minutes before he was a prisoner, now he was master of the vessel.

"Will you help me to work this vessel?"

"No," said Cashel sullenly. "You can shoot if you like. I'm bad enough, goodness knows, but I'm neither a coward nor a traitor. I don't want to see my comrades hanged, though they all deserve it. You can't work the vessel single-handed, so I don't see where the victory comes in."

Ching-Lung fingered the weapon thoughtfully. He saw he would get no aid from Cashel by threats.

"Did you really mean to let me go?"

"I did."

Jose stirred and groaned. Time was more precious than gold. At any moment the Spaniard might recover.

"You're a good fellow," said Ching-Lung quickly. "I'm sorry to find you leagued with this gang of villains. Will you come with me?"

There was a pause. Jose's evil eyes were open, but he was too dazed to rise.

"Yes," said Cashel.

"Then be quick."

A long metal arm swung over clear of the rock on which the vessel rested. Tied to it was a huge parachute. The Cloud King carried four of them, for at any time an accident might occur in mid-air, and the parachutes offered a poor chance of life.

"Come," said Cashel; "it will carry both of us. Hang the cords; they're tangled!"

Ching-Lung ran forward. A seven-pounder lay uncovered on the deck. He shouldered it round until its muzzle was pointing aft.

"Are you ready?" asked Cashel hoarsely.

"Yes."

"Then catch hold of the ring and jump! Now!"

Ching-Lung had the lanyard of the gun in his hand.

"Jump, man!"

They sprang together, and hissed downwards. There was a deafening roar, and a wild, crashing sound. The shell had brought down the wheel-house and one of the uprights.

The great parachute opened, checking the descent.

Spit! A bullet cut through the cloth. Mad, frenzied yells came from drunken throats. They were being fired at, but the ground was near.

Spit! Something hot and clammy spurted over Ching-Lung's head. Cashel shrieked, and his fingers slipped from the ring. Sick with horror, Ching-Lung saw him fall sideways. He thudded down upon the shingle.

"Carajo! Shoot! Shoot!" It was Jose's voice. "Shoot! Shoot!"

The ground was close at hand. Ching-Lung let go his hold. The parachute turned sideways, and sank into the water.

Cashel was dead.

The First of Three Separate Adventures that Bring Three of Our Heroes Together.

Even amid the ice the air was not cold. Which way, Ferrers Lord searched the ground for any clue that might aid him in his quest. The shingle was trampled close to the spot where the launch had lain.

But the marks did not extend. Ferrers Lord made a circle round the place. Again his heart sank sickly. Against every hope and every wish he was convinced. The absence of tracks proved that Gacchio and his captive had been carried away by the Cloud King.

Which way now?

Chance alone could help him. Unless the vessel, like some monstrous eagle, had found an eerie among the peaks, or had sailed homewards, he was certain to sight her. He must trust to chance. He sent his gold pencil-case spinning into the air. When it fell the lead pointed towards the ice-peaks that loomed so terrible and so desolate as they flashed in the light of the four suns.

Rifle on his shoulder, he passed into a narrow ravine. He was anxious to know what kind of country lay beyond the peaks to the south.

The pass ended, and he saw the solitudes of the eternal ice. Eight hundred feet below him the great icfield rolled away like a stormy sea. A wall of darkness seemed to rise in the distance, black and mysterious. Now and again the Aurora flashed across it. The jagged hummocks sparkled.

Ferrers Lord had hoped for some glimpse of water. None was to be seen. Returning through the cavern offered a dreary prospect. The black wall seemed to be coming nearer and nearer and shrouding the sky.



"Smoke!" he muttered.

He heard strange rumblings and growls. The smoke must proceed from an active volcano. So the north as well as the south had its active volcano.

Which way now?

He could see for miles in every direction, except where the long chain of peaks hid the sea. He looked about him. A cavern gaped in the glassy wall of the pass. Its entrance was about twelve feet square, and a few hardy lichens grew about it.

Ferrers Lord entered. The light filtered through the ice—a dim, greenish, ghostly light. The ice beneath his feet was firm and hard, and the roof lofty.

Where did the cavern lead?

It descended as steadily as the path in the ravine had ascended. The millionaire halted. The path was grooved by the constant passing backward and forward of feet—the clawed feet of bears. It was smooth and treacherous, but the millionaire's boots were shod with ice-nails.

The passage narrowed, widened, and narrowed again, and the light grew fainter. Then a crevasse yawned before him. Leaning forward, he could see the bottom. The bears had made a slanting track along the side of the crevasse. It was only a few feet wide, and the ice-cliff fell sheer away for fifty feet, the floor as hard as adamant.

Ferrers Lord hesitated a moment. The descent was perilous. The cavern must have an outlet below. His love of adventure spurred him on.

To retrace his steps would only bring him back to the sea. He went forward cautiously. A slip would mean death.

The cliff path wound deviously, sometimes even ascending. Before he reached the bottom he had travelled over a quarter of a mile. It was darker than ever. Ferrers Lord guessed that he was in the very heart of one of the peaks, with millions of tons of ice above him.

There were two paths—one to the right, one to the left. His compass was utterly useless, for had it been balanced it would have pointed straight up and down. He took the right-hand one.

"By Jove!"

Ferrers Lord stopped again. He had come upon the graveyard of the mammoths.

The round cavern before him was a vast charnel-house of giant bones and ivory. There were tens of thousands of mighty yellow tusks, embedded still in naked, grinning skulls. It was here that the great brutes had crawled to die. Some of the vast skeletons had shaggy hair still hanging from their ribs.

He strode on through the charnel-house. There was no exit. He must try the other path.

Then came a snarl. He looked round quickly, and saw the head of a bear protruding through the ribs of a mammoth. A squeaking told him that it was a she-bear with cubs. She had chosen a queer nest for her young.

Ferrers Lord took no further notice of her, but went on; he was not a hunter to-day. Then came a second snarl. The bear's mate stood in his path. It cowered back when it saw him, and shuffled away.

Still the path led downwards steadily. Another crevasse cut in the ice, but it was possible to avoid it by keeping close to the ice-wall. It was a risky climb. The millionaire's rifle hung over his left shoulder by the strap. As he neared the top of the path, and squeezed himself close to the ice, something fell from above.

It was a lump of ice. It struck the rifle, and knocked the weapon from his shoulder. The rifle dropped into the crevasse. Startled, the millionaire raised his head quickly to find out the cause of the accident. A bear was squatting on a ledge above him, staring down at the strange visitor more in wonder than in fear.

The bear was blocking the path. Blaming himself for his carelessness in not carrying the rifle more securely, the millionaire edged round to retreat. A roar rang through the cavern, followed by a snarl and a patter of feet. A second bear appeared on the edge of the crevasse.

"Pleasant!" muttered the millionaire. "A hungry bear with cubs is not the gentlest of creatures!"

The millionaire had his revolver still. He was a deadly shot at thirty or forty yards. The nearer of the two brutes was about that distance away.

A smile crossed Ferrers Lord's features. At close quarters he was confident of victory, and he had had no breakfast. He lowered himself carefully, and sat down. He was compelled to wait the pleasure of the two shaggy sentinels, so it was as well to pass the time as comfortably as possible.

Ferrers Lord took out his flask and sandwich-box, placed his revolver beside him, and commenced his meal.

The brute sentinels snarled and growled, but neither advanced nor retreated. It was to be a siege!

(To be continued next week.)

My Readers' Column



NEXT TUESDAY'S GREYFRIARS STORY.

Among the powerful "gripping" tales of schoolboy life which Frank Richards knows so well how to write,

"THE PARTING OF THE WAYS."

which will appear in next week's issue of THE MAGNET Library, will take a high place.

All regular MAGNET readers will thoroughly enjoy this story, which they should make a point of ordering in advance.

OUR COMPANION PAPER'S WONDERFUL OFFER.

In this week's issue of "The Gem" Library is contained the first of a new

SERIES OF SIMPLE WEEKLY COMPETITIONS.

which cannot fail to interest all my readers. Every week, until further notice, our popular companion paper will contain a simple competition

COMPLETE IN ONE WEEK.

Each week a fresh competition! If you don't win a prize one week, you can start afresh—and on level terms with your rivals—the next week and try again. And remember this:

TEN HANDSOME PRIZES ARE AWARDED WEEKLY!

Be sure to get this Thursday's "Gem," containing the first weekly competition. It will pay you!

A CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

On the back-cover page of this issue my readers will notice a long list of the names of "The Gem" readers who require to correspond with fellow readers in England and different parts of the world. This Correspondence Exchange has become such a popular feature of our companion paper that it has quite outrun its allotted space, with the result that I have been constrained to find room for it upon our back cover this week. As an instance of the success of "The Gem" Correspondence Exchange, I will print below the letter of a girl reader, whose name was inserted therein in the ordinary way:

"London, S.E.

"Dear Editor, — Some time ago you published in 'The Gem' my request for Colonial correspondents. Since then I have had such a number of letters, both from England and abroad, that it was impossible for me to reply to them all. It would have cost quite a small fortune if I had attempted it. Will you, therefore, convey my very best thanks to all those readers who have written to me and received no reply in exchange?

"I may truthfully say that all my unknown friends praise 'The Gem,' and say how interesting they find the stories.

"I wish a very happy Christmas to all Gemites and Magnetites. My wish is the same, also, for Mr. Martin Clifford and yourself.

"With best of wishes, I remain,

"Yours sincerely,

"N. BARBARA EDWARDS."

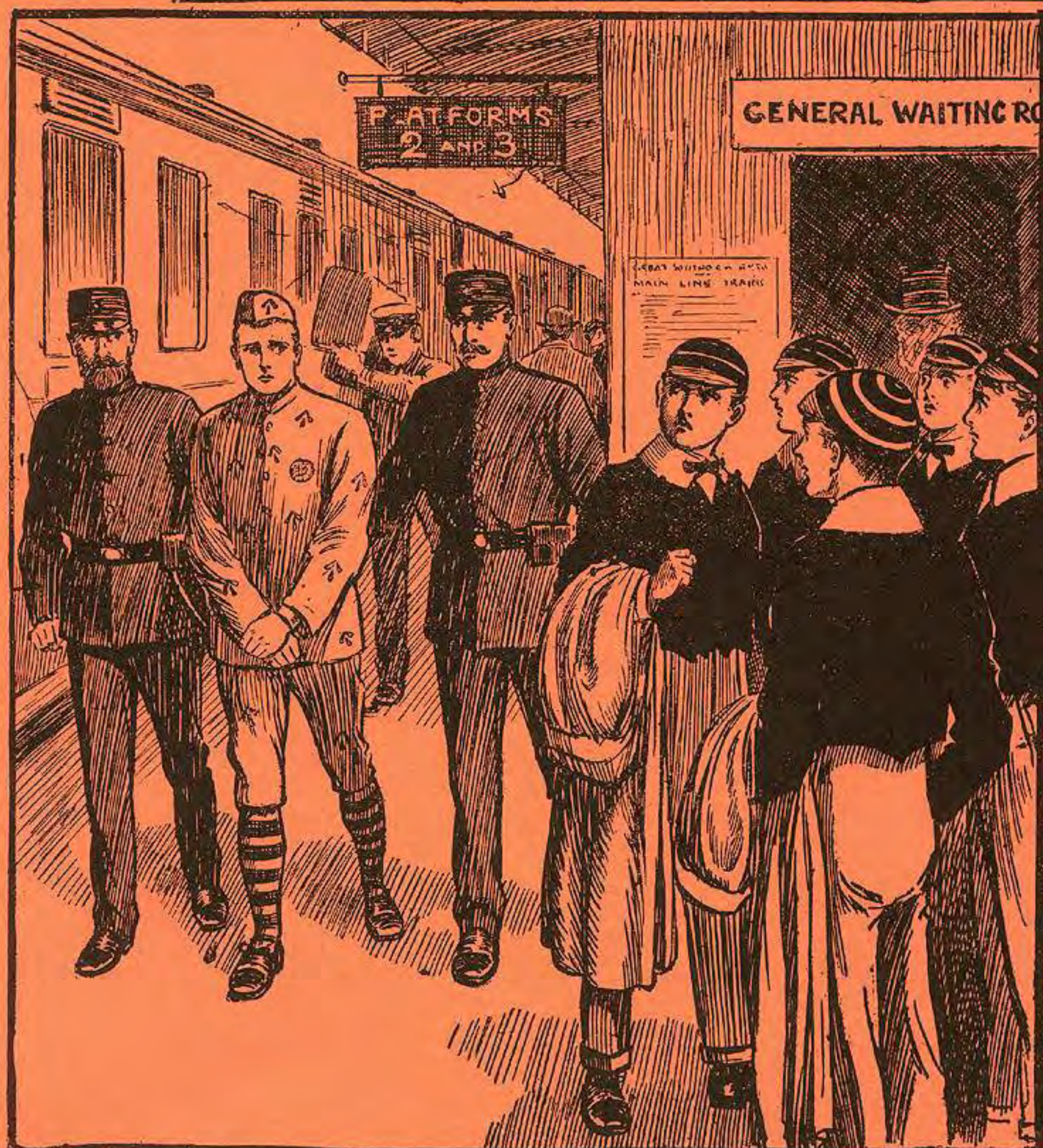
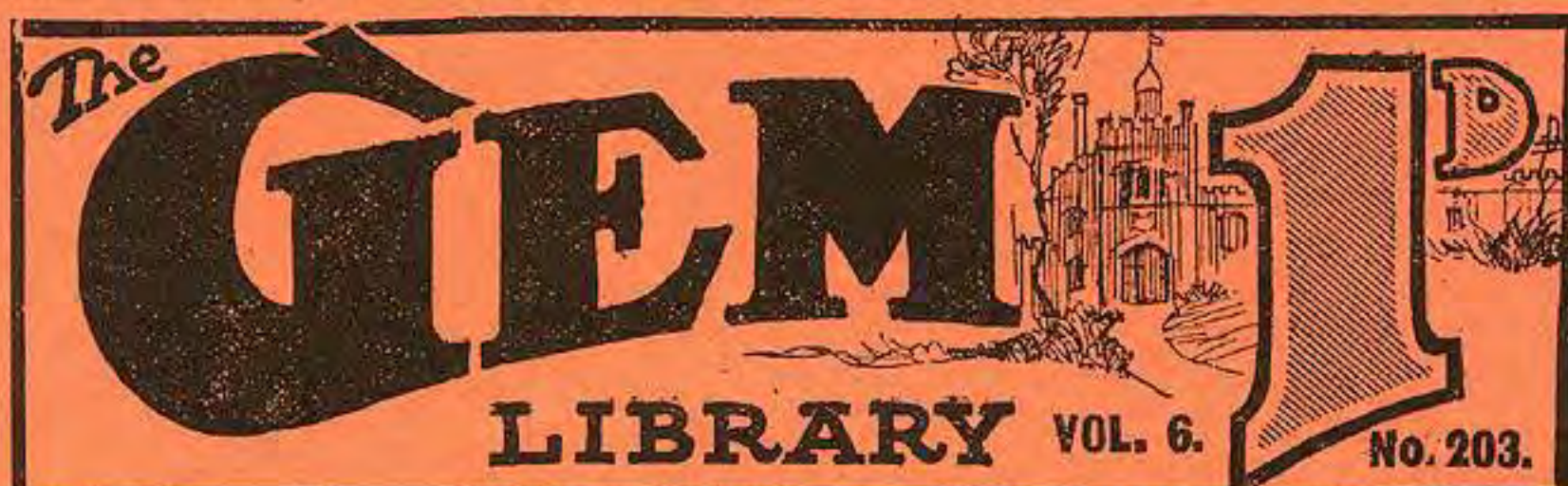
Miss Barbara Edwards has my best thanks for her letter, which is only one of many I have received, telling a similar tale. "The Gem" Correspondence Exchange columns are eagerly scanned by hundreds of thousands of readers all over the world, and my advice to any of my readers who may desire correspondence with a chum is to at once join the ranks of "The Gem" readers and take advantage of the excellent Exchange.

LOTS OF CHRISTMAS FUN AND HAPPINESS
TO ALL "MAGNET" READERS IS THE WISH
OF YOUR EDITOR.

This Thursday's Number of The "Gem" Library, the cover of which is reproduced below, contains:

"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



"DISOWNED BY HIS BROTHER" AND A GRAND NEW COMPETITION.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

A Popular Feature of the Famous Companion Paper of "The Magnet" Library, by which fellow readers in England and all parts of the British Empire are brought into touch with one another. If you wish to have your name included in this Popular Correspondence Exchange, join the ranks of "Gemites," and obtain a chum to write to. Start to-day by giving your newsagent an order for this week's issue of "The Gem" Library. Price One Penny.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

W. E. B., age 16, of Stanley House, Clifton Road, Peckham, S.E., would like a girl reader to correspond with him.

Miss Ethel Bennett, of 5, Jutland Villas, Harvey Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, would be very pleased if a boy or girl Gemite would correspond with her, age 14-15.

C. Harkwicke, City View, Woodhope Road, Worcester, would like some boy Gemite, about 14 or 15, to correspond with him.

Will any Australian or other Colonial reader correspond with W. Needle, age 14, Brampton House, Brampton Road, Harringay, London, N., England?

Miss Q. Miller, of 107, Upper Kennington Lane, London, England, would like to correspond with a Gemite, age 15-16, who lives in China, America, Australia, or Canada.

John W. Parry, 63, Swan Street, Flint, North Wales, wishes to correspond with any boy or girl reader of THE GEM.

Miss N. R. Hutchings, 17 years of age, would like some boy or girl readers of THE GEM to write to her.

Charles Davis, 3, Brunswick Grove, Brunswick Avenue, Hull, would like a chum with whom he could correspond.

L. Dawson, of 42, Marion Street, Cardiff, would like to correspond with some boy or girl reader of THE GEM. He would also like to hear from Masters D. Hart and R. Lagrue.

Would any girl reader of THE GEM Library, age between 15 and 16, care to correspond with Percy W. Parkin, 18, Birchdale Road, Forest Gate, E.?

George F. Green wishes to correspond with some boy or girl reader living in South Africa or China. Please address letters to 3, Lansdowne Road, Worcester.

Fred Devereux, of 27, Crawford Buildings, Homer Street, London, W., would like a girl chum, age 15, to correspond with him.

H. Navier, 60, West Parade, Hull, Yorkshire, wishes to correspond with some boy or girl chum in England or America.

Miss Winnie Ostler, of 19, Yarmouth Road, Watford, Herts, would be very pleased to correspond with another Gemite, age about 17.

Miss Dorothy Couch, 16, Trafalgar Place, Brynmill, Swansea, wishes to correspond with a Gemite in Japan, France, or Italy.

Miss F. Newton, 448, Moseley Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, and Miss E. De Groot, of 65, Ombersley Road, Camp Hill, Birmingham, wish to know if any boy or girl readers of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries would like to correspond with them.

Miss Marie King, age 17, of 54, Voelas Street, Princes Park, Liverpool, wishes to correspond with some other boy or girl reader of THE GEM.

Miss Melita Brown, age 16, 59, Rhiwlas Street, Prince's Park, Liverpool, wishes to correspond with some other boy or girl reader of THE GEM.

Stanley E. Rendell, of 79, Berger Road, Well Street, S. Hackney, wishes to correspond with a girl reader about 17 or 18 years of age.

Miss Hope Surling, of 13, Havant Road, Walthamstow, Essex, would like to correspond with a reader of THE GEM and "The Magnet" living in Germany, France, or England.

P. Leighton, of 82, Petherton Road, Canonbury, London, N., who is fifteen years of age, tall, and dark, would very much like to correspond with a fellow-reader.

Miss J. L. E. Everett very much wants a boy chum to correspond with her—letters to be addressed to 27, Penn Street, off Lea Road, Wolverhampton, Staffs.

Harold J. Collins, 113, Lower Cheltenham Place, Montpelier, Bristol, wishes to correspond with a girl reader of THE GEM.

Miss Isa G. Irving, of 22, Lynn Street, Waterloo, Blyth, would very much like to correspond with a boy reader whose age is between 17 and 20.

Miss Dorothy Butt, of 70, Tyrrell Street, Leicester, England, wishes to exchange postcards with someone in North America.

A. Thomson, of Market Place, Dunbeath, Caithness, wishes to correspond with some boy reader between 15 and 16 years of age.

Ernest Burns, 6½, Walker's Square, Sikes Street, Hull, wishes to correspond with a girl reader whose age is between 14 and 15.

W. G. Lightfoot would very much like to correspond with any boy or girl reader of THE GEM. Address: 62, Salcott Road, New Wandsworth, London, S.W.

Miss Gladys Dean, of 16, Blackshaw Road, Tooting, S.W., would like to correspond with a boy chum. Her friend—Miss Fillie Carthew, of 64, Acre Road, Merton, would also like to correspond with a boy chum.

W. J. E. Jolland, 39, Eastbourne Street, Lincoln, wishes to enter into correspondence with a girl reader of about 16 years of age.

Miss H. McStay (16 years old), of 2, Cuthbert Road, Wood Street, Walthamstow, wishes to correspond with a reader of THE GEM.

Will any girl chum, about 14 years old, enter into correspondence with F. Muddiman, 30, Teall Road, Saltley, Birmingham?

E. A. Heaford would very much like to correspond with a girl reader, age about 15. Address: 31, Spunstowe Road, Dalston Lane, Hackney, N. E.

Miss Elsie E. Burke, of 130, Clapham Park Road, London, S.W., England, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in Australia, age about 14.

A. Northrop, of 116, Lower Rushton Road, Thornbury, Bradford, England, wishes to correspond with a girl Gemite in Australia.

Harry Brown, P.O. Box 1,184, East, St. John's, Newfoundland, wishes to correspond with a girl reader. He is slightly dark, 18 years of age, and average height.

Henry Hardy, of 10, Suffolk Street, Birmingham, England, would like to correspond with a Colonial girl reader (14 or 15) of THE GEM.

Percy Austin (age 14 or 15) would like a girl reader, of the same age, to correspond with him. Address: 30, Orkney Street, Battersea, S.W.

T. G. Eden, of 20, Derby Road, Burton-on-Trent, wishes to correspond with some boy or girl reader of THE GEM and "The Magnet" (age 14).

A. C. W., of 16, Long Street, Bloemfontein, South Africa, wishes to exchange picture-postcards of South Africa for Indian ones with a boy in India.

W. Cooper (age 19), of 6, Kimberley Street, Hull, England, wishes to correspond with a girl reader residing in any part of Australia.

Fred Ross (age 19), of 108, Old Bethnal Green Road, London, N.W., would like to correspond with some lady Gemite of the same age.

John Mitchell, Dashwood House, Alford, N.B., would like to correspond with a girl chum about 18 years of age.

I. W. Scott, of 3, Biccard Street, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wants some English readers of THE GEM Library to correspond with him.

Two lads (age 16) would like to correspond with two girl readers of about the same age—two interested in cycling preferred. Letters to be addressed to T. S., care of E. Fribbins, 32, Liverpool Road, Canning Town, London, E.

James Spry, 136, Earls Court Avenue, Earls Court, Toronto, Canada, would like an English, Australian, or Scotch boy to correspond with him.

H. Blakey, 41, Athol Road, Sunderland, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader, age about 15.

B. H. Newman, of 35, Alexandra Road, Ipswich, is 16 years of age, and wishes to correspond with a girl reader of about the same age.

Frank Sickle, of 86, Liverpool Road, St. Helens, would be greatly obliged if a reader (age 16 or 17) in Canada, Australia, or New Zealand would communicate with him.

Miss Phoebe Nicholson (age 20), of 25, Faulkner Street, Hope Street End, Liverpool, will be very pleased to hear from any boy reader of THE GEM.

Miss G. Bolton (nearly 20), of 51, Christ Church Road, Streatham Hill, London, S.W., England, will be very pleased to correspond with a boy or girl reader, of the same age, in Australia.