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The Factory Rebels!



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THE FIRST CHAPTER. Trouble in the air!

BOB CHERRY, of the Lower Fourth—called the Remove at Greyfriars—said he thought it was a rotten idea. In fact, he went so far as to call Frank Nugent a frabjous chump for suggesting it.

"Look here—" began Nugent warmly.

"I put it to the meeting," interrupted Bob Cherry, looking round No. 1 Study at its other occupants, Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh, the Indian junior—"is this a good idea, or is it not?"

"Yes, it is!" declared Nugent.

"Dry up, Franky; you're not on in this act," went on Bob.

"You suggest that we pack some grub in a basket, and have a picnic in the ruined Priory?"

"That's it," agreed Frank Nugent; "and a jolly good idea, too!"

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Now, gentlemen, these are the facts. There's no footer for us this afternoon, because the Remove is playing the Third, and we want to give the kids a chance. Well, it's dull and windy, and looks like rain. If we go to the Priory, we shall be chilled to the marrow. Is it a good idea, or is it not?"

"Is it not, I should say!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Yes, it would be too windy, Franky, old man," said Wharton thoughtfully.

"The agreeableness of my honourable self with the esteemed Bob is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, in his weird and wonderful English. "The windfulness of the august rains would also be terrific!"

"You asses!" shouted Nugent.

"Shut up, Franky," said Harry Wharton. "You've had your turn, and you're squashed! Now, I suggest a ramble across the cliffs to Pegg Bay—"

"Rotten!" interrupted the others, in one voice.

"Why, you chumps—"

"It's worse than the picnic wheeze," said Bob Cherry, with a sniff. "It's left to me to suggest a really decent way of spending the afternoon. We're all pretty flush, and as it's chilly, and looks like rain, why shouldn't we run into Courtfield, have a jolly good feed, and drop into the picture palace? There's a ripping show there, and even if it rains it won't make any difference!"

"Well, that's not so bad," began Nugent. "In fact, it's a pretty good wheeze, and I expect I should have thought of it before long!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Yes, you would," he said. "Well, now we've decided, we'd better not waste any more time, or all the giddy afternoon will be gone before we start!"

"Right-ho! We'll buzz off straight away!" said Wharton; and Hurree Singh agreed that the buzzoff-fulness would be terrific.

They crowded out into the passage, and descended to the Close. There were not many juniors about, for the afternoon was, as Bob Cherry had said, decidedly chilly. The old elms swayed about in the wind, and the sky overhead was somewhat overcast.

"I say, you chaps, heard the latest?"

The Famous Five turned, and saw on the School House steps a tall, slim junior, with a large nose, and thick hair, in queer little tufts.

"Hallo, Alonzo! What is the news?" asked Harry Wharton. "Have you been hearing from your giddy Uncle Benjamin?"

The new-comer grinned.

"No; I leave Uncle Benjamin to Alonzo," he replied. "I'm Peter!"

"Oh! Blessed if I can tell which of you is which," said Harry. "Why don't you wear labels? Well, what's the latest?"

Peter Todd turned, and pointed to a tall chimney just visible in the distance.

"That's a factory," he replied—"a jam factory, where they make pickles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, they make pickles and jam," said Peter Todd. "It belongs to Mr. Hardinge—"

"Look here," interrupted Bob Cherry, "do you think you're giving us a piece of information? Is this what you call the latest? That factory started long before you came to Greyfriars, you ass! We had a regular dust-up with old Hardinge about the short cut to Courtfield, but the old boy turned up trumps in the end!"

"Buzz off, Toddy! You're months behind the times—"

"Hold on!" said Peter Todd coolly. "I've got other news. There's some sort of trouble at the factory, and Mr. Hardinge's half expecting a strike!"

"My hat!"

"A strike!"

"That's news, anyhow!"

"Who told you?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I heard it from Temple, of the Fourth, who's just come back from Courtfield," said Todd. "He says that there's quite a lot of excitement there, and advised me to run over and see the fun!"

Harry Wharton looked doubtful.

"I'm blessed if I trust those Upper Fourth bounders!" he

said. "Ten to one Temple was stuffing you, to get you to go to Courtfield on a fool's errand!"

"No fear," replied Peter Todd firmly. "As chief of the top study in the Remove—"

"Chief of rats!"

"Top study be blown!"

"As chief of the top study in the Remove," went on Peter calmly, "I think I'm above being stuffed by an ass like Temple! Old 'Lonzy might have been stuffed, but you can't kid me! Temple was serious for once!"

"Well, does he know what the row's about?" asked Harry Wharton.

"No; but he's heard that a good few of the factory workers are talking about going on strike," replied Todd. "Of course, it's all jaw; the thing'll fizzle out in a day or two, and we shall hear no more about it!"

"Well, we're going to Courtfield now," said Bob Cherry, "so we shall see whether Temple was kidding you or not. Hallo! What's up with old Wingate?"

Wingate of the Sixth, captain of Greyfriars, was striding towards the little group of Removites. He was looking serious.

"Are you kids going out?" he asked sharply.

"Yes, Wingate."

"No harm in going out, is there?" asked Bob Cherry. "We're not gated."

"Where are you going to?" asked the captain.

"Courtfield," replied Harry Wharton.

"What for?"

"I say, ease off," protested Nugent. "Can't we go out—"

"I don't say you're not to go!" exclaimed Wingate. "But while you're in Courtfield be careful not to get mixed up in any row. I've seen Mr. Hardinge, of Courtfield End Factory, this morning, and he's fearfully worried because there's some talk of a strike amongst his workers. There might be some brawls in Courtfield this afternoon, and I don't want any Greyfriars juniors to be mixed up in them!"

"Well, you give us a jolly nice character—I don't think!" said Bob Cherry. "Do you think we should join in any beastly brawl?"

"I think, in the excitement, you might be drawn into one."

"Oh, rats! We shall be as good as gold, Wingate!"

"The good-as-goldfulness will be terrific!"

Wingate laughed.

"All right; be off, you young rascals!" he said, and turned away.

"Half a mo'!" said Bob Cherry quickly.

"Well?"

"What's the giddy row about?"

"Surely Mr. Hardinge hasn't been doing anything tyrannical?" asked Wharton. "We thought he was a rotter at one time, but when we got to know him he was one of the best chaps going!"

"No; it's the fault of some ruffian named Nat Boggs," said Wingate. "I can't stop to explain the whole circumstance to you now; but Boggs, who was in charge of one of the rooms, made a very culpable blunder—owing to being drunk—and spoilt about a ton of jam. The manager, Mr. Jackson, didn't find it out until the day's work was over, and the employees were gone. Boggs was just leaving, and when Mr. Hardinge reprimanded him for his carelessness, he used very bad language. Quite properly, Mr. Hardinge sacked him on the spot, and the ruffian, wild with fury, threatened Mr. Hardinge's life."

"My only aunt!"

"The rotter!"

"And do you mean to say the other employees believe in the villain?" asked Nugent.

"Yes," replied the captain of Greyfriars. "Boggs is usually a quiet man, and when he left the factory he spread a false tale about, saying that he had been sacked for no just reason. The employees, who knew nothing about the row, believed him, and sympathised with him. He'd always been fairly popular with the rougher element, and he easily made them believe his story. Of course, it spread to the other workers, and the majority of them are quite angry because he's been sacked!"

"They don't know that he threatened Mr. Hardinge's life?"

"Mr. Jackson told them, but they don't believe it."

"The silly asses!"

"Yes, they're prejudiced," agreed Wingate. "But you know what these affairs are—the bulk of the men believe their fellow-worker, and follow his lead like sheep. But I can't stop here talking to you kids; if you're going to Courtfield, buzz off before it's too late!"

"Right you are, Wingate!"

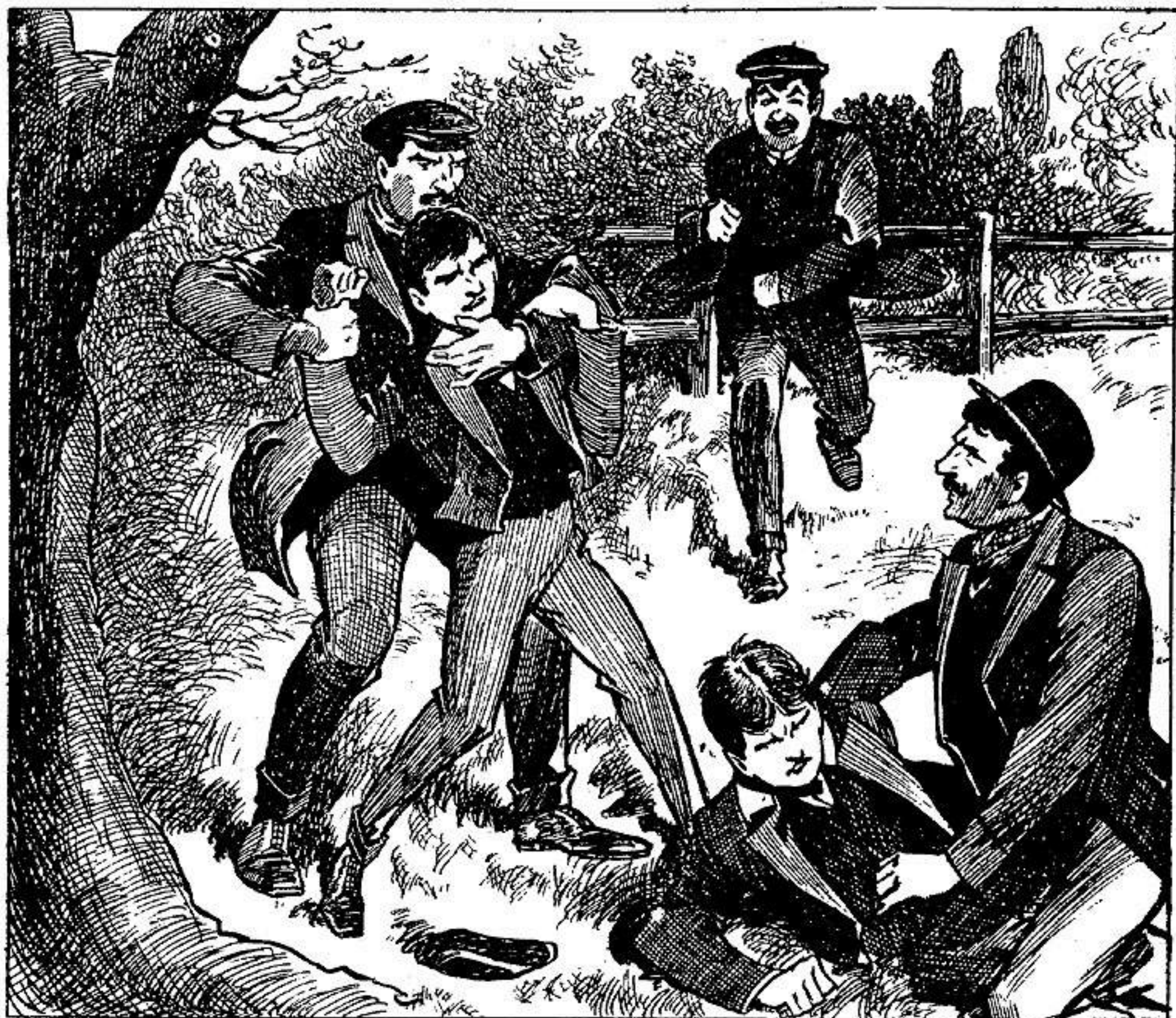
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Bolsover and Vernon-Smith were held securely until Nat Boggs hurried up. "I want to know what this means!" said the Bounder angrily. "It'll be best for you, Boggs, to let us go!" (See Chapter 11.)

"And keep to yourselves," warned Wingate, as he walked away.

The juniors promised, and the Famous Five walked to the bicycle shed, talking animatedly about the trouble at the jam-factory. Peter Todd strolled away in the direction of the tuckshop, where he found his amiable and gentle cousin, Alonzo, vainly attempting to give Dutton, the deaf junior, a lecture on the wise sayings of his Uncle Benjamin.

Meanwhile, the Famous Five had mounted their bikes and were off.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Getting Serious!

"COURTFIELD!" panted Bob Cherry, free-wheeling. The five juniors rode easily into the town. Wednesday afternoon was not, usually, a busy time in Courtfield. But to-day the town was wearing quite an animated aspect. As a rule the streets were deserted save for the usual loungers, and afternoon shoppers.

But now Courtfield wore a very different appearance. As the Famous Five cycled slowly along they passed groups of men on all sides, eagerly talking. Some were holding miniature meetings, and shouting excitedly. The jam factory at Courtfield End was of considerable size, and the bulk of the male workers were to be seen in the streets of the town.

"My hat!" exclaimed Nugent. "Todd was right! There seems to be plenty of excitement, anyhow. He said that the

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"PETER TODD'S PLOT!"

men were talking of going on strike—it looks as if they've already struck!"

"The strikefulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Singh.

"I expect they're just making up their minds what to do," said Harry Wharton. "In all probability they'll realise it's no good, and will turn up at the factory to-morrow morning as usual."

"Hallo, here's Mr. Jackson coming along!" said Johnny Bull.

"Good! We'll stop him and ask for the latest news," said Bob Cherry. "Might as well be well-informed!"

They dismounted from their machines, and waited for the factory manager to come up. Mr. Jackson was looking very worried, and he nodded absently to the juniors. But, as he was going to pass on, the Famous Five surrounded him.

"Well, my lads, what do you want?"

"How's it going, Mr. Jackson?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Do you think the chaps will come to their senses?"

Mr. Jackson shook his head.

"No; I'm afraid we're in for trouble!" he replied. "The majority of the men seem to be in favour of Boggs, and I've only got to open my mouth and speak, when I'm literally howled down. The men seem to be in a reckless mood, otherwise they would never treat me so disrespectfully. See, this is the sort of treatment I receive."

A small party of men were walking past at the moment, and they shook their fists at Mr. Jackson and uttered angry, insulting remarks as they passed. The manager wisely took

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

no notice, for it would have needed very little to set these men off, and Mr. Jackson had no desire to be mixed up in a brawl.

"The rotters!" said Harry Wharton angrily.

"The worst of it is, you can't do anything," said Bob Cherry. "When things gets as serious as this, the men are absolutely reckless, and don't care what they do—and you can't sack the lot, can you?"

"I am not so very much incensed at the men's behaviour," said the manager thoughtfully. "I have no doubt that they believe implicitly in Boggs, and are, therefore, hardly to blame for treating me with disrespect. They all think that Mr. Hardinge and myself dismissed the man for no just reason. Boggs is a very plausible scoundrel, with an eloquent tongue, and he rapidly got the men on his side."

"But he is a scoundrel, isn't he, Mr. Jackson?"

The manager nodded grimly.

"He is!" he agreed. "In Mr. Hardinge's private office he used the most profane language, and I may tell you that I was absolutely startled by his fury. He threatened many things—to ruin the factory, to burn it down, and actually to take Mr. Hardinge's life! Mr. Hardinge remained cool until the outburst was over, and then ordered the man to leave. That was the beginning of the trouble; what the end will be I hardly dare imagine!"

"You think it's serious, then?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I am sure of it, my lad," replied Mr. Jackson gravely. "The men demand that Boggs be reinstated, but Mr. Hardinge would shut up his factory before doing that! He, at least, is not deceived about the man's character, and no amount of threats will make him alter his decision. As you boys are aware, Mr. Hardinge is a very strict man, and he will never give in to the men's demands."

"Good for Mr. Hardinge!" said Bob Cherry approvingly.

"Rather!"

"It would serve the men right if they were all sacked!"

"The sackfulness of the honourable strikers would be terrific!"

Mr. Jackson smiled.

"That would be impossible," he said. "We must fight the matter out, and make the men realise that they are making a grave mistake. But I'm afraid there will be a tussle before we get the factory working again."

The manager nodded and passed on, leaving the juniors discussing the situation. They had forgotten about their proposed visit to the picture palace, for they looked upon this disturbance at the jam factory as being closely connected with Greyfriars. The factory was within sight of the school, and although at one time Mr. Hardinge had been at enmity with the juniors, he was now their firm friend.

"Let's bike towards the factory, and see what's going on," suggested Nugent.

"How about Wingate's warning?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, we sha'n't get mixed up in anything!"

"Come on, then!"

They mounted their cycles again, and passed out of the busy part of the town. Presently, as they got more out into the open, they saw a big crowd of men gathered against an advertisement hoarding. Another man, with his back to the hoarding, and standing on a box, was addressing the crowd.

As the juniors cycled up, they heard the shouts of the men.

"Go it, Boggs!"

"Good old Nat!"

"We'll fight it out with the tyrant!"

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors dismounted on the edge of the excited crowd.

"That's Nat Boggs speaking," murmured Harry Wharton.

"Yes, and the rotter seems to have plenty of supporters!" growled Bob Cherry.

"It's bad for Mr. Hardinge."

Hurree Janset Ram Singh remarked that the badfulness was terrific, and then the Famous Five settled themselves to listen, being curious to hear the dismissed man speak.

"I say it's a shame—a thundering shame!" roared Boggs, at the top of his voice. "What have I done to be dismissed at a second's notice? Nothing! Mr. Hardinge is lying to you when he says that I used threats against him! All he thinks about is making money out of his rotten factory—what does he care for chaps like me, who've got children to feed and clothe? Not a farthing—not a bloomin' farthing!"

There was a roar of applause.

"Shame!"

"He ought to be kicked out o' Courtfield!"

"The tyrant!"

"Kicks me out just because he wants to give my post to some other chap!" went on the dismissed man indignantly.

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"Without a word o' warnin' he says, 'Out you go, Boggs!' an' then tries to kid you all that I'd used bad language to him. It's a shame, that's what I says! Me, with a wife and three kids to keep, chucked out o' work without any warnin'. I sha'n't get another job because o' the lies told about me, an' it'll end in starvation—the workhouse! That's what it'll mean!"

"It won't git to that, mate!" roared a man in the front.

"We'll strike, and make the tyrant take you back!"

"Hear, hear!"

Boggs mopped his brow.

"It's good to hear you talk like that, chaps!" he shouted.

"You all know me—you all know that I ain't deservin' o' such disgraceful treatment! If it was myself only, I shouldn't say a thing—I shouldn't ask you to do anything for me. But it's the wife an' kids that I'm thinkin' of! It breaks me heart to think o' them goin' without proper food, when—"

"It sha'n't be, Boggs!"

"No, no! We'll strike!"

"We'll do no work until you're taken back!"

"Not a blessed stroke!"

"Hear, hear!"

Harry Wharton looked at his chums.

"Come on!" he said shortly. "We've heard enough!"

"My hat, rather!" agreed the others.

They pushed their way out of the enthusiastic, shouting crowd, and looked at one another grimly.

"The absurdfulness of the honourable workers is terrific," remarked Hurree Singh gravely. "They are all suffering from the esteemed madfulness."

"That's just about right, Inky," agreed Harry Wharton.

"They are mad—mad as hatters—to listen to that plausible scoundrel. Look at the silly asses! They're absolutely dotty with excitement!"

"But Boggs hasn't a wife or any children at all!" said Bob Cherry. "That's only a gag to get the men's sympathies with him. What's that they're saying now?"

"Oh, some rot!" exclaimed Johnny Bull impatiently.

"Something about a deputation going to lay the matter before Mr. Hardinge. Come on! I'm fed up with the thing!"

And the Famous Five mounted their cycles and rode off, heartily disgusted with the factory workers for being so easily led by the scoundrelly Boggs. The sample of the dismissed man's oration they had heard was but brief, and did not serve to show how fully Boggs had established his case amongst the employees. To do the men justice, they really believed that their comrade was being badly treated. They had no idea as to the real, unvarnished facts.

The scoundrel knew full well that he would never be reinstated in the factory. He knew that Mr. Hardinge would never give in to the men's demands. But Boggs, like many men of a cunning and spiteful disposition, had determined to be revenged on the factory owner, and he was using the employees to gain his villainous ends. He was goading them on to strike, and when they had struck he would lead them madly into desperate acts which would probably mean the ruin of their employer. To ruin the factory, to destroy the business—that was what Nat Boggs wanted. In his vengeful state of mind he was ready to lead the men into almost any villainy.

Harry Wharton & Co. paid their visit to the picture palace—mainly because rain had commenced to fall. When they emerged the downfall was over, and the sky was clearing.

As they wheeled their bicycles into the roadway, preparatory to mounting, they were nearly run into by Tom Brown and Bulstrode of the Remove.

"Hallo, you chaps! Heard the news?" asked the New Zealand junior breathlessly.

"You mean the excitement at the factory?"

"Partly," replied Tom Brown. "The strike's certain now, though. The men have decided to uphold Boggs and defy Mr. Hardinge."

"My hat!"

"The fatheaded chumps!"

"Well, there you are!" said Bulstrode. "A deputation of men has just been to see Mr. Hardinge in his office. There was a fuss, the men got angry, Hardinge got angry. They used threatening language, and he dismissed the lot—the whole giddy deputation. That's the case in a nut-shell."

"And everybody's struck work?"

"Nearly everybody. And the rest'll have to give in," said Tom Brown. "The leaders say that the strike'll continue until Hardinge agrees to reinstate everybody who's been sacked."

"Then the strike'll go on for a jolly long time, if I know anything of Mr. Hardinge," said Harry Wharton seriously.

"And, if I'm any judge, there'll be some excitement before the matter's settled."

And the captain of the Remove was right. There was some excitement. As Fisher T. Fish would have said: There were ructions ahead. Just a few!

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Greyfriars to the Rescue!

GREYFRIARS was excited. Strictly speaking, there was no reason why Greyfriars should have been excited; but the fact remained, nevertheless, that the old school—the junior portion especially—was considerably out of its usual placid ruck.

Courtfield End Factory was responsible for it—or, rather, the employees of the factory were.

The strike was regarded at Greyfriars as something in which everybody was immediately concerned. Coker of the Fifth, in fact, suggested getting hold of Nat Boggs and ducking him in the horsepond, declaring that the ducking would knock all the ardour out of the strike-leader. But the scheme was generally regarded as impracticable.

Everybody was against Boggs. Everybody wanted to help Mr. Hardinge. Tubb of the Third positively asserted that something ought to be done, although what that something was he could not state.

The morning following the Famous Five's visit to Courtfield the whole of Greyfriars was talking about the obnoxious Nat Boggs, for every boy, from the Second to the Sixth, fully believed Mr. Hardinge's statement with regard to Boggs's character, and they were greatly indignant with the other factory workers for blindly following the lead of the scoundrel.

Lessons were greatly disturbed. The Remove Form-master—Mr. Quelch—distributed lines broadcast, but it seemed to make no difference. The juniors would not settle to their lessons; there seemed to be something of a disturbed nature in the air itself. The Form-room hummed with a low murmur of whispered conversation.

"Silence, boys!" ordered Mr. Quelch sternly for the tenth time. "I really cannot allow this unruly conduct to continue. The first boy who whispers again will receive fifty lines!"

"Oh, rats to you!" murmured Snoop.

Mr. Quelch frowned.

"Snoop, stand up!"

Snoop stood up.

"Did you speak, Snoop?" demanded the Form-master.

"No, sir; I didn't utter a sound," replied Snoop unblushingly.

"Are you sure, Snoop?"

"Quite sure, sir!"

"Then sit down!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Snoop, with a wink at Johnny Bull.

"You blessed fibber!" whispered Bull contemptuously.

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes like gimlets upon Johnny Bull.

"Bull!" he exclaimed, in a terrible voice.

"Ye-e-es, sir?" gasped the junior.

"You were speaking!"

"I—I—Ye-e-es, sir!"

"How dare you, Bull, after what I just said?" demanded Mr. Quelch angrily. "You will take fifty lines!"

"But, sir, I—"

"Silence!"

"Yes, sir, but—"

"Bull, you will take a hundred lines!" said Mr. Quelch.

"If you speak again I shall cane you!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Johnny Bull.

He sat down, and Snoop chuckled. The rest of the Form glared at Snoop angrily, for he was the cause of Johnny Bull receiving the imposition. Mr. Quelch glared round the Form-room, but all the juniors were bending over their work, and only the sound of scratching of pens broke the stillness. For a few minutes there was peace.

Then, from the partially-opened windows, came the sound of a motor-car crossing the Close. Now, motor-cars do not frequently come to Greyfriars in the middle of the morning, and the juniors looked up curiously. But the windows were high, and they could not see out into the Close.

Bob Cherry looked at Mr. Quelch, and saw that he was writing something on the blackboard, with his back to the class. Bob quietly rose to his feet, and stepped on to the form. He looked out, and then uttered a little murmur of surprise.

"It's Jackson, from the jam factory," he whispered quickly. "He's just jumping out of the car, and he's looking off his rocker with worry and excitement. His tie's all lopsided, and—"

Mr. Quelch swung round, and stared at Bob Cherry in amazement.

"Cherry!" he thundered.

Bob Cherry turned, and nearly fell off the form.

"Oh, sir, I—I—"

"What are you doing there?" demanded Mr. Quelch, in an ominous voice.

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"PETER TODD'S PLOT!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"There's Mr. Jackson out in the Close, sir, and he's looking awfully excited about something," said Bob quickly. "I expect there's a row at the factory, or something!"

"How dare you stand there and—"

But the rest of Mr. Quelch's sentence was lost. The juniors, regardless of lines, all jumped to their feet at the mention of Mr. Jackson's condition of excitement. In a moment the whole Remove were standing up, craning their necks to see into the Close.

Mr. Quelch rapped his desk furiously.

"This—is outrageous!" he thundered. "Boys, sit down immediately!"

The Remove remained standing.

"Boys!"

Mr. Quelch literally fumed. But the Remove was intent upon the doings of Mr. Jackson. The manager of the jam factory leapt from the motor-car, and rushed up the steps to the Head's front door. Then he pressed the bell furiously, took out his handkerchief, and feverishly mopped his brow. Clearly he was in a great state of agitation.

Mr. Quelch grasped his cane, strode forward, and delivered a smart swish upon the lower portion of Micky Desmond's anatomy.

"Yow—ow!" yelled Micky, sitting down with great haste.

"Attend to me!" roared Mr. Quelch, red in the face.

"Take your seats at once! Do you hear me, boys? Good gracious! This is past all endurance! If any boy is standing in ten seconds I will send him to the headmaster to be flogged!"

The Remove sat down abruptly.

"Each boy in this room will take two hundred lines!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch sharply. "I am here to be obeyed, and—"

"But it was Mr. Jackson, sir," broke in Harry Wharton quickly. "I believe there is something the matter, sir."

"And if there is something the matter, Wharton, it is no business of ours. We are here to work, not to gaze out of the window at everyone who happens to enter the Close."

"It may be serious, sir," said Nugent. "Suppose the strikers—"

Mr. Quelch glared.

"We will suppose nothing, Nugent!" he snapped. "Get on with your work, and let's have no more of this nonsense! The first boy to speak again will be sent to the headmaster!"

Silence reigned again, although every junior was simply bursting to talk. A visit to the Head, however, meant a gating at least, so the Remove thought it wisest to fall in with Mr. Quelch's command.

But, although talking was forbidden, the juniors could not be prevented from thinking. Lessons were forgotten, and the sole subject for consideration was the dramatic visit of Mr. Jackson to the school.

Why had he come?

What business could he have with Dr. Locke?

Above all, why had he looked so agitated?

The Remove were soon to know. Mr. Jackson was taken straight to the Head's study—in fact, he arrived in that sacred apartment almost upon the heels of Trotter, who announced him.

"Please pardon this abrupt entry, Dr. Locke, but I really couldn't wait until the pageboy returned!" ejaculated Mr. Jackson breathlessly. "Besides, I feared that you would send word that you were too busy to see me."

As a matter of fact, the Head was busy—very busy. He laid his pen down, and gazed at the visitor in some astonishment.

"Good gracious, I trust nothing is wrong!" he said anxiously.

Mr. Jackson forced himself to be calm. Trotter, who still stood in the doorway, looked on interestedly.

"You may go, Trotter," said Dr. Locke.

"Yes, sir."

And Trotter went.

"Now, Mr. Jackson—"

"Something terrible has happened, Dr. Locke!" exclaimed the factory manager quickly. "The strikers have become excited and violent, and they are surrounding the factory in great numbers."

"Dear me!" said the Head.

"The men are insane with anger," went on Mr. Jackson. "That scoundrel Boggs has been goading them on with his disgraceful falsehoods until they are fit for any violence. But I have not told you the worst. Mr. Hardinge himself is in the factory. He was forced to take refuge there from a party of half-drunken roughs. At this very moment he is in the factory, unable to escape. The men are surrounding the building, intent upon getting hold of him."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the Head. "Is Mr. Hardinge in any danger?"

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"I fear so. If the men get to close quarters with him, they will, in their present excited state, handle him with unpleasant roughness, and perhaps do him an injury. The fools do not know that he is their best friend. They have listened to the lies of Boggs, and their minds are poisoned against their employer."

"But the police—"

"There are only three or four, and the strikers treat them with contempt," said Mr. Jackson quickly. "I have come to you, Dr. Locke, because it is in your power to extricate Mr. Hardinge from his perilous position."

The Head raised his eyebrows.

"In my power?" he repeated, in surprise. "I cannot see—"

"Your boys!" said the factory manager anxiously. "Can not they drive the strikers away from the factory?"

"My boys! Upon my soul!"

The Head stared.

"You must allow them to help Mr. Hardinge," said Mr. Jackson eagerly—"you really must, sir! The Greyfriars Cadet Corps is a famous institution, and I am sure they will succeed in quelling this disastrous riot. A life is in danger, doctor! There is no telling to what lengths the men will go!"

"But, my dear sir, I could not allow such a thing!" exclaimed the Head, rising and pacing his study. "I am responsible for the boys, and I could not permit them to engage in a free fight with these ruffians!"

Mr. Jackson threw up his hands.

"Then Mr. Hardinge will probably be severely injured," he declared. "You are the only one who could help, Dr. Locke, and I hoped that you would send your boys to the factory without a moment's delay."

The Head looked worried.

"You place me in an awkward situation, Mr. Jackson," he said. "If I refuse your request, and Mr. Hardinge is injured, I shall feel myself to blame for the disaster. But if I allow the boys to go, they may themselves be severely hurt. And think of the notoriety—"

"Surely you would not consider it a disgraceful notoriety?" asked Mr. Jackson quickly. "The Greyfriars Cadets would prove themselves to be really useful, and, when this unfortunate strike is settled, would be held in esteem by the whole country. And you talk of danger! There is no danger, Dr. Locke! The men are not criminals. They will not go beyond certain lengths. The boys may possibly receive black eyes and swollen noses in the course of the conflict, but that will be the extent of their injuries."

The Head smiled.

"I fancy black eyes and swollen noses will be nothing new to my boys," he said drily. "Very well, Mr. Jackson, I will do as you request. I will send a party of prefects, supported by the Cadet Corps, consisting chiefly of the Remove—the keenest fighting Form in the school, I imagine."

Mr. Jackson breathed freely.

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed gladly. "I knew that you would help Mr. Hardinge in this crisis. But we must hurry, sir! We have wasted much valuable time already!"

"I will speak to Wingate immediately," said the Head briskly.

He pressed the bell, and Trotter appeared with surprising rapidity.

"Please tell Wingate to come to my study at once!" said Dr. Locke.

"Yes, sir."

And Trotter hurried away on his errand.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

School versus Factory!

WINGATE left the Head's study looking flushed. An eager light shone in his eyes. The Head had just given him his instructions, and Wingate approved of them exceedingly. He was a senior, and a prefect—captain of the school. But he enjoyed a "mill" as much as anybody, and considered this conflict with the factory strikers a welcome change from the routine school work.

Very soon he had his fellow prefects gathered round him. In a few words he told them what was in the wind.

"Oh, ripping!" said Courtney enthusiastically.

"It'll be a change, anyhow," said Walker.

And others added that the Head was doing the only thing possible in the circumstances.

"Lot of rot I call it!" growled Loder. "I'm blessed if I want to go brawling about with a crowd of dirty factory workers!"

"I'm with you, Loder," said Carne. "I'm surprised at you, Wingate, for consenting to lower yourself—"

Wingate frowned.

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"You two can keep out of it!" he said sharply. "We don't want chaps who grumble. You'd better stop here and keep order amongst the juniors while we're gone. As for brawling, it's nothing of the sort. Mr. Hardinge's in danger, and it's up to us to give him a helping hand."

"Hear, hear!" said Courtney.

Wingate walked away, and made for the Remove Form-room. He found Mr. Quelch still wrestling with his unruly class, for the Remove was agog to learn the reason for Mr. Jackson's visit.

"Hallo! hallo! hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "This is where we learn things!"

"Wingate may have come about something in connection with lessons," said Mark Linley.

"Rats! You can tell there's something up by the look of his chivvy!" said Bob. "Old Wingate doesn't often look so excited as this."

Wingate was talking with Mr. Quelch, and the latter was staring at the Sixth-Former in great surprise.

"But—but this is amazing!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch audibly. "The whole day will be upset, Wingate, and there is no telling where the matter will end."

"Can't help it, sir," said Wingate briskly. "Will you please tell the boys at once? Every minute is of value."

"Well, upon my word, I hardly know what to say!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. He turned to the eager boys, and they immediately grew silent.

"Boys," he said, "put your books away—"

"Oh, good!" muttered Billy Bunter.

"Silence, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, sir, I didn't speak—"

"I will not stop to argue, Bunter, but I will speak to you later," said Mr. Quelch sharply. "Every boy belonging to the Cadet Corps will leave the room immediately and follow Wingate into the Close. He will then give you your instructions."

Over half the Remove jumped up with alacrity, and made for the door, talking excitedly. Evidently there was something very considerably "up," and the Removites were anxious to know what that something was.

"When you get in the Close, form up in orderly lines," said Wingate, "and don't make more noise than you can help. I'll be there in a minute."

"Right-ho, Wingate!" said Harry Wharton.

Mr. Quelch, still looking annoyed, espied the bulky figure of Billy Bunter trying to squeeze out with the other Removites.

"Bunter!" he said sternly.

"Oh, I—I—"

"Where are you going, Bunter?"

"Out, sir!" said the Owl of the Remove innocently.

"Take your seat at once," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, really, sir, I'm one of the Cadets, sir—"

"Why, you awful fibber!" whispered Russell, who was passing out at the moment.

"Shut up, you beast!" growled Billy Bunter. "I'm going to—"

Mr. Quelch strode forward, grasped the fat junior, and swung him round.

"Go to your seat, Bunter, and take fifty lines," he said angrily.

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Silence!"

Billy Bunter sat down, and blinked round at the other juniors.

"Beast!" he muttered.

"Like your blessed cheek, anyhow," said Frank Nugent.

"You're not a Cadet, my son, so you've got to stay in with the others, like a good little boy."

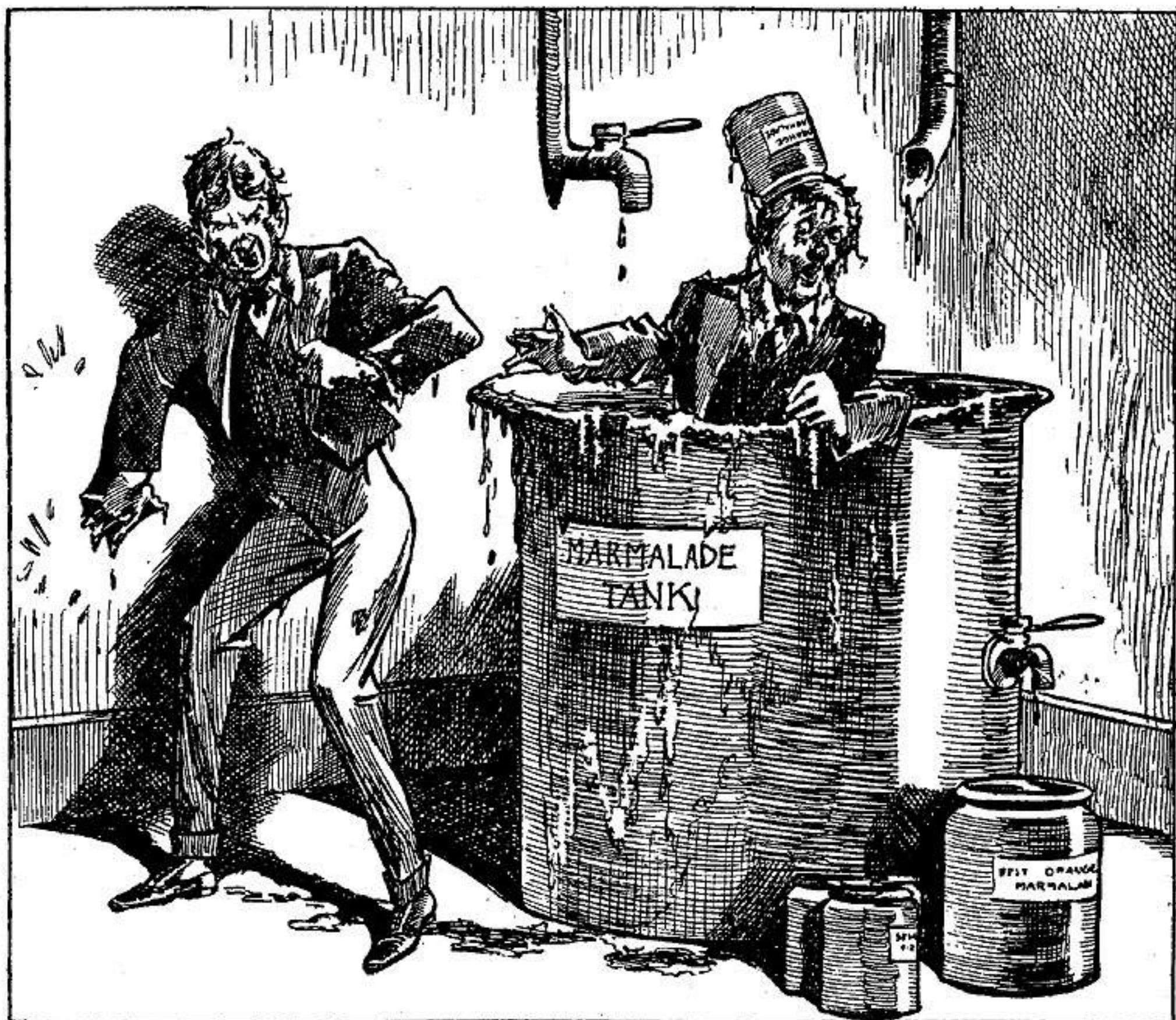
Out in the Close the Removites gathered in excited groups, discussing the situation. The Famous Five were in one group, Tom Brown, Bulstrode, Mark Linley, and Ogilvy in another. Lord Mauleverer was the centre of another party, and all were hazarding wild guesses as to the cause of the excitement.

Temple, Dabney & Co., and many others of the Upper Fourth, were also in the Close, and Fifth and Sixth Formers hurried about on all sides. At that time of the morning the Close was usually deserted; now it wore an extremely animated appearance, and Gosling, from his lodge, stood looking on with strong disapproval.

"Now then, you kids, form up!" said Wingate sharply, appearing with Mr. Jackson.

"What's the idea, Wingate?" asked Bob Cherry.

"The idea is that Mr. Hardinge, over at the jam factory, is besieged in his own premises," answered Wingate. "The strikers, led by Nat Boggs, have become violent, and have driven Mr. Hardinge into the factory. They're surrounding the place now, and Mr. Hardinge is in some danger. We've



Vernon-Smith and Bolsover scrambled out of the sticky mass, and gouged the marmalade out of their eyes. "Yowp!" gurgled the Bounder. "Oh, great Scott! The rotters!" "Ow! This is horrid!" spluttered Bolsover. (See Chapter 13.)

got to hurry there, and drive the strikers off before they do any damage."

"Oh, ripping!" shouted Nugent excitedly.

"A battle with the giddy strikers!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "My hat, that sounds A! Better than swotting away in class!"

"Rather!"

The juniors burst into a storm of excited conversation. Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed with eagerness as he walked up to Wingate.

"Hadh't we better get into uniform?" he said quickly.

"The strikers would be more impressed, you know."

"It would be better certainly," said Wingate; "but there isn't time for that. We've got to get there at once. Now then, you kids, stop that talking, and attend to me. Line up, and file out of the gates at the double. There's not a second to lose."

The Removites and Fourth Formers hastily lined up, and a few moments later the whole body of boys, numbering fully eighty, were hastening across the fields to the Courtfield End Jam Factory. By the short cut the distance was not far, and the large building soon came in sight.

Mr. Jackson, who was running beside Wingate, in advance, looked anxious.

"The men are still there," he said breathlessly. "Good gracious, the scoundrels have taken to throwing stones at the windows. Look at them, Wingate! This is getting serious!"

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"PETER TODD'S PLOT!"

"We'll give the rotters something!" panted Wingate angrily.

He could see that a large number of windows had been shattered, and a scattered crowd of men were busily engaged in hurling stones and shouting threats against Mr. Hardinge.

They swarmed round the factory, and foremost amongst them was Nat Boggs, the leader. The scoundrel was looking extremely pleased with himself. His sole object was to goad the men on to commit insane acts of violence against their employer. He knew that he himself would never be taken on again, and he wanted to exact a villainous revenge before he cleared out of the neighbourhood. The men, incensed by Boggs's speeches, followed his lead in all he did.

The cunning rascal took great care to use no bad language of any sort. He had been dismissed for using bad language, and he meant to show the strikers that his dismissal had been unjust. They, believing him to be greatly wronged, upheld him, and the rougher element were ready to commit any violence. For the time being they had lost their capacity for sober thought, and Boggs saw that their excitement and anger was kept at fever-pitch all the time. But for Boggs the men would very soon have cooled down, and seen things in the right light. But Boggs would not allow them to cool down. That was the mischief of it.

And the rascal did nothing which would place him within the grasp of the law. He made the other men commit the violence. And in any case the police were helpless. There

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were very few of them in Courtfield—a totally inadequate number to cope with the situation.

And matters were made ten times worse by the fact that another great strike was in progress at a large town twenty miles away. Here many thousands of men were rioting, and the Courtfield strikers caught the fever. Another, and far more serious, consequence of the larger strike was the fact that all the available police in the county were called to the big town. The Courtfield affair was minute in comparison to the other strike, and the authorities could not spare any police to assist Mr. Hardinge. The Courtfield police themselves were ordered to cope with the strike.

So Boggs & Co. had things all their own way. At least, they had had up till now. But Greyfriars was to take a hand in the game, and Greyfriars was going to show that it was quite capable of dealing with it.

Wingate came to a stop in a meadow about a hundred yards from the factory, in order to give his instructions. Mr. Jackson looked anxiously at the building, and saw one of the upper windows suddenly flung up.

"Mr. Hardinge is going to address the men!" he panted. "Perhaps our services will be unnecessary, after all, Wingate. See, there he is!"

The manager pointed, and all the boys gazed at the factory. Mr. Hardinge was standing at the window, speaking quickly and earnestly. For a moment the strikers grew quiet, then one of them threw a clod of earth. It struck Mr. Hardinge full upon the chest, and burst, spraying him with damp soil.

He staggered back, momentarily choked.

Instantly a roar went up from the men.

"Tyrant!"

"Bully!"

"Smash 'im, mates!"

"Down with Hardinge!"

"We want justice!" yelled one of the men who had been dismissed—a member of the deputation. "We won't give in till we're all reinstated."

"Ay, all of us!"

"Boggs as well!"

"That's it, mates!" roared Boggs. "Go for him! We won't be bullied by the tyrant!"

A volley of stones flew at the factory, and the crash of glass which followed made Wingate snap his teeth. He turned to the eager cadets.

"I'll lead the Fifth and Sixth!" he shouted. "Temple, you take charge of the Fourth."

"Good enough!" said Temple eagerly.

"Wharton, I'll leave you to handle the Remove," went on Wingate quickly. "Don't be rash, but go for the rotters in a body. I don't suppose they'll be violent, but if they are you'd better retreat immediately."

"Oh, come off it, Wingate!" protested Frank Nugent.

"I mean what I say!" exclaimed Wingate firmly. "I'm not going to have any of you kids hurt. Black eyes and thick ears are all right, but if the strikers start doing real damage you've got to retreat. But if you go for 'em bald-headed I expect they'll scatter and clear off!"

A minute later the Remove were rushing across the meadow while the Fourth and the seniors hurried round to take the strikers by surprise from another quarter.

"Hurrah!"

"Greyfriars for ever!"

"Hurrah!"

"Come on, kids!"

Harry Wharton led the charge. The strikers were too intent upon their mischievous work to see the oncoming juniors for a moment. Then one man uttered a yell, and pointed.

The whole body of men turned, startled, and gaped at the Removes. Then one of them laughed in derision.

"Look at the babies, mates!" he shouted. "I'm blowed if I don't believe they're a-comin' for us!"

Several men paused with stones in their hands, hesitating. It was one matter to throw stones at windows, and another to hurl them at schoolboys. Before they could decide what to do, the Removes were upon them.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Hammer and Tongs!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. did not give the strikers time to draw breath. With a chorus of yells, the juniors flung themselves into the fray.

"Greyfriars for ever!"

"Hurrah!"

"Down with the strikers!"

"Down with Boggs!"

"Down with everything!"

"Hurrah!"

"Greyfriars for ever!"

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FRANK RICHARDS

Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale in our New Companion Paper—

"CHUCKLES!" 1st

"Go for the rotters baldheaded!"

"Pile in!"

The Famous Five were responsible for most of the shouts. They were in the forefront of the battle. Hurree Singh was too occupied to utter a word, for he was "piling in" with a vengeance, hitting out right and left with considerable effect.

Harry Wharton found himself attacked by two huge ruffians. For over a minute the junior held his own, but the men soon altered their attitude.

At first they had looked at Harry with amused grins, but the Remove captain's punches were by no means light, and now they grasped him and shook him violently.

"Rescue!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Don't worry; we're here!" yelled Bob Cherry, wiping a little blood from a graze on his knuckles. "Come on, chaps; pile in!"

Bob Cherry, Mark Linley, Bulstrode, and Tom Brown rushed to Harry Wharton's assistance, and the two ruffians found themselves surrounded. The situation became too hot for them, and they wisely considered it time to retreat. Which they did—hurriedly.

But the battle had only just commenced.

The strikers, amused at first, were now become aggressive. The Removes' blows were by no means light, and the men began to lose their tempers. They closed up into a compact body, and hit out hard.

The juniors could do nothing but dodge those blows. Bulstrode accidentally received one full on the side of his head, and he fell to the ground like a log, almost stunned. The man who had delivered the punch burst into a drunken roar of laughter.

"You brute!" shouted Nugent hotly.

The junior rushed at the man, leapt up—for the fellow was six foot high—and landed a hard drive right upon the striker's nose. He staggered back with a roar, and uttered a string of oaths. The next second, mad with rage, he threw himself upon the juniors, and hit out with all his strength.

"Go for him!" gasped Harry Wharton. "All together!"

Six Removes flung themselves at the brute before any of his blows could take effect, and bore him to the ground. The other strikers, enraged at the treatment of their comrade, lost their tempers completely. Headed by Nat Boggs himself, they broke from their compact position, and rushed among the juniors.

"Make 'em feel it, mates!" roared Boggs. "Teach the brats a lesson!"

"Ay, we'll teach 'em!" thundered one of the roughs.

The situation was beginning to look desperate for the Removes. A large proportion of the strikers had fallen away, and were standing looking on. They were quite sober, and knew better than to attack the boys. But the rest were mostly roughs, and nearly all more or less the worse for drink. Yet the sober strikers could do nothing; they certainly would not take the schoolboys' part against their own comrades.

"Greyfriars for ever!" shouted Bob Cherry excitedly.

"Don't give in, chaps!"

"Stand up to the rotters!"

The juniors were plucky enough. They had no thoughts of giving in. But Harry Wharton realised that if this fight continued very serious damage might result.

Bulstrode had managed to get to his feet, but he was feeling very groggy. And the strikers were weighing in now, with a vengeance.

Wharton, as captain, was on the point of giving the order to retreat, when his eyes suddenly lit up.

"Rescue, Sixth!" he yelled. "Rescue! Rescue!"

He had caught sight of Wingate and the other prefects running round a corner of the building. The Sixth-Formers had just put to flight a party of strikers round the opposite side of the factory.

Wingate swiftly took in the situation.

"By Jove, those Remove kids are in the thick of it!" he said quickly. "Come on; we'll lend them a hand!"

"And a fist or two!" added Courtney breathlessly.

Behind the prefects came Temple, Dabney, and a number of other Fourth-Formers, all more or less battered. They were by no means knocked out, however, but were looking for new worlds to conquer. They gave a shout as they saw the desperate position of the Remove.

"My hat, they'll get wiped up!" panted Temple. "Come on!"

"On the ball!"

ANSWERS

The prefects and Fourth-Formers rushed up, and attacked the strikers from the rear. The Remove had "stuck it" manfully, but were on the point of retreat. The reinforcements came at exactly the right moment, and the Remove never faltered.

"Stick to it, kids!" roared Harry Wharton. "Wingate and the others are here!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Wingate!"

The Remove attacked the strikers excitedly. But the battle was practically over. With the enemy at front and rear, the strikers didn't stand much chance. And at last they broke up, and rushed away from the factory, shouting out threats and oaths.

"You blackguards!" shouted Wingate hotly.

"Does that include me?" demanded Nat Boggs, standing up, with a black frown.

"Yes, it does!" retorted Wingate. "You're the worst ruffian of the lot!"

"Why, you—you cheeky young 'ound——"

"Clear off!" said Wingate angrily. "I'll——"

But Boggs suddenly lunged out with his big fist. Wingate stepped lightly aside, and Boggs blundered forward. He met Wingate's left with his nose, and he crashed to the ground, roaring.

"Oh, ripping!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Good old Wingate!"

"Give him beans, Wingate!"

But Boggs had had enough. He scrambled to his feet, and strode off, muttering furiously to himself. Wingate turned to the juniors, after seeing that the strikers had passed right out into the roadway.

"Any of you kids hurt?" he asked sharply.

"Nothing to speak of, Wingate," replied Harry Wharton.

"Your nose looks rather crooked, Nugent," said Wingate; "and that's a nasty bruise on your forehead, Bulstrode!"

"Oh, rot!" said Bulstrode. "It's nothing!"

Not one of the juniors complained. Many, like Bulstrode, had received hard blows, and were aching painfully, but they did not think of complaining. In the excitement they cared nothing about their hurts.

"Hallo! Here's Mr. Hardinge!" exclaimed Tom Brown suddenly.

"My hat, yes!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Hardinge!" yelled Nugent.

"Hurrah!"

Mr. Hardinge approached with his manager. Both were looking serious, but a smile broke out on the factory-owner's face, as he took Wingate's hand.

"Your services have been invaluable," he said quietly.

"I watched the conflict from an upper window, and my admiration for these junior boys is immense. They fought with truly magnificent pluck and determination. I am proud of you all!"

Wingate laughed.

"We only drove the rotters off, sir!" he said.

"That's all, sir!" said Harry Wharton. "All in the day's work!"

"Better than lessons, anyhow!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Mr. Hardinge smiled.

"It is lucky for me you think so, my boys," he replied.

"I am afraid I should have been roughly handled if that scoundrel Boggs and his drunken allies had got hold of me. I am going straight into Courtfield now, where, I hope, I shall be safe from attack. The ruffians will hardly dare to molest me in the town."

"But they'll collar you on the way, sir!" said Johnny Bull anxiously.

"I think not, my boy. I am going in my car, and the strikers won't be rash enough to get in the way of a swiftly-moving motor-car."

"They're in a jolly angry state," said Wingate doubtfully, "but I suppose it will be all right."

The motor-car came quickly. Mr. Hardinge had driven to the factory in it, and the chauffeur had quickly locked it away in one of the sheds, to save it from the strikers.

Mr. Hardinge entered it.

"Let me again thank you——"

But Wingate interrupted him.

"No time for that now, sir," he said quickly. "The sooner you're in Courtfield the better."

The car moved swiftly away, and the juniors sent a cheer after it.

"Well, we've performed the giddy rescue!" said Bob Cherry. "My hat, though, look at the damage the rotters have done! They ought to be boiled in oil!"

"The boilfulness is terrific, my worthy chum!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, applying his handkerchief to a graze on his right cheek. "They are the esteemed bounders!"

"If they were boiled in oil, they'd be steamed bounders, anyhow!" grinned Nugent.

"Suppose we rush out after the beggars, and chase 'em down the road?" suggested Russell.

"No, none of that!" said Wingate sharply. "We've

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ONE
PENNY.

driven them off, and we'd better leave them alone. There's no sense in asking for trouble."

"Well, I'm fed up, anyhow!" said Temple, of the Fourth. "After all, this isn't a school matter, is it? It's none of our bizney. Why the dickens can't old Hardinge get the police to help him? I don't mean to say that I'm sorry I've helped, but it would be a bit thick if Mr. Hardinge asked us to lend him a hand again."

Dabney nodded.

"That's what I say," he agreed. "This once is all right. It's the only thing we could have done. But, personally, I don't care for the idea of fighting these drunken brutes."

Several other members of the Upper Fourth were apparently of the same way of thinking.

Harry Wharton looked surprised.

"Well, you are a set of funks," he said disdainfully.

"Funks!" shouted Temple warmly. "Well, I like that. Didn't we come and rescue you?"

"Why, if it hadn't been for us you'd have been simply wiped up!" said Dabney excitedly.

"Wiped up!" echoed Fry.

"I'm not saying anything about that," said Harry Wharton, "but you evidently didn't like the bizney. Personally I'm keen on helping Mr. Hardinge until he's through with his trouble."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Bob Cherry heartily. "I'm with you, Harry!"

"And I!"

"And I!"

"Me as well!"

Nearly all the Remove backed Harry Wharton up. As a matter of fact they couldn't do anything else. Temple, Dabney & Co. were their natural enemies, and it would have been impossible to agree with them. Therefore, the whole of the Removites echoed Harry Wharton's sentiments.

Wingate didn't say anything, but he heard all that had been said. He guessed that most of the Fourth were, at heart, with the Remove, but couldn't state their real opinion without deserting their leader. Wingate thought that even Temple himself didn't exactly mean what he had said.

And this was right. Temple was suffering from a terrific headache, the result of a heavy punch, and felt extremely groggy. Had he been his own self he wouldn't have uttered those sentiments. But he had uttered them, and the Fourth felt compelled to back him up.

There was a sudden shout from Bland, of the Fifth.

"There's some kid tearing along the road for all he's jolly well worth!" he yelled. "It's Hazeldene of the Remove!"

The crowd of juniors hastened to the big entrance gates. Hazeldene rushed up to them, panting and excited. He grabbed hold of Wingate.

"The strikers! They've collared hold of Mr. Hardinge's car!" he panted breathlessly. "It's about half a mile down the road, partly smashed. The rotters chucked a log of wood in the way just as it was coming, and the driver couldn't pull up in time. Boggs and his set have captured Mr. Hardinge, and——"

But Hazeldene's voice was drowned in the roar of indignation which arose.

Wingate shouted out in vain.

In less than ten seconds the whole crowd of Removites had made a move, and were rushing down the road as fast as their legs would carry them. Temple, Dabney & Co., after a moment's hesitation, followed their example.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Wingate's Advice!

"BUCK up!" panted Bob Cherry, who was running beside Harry Wharton. "Temple and the other Upper Fourth asses are coming, in spite of what they said, and we mustn't let them get there first."

"My hat, no fear!" agreed Harry. "Come on, you chaps!"

The Removites ran swiftly. They were all in perfect form, and easily kept their lead. Temple, Dabney & Co. made frantic endeavours to outstrip the Removites, but, in Bob Cherry's words, "it couldn't be did."

There was a sudden shout.

"There's the car!"

"And there are the strikers!" panted Wharton. "Great Scott, this is getting exciting!"

It could be seen that Mr. Hardinge, the chauffeur, and Mr. Jackson, were standing up in the car, making a valiant defence against the onslaughts of the strikers. Hazeldene had been wrong when he said that Mr. Hardinge was captured. For the factory owner was certainly not captured. He was making a gallant stand against odds.

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He and his two faithful companions were beating off the strikers with success. Mr. Hardinge was using his heavy blackthorn walking-stick, Mr. Jackson a malacca-cane, and the chauffeur looked ferocious with a heavy spanner in his fist.

But they couldn't have kept it up for long.

The roughs, led by Boggs—for these men were all composed of the most brutal element of the strikers—were making a determined effort to get to grips with Mr. Hardinge. The blackthorn and the cane were hard things to dodge, however, and several men received severe blows.

It was no time for gentle measures.

Mr. Hardinge used his stick to full advantage, and the strikers found it impossible to get near him, for they had to climb into the car and face that rain of fierce blows while they were doing so.

But the defenders were almost exhausted, and would have to give in almost immediately. When the Removites arrived they found Mr. Hardinge panting hard, and on the point of dropping through sheer physical exhaustion.

"The hounds!" panted Harry Wharton angrily. "The rotten hounds!"

The air was filled with the yells and threats of Boggs & Co., but a moment later the clear voices of the Removites joined in the chorus. The juniors flung themselves at the ruffians with reckless courage.

There were comparatively few strikers here. The band simply consisted of Nat Boggs and his own set. The majority of the strikers were scattered about the roadway between the factory and Courtfield, discussing the situation in groups. Most of the men had refused to molest Mr. Hardinge once he had driven off in his car. It was only the roughs who had resorted to this piece of sheer villainy.

And the Remove made short work of the rescue. Within three minutes the men had been driven off, and the juniors made a circle round the car. Temple, Dabney & Co. arrived just in time to see the strikers routed.

Mr. Hardinge sat down, breathing hard.

"Upon my soul!" he panted. "These men are getting reckless enough for anything. I had no idea they would go to such lengths. Again I have to thank you for coming to my assistance."

"We couldn't do anything else, sir," said Harry Wharton. "When we heard that the rotters had stopped your car we rushed here at top speed."

"Have they damaged the car?" asked Bob Cherry.

"I am afraid so," replied Mr. Hardinge.

"The front wheels are partly busted," said Nugent, "and the mudguards are all twisted up."

"That's about all, sir," added the chauffeur. "We can't go on. The car won't shift an inch. Perhaps I'd better run into the town, and get help."

"But how am I to get there?" said Mr. Hardinge ruefully. "I can see that this car will not be ready to drive again for several days."

"Suppose we form an escort, sir?" suggested Harry Wharton eagerly. "You and Mr. Jackson walk in the middle of the road, and we'll march all round you?"

"Ripping wheeze!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

"The rippingfulness is terrific!"

Mr. Hardinge smiled slightly.

"Yes, I think that is the only thing to do," he said. "Ah, Wingate," he added, as the captain of Greyfriars pushed through the juniors, "you find me in trouble again, I fear. These wretched men have had the audacity to injure my car, and molest me. These junior boys have suggested that they should form an escort to take me into Courtfield. Do you approve of the idea?"

Wingate looked round quickly.

"It seems about the only thing to do," he said. "I'll go with you, Mr. Hardinge. Courtney, you'd better come, too," he added to his fellow prefect.

"Good," said Courtney.

So the Remove formed up briskly and smartly, and very soon were marching triumphantly towards Courtfield, with Wingate and Courtney at their head. The factory owner and his manager felt practically safe with such a strong guard round them. Behind, Temple, Dabney & Co. followed, feeling rather out of it.

At Courtfield the procession created something of a stir, and two police-officers came up, and heard all about the excitement of the morning. As Bob Cherry remarked, the men in blue had taken good care to be otherwise occupied while the rioting had been in progress at the factory.

Yet the police were not to be blamed. They were so few that it would have been madness to attack the strikers unassisted. Had they known that Greyfriars had hurried to Mr. Hardinge's assistance they would eagerly have lent their own services.

The Removites saw Mr. Hardinge to the gate of his own

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private house, and then took their departure. It was almost dinner-time, so Wingate hurried the juniors back to Greyfriars with all speed. Not one of the boys was badly hurt, although some of them were plainly the worse for wear. But they didn't mind. After all, they were well accustomed to "banged-up optics and fat ears," as Nugent elegantly expressed it.

At Greyfriars the sole topic of conversation was the strike. At dinner the prefects and masters tried in vain to keep order. The juniors were full of the subject, and no amount of lines could prevent them from airing their views.

The Removites who were not boy-scouts or cadets felt rather out of the excitement. Vernon-Smith & Co. were rather inclined to jeer at the cadets for "brawling" with the Courtfield roughs; but in his heart, Vernon-Smith, bouncer though he was, would have been glad enough to join forces with Harry Wharton against the strikers. It was just the kind of adventure the Bouncer delighted in. But he was not a member of the Cadet Corps, and was therefore out of the excitement.

Fisher T. Fish, the keen business man of the Remove—it was only Fisher T. Fish, by the way, who considered that Fisher T. Fish was a keen business man—was aroused into floating another of his marvellous schemes. He collected a crowd round him in the Close after dinner, and forthwith commenced to orate.

He stated, with his usual self-possession, that he was starting a huge business in ointment, lint, and bandages. Every injured junior had only to come to him, and for the modest charge of one shilling he would send them away scientifically bandaged and practically cured!

The Removites, however, weren't having any of Fish's bunkum, and the meeting ended in Fisher T. Fish receiving a somewhat severe bumping for his pains. The Remove had had quite enough of the American junior's "business methods."

Which only confirmed Fish's frequently stated opinion that everybody was dead asleep on this side of the "pond"—confirmed it, that is, in Fish's own mind.

Afternoon lessons were practically a farce. After the exciting events of the morning, the Remove found it simply impossible to settle down to work. Mr. Hardinge's affairs were still in a state of considerable uncertainty, and the juniors half expected that they would be called out again to render their valuable services.

But the afternoon wore on, and nothing occurred.

As a matter of fact, the strikers were holding a huge mass meeting in Courtfield, and were therefore too busy to make mischief. There was plenty of mischief brewing, and the worthy shopkeepers of Courtfield shook their heads doubtfully as they saw the excited state of the strikers, and the utterly inadequate number of police to cope with the situation.

Wingate and Courtney cycled over to the town during the afternoon, and arrived just when Boggs was making a wild speech. He told the strikers that the only way to gain their end was to take swift and drastic measures. If they simply remained inactive, Mr. Hardinge would allow them to starve. The only thing was to force the factory-owner to agree to their terms.

"Think o' your wives an' children!" roared Boggs, waving his hands excitedly. "What'll become o' them if you don't go back to work? They'll starve, mates—that's what they'll do! But you're all right, all the lot of you. It's me that has to suffer. If you go back to work an' leave me in the lurch, I shall 'ave to go into the workhouse. What're you goin' to do? Give in like lambs, or fight it out to the last, an' make Hardinge reinstate me?"

"We'll stick to you, Boggs, old pal!"

"Ay, right to the last!"

"Good old Boggs!"

"I don't believe in violence!" shouted one of the strikers. "Arguin's all right; but when it comes to a case of assault, I ain't there! Mr. Hardinge's been a good master—"

A roar of yells drowned the man's voice. The strikers were excited, and eager for any mischief. Boggs's influence had got hold of them, and they were not open to reason.

"It's my wife an' children who'll 'ave to suffer!" shouted Boggs, when quietness reigned again. "My wife—"

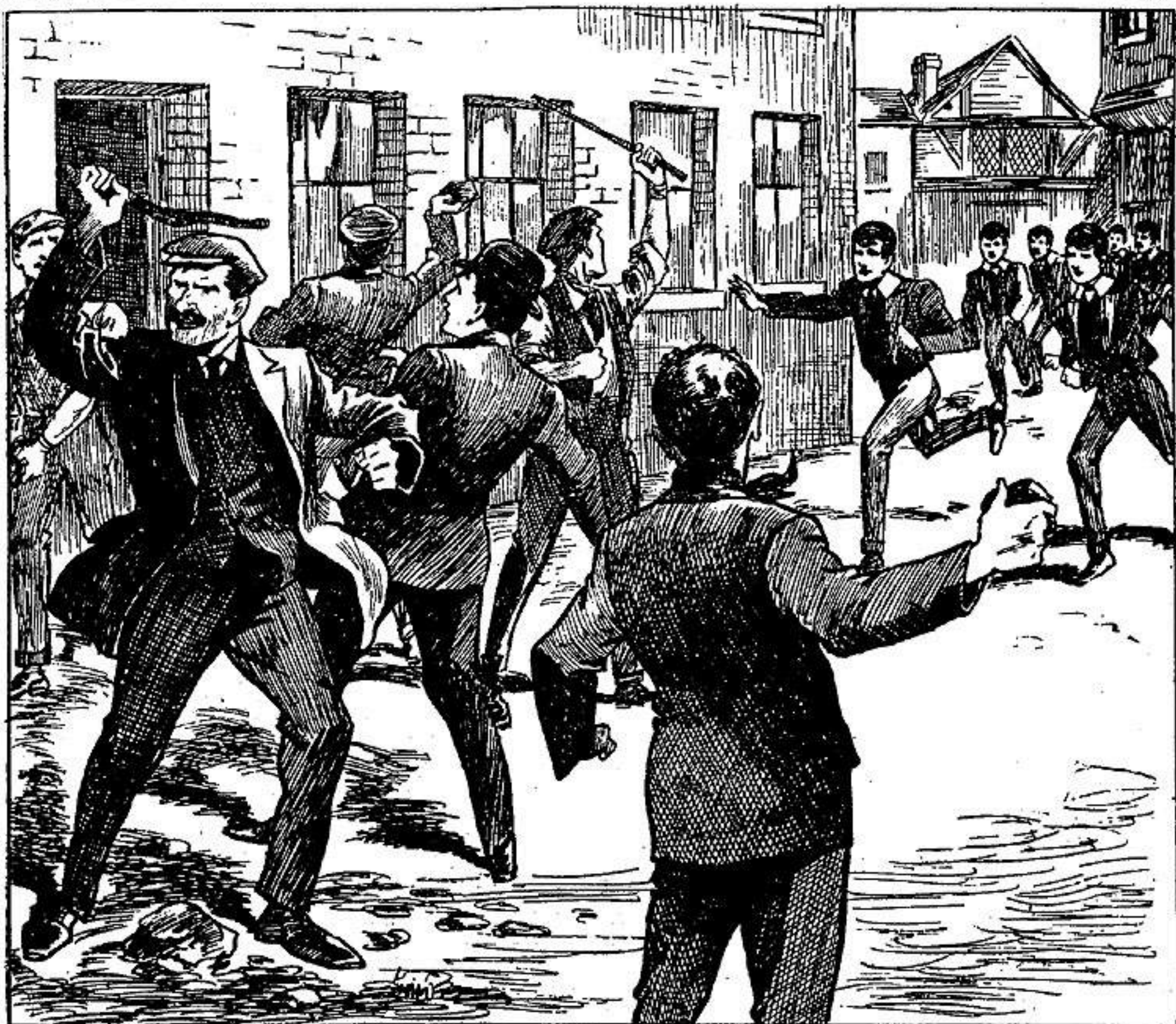
"I don't believe you've got one!" roared somebody in the crowd. "I ain't never seen 'er, anyway!"

"Simply because she ain't in Courtfield, it don't mean to say as I 'aven't got one!" bellowed Boggs quickly. "I sent 'er away months ago, 'cos—'cos she was ailin', an' needed fresh air. She won't come 'ere until all this affair's settled!"

"You're a liar, that's what you are!" shouted one of Mr. Hardinge's supporters.

But his voice was drowned in the shout which arose.

Wingate and Courtney listened contemptuously. It was quite obvious to them that Boggs had no wife at all, and



The strikers were too intent upon their mischievous work to see the oncoming juniors for a moment. Then one man uttered a yell, and pointed. "Greyfriars for ever!" roared Wharton. "Come on, kids!" And before the strikers could decide what to do, the Removites were upon them. (See Chapter 4.)

had only used the argument as a lever to influence his fellow-workers. They themselves were too excited to think of the matter, and they accepted Boggs's word without hesitation.

Wingate and his chum remained on the outskirts of the crowd for some little time.

Boggs declared that the only thing to do was to act immediately, and act drastically.

When the two prefects left, they did so with the conviction that something of a highly unpleasant nature was brewing.

"The bulk of the fellows are all right in the main, I think," said Wingate, as he and Courtney mounted their cycles. "To do them justice, I believe they really think that Boggs has been badly treated. But that doesn't alter the fact that Boggs is a scoundrel!"

"He knows he'll never be re-instated," said Courtney, "and he's trying to do as much harm to Mr. Hardinge as he can. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he gets some of the roughest men to help him in some villainy to-night!"

Wingate looked thoughtful.

"That's what I fear, too," he said. "When we get back I'm going straight to the Head!"

Wingate carried his intention out. Dr. Locke looked serious when he heard what the captain of Greyfriars had to say.

"It's my belief that Boggs and his set will be up to some mischief while the more respectable strikers are asleep," concluded Wingate. "And unless something's done, they'll have everything their own way. And the factory is unguarded, except for three special watchmen and a

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constable or two. A handful like that couldn't do anything against Boggs and his crowd!"

"But what do you suggest, Wingate?" asked the Head, looking worried.

"Well, sir, I think it would be a good idea to let the Remove camp out in the meadow adjoining the factory," said Wingate. "I don't suppose for a moment that they'll have any trouble, for their very presence there will convince Boggs that it would be useless to try any mischief."

The Head tapped his blotting-pad thoughtfully.

"But why the Remove?" he asked. "They're only juniors, remember."

"Very likely, sir. But I think they're quite capable of the task. The Sixth and Fifth didn't seem very keen to-day. I don't mean to say they funk, but it struck me that they would rather have been out of it. I suppose they considered it below their dignity as seniors!"

"There is the Upper Fourth—"

"Exactly, sir. But I heard Temple, the captain of the Fourth, saying that he didn't want any more of it," said Wingate. "They behaved admirably this morning, but they all backed up Temple's statement. The Remove, on the other hand, were enthusiastic, and declared they'd do anything for Mr. Hardinge. And, being enthusiastic, they'll enter into the idea with all their hearts. I think, sir, that the Remove is the Form for this business!"

"But the danger, Wingate?" asked the Head doubtfully.

"I don't think there's any need to fear that, sir. I shall give Wharton strict orders that if matters begin to look

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ugly, he is to retreat immediately. But it's my opinion that the very fact of the camp being there will prevent Boggs trying any games!"

"Very well; you had better tell the Remove to prepare at once," said the Head. "Mr. Hardinge and myself have always been on the very best of terms, and if I can be of any assistance to him, I will gladly do all that is in my power. If the Remove start their preparations at once, I have no doubt they will pitch their tents before dark!"

"I will tell them at once, sir."

"You understand, Wingate, that only those members of the Remove who are cadets are to go," said the Head. "And they must get into uniform. It's my opinion that the uniform alone will have a great effect upon the strikers!"

A minute later Wingate, looking very serious and thoughtful, passed out of the Head's study, and made his way to the Remove common-room.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Under Canvas!

UNDER ordinary circumstances, the din which was proceeding from the Remove common-room would have brought Mr. Quelch and a whole host of prefects to inquire into the disturbance.

But this evening the masters and prefects conveniently closed their ears, for they knew quite well that lines and canings would have no effect upon the excited Removites. The instant their backs were turned, the din would proceed undiminished.

Therefore, the Remove for once were left strictly to themselves.

The common-room was crowded with those members of the Lower Fourth who were cadets. It was, in fact, a meeting of the Remove Cadet Corps. All other juniors were forbidden to attend that all-important gathering.

"I say that something ought to be done!" shouted Harry Wharton, who was addressing the noisy crowd. "We can't leave Mr. Hardinge in the lurch!"

"No fear!"

"Rather not!"

"Therefore something must be done," said Bob Cherry briskly.

"Hear, hear!"

"Order!"

Harry Wharton rapped the desk with a ruler.

"Silence!" he shouted. "You're a nice lot of cadets, I must say, making all this fearful din!"

"Rats!"

"This isn't a giddy drill, you ass!" shouted Bulstrode.

"We're all entitled to talk here," said Russell.

"We can't all talk at once, you frabjous idiot!" roared Nugent. "Let Wharton speak!"

"The speakfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Singh. "Pray allow my august and ludicrous chum to spout forth the esteemed speakfulness!"

"Hear, hear, Inky!" grinned Bob Cherry. "The speakfulness is terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What we have to do is to form a deputation and interview Wingate——"

The door opened, and Bob Cherry, who was facing it, raised his eyebrows.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he said. "Talk of angels and they appear! Shut up, you chumps! Wingate's here! There's no need to form a giddy deputation. He's walked right into the lion's den!"

Wingate held up his hand, and frowned.

"If it was any other day, I'd come in here, and lay into you with a cane!" he said sharply. "This noise is disgraceful!"

"Sorry Wingate," said Harry Wharton; "I was only making a speech!"

"Then you've got a terrific voice," said Wingate grimly. "It was my impression you were all shouting at once. You're all cadets here, I see. That's just what I want!"

A dead silence reigned amongst the Removites, and they looked at Wingate eagerly. In a few brief sentences the captain of Greyfriars told them of the Head's decision, and he concluded by ordering them to start making preparations immediately.

"That's all," concluded Wingate briefly. "Go about it as quietly as you can, and don't waste a second. It's dusk now, and you'll have all your work cut out to pitch camp before dark."

And Wingate left the common-room.

The Remove could only gasp for a moment. Then, as it realised what Wingate's order meant, a tremendous hubbub

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arose. There was no doubting the attitude of the juniors; they were wild with enthusiasm.

"My only Sunday topper!" gasped Nugent. "What a ripping wheeze!"

"Rather!"

"It'll be great camping out, and keeping guard over the giddy factory!"

"There'll be excitement, too!" said Johnny Bull. "I wouldn't mind betting a fiver to a burnt match that the strikers get up to mischief to-night!"

"And it'll be up to us to put a spoke in their rotten wheel!" said Harry Wharton enthusiastically. "My hat, the Head's a brick!"

"Hear, hear!"

"So is old Wingate!" said Bob Cherry. "I'll bet it was him who suggested the wheeze to the Head."

"Do you call this being quiet?" roared Peter Todd, jumping on a form. "The best thing we can do is to follow Wingate's instructions. But before we go, I've got a suggestion to make."

"Oh, come off it, Toddy!"

"As chief of the top study in the Remove——"

"Bosh!"

"Chief of rats!"

Peter Todd grinned.

"As chief of the top study," he said calmly, "I think it's up to you fellows to back me up. Now, I suggest that you make me your leader in this bizney. It was my idea right from the very start to camp near the factory. I was just going to suggest it when Wingate came in!"

"Rats!"

"Fibber!"

"It's a fact!" roared Todd.

"It's a giddy whopper!" said Harry Wharton. "Great Scott, it's like your beastly cheek! I'm captain of the Remove Cadet Corps, and you can go and eat coke, Toddy! Now then, chaps, listen to me for a minute."

The Remove became instantly silent, as Harry Wharton rapidly gave his instructions. Peter Todd didn't attempt to make himself heard again. To do him justice, however, he had been speaking the truth. When Wingate came in he had been on the point of suggesting a camp on very much the same lines as Wingate had planned. But as Peter Todd had not aired his idea previously, the juniors were not likely to take his word now.

The Remove Cadet Corps lost no time in changing into their neat uniforms. The Famous Five had finished first, and they hurried down to attend to the numerous impedimenta connected with camping-out.

They found that Wingate had been busy with the matter. He and Trotter and Gosling had already got the tents and camping outfits into the Close. It was getting dusk, and Wingate was anxious for the Removites to have things somewhat shipshape when darkness fell.

"The other chaps'll be ready in a tick, Wingate," said Harry Wharton. "I say, it's jolly decent of you to see about these things. We shall be able to have the tents up in less than half an hour after we start!"

"All the better!" exclaimed the captain of Greyfriars. "There's no grub here, but I'll see about some after you've gone, and get Mr. Quelch's permission to let some of the other Remove kids bring it along."

"Thanks!"

"That's ripping!" said Bob Cherry. "By jingo, I can see us having a lively time."

Wingate looked at the Famous Five keenly.

"This isn't a holiday camp, remember," he said. "You'll have to keep a strict watch all through the night, and be ready for any emergency. And I think I can rely on you, Wharton, to see that your men don't get larking about. It's no time for japes, and if I hear you've been——"

"Oh, ease off, Wingate!" broke in Nugent. "You can trust us!"

"If we don't have to keep law and order amongst the giddy strikers, we'll keep law and order amongst the chaps," said Bob Cherry.

"All right, I'll leave you to do your best, Wharton."

"Good!" said Harry.

Wingate hurried away to see about some more baggage. The Close was filled with excited and eager juniors, and a good many seniors were interested.

"Lot of rot, I call it!" said Coker of the Fifth, to Potter. "What good will these kids be, I should like to know?"

"Well, they're quite welcome to the job!" said Potter.

"Rather! I'm blessed if I envy them," said Coker.

"Personally, I prefer sleeping in a bed quietly. I expect the young asses will be rowing half the night. And, anyhow, the strikers won't take any notice of 'em. If Boggs wants to do dirty work, he'll do it, Remove or no Remove!"

"To which I say 'Rats!'" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "And many of 'em!"

"Look here, you chaps," said Temple of the Fourth, hurrying up. "Ain't we going to be in this act?"

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Not a bit like it, my son!" he replied. "You're absolutely out of it—don't even get a giddy look in. Anyhow, you don't want to be in it!"

"Yes, I do!" said Temple.

"Why, you ass," broke in Johnny Bull. "you said—"

"Oh, blow what I said!" interrupted Temple. "I didn't know there was going to be any camping-out bizney when I said I didn't want to row with the strikers again. You Remove kids get all the luck. Rotten, I call it!"

"Well, it's your own fault," said Nugent. "If you hadn't stated—in Wingate's hearing—that you were fed up with the strikers, he'd have got the Head to let you fellows join us. As it is, you're all left in the cart. Which serves you jolly well right, for grumbling."

"It was Temple who started it!" growled Fry glumly.

"Yes, the fatheaded ass!" agreed Dabney. "We only backed him up because you Remove kids were against him. I suggest we give Temple a jolly good bumping!"

"Hear, hear!" said Fry heartily.

"Look here, you chumps," began Temple hastily.

"Oh, we'll leave 'em to it!" grinned Wharton. "Here come the other chaps, so we'd better get a move on."

In a few moments the Remove Cadet Corps was ready for departure. Smartly and quickly the juniors filed out of the gates in orderly rows, looking extremely well in their neat uniforms.

Dicky Nugent, Myers, Gatty, Tubb, and several other Second and Third-Formers sent up a shrill cheer, and the members of the Remove who weren't cadets, looked after their fortunate comrades with envious eyes. Temple, Dabney & Co. were having a heated argument of their own in a corner of the Close.

When the cadets arrived at the meadow adjoining the factory the dusk was getting thicker, and Harry Wharton lost no time in making camp.

In a very few minutes the juniors were as busy as bees on a summer's day, and they did their work with enthusiastic vim. They regarded this business in the light of a rare treat, in spite of the fact that their position was fraught with excitement and possible peril.

In a short time the tents were erected, and so busy were the juniors, that they did not notice a pair of rough-looking men watching their proceedings from the other side of a low hedge. They remained there for some minutes, then, talking seriously together, they hurried off in the direction of Courtfield.

All was quiet about the factory. Two men were standing against the main doorway, but the juniors recognised them as a pair of the watchmen. A police-constable was stationed at the back, but he considered that he had a night of lonely solitude before him.

Darkness fell in earnest. But the Remove had almost finished. Lanterns gleamed outside the tents, and the juniors were putting the finishing touches to their sleeping-kits.

Overhead the sky was clear, and it looked as though a spell of fine weather had set in.

"Well, we're here," said Bob Cherry cheerfully, "and there's no sign of the strikers. I'm not a particularly blood-thirsty chap, but I shall be jolly disappointed if we don't have a scrap with Boggs & Co. before morning."

Voices sounded in the darkness, and a moment later several forms loomed up in the light of the lanterns.

Harry Wharton looked keenly into the darkness, and then chuckled.

"It's all right," he said. "Only the grub."

"Only!" ejaculated Frank Nugent. "I'm starving, you ass! I was just wondering if Wingate had forgotten all about us."

But Wingate hadn't.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

An Alarm in the Night!

ALONZO TODD, Dutton, Fisher T. Fish, Vernon-Smith, and several other Removites who were not members of the Cadet Corps, came into the camp loaded with food and drink. Wingate had given them strict instructions to return immediately, but they didn't.

"Welcome, oh, bearers of good tidings—I mean, good grub!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "I hope you haven't been wolfing the tuck on the way here!"

"It's jolly good grub!" declared Dutton, the deaf junior, indignantly.

"Who said it wasn't, my son?"

"You said it was muck!"

"You ass! I said tuck!" roared Bob Cherry. "I spoke plain enough!"

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Dutton glared.

"Don't you call me a muck!" he said warmly.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Bob. "What's the good of talking?"

"You silly chump," said Dutton, "of course we came walking! You don't suppose we cycled over the fields, do you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared, and Bob Cherry grew red in the face.

"I didn't say anything about walking!" he bellowed. "I said it's no good talking to you, fathead!"

"You needn't shout!" said Dutton. "I'm not deaf!"

Bob gasped.

"Not a bit," he agreed. "But the next time I hold a conversation with you I'll use a giddy megaphone."

"How can I hear you when you only mumble?" demanded Dutton indignantly. "What's that you said? We shall have to leg it home? Of course we shall have to—"

"Leg it home!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Who said anything about legging it home?"

"You did."

"I said that the only way to talk to you is to use a megaphone!" shrieked Bob Cherry.

"What rot!" said Dutton. "I can hear you all right if you only speak up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take him away, somebody!" panted Bob. "I'm exhausted!"

The juniors chuckled hugely, and Dutton laid down his parcel of food with a rather puzzled expression.

Alonzo Todd beamed round him with a nod of approval.

"My dear friends, I do hope you will come to no harm," he said. "These rough strikers are terrible fellows, and I implore you to take care of yourselves. And there is the damp, too. Sleeping in these tents—"

"Oh, dry up, Lonzy!" interrupted Nugent. "We're all right!"

"You can never be too cautious, my dear Nugent," said Alonzo. "I am sure you will all get colds if you do not wrap yourselves in warm blankets. My Uncle Benjamin always told me—"

"Blow Uncle Benjamin!" growled Wharton. "We've heard quite enough about him."

"My dear Wharton, pray do not speak so disrespectfully!" exclaimed the Duffer of Greyfriars. "He would be surprised—nay, shocked—if he heard—"

"You'll be chucked out on your neck if you don't dry up!" roared Harry Wharton. "First it's Dutton, and now you! Dry up, you ass! Now, then, Smithy, I suppose you're in charge of the grub?"

The Bounder nodded.

"Yes; and I must say Wingate's allowed you chaps a liberal supply," he replied. "I say, Wharton, I should like to be in this business!"

"Sorry, but it can't be did."

"Why not?"

"You're not a cadet, that's why not," replied Wharton.

"That's nothing," said Vernon-Smith coolly. "I can use my fists as good as most chaps, and I daresay I should come in useful."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"It's impossible, Smithy," he said firmly. "Wingate said that no chaps were to stay in the camp except cadets, and I'm not going to let you stop."

"Oh, but that's rot!" said the Bounder. "Wingate's not here, and he wouldn't know anything about it till the morning. Even then he might not know, and—"

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"I've given my word to Wingate, and I'm going to keep it," he said. "All the chaps here are cadets."

"No civilians allowed!" said Bob Cherry. "Buzz off, Smithy!"

"Oh, all right!" replied the Bounder quietly. "I will. I was only asking because I thought I might be useful. I'm rather keen on anything of this sort, but as you don't want me, I'll clear."

"Sorry, Smithy!" said Harry. "But I must keep my word to Wingate."

Vernon-Smith and the other Removites bade the cadets good-night, and disappeared into the darkness.

"I think the Bounder feels rather out of it," remarked Johnny Bull.

"Can't be helped," said Harry. "He's not a cadet, and there's nothing more to say."

And the Remove Cadets prepared supper without waste of time.

The meal was a merry one, for the juniors did not regard

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

this adventure at all seriously. If the night passed without excitement, well and good; but if the strikers thought fit to attack the Remove camp, all the better.

The Remove was quite prepared.

They turned in fully dressed, and feeling little disposed to sleep. The uncertainty of their position was not calculated to induce peaceful slumber. Nevertheless, the bulk of the juniors were asleep when ten-thirty sounded from Courtfield Church.

Wingate was quite sure in his own mind that the night would pass without incident, but even Wingate was not always a reliable prophet.

The Famous Five were allotted to one tent. Just outside the flap of it were two stools, and a storm-lantern hung from a ring in the canvas. On the stools were seated a pair of sentries. Harry Wharton had deemed it wisest to have two, as one would be prone to doze off, and a doze would end in a sound sleep.

Harry Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh took the first watch—from ten till eleven. In this way most of the juniors would take a share of sentry duty. Eleven o'clock boomed out in the distance, but all was silent and still otherwise.

"Nothing doing," said Wharton briefly.

"The esteemed and ludicrous strikers are extremely quietful," murmured Inky.

"It's Bob's and Franky's turn now."

Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent were roused. They didn't feel much like doing sentry duty, as they had only just dropped off to sleep; but, as Bob Cherry remarked, it was all in the night's work.

Half an hour passed. The night was dark, and a light breeze blew from the east. Bob Cherry and Nugent made attempts to hold a brisk conversation, but they made a dismal failure of it.

"This is rotten!" yawned Bob. "I wouldn't care if something would happen."

"I don't expect Boggs will make a move till after midnight, even if he makes a move at all," said Nugent drowsily. "Camping out's all very well, but I must say sentry duty is beastly tiresome!"

"Well, our hour'll soon—"

Bob Cherry paused.

"Go on," said Nugent.

He looked at Bob sleepily, then opened his eyes wider.

Bob was bending forward, gazing eagerly into the darkness in the direction of the factory. A tense look was on his face, and his eyes gleamed.

"What's up?" asked Nugent in a whisper.

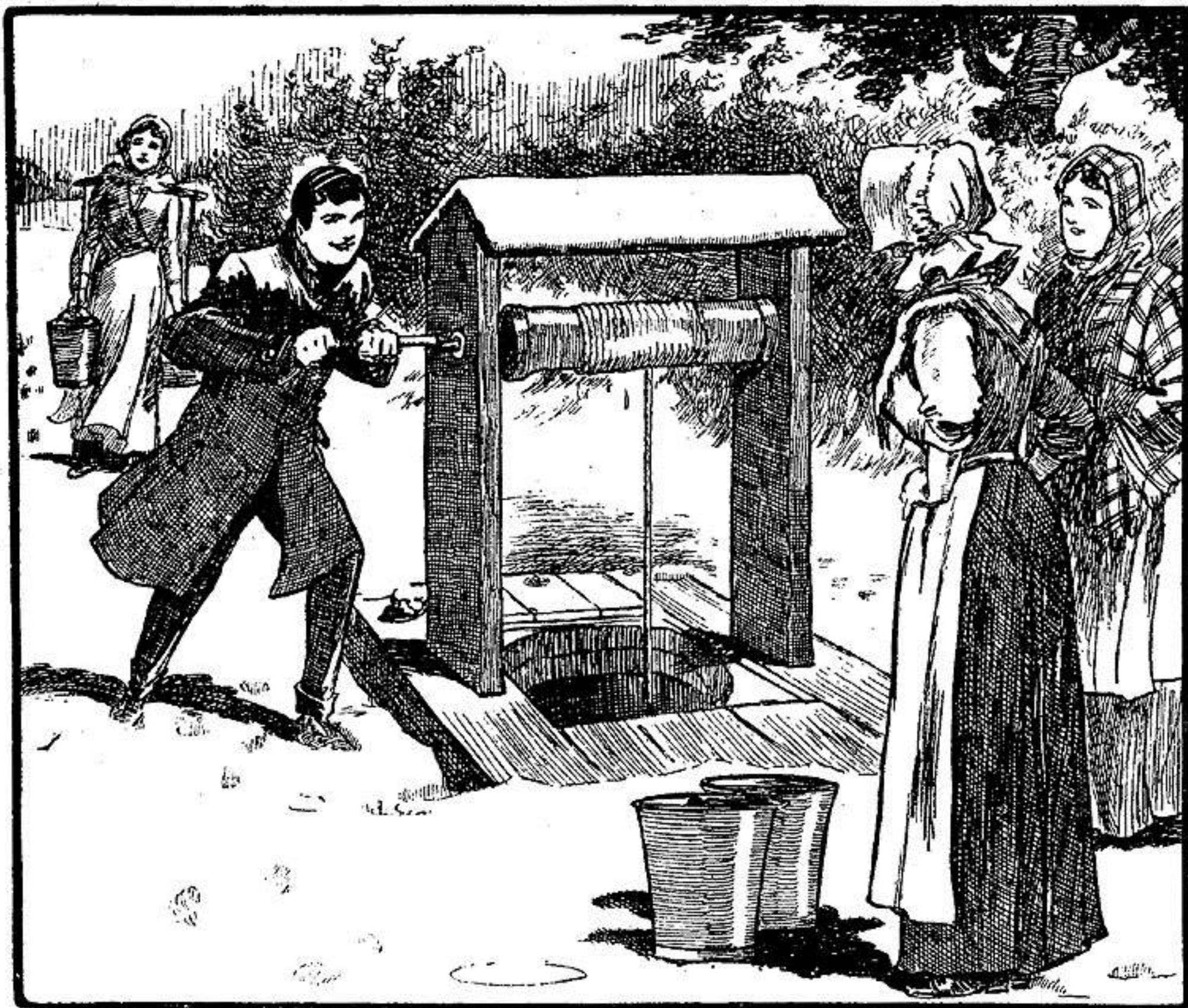
"Ss-ss-h! Look!"

Nugent looked. At first he could see nothing. The night was dark, and the wall of the factory was only a dimmer blackness against the dim sky.

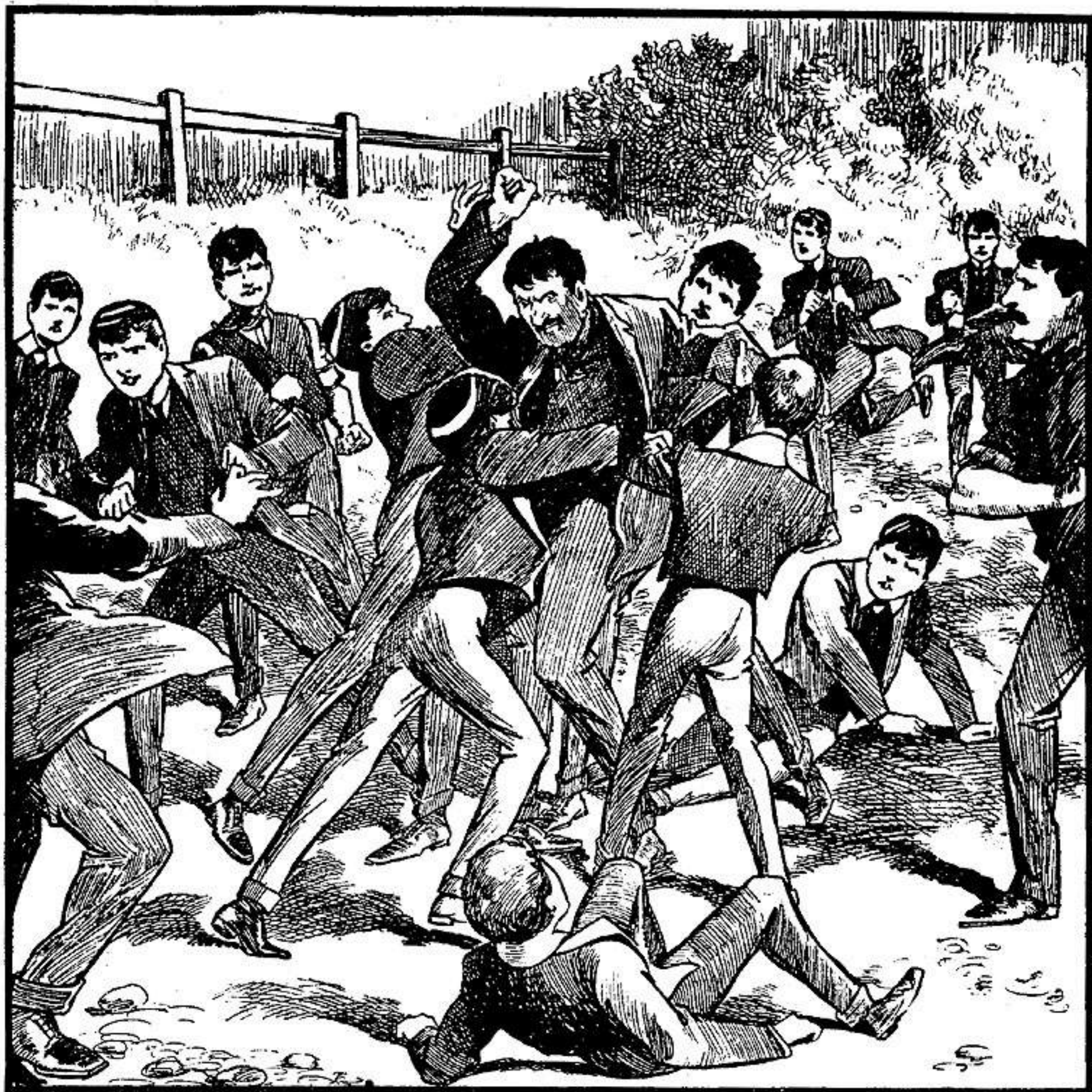
But Nugent's eyes grew accustomed to the gloom after a



GOOD TURNS.—No. 30.



A Magnetite does some cottagers a good turn on a cold morning by cheerfully drawing water for them from the village well.



Just when the fight was at its height, Wharton sighted Wingate and the other prefects running round a corner of the building. "Rescue, Sixth!" he yelled. The prefects rushed up and attacked the strikers from the rear. (See Chapter 5.)

moment, and then he made out the forms of several men noiselessly climbing over the wall. Just for a second an indistinct shape would rise above the top of the wall, and then disappear. This happened many times.

"Boggs and his set!" breathed Nugent hoarsely.

"Sure as a gun!" murmured Bob.

The two sentries gazed at one another with eager eyes. There was no sign of drowsiness now. Both were very wide awake.

"What shall we do?" whispered Frank Nugent.

"Wake the chaps, of course! There's no telling what mischief these rotters are up to!" said Bob quickly. "They must have seen us sitting there, and tried to skip over the wall without us knowing. My hat, it's a good thing we saw 'em!"

"Rather!"

"Don't make a sound! We'll wake the chaps, and creep over the wall!" whispered Bob Cherry. "We'll take the boundaries by surprise!"

In less than two minutes the whole Remove camp was awake. Some of the fellows grumbled, but they soon altered

their tone when they heard what was in the wind. Harry Wharton collected his men together at the rear of the tents, so that they were out of sight of the factory.

"My only hat! This is something like!" murmured Bulstrode, with enthusiasm. "I didn't think for a minute we'd be called upon to protect the giddy factory!"

"Well, we have."

"And we're going to protect it!"

"Rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton raised his hand.

"Silence, you prize asses!" he said sharply. "Silence in the ranks! We'll attack the enemy from two points! I'll take charge of one detachment, and you the other, Todd!"

Harry Wharton knew that Peter Todd was quite capable of dealing with his men, for the chief of No. 7 Study was an extremely astute junior when he chose.

"Good for you!" said Peter briskly.

"Go quietly, and don't let the enemy know of our presence until we're right upon 'em!" said Harry Wharton. "Advance!"

The juniors advanced eagerly enough. Their eyes had grown accustomed to the gloom now, and they could see with a fair amount of distinctness. The wall of the factory yard loomed up in the dimness.

Stealthily, the Removites clambered over it, and bore down, in two distinct bodies, upon the factory itself.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Warm Work!

HARRY WHARTON'S party advanced quietly along one of the factory walls. There was no sign of Boggs & Co., and some of the juniors began to think that Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent had been mistaken.

"Blessed if I can see anybody!" murmured Tom Brown.

"Those two asses were half-asleep, and fancied they saw something!" breathed Mark Linley.

"Faith, an' it's right, I'm thinkin' ye are, Linley darlint!" came in a stage whisper from Micky Desmond.

"You asses!" muttered Nugent warmly. "We saw the rotters plainly!"

The juniors were passing round a couple of upturned waggons—evidence of the strikers' violence—when Morgan pointed ahead quickly.

"Look you!" he whispered. "There is a light!"

"My hat! So there is!" said Wharton.

They all looked eagerly. A fitful light shone across the yard near a large wooden building which adjoined the factory.

The light came from a candle, held in the hand of one of the group of men, and it was flickering in the breeze. Indistinctly, the juniors could see the men busy at some work or other.

Bob Cherry was the first to realise what they were doing.

Two of them were pouring some liquid out of cans on to several little piles of straw and sticks.

Bob uttered a cry of alarm.

"My only Aunt Sarah Jane!" he gasped.

"Ss-ss-h, you silly ass—"

"Don't you see what the blackguards are up to?" panted Bob, in horror. "Look! They're pouring paraffin on to the sticks! They mean to set fire to the shed!"

There was a general exclamation.

"Grent Scott! You're right, Bob!" said Harry Wharton grimly, and with set lips. "The scoundrels—the utter rotters! I'll bet this is being done by Boggs and his own particular set! We must stop 'em!"

"Rather!" exclaimed Johnny Bull excitedly. "If that wooden shed once gets alight—and it'll blaze like tinder if they once set a match to it—the factory itself will be ablaze within half an hour!"

"Look!" yelled Bulstrode. "That chap's lowering the candle! Shout, you chaps—shout, to frighten 'em!"

The cadets set up a great roar of anger and excitement. But Bulstrode's first yell had been sufficient to startle the incendiaries. They dropped the candle, and turned round with oaths of alarm. Then, before they could recover their wits, the juniors were rushing towards them, angry and indignant.

They turned in fright, for there were only half a dozen, not including Nat Boggs, for that wary ruffian had remained in the roadway, after goading his companions to do the mischief. The six men ran helter-skelter from Harry Wharton & Co.

"After 'em!"

"Collar the rotters!"

"Head 'em off!"

"Where's that ass Todd?"

But Peter Todd was at hand. He and his men, too, had discovered Boggs & Co.'s game, and had rushed forward, from the opposite direction, almost at the same time as Harry Wharton and his supporters.

The scoundrels were headed off.

The next few minutes were exciting. Boggs's men stopped, panting, and thoroughly frightened. The shouts of the juniors proclaimed that they were in no gentle mood, and even half a dozen strong roughs would be helpless against such a crowd of angry boys.

"Over the wall, mates!" roared one of the men. "These young cubs have spoilt the game for to-night—hang 'em!"

"Don't let the rotters escape!" yelled Nugent excitedly.

But the strikers were desperate. They scrambled over the wall, which was not a high one, with more haste than dignity.

Two of the night watchmen and a policeman came rushing up to grasp the men as they jumped to the ground.

A short tussle ensued, during which the policeman had his helmet jammed over his eyes, and the night watchmen were knocked down with no little force.

The crowd of juniors swarmed over the wall like ants.

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Many of them, in the excitement, fell upon the night watchmen and the policeman. The worthy trio received several hard blows before they managed to gasp out their identity.

Meanwhile, Boggs & Co. had made good their escape.

"Sorry!" gasped Wharton. "I thought you were the giddy strikers!"

"It's all right young gents!" growled one of the watchmen. "You wasn't to know in this darkness. They've got clear away, Bill," he added to the constable.

"Yes—hang 'em!" said the officer savagely.

The Remove cadets returned to their camp, after explaining what the excitement had been about, and after making sure that there was no smouldering spark left by the strikers.

"By Jove, that was all right!" panted Bob Cherry. "We did the rotters in the eye jolly nicely! Just fancy what would have happened if we hadn't kept a watch!"

"The giddy factory would have been burnt down!" said Johnny Bull.

"Absolutely!"

"The absolutelyfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Singh sleepily. "We have had our esteemed excitement, and will now return to our august beds."

"Hear, hear!"

And in less than fifteen minutes the camp was asleep again, with the exception of Mark Linley and Micky Desmond, whose turn it was to keep watch.

But the remainder of the night passed without incident. Boggs & Co. had evidently given it up as a bad job, and were discussing other plans. At all events, they understood that it was impossible to make a surprise attack upon the factory while the Removites were camping near by.

Being under canvas, the juniors were up very early—soon after sunrise, in fact. And it was pleasing to realise that they had not been placed there for no purpose. They would have something to tell Wingate when he arrived. The captain of Greyfriars had promised to walk over to the factory before early prayers.

"Personally, I think the strikers will give it up," said Nugent, as he and a crowd of cadets sat round one of the fires, preparing breakfast. "Anyhow, it's only Boggs and his own lot who'd go to such rotten lengths as trying to burn the factory down!"

"And the worst of it is, we've no proof that it was Boggs who led the scoundrels," said Wharton thoughtfully. "We know it was him, of course; but there's no proof, and the main body of strikers will believe that he had nothing to do with the attack. Of course, he'll deny it, and say it was the work of a set of drunken roughs. And the silly asses will believe him, I expect, and support him as strongly as ever!"

"I'm blessed if I can understand 'em!" growled Bob Cherry. "I'll admit that Boggs has got the gift of the gab, but the chaps must be giddy idiots to believe all he says!"

"He means to do all the harm he can," said Wharton; "and, so far, he's done practically nothing. He won't be satisfied until a tremendous lot more damage is done, and I'll bet he'll get the strikers to back him up in further villainy!"

"Well, we'll be ready for 'em!"

"We'll give 'em beans!"

"What-ho!"

There was no lack of enthusiasm among the cadets. Breakfast was a merry meal, partaken of sitting round the campfires. For although the morning was fine, it was extremely chilly, and the juniors would have been cold and miserable without a cheerful blaze.

"Going to be a fine day," remarked Nugent, with a glance skywards. "I say, I wonder if Wingate'll come along and send us all back to Greyfriars?"

"I shouldn't think so," said Harry Wharton. "When he hears what's happened he'll realise how invaluable our services are. Why, after last night's affair, the strikers will be more angry than ever. Boggs's will, anyhow, and he'll lead the rest where he likes."

"Can't we think of some wheeze to open the men's eyes?" put in Bulstrode. "Once they knew what an absolute rotter he is, they'd know that he's been telling lies all along, and that they've been doing a great injustice to Mr. Hardinge."

"It wants some thinking out," said Wharton thoughtfully. "That would be a splendid thing if we could do it. At present the strikers believe in Boggs implicitly, and when they hear that we're here guarding the factory, they'll be jolly wild."

"I think——"

But what Bob Cherry thought was never to be revealed, for at that moment Ogilvy, who'd been taking a stroll out in the roadway, came rushing back in great excitement.

"The strikers are coming!" he shouted. "There's hundreds of 'em! The whole road's filled with 'em for hundreds of yards, and they'll be here in less than five minutes!"

"My hat!"

"Strikers coming here!"

"This'll mean ructions!"

"Rather!"

"Well, we're ready for 'em!" declared Harry Wharton.

"We'll drive 'em off!"

Ogilvy waved his hands excitedly.

"You chump!" he yelled. "It's impossible! There's hundreds of 'em! They're desperate, and if we tried to stop 'em, they'd simply wipe us up!"

"But we can't scoot!" protested Nugent.

"We must. There's no help for it!" persisted Ogilvy.

"I'm not a funk, as you chaps know, but I'm jolly certain we should get the worst of it in a tussle with the strikers. It's not like dealing with a handful!"

Harry Wharton had rushed across the meadow to the roadway, and now came back, panting, and looking anxious. The juniors crowded round him.

"Ogilvy's right," he said quickly. "It would be simply asking for trouble to attack the strikers. There must be a full hundred of 'em."

"But they won't hurt us," said Russell.

"Won't they? I believe they're coming up here simply to drive us away," said Wharton. "When they spotted me they sent up a shout, waved their sticks, and came on at the double."

"That was pretty significant, anyhow," said Bob Cherry.

"Why not get into the factory itself?" suggested Johnny Bull, looking round quickly. "There are those two giddy watchmen at the main door wondering what the excitement's about. We can swarm in before they know what's happened."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"You're right, Johnny," he said briskly. "That's about the best thing we can do. If we scooted we should be out of the affair altogether, while if we hop into the factory we shall be on the spot to protect it."

"Hurrah!" yelled Micky Desmond excitedly. "Faith an' it's a darlint ye are, Wharton! Once we're inside the factory we'll stick there, and we sha'n't have to do any lessons this morning, bedad!"

"Hurrah!"

Led by Harry Wharton, the excited cadets picked up the bags containing the remainder of the food. Then, just as the foremost strikers came into sight, they rushed up to the main door of the factory and crowded in. The two watchmen protested in vain. They could do nothing against the onslaught. Wharton didn't know whether they would approve of the move or not, so the juniors left nothing to chance.

A howl went up from the strikers as they saw the Removites crowding into the factory, and Harry Wharton cast a swift glance behind him.

"Quick!" he gasped. "The rotters are on us!"

The remainder of the juniors piled in breathlessly, and even as Nat Boggs and several others rushed up, the heavy doors slammed to, and the bolts were shot.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

No Admittance!

NAT BOGGS swore furiously under his breath as the door shut with a bang in his face.

"Bash it down, mates!" he roared.

He and several others flung themselves at the doors, but the latter were of great strength, and Boggs & Co. only received bruised shoulders for their pains. The strike leader looked round him furiously.

But there was no means of entering the factory. The windows were all high up, and in any case it would be impossible to effect an entrance with all those boys ready to repel them.

"Hang 'em!" snarled Boggs, with clenched fists. "I thought we'd got 'em, mates. Gosh! We'd have given 'em something if we'd 'ave copped 'em!"

"You're right, Nat," said one of his pals. "An' we'll cop 'em yet. We're not goin' to be got the better of by a crowd o' school kids!"

Inside the factory Harry Wharton & Co. were congratulating themselves upon their move. For the time being they were safe, and before the strikers could effect an entrance, perhaps, help would arrive.

Harry Wharton realised the Remove's peril fully, but he did not flinch. These men were desperate, and although they would not wilfully harm the boys they would almost certainly do so in their excitement.

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"PETER TODD'S PLOT!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

"We'd better hop up to the next floor," said the Remove captain briskly. "They can't reach us there, and if they try to get in we can chuck things at 'em. Don't forget that our position is desperate. It's up to us to save the factory."

"And we'll save it if we can!" said Bob Cherry grimly. "My hat, it makes me wild to think of these ruffians leading the strikers to such villainy as this! They're quiet enough men, as a rule, but they're too excited now to realise what they're doing. Come on!"

Harry Wharton gave his instructions quickly, and the cadets hurried to the upper floor. There they separated, some going to each side of the building, so that every inch of the yards was under observation.

A roar went up from the strikers as they saw the juniors at the upper windows.

"Come down an' open this 'ere door," roared Boggs, "or it'll be the worse for you!"

Harry Wharton thrust his head through a huge hole in one of the large windows.

"Sorry," he said sweetly, "but it can't be did!"

"You young rip—"

"Now, that's personal, Boggy!" grinned Bob Cherry cheerfully from another window. "Now, all run away from here like good little boys. You can't come in until you promise to be well-behaved!"

Boggs fumed.

"You saucy young 'ound, you!" he yelled. "Are you comin' down to open this 'ere door?"

"Not a bit like it, you blackguard!" said Wharton.

"I gives yer fair warnin'!" bellowed Boggs. "If you don't come down an' open it, we'll break in, an' it'll be the worse for you. If you come down right away we'll let yer go 'omo without doin' yer no 'arm!"

"We're quite comfortable, thanks!" said Bob Cherry cheerily.

"Look here, you chaps!" shouted Harry Wharton, in a clear voice, which was very serious. "What do you want to follow the lead of Boggs for? He's a liar and a scoundrel, and before he's done he'll lead you into doing things you'll regret later on. Why can't you be sensible and hoof him out!"

"Shut yer mouth!"

"We don't want any lip from you!"

"You'd best go back to school before you're hurt, young 'un!"

The strikers were in no mood to be dictated to by a schoolboy, and Harry

Wharton's speech only served to still further anger the strikers. They were all greatly excited, and didn't give themselves time to think.

"All right!" shouted Wharton grimly. "You'll realise I'm right before long. Boggs is a scoundrel and a scamp. You're doing Mr. Hardinge an injustice. Three cheers for Mr. Hardinge!"

They were given with a will by the Removites, but the cheers were almost drowned by the howl which arose from the strikers outside.

Unfortunately, Harry Wharton had chosen a rather inopportune time for his little speech. It was the first opportunity he had had of addressing the strikers. But they didn't like being addressed by a schoolboy, and showed their displeasure.

"Break in, mates!" shouted Boggs furiously. "We'll show these young 'ounds wot's wot!"

"You won't get in!" shouted Bob Cherry. "If you come any nearer, we'll chuck things at you!"

But Boggs & Co. disregarded the warning. A great crowd of them disappeared, and very soon returned with a great log of wood. Harry Wharton & Co. saw them approaching with it, and the juniors looked at one another in dismay.

"That's done it, by Jove!" said Nugent. "With that thing they'll bust the door down in two ticks. My hat! This is where we do the vanishing act!"

"No fear!" declared Harry Wharton. "I've got an idea. There's a fire-hose in each one of these departments, and if we turn the water on the rotters, I'll bet it'll cool their ardour!"

"By jingo, that's a ripping wheeze!"

"Topping!"

"First-chop idea!"

"Shure, an' ye're right!"

The Removites bustled about rapidly. Fortunately, the factory was provided with every modern convenience, and fire-hydrants were fitted in every one of the big departments. The main supply was turned on full, and the juniors only

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had to uncoil the hoses and turn the water on. This they were well able to do, for many of them were members of the Greyfriars School Fire Brigade.

"Wait till they get near," said Harry Wharton, when everything was ready. "It'll take 'em by surprise, and make 'em realise that we're not to be trifled with."

The majority of the men were still crowding round the main entrance, while a dozen strikers were carrying across the yard the heavy log which they intended to use as a battering-ram.

All the men were looking excited and pleased, for they had no doubts in their own minds that they would be within the factory in a few minutes.

But they had reckoned without the Remove.

"Now!" said Wharton sharply. "Let the bounders have it!"

And they had it!

Swis-s-s-h!

Almost at the same instant three hoses filled with water, and three powerful streams shot down on to the strikers. The water descended with tremendous force. The strikers were totally unprepared for it.

A yell of fright went up, intermixed with the gaspings of those who were drenched through and knocked breathless by the force of the water.

Hats and caps went flying everywhere, and the men carrying the log, on whom Wharton's hose was trained, were all bowled over like ninepins. They were utterly unable to stand up against those unexpected streams of water.

A more effective weapon of defence than a hose does not exist when no injuries are desired. The strikers fled in terror, and within three minutes the factory yards were absolutely deserted, and the men were gathered in dripping and gasping groups in the roadway.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites yelled themselves hoarse. To them the situation was irresistibly funny. Wharton's wheeze had turned the tables completely. And Boggs realised it. He knew that it would be impossible to gain an entrance while those hoses were in working order.

And the water had a remarkably damping effect upon the strikers' enthusiasm, as well as upon their clothes. For the time being hostilities were ended. And Boggs retired with his men to discuss the situation.

"My hat, you're a wonder, Harry!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "If you hadn't have thought of that wheeze we should have been completely dished."

"Somebody coming across the fields from Greyfriars!" bawled out Tom Brown from one of the windows. "Two of 'em!"

"Wingate and Courtney, I expect," said Wharton.

But the new arrivals proved to be Vernon-Smith and Bolsover major of the Remove. They came near, and stared at the wrecked state of the Remove camp in amazement—for the strikers had pulled the tents down and generally created havoc.

The Bounder looked up upon hearing a chuckle, and then he and his companion saw the Removites crowding at the upper windows of the factory.

"What the dickens has happened?" demanded the Bounder.

"What are you asses in there for?" asked Bolsover.

"Who's been playing the giddy ox with the happy home?"

There were plenty of juniors eager enough to relate their experiences, and the two visitors soon learned what had occurred. Vernon-Smith and Bolsover, it appeared, had got up early and strolled over before breakfast.

The Bounder's eyes gleamed as he heard the story.

"I say!" he exclaimed. "We're coming in!"

"That's it!" said Bolsover. "We'll be in this bizney!"

"Sorry," called down Harry Wharton, "but I can't oblige!"

"No admittance, my sons," said Bob Cherry sweetly.

"Faith, an' be off wid ye!"

The Bounder grinned.

"Now, don't be silly!" he said. "Joking apart, Wharton, old man—"

"There's been no joking in it yet," said Harry Wharton briefly.

"Don't talk rot! You're joking all the time, if you say I can't come in," said the Bounder coolly. "Buzz down and open the door. We want to be in this affair as much as you. Surely you're not going to refuse help when you're in a tight corner?"

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"It's no good arguing. You can't come in. I'm sorry."

"Why can't we come in?" roared Bolsover, getting angry.

"Because Wingate said that nobody was to be in this business except cadets. As you're not cadets you can kindly buzz off. If you stop here much longer the strikers'll come back, and then you'll get it in the neck."

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Vernon-Smith frowned.

"You're an ass, Wharton!" he said crossly. "What's the good of sticking to what Wingate said? You're in a tight corner, and you want all the help you can get."

"If you get permission from Mr. Quelch or Wingate, I'll let you in like a shot, Smithy," called Harry Wharton. "But until you do you're not coming in. That's flat, and you can go and eat coke!"

And Harry Wharton disappeared.

Vernon-Smith glared up at the window for a moment, and then turned to Bolsover. They spoke together for a few moments. Then, with a last look at the factory, they turned and left the yard.

"Dished, diddled, and done!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Smithy's out of this business, and I'm glad of it. There's no telling what tricks the Bounder would get up to."

But Vernon-Smith was not out of the business—not by a long way.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Just Like the Bounder!

WINGATE and Courtney appeared a very few minutes after the Bounder and Bolsover had taken their departure.

The two prefects were astounded to see the wrecked camp, and they listened to Harry Wharton's explanation in grim silence. Wingate's face broke into a smile when he heard about the hose play, and he nodded.

"Best thing you could have done," he said. "Well, I'm hanged if I know what to say! If I order you to leave the strikers will possibly do damage to the factory."

"Possibly!" exclaimed Nugent. "It's jolly certain!"

"Well, I shall have to leave you here," said Wingate. "I'll go and talk to the Head about it now, and come back later with fresh instructions. If the strikers try to get in again, let the rotters have the full force of the hose."

And Wingate and Courtney hurried off to Greyfriars with very serious faces. But Wingate was feeling pleased that the juniors had acquitted themselves so well. He told himself that the Head had done the best thing possible in selecting the Remove Cadet Corps to deal with the situation.

Meanwhile Vernon-Smith and Bolsover had left the factory grounds, and seated themselves behind a hedge some distance away.

"I mean to get in there," said the Bounder firmly. "If I ask Wingate, he'll tell me to buzz off; and it's not a bit of use going to old Quelch."

"Well, we can't get in," said Bolsover.

"Yes, we can. All we have to do is to swank to Wharton that we've got Wingate's permission," said the Bounder. "I can make him believe me, and once we're in we'll stick in. This is just the kind of bizney I enjoy."

"All right," said Bolsover. "Try it on. I'm with you. But we'd better not go back for some little time. It's just about the breakfast hour now, and Wharton will know that we couldn't get back for at least an hour."

"Well, I suggest we stroll into Courtfield and get something to eat," said the Bounder. "I've got plenty of tin on me."

"Good!"

The two rose, and struck off across the field in the direction of Courtfield, which was quite close. But Vernon-Smith and Bolsover had reckoned without the strikers.

The two juniors passed through a gap in the hedge, and found themselves, to their surprise, in the midst of a large crowd of strikers, the bulk of whom were dripping wet. The men saw the Greyfriars caps, and their faces instantly became dark with anger.

"I say!" gasped Bolsover. "These are the rotten strikers! We'd better scoot!"

"Keep cool!" said the Bounder. "We haven't touched them, you ass!"

But Boggs & Co. did not discriminate. As a matter of fact, they thought the Bounder and Bolsover were two of the boys who had attacked them. The mere fact that they were not wearing uniform was nothing. They were Greyfriars juniors, and that was enough.

"Cop 'em, mates!" said one man hoarsely. "We'll teach 'em!"

"By gosh, we will!" exclaimed another.

"Run, you ass!" yelled Bolsover, in alarm. "These silly fools are going for us!"

And Bolsover started running. Unfortunately he tripped in a tuft of grass, and instead of escaping, fell with a somewhat loving embrace into the arms of an extremely damp striker. The man rolled Bolsover on the grass, and calmly sat on him.

The Bounder fared no better. He was quickly made a prisoner.

"Look here, what's the game?" said Vernon-Smith angrily.

"Wot's the game, eh?" leered one of the men. "We'll soon show you, my beauty! Here, Jim, run across the field an' fetch Nat 'ere. I reckon 'e'll be pleased to see this pair o' young 'uns!"

The two Removites were held securely until Nat Boggs hurried up. He looked at them with angry eyes. Bolsover was in a blue funk, and even the imperturbable Bounder was beginning to get alarmed. The looks of these men were not at all agreeable.

"I want to know what this means?" said the Bounder angrily. "You're the chief of these fellows, I believe. It'll be best for you, Boggs, if you let us go!"

"Oh, will it?" sneered Nat Boggs unpleasantly. "I ain't goin' to 'ave any words with you, young 'un, but I'll tell you straight out that now we've got you we're goin' to put you through it—we're goin' to take you to the factory an' tell your young pals that if they don't give in we'll do you some real hurt!"

"You—you—scoundrels!" panted Bolsover.

"Do you think they'll give in?" said the Bounder. "Whatever you do to us, the chaps in the factory won't knuckle under!"

Vernon-Smith had been thinking hard, and a sudden gleam shot into his eyes. He knew quite well that he and his companion were in a very tight corner. The Bounder saw a way out of it.

"They won't knuckle under, you say?" exclaimed Boggs. "We'll see about that! We'll——"

"Hold on," interrupted Vernon-Smith. "I've got an idea. I don't like those chaps in the factory any more than you do."

"What are you sayin'?" demanded Boggs suspiciously.

"I am saying the truth. Harry Wharton and his set are dead against me, and when I wanted to get in they wouldn't open the door. Well, I've got a wheeze to get in, and if you let us go we'll get in and open one of the doors at the back. Then I'll keep the chaps' attention engaged in the front of the building while you and your men come in. How'll that do you?"

Nat Boggs's eyes gleamed, then he frowned suspiciously. "I don't believe yer," he said. "It's a trick to get away."

"It isn't!" persisted the Bounder. "If you let us go, we'll carry out our part of the bargain. Eh, Bolsover?"

"Yes, rather!" stammered Bolsover.

Boggs thought for a moment.

"All right," he said. "I'll take your word for it, but I shall remember yer faces, young 'uns! If you do the dirty on me, you'll 'ave to pay for it, that's all!"

"I shall keep my word," said the Bounder quietly. "We'll enter the factory and have the door open for you at exactly eleven o'clock. How will that do?"

"Good enough," said Boggs. "But remember, if you——"

"Oh, dry up! I'll do the trick!"

And Vernon-Smith and Bolsover were allowed to go. The Bounder knew quite well what he had agreed to do, but he felt no scruples. He wanted to get his own back on Wharton, and this was a good opportunity.

"I say," panted Bolsover, when they were a good distance away, "you ain't going to do it, are you? It was swank!"

"Rot!" said the Bounder. "I meant every word of it!"

"But the chaps'll rag us fearfully——"

"Rats to the chaps! Didn't you hear what Boggs said? If we don't do it he'll mark us out and very likely half-kill us!" said the Bounder. "I'm not a funky sort of chap, but I know that fellow's a scoundrel, and I draw the line at being half-killed. We've got to do it, or take the consequences!"

"I—I think we'd better do it!" said Bolsover.

"Then we'll sit here for half an hour, and then go back to the factory. I've got a fountain pen and paper on me, and I know Wingate's writing as well as my own. I'll write a pass for us!"

"But—but it's forgery!"

"Forgery be blowed!" said the Bounder calmly. "What is it after all? We're only doing it because Wharton's so blessed obstinate!"

Vernon-Smith had no scruples about the matter, and during the wait, he wrote the following words on a piece of paper: "Vernon-Smith and Bolsover to be allowed to enter the factory.—Wingate." On second thoughts, the Bounder had written the words in pencil, and had scrawled them, as though Wingate had been in a great hurry. This

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would allay Harry Wharton's suspicions if the writing was not quite identical to Wingate's.

The pair presented themselves at the factory with confident air.

"Hallo, you freaks come back again?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, sticking his head out of an upper window. "It's no good, you know. Dogs ain't admitted!"

"We've got a permit from Wingate," said the Bounder coolly. "We explained to him that you wouldn't let us in, and he called you a set of young idiots!"

"Rats!" said Harry Wharton. "You're fibbing!"

"Oh, all right! Read this!"

"What is it?"

"Wingate's permit!"

The Bounder was quite confident, and Harry Wharton was puzzled. Vernon-Smith folded the paper up into a small compass, and tossed it up. Wharton caught it.

"Buck up!" said the Bounder. "We don't want to wait here all day!"

Harry Wharton unfolded the paper and read it, with Bob Cherry, Nugent, and several other Removites craning over his shoulder.

"Well, that's plain enough," said Nugent.

"I can't understand old Wingate," muttered Harry in perplexity. "There's no getting over this, though!"

He leaned out of the window again, completely deceived by the note.

"Wingate's been here this morning," he called down. "When did he give you this?"

"Oh, we met him in the Close," said the Bounder glibly. "He scrawled that permit while we waited."

"Buzz down and open the door!" exclaimed Bolsover impatiently.

"Oh, we'll let you in!" said Harry Wharton. And he instructed two Removites to go down and open the big door.

Nevertheless, he could not quite understand it, now. Peter Todd took the note and scanned it keenly.

"Looks all right," he said. "I suppose those rotters haven't been up to some trick? This certainly seems to be the genuine article."

"It's rottenly written, but it's Wingate's writing," said Wharton.

So the Bounder and Bolsover gained admittance into the factory. Some of the juniors were glad that they had come, for they were able to learn how matters were progressing at Greyfriars.

But the Bounder, soon after half-past ten, quietly walked away from the rest of the fellows, and went round the factory, from department to department, as though interested in their contents.

Presently he went downstairs. Here the two watchmen were in sole charge. The men were talking together in the front of the building, and Vernon-Smith, passing through a doorway, found himself quite alone.

"Good!" he muttered.

In less than two minutes he had found a door which opened into a covered passage. It was securely locked and barred. With extreme caution he removed the bars and turned the key. He opened the door, and gave one glance outside. The covered passage led straight into the factory yard, only a flimsy door protecting it at the further end.

"That's all right," he murmured. "They can bust that down in two ticks. I'd better scoot back now, or I shall be missed."

Quietly Vernon-Smith made his way upstairs again, looking as unconcerned as ever. It was now quarter to eleven, and he found the juniors excited about something.

"What's the row?" he inquired.

"Strikers coming back again!"

Vernon-Smith smiled quietly to himself, and looked out of one of the front windows. A large crowd of strikers were gathered near the gates of the factory. This was evidently a ruse to draw the juniors' attention from the back of the building.

It certainly succeeded, for practically every cadet lined the row of windows in front.

"What the dickens are they up to?" said Nugent, in a puzzled tone. "They seem to be standing there doing nothing at all. And where's Boggs? He's not among 'em!"

"I don't quite catch on," said Harry Wharton. "They're up to some game, you can bet. What do you think, Smithy?"

"It looks queer, I must say," agreed Vernon-Smith coolly. "But how on earth should I know what they're up to?"

But the Bounder knew right enough—and the others knew, too, before five minutes had passed.

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"PETER TODD'S PLOT!"

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THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Black Eyes and Thick Ears!

PETER TODD came rushing through one of the big doorways, yelling like a demon. The juniors turned in alarm.

"Great Scott, what's up?" shouted Nugent.

"He's mad!"

"He's gone off his giddy rocker!"

"They're at the back!" yelled Todd quickly. "There's a whole crowd of strikers, led by Boggs himself, at the back! They busted down a little door, and are—"

Just then Russell appeared, white-faced.

"They're in!" he bawled. "They've got in downstairs!"

Harry Wharton set his teeth.

"Can't you be calm, you asses!" he said quickly. "How do you know they're in?"

"They're downstairs!" panted Russell. "They must have knocked a door down at the back."

"We're done!" said Peter Todd blankly. "We simply can't use the hoses inside the factory; they'd ruin everything in the place. We must fight the rotters!"

"That's it—fight 'em!"

"There are still heaps of the strikers in front," said Harry Wharton quickly. "Some of you chaps get the hoses going and keep 'em back."

"Right-ho!"

Half a dozen cadets rushed for the hoses, and in less than a minute three powerful spurts of water were swishing down upon the crowd.

The men scattered instantly, drenched through, and rushed away from the factory. The hydrants were shut off, but the juniors remained at their posts in order to repeat the onslaught, if necessary. But the strikers took care to keep well back.

"That's the way to treat the rotters!" chuckled Hazeldene. "By gum, they're wet!"

"The wetfulness is terrific!"

"They're soaked to the skin!"

"There's a fearful shindy going on below!" panted Mark Linley. "Just listen!"

Sundry yells, thuds, and roars were proceeding from the ground floor. Despite the fact that many strikers were still outside, a large proportion of the men had gained admittance by the back entrance.

And the Remove Cadet Corps had no intention of being driven out of the factory.

They fought the invaders with desperate courage.

The conflict was taking place in the large department on the ground floor, where there was plenty of space to move about. Harry Wharton & Co. had formed into a compact body, and the strikers were finding that they were by no means an easy force to tackle.

All the cadets were armed with rifles, although the cartridges they possessed were blank. But the juniors looked upon this affair rather in the light of a glorious "dust-up," when fists alone would count; so the rifles were all left upstairs.

The strikers, too, now that they had come to hand-grips with the juniors, seemed to realise their position. A few of them were armed with heavy sticks, but while they saw that the cadets were only using their fists they discarded these, and decided to simply sweep the juniors out of the factory with little or no violence.

They had no quarrel with Greyfriars, and had no wish to harm the boys.

But the juniors had not the slightest intention of being swept out. They saw how the conflict was progressing, and used their fists to full advantage. Naturally, the strikers retaliated, and black eyes, thick ears, and swollen noses were as plentiful as flies on a summer's day.

Harry Wharton & Co., in the extreme excitement of the "mill," did not notice that the men who were attacking them were the ordinary factory workers. Nat Boggs and his own particular set of ruffians—who were responsible for the whole strike—were not in the factory at all.

"Greyfriars for ever!" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Hurrah!"

"Swipe 'em!"

"Pile in!"

"Drive the rotters out!"

Bob Cherry hit out hard, and caught a burly striker a tremendous punch on the cheek. The man staggered back.

"Gosh!" he muttered. "These kids can 'it, mates!"

And he leapt forward at Bob Cherry with the intention of giving that cheerful junior a thorough trouncing. But Bob Cherry had disappeared, and was busily engaged with his fists elsewhere.

Unfortunately there were not many men who kept their tempers. The bulk of them were getting very angry, and

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their blows became heavy and vindictive. The Removites had all their work cut out to hold their own.

When the conflict was at its height, Vernon-Smith and Bolsover major—who had no intention of taking part in the hostilities—slipped through a doorway into one of the other departments.

"We'll buzz off!" said the Bounder coolly. "We've done our bit, and I'm satisfied. I've got my own back on Wharton, anyhow!"

"I shouldn't like him to know we had a hand in letting the strikers in," said Bolsover.

"He won't know—he'll think they broke in themselves!" chuckled the Bounder. "Come on?"

"Yes, we'll get out straight away!"

And the pair hurried across the big room with the intention of making their exit. But just as they were passing through one of the doorways a dozen men hurried through. They were all dripping wet, and very angry.

"Here's a couple of 'em, mates!" roared one of the men.

"Cop 'em!"

The Bounder and Bolsover major started back.

"Hold on!" said Vernon-Smith, in alarm. "We're not cadets!"

"I don't care what you are!" roared the man. "You've got to go through it, young 'uns, an' don't you forget it!"

The precious pair of Removites were soon in the firm grasp of the strikers. Retribution was upon their heads. They had let the strikers into the factory; but, unfortunately for them, these men did not know that all-important fact.

"You fools!" roared the Bounder. "Leave us alone! We opened the door for you, and—"

"No lip, you cub! You ain't goin' to git off like that 'ere, I give you my word! What shall we do with 'em, mates?"

"I tell you—"

"Shut up!" shouted one of the men. "We don't want no lies!"

"They're not lies!" howled Bolsover wildly.

But the strikers were not likely to release their victims. One of the men suddenly uttered a laugh, and pointed to a huge vessel standing in a corner of the room.

"I've got it, mates!" he grinned viciously. "This 'ere thing's 'arf full o' orange marmalade! Let's duck the young 'ounds in it, an' see 'ow they like it! I reckon they're fond o' marmalade!"

The men all burst into a loud laugh, but there was not much humour in it. They were all angry, and the idea of ducking Vernon-Smith and Bolsover into a bath of marmalade appealed to them strongly.

In vain the pair protested.

"If you duck us in there—"

"No lip, I says!" ejaculated a striker threateningly. "Come on, mates, in with 'em! We can't waste time 'ere! The other chaps'll want us."

And, without the least ceremony, the Bounder and Bolsover were picked up, struggling and kicking, but quite helpless, and thrust head first into the huge vessel of sticky marmalade.

"Ooooooop! Yow!"

"Gurrrrrr! Oooosh!"

"Haw, haw, haw!"

The men roared. From their point of view the spectacle was extremely funny, and for the moment they forgot their anger. Then, hearing the warlike sounds from afar, they hurried away, and left Vernon-Smith and Bolsover to their own devices.

The luckless pair were in a terrible state. They scrambled out of the horribly sticky mass, and gouged out marmalade from their eyes.

Their hair was full of it, their faces were smothered in it, and their clothes were utterly ruined.

"Yowp!" gurgled Vernon-Smith. "Oh, great Scott! The rotters! The beastly rotters!"

Bolsover major goggled at him through the marmalade.

"Oooooosh! This is horrid! I can't hear a blessed word you've said, Smithy!" he spluttered. "This rotten marmalade's simply smothered me. My ears are absolutely bunged up!"

"It's horrible!"

"All your rotten fault, too!" growled Bolsover. "Of all the beastly ideas—"

"My fault!" howled the Bounder furiously. "Do you think I wanted to be ducked in the rotten marmalade, you ass?"

Bolsover was silent. He was too busily engaged to answer.

The unfortunate pair hurried out of the factory, and straightway ducked themselves into a large tank of water in the yard. Anything was better than being in that sticky

condition. They had received their punishment, and they wished heartily that they had never left Greyfriars.

And while they were bewailing their woes, Harry Wharton & Co. were finding themselves in a desperate fix. Some of the strikers had opened the main doors, and the juniors were slowly but surely being forced out of the factory.

This was not to be wondered at, for they were hopelessly outnumbered. The men were angry, but they had not lost their heads. They realised what the consequences would be if they did the boys any real harm—which they could have done had they chosen.

Their sole object was to drive the boys out, and this they were doing.

"Stick to it!" gasped Harry Wharton, gazing round him out of one eye. His other was rapidly becoming "bunged-up." "Don't let 'em whack us!"

"We can't help our giddy selves!" panted Nugent.

"We're outnumbered!"

"Greyfriars for ever!"

Then, with a dramatic suddenness, two strikers rushed up to the main doors, their faces excited and terrified. They were not men of Boggs's set, as Harry Wharton saw at a glance.

"Fire!" they yelled. "Fire!"

"Fire?" repeated Wharton, with a start. "Good heavens! Boggs must have done it while we've been engaged here!"

"Fire!"

The shout went up from dozens of throats. The conflict was forgotten, and the strikers rushed out of the building helter-skelter. The bulk of them were thoroughly frightened, for setting fire to the building was not at all in accordance with their views.

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"It's Boggs!"

"He's done it on purpose!"

"So that we can't put the fire out!"

Harry Wharton raised his voice.

"Dry up!" he bellowed. "It's no good standing here jawing! Listen to me!"

The juniors became silent.

"Two of you rush down and telephone to Courtfield for the fire-brigade!" said Harry Wharton quickly. "I don't suppose it'll arrive in time to do any good, but it's a chance. Buzz off, Russell and Ogilvy!"

Russell and Ogilvy left hurriedly.

"The next thing is to find the turncock," went on Wharton. "It's sure to be in the ground somewhere, or—"

Peter Todd dashed in.

"Come and help!" he gasped. "Boggs and about fifty men are surrounding the turncock out in the road! They've turned the water off, and don't mean to let us turn it on again!"

"My hat!"

"We can shift 'em!" declared Wharton. "If we make a decided rush at 'em they'll scatter, I expect."

Peter Todd shook his head.

"No fear!" he said quickly. "They're all Boggs's chaps, most of 'em half drunk and reckless. They're armed with

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G. R. S.

"It's Boggs's doing!" roared Bob Cherry. "The utter scoundrel!"

"Boggs ain't done it!" said one of the men incredulously.

"He said all along as 'e wouldn't 'ave no violence!"

"My hat! The scamp!" exclaimed Nugent.

Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, and many others fought their way upstairs without loss of time. From the upper windows they caught sight of the large wooden building adjoining the factory. Its further end was blazing furiously, but as yet the fire had not gained much hold.

"Quick! The hoses!" gasped Harry Wharton.

He grasped the nozzle, and rushed to the window. Bob Cherry turned the water-cock on quickly, but the hose did not fill.

"Turn it on!" roared Harry Wharton from the window. Bob Cherry looked blank.

"I have done!" he panted. "It's turned on full!"

A moment's examination showed Harry Wharton that his chum was right. And all the hydrants were the same. The water had been cut off!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton's Ruse.

"GREAT pip, we're done!" ejaculated Johnny Bull, aghast. "That wooden shed will blaze like tinder, and there's no water to put it out! The whole factory will be burned to the ground!"

"Good heavens!"

"It's terrible!"

The Removites, now thoroughly scared, looked at one another in horror.

"What can we do?" panted Bob Cherry. "Who's turned the water off? Where's the turncock?"

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"PETER TODD'S PLOT!"

sticks, too, and they'd half kill some of us if we tried to move 'em!"

"Let's go and see, anyhow."

And Harry Wharton dashed to the stairs, the others following helter-skelter after him. As they ran across the yard Wharton cast a swift glance at the wooden shed. It was blazing more fiercely now, and it would certainly be beyond control at the end of another fifteen minutes.

The situation was desperate.

Most of the strikers had disappeared. They were thoroughly frightened, and considered it best to make themselves scarce. The majority of them did not believe in going so far as to fire the factory, and although in their excited moments they had threatened all sorts of violence, they had not actually meant it.

But Boggs & Co. were different. The scoundrel had gathered round him a big collection of men of his own breed, some of them being men who had never had employment in the factory.

This choice collection had started the fire, and they now formed a thick, impenetrable crowd round the water-tap in the roadway. If they held that position for long nothing could save the factory from destruction.

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Harry Wharton desperately. "We're done! Practically all the decent men have gone! I was going to ask them to help us drive Boggs & Co. off, but now we're left to ourselves! The news won't get to Courtfield for some time, and when a crowd comes up it'll be too late!"

"By Jingo! Here's Wingate!"

Wingate, Courtney, and a whole host of Sixth and Fifth-Formers ran up, panting and excited. In less than half a minute Harry Wharton had briefly explained the situation.

"We must drive the rot off!" exclaimed Wingate

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sharply. "There's nothing else for it! Great Scott, what a set of scoundrels they are! Are any of you kids hurt?"

"Not scratched!" said Bob Cherry, who was looking as though he had been through a mangle. "We're ready for anything, Wingate!"

"Good!"

Wingate and the others had had no suspicion that matters had reached such a pass at the factory. But now that the captain of Greyfriars was here he immediately took the reins.

"Are there no police here?" he asked.

"Yes; but they haven't helped us," replied Wharton. "They couldn't. They were too busy on their own account. There they are now, look, using batons against the roughs!"

"By Jove, yes! But there aren't a tenth enough!" said Wingate. "All you fellows form up! We'll make a charge."

"Hurrah!"

Barely two minutes had elapsed since Wingate's arrival, and the juniors and seniors rapidly formed up. Then, at a word from Wingate, they rushed forward to the grim-looking crowd of men who were guarding the water-cock.

They were in a large circle, and the outside ring had their backs to the others. And every man was armed with a heavy club.

The cadets charged.

On they went, yelling with all their might; but when they got within five yards of that desperate ring of scoundrels, they paused and fell back.

They were not funking it in the least, but the attitude of the men forbade them to go any further. The juniors knew instinctively that the ruffians would hit out blindly with their sticks, and serious injuries—and perhaps death—would result.

Better let the fire take its course than that.

But Harry Wharton & Co. were reckless.

"Come on!" roared Bob Cherry. "We'll risk it!"

"Yes; go for 'em!"

Wingate dashed forward.

"No!" he thundered. "Get back, all of you! It's not worth the risk. These scoundrels are desperate, and they might kill you! Get back!"

The juniors reluctantly retreated.

"It's hopeless!" groaned Nugent. "Oh, why aren't there more police?"

"An idea!" shouted Harry Wharton suddenly.

"What is it?" demanded Wingate.

"Why," panted Wharton, "we've got all our rifles in the factory! There's blank cartridges in 'em, but Boggs and his lot don't know it. If we fired on them they'd scatter in a tick!"

Wingate didn't hesitate.

"Splendid!" he said. "Rush and fetch them at once!"

"Rifles!" bellowed Harry Wharton. "We've got to fetch 'em!"

The Remove Cadets understood instantly, and in a second they were all rushing towards the factory at top speed. The fire was growing apace, but, fortunately, the wind was blowing the flames away from the factory. But for that providential chance the fire would have spread at thrice the speed.

In a very short space of time the juniors had returned with the rifles, and they formed up in gasping lines before Wingate.

"Come on," said the captain of Greyfriars briskly.

They hurried to the gate, and formed up smartly in a big semi-circle before the roughs. The latter eyed them in some uneasiness.

"I give you one chance!" shouted Wingate sternly. "If you do not leave that tap within fifteen seconds, I shall order these cadets to fire upon you!"

A roar went up, partly of fright, and partly of derision. Many of the men tried to break away, but the others prevented them.

"Keep still, you fools!" shouted Nat Boggs from the very centre of the crowd. "They won't fire! It's only swank!"

"Seven seconds have passed!" shouted Wingate.

"Go it, young 'un!" jeered Boggs. "It ain't no go! We're not shiftin' until that factory's well alight!"

Wingate set his teeth.

"Ready!" he shouted. "Present!"

There was a momentary pause, and all the roughs began to look frightened.

"Fire!"

Wingate snapped the word out sharply.

Harry Wharton & Co. obeyed the order.

Crack! Crack!

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

The rifles spat out fire—but nothing else—almost simultaneously with a rattle like that of a Maxim gun.

It was the crucial moment.

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A howl of fright went up, and Boggs & Co. broke ground and fled in dire panic, many of them shouting out that they had been hit. Imagination goes a long way; the men thought the rifles were loaded with ball cartridges, and actually thought that they had been shot.

Nat Boggs himself happened to receive a jab in the back from one of his companions' sticks, and he instantly rolled over, howling in agony. Then, after the first moment, he realised the truth and jumped up, his face working with terrible fury.

"It's a trick," he roared. "Come back, you fools!"

But his men were scattered, and had no intention of coming back. Wingate leapt forward, knocked Boggs down with a terrific drive, and turned on the water. Several Fifth-Formers were already in the factory waiting for that moment, and they directed the hoses on the burning shed without a second's loss of time.

Wingate had too much to do to attend to Boggs. The whole crowd of juniors and seniors hurried up to the factory, and within five minutes every available hose was playing upon the burning outbuilding.

After ten minutes uncertainty the crisis was passed.

The fierceness of the fire abated, and when the Courtfield brigade arrived they found that their services were practically unnecessary.

The fire was under full control.

The Greyfriars Cadets had won the day!

— — —

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Boggs's True Colours!

NAT BOGGS, almost mad with fury and impotence, hurried after his scattered men. He wiped blood from his face—the result of Wingate's blow—and swore violently.

"They've done me!" he snarled. "But I'll get even yet! I'll get hold of Hardinge himself, and bash his head in!"

For the man was almost insane with anger. Scores of the strikers who had upheld him all along were now beginning to have doubts; they realised that they had been led away by Boggs's lying tongue. He had fired the factory, and that was enough to turn the majority of the strikers against him.

Yet they were not sure—there was uncertainty.

But Nat Boggs's reign was almost at an end.

Chance was to put in his way an opportunity which would prove to the strikers, once and for all, that they had been deceived by their leader, and that they had done Mr. Hardinge a great wrong.

Boggs and ten of his men—the roughest of the lot—were walking slowly towards Courtfield, all of them looking angry. They talked together of the schoolboys who had ruined their plan.

Then a motor-car appeared round the bend. It was not Mr. Hardinge's car, and for several minutes Boggs & Co. took no notice. Then one of the men started forward and pointed.

"It's Hardinge!" he shouted. "The tyrant's in the car!"

Nat Boggs looked eagerly.

"By thunder, so he is!" he exclaimed. "We've got 'im, mates—got 'im clean! There ain't nobody about 'ere, an' we can pay 'im out an' then make ourselves scarce!"

"You're right Boggs!"

"We'll do it—anged if we don't!"

The car came on, fairly slowly. Then its driver, realising the attitude of the man ahead, quickened its pace.

But Boggs & Co. were not to be denied. One of them picked up a heavy stone and flung it. It struck the glass wind-screen, shattering it, and the driver, momentarily confused, swerved suddenly and jammed the brakes on to avoid an accident.

The car stopped, and Mr. Hardinge stood up, pale-faced. He was alone in the car except for the chauffeur.

He had heard of the fire, and, despite all warnings, had hired a car to rush to his property to see what damage had been done. He had also heard that the men were scattered, and so deemed it safe to take the journey.

"Stand back!" he shouted. "I've got a revolver on me, and I shall not hesitate to use it if—"

But Boggs had leapt forward. And as Mr. Hardinge thrust his hand into a side-pocket the strike-leader caught him round the neck and literally pulled him out of the car on to the road.

Meanwhile, the chauffeur had been knocked on the head, and now sat on the grass, looking round him in a dazed condition. He was not hurt, but he was unable to render Mr. Hardinge assistance.

Boggs and his men surrounded Mr. Hardinge, who, despite the desperate nature of the situation, was looking perfectly calm but very pale.

And Boggs, face to face with the man he hated at last, came out in his true colours. His anger and hatred got the better of him, and he stood there and swore at Mr. Hardinge in the most vile language.

Neither he nor his companions saw that a large crowd of men were hurrying up, and even when the car was surrounded by the new-comers Boggs was too excited to notice them.

He had worked himself into a terrible fury. His language was awful to listen to, and it was fortunate that there were no Greyfriars juniors present to have their ears contaminated.

"And now I've got yer!" he finished up, with a snarl. "I've bin lookin' forward to this meetin' for a long time, an' you ain't going to escape."

He raised his heavy stick threateningly, and Mr. Hardinge struggled helplessly in the grasp of Boggs's confederates.

But the stick was never allowed to fall.

Several men—men who had upheld Boggs until this moment—dashed forward and flung the stick from his hand. They had heard his whole tirade against Mr. Hardinge, and a revulsion of feelings seized them.

They realised that Mr. Hardinge had told the truth all along, and that Boggs was a thorough-paced scoundrel. At last the truth was brought home to them, and they wondered afterwards how they could have been blind for so long.

"What's the meanin' o' this, mates?" thundered Boggs. "Ain't you with me?"

"No, we ain't!" roared one of the men. "We know you at last to be a blackguard and a scoundrel! We must ha' been barmy to believe a word you said afore! My! To think that we up'eld a man what set fire to property an' now tries to 'arf murder a gentleman!"

Boggs staggered back.

Then he seemed to go wholly mad. In a sheer frenzy he lunged out on all sides. But the men had good hold of him, and kept him a firm prisoner. It took six of them to keep him quiet. But even then his tongue was free, and the men were disgusted at his foul utterances.

"We've bin fools, mates!" shouted somebody. "Boggs has deceived us all along! Let's take 'im an' 'is pals to the look-up straight away!"

"Ay! It's the best place for the likes o' them!"

"We've done Mr. Hardinge a wrong. Three cheers for 'im, mates!"

And almost every man present sent up a rousing cheer for Mr. Hardinge.

It was amazing. The swiftness with which the strikers had veered round almost took Mr. Hardinge's breath away, but he uttered a great sigh of relief. He knew that the strike was ended. Boggs had shown himself in his true colours, and the bulk of the men, honest enough fellows at heart, were sincerely sorry that they had ever listened to the scoundrel's seditious speeches.

Boggs and several of his henchmen were taken straight away by the angered strikers, and handed over to the police. They were likely to remain in prison for some considerable time, for they were guilty of assault, destruction to property, and incendiarism.

The news of his arrest spread like wildfire among the strikers, and those who had heard his attack upon Mr. Hardinge repeated it again and again. At the end of two hours, every one of the factory workers had completely changed his views, and the anger against Boggs was tremendous.

Up at the factory, Mr. Hardinge was warmly thanking the Remove Cadet Corps for their invaluable services.

Harry Wharton & Co. were still in the same untidy condition—perhaps worse, after subduing the fire—but they were all looking pleased and enthusiastic.

"But for you brave lads," said Mr. Hardinge feelingly, "I have not the least doubt that the whole of this property would now have been in smoking ruins."

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"We only did our best, sir," said Harry Wharton modestly.

"They worked like Trojans, Mr. Hardinge," put in Wingate smilingly.

"I can quite believe it," said the factory owner. "I cannot express my high opinion of them, Wingate. I can only say that I am deeply thankful that no one is badly hurt."

"The sole list of injuries amounts to nothing but bruises and scratches," said Wingate. "I do not think there is a Remove cadet present who does not bear some very visible trace of the conflict."

"Yes; those bruises make me anxious—" began Mr. Hardinge.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Don't you worry about that, sir!" he chuckled. "We're quite used to 'em at Greyfriars. Personally, I've enjoyed myself hugely."

"And I!"

"Rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

Mr. Hardinge smiled.

"I shall come to Greyfriars to-morrow to interview your headmaster, and tell him how grateful I am to him," he said. "I hope by that time to tell you that my worries are at an end. Fortunately, you got the fire well under control, and the damage is slight."

Mr. Hardinge was as good as his word when he came to Greyfriars the next day. He brought the news that every one of his men—excepting the ruffians who had assisted Boggs—had returned to work, and that a deputation of them had visited him, and humbly apologised for their behaviour.

It happened to be a half-holiday, and after Mr. Hardinge had witnessed a keenly-contested football match between the Remove and the Upper Fourth, he sprang his surprise upon the Remove Cadet Corps.

He had already got permission from the Head, and told Harry Wharton & Co. that he had arranged a huge feast for them in one of the largest Courtfield hotels.

The excitement among the cadets was intense. Billy Bunter, when he heard the news, immediately stated his willingness to become a member of the corps without delay. But the cadets weren't having any of Bunter's spoof, and the Owl of the Remove had to stand by, and regretfully watch the Cadet Corps start out for Courtfield.

The feast was a huge success. And there was not a single junior present who was not thoroughly satisfied with the welcome break in the monotony of school work which had been brought about by the scoundrelly Nat Boggs and the misguided factory rebels.

Some time later, when Wingate and Harry Wharton were chatting over the whole affair, Wharton mentioned the note that Vernon-Smith and Bolsover had presented as having come from Wingate; but, of course, the latter denied having given any such permit. In fact, had not Wharton insisted that it was a case for the Remove to deal with, it is not unlikely the two rascals would have had a most uncomfortable five minutes at the hands of the Captain of Greyfriars.

Both of them were tried by the Form, and, in accordance with the verdict, were given such a licking that they felt decidedly uncomfortable for a few days afterwards.

And, as the humorous Bob Cherry remarked, what with the glorious feed at the Courtfield Hotel, and the ripping scraps they had had, it was a great pity there were not some more factory rebels.



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Our Great Adventure Serial!

MYSTERIA



By SIDNEY DREW, Prince of Adventure Story-tellers.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is surrounded in his magnificent London residence by his friends Ching-Lung, Barry O'Rooney, Gan-Waga, the Eskimo, and Prout & Co.—the stalwarts of the millionaire's famous submarine, the Lord of the Deep. After a period of inaction there is a rumour afloat that Ferrers Lord is about to start upon one of his great expeditions again. Meantime, the millionaire himself is devoting all his attention to a curiously carved narwhal's tusk which he has picked up in an East-End curio-dealer's shop. The tusk proved to be hollow, and to contain some gold coins and a small wad of parchment, which bears a strange message from the sea. This tells of a mysterious floating island inhabited by strange monsters which Ferrers Lord determines to go in search of. Thurston immediately christens the phantom island "Mysteria" in advance. All hands board the Lord of the Deep, and as they are steaming along one day a bank of fog ahead suddenly parts, and there, not a league away, appears Mysteria—the weird island. Before sunrise the next morning a move is made to explore Mysteria. The landing-party find the island to be an evil-smelling swamp, with little sign of life. They catch a glimpse of a terrifying monster which inhabits a black lake, and then Barry creates a diversion by falling down a deep tunnel, and injuring his head. Shortly after this adventure, Jimson, the parrot, is found croaking over a huge bush, and when Prout advances to catch his pet, he stumbles over the body of a man whom they have never seen before. The castaway is found to be alive, and is taken aboard the submarine. The adventurers then find a great hole has been blown in Mysteria. Ferrers Lord and his men explore the bottom of the pit, and find a miniature island has been formed inside Mysteria. While crossing to the island in canvas boats, they are attacked by one of the great monsters which inhabit Mysteria; but, although the party have narrow escapes, nobody is injured. While Ferrers Lord and his party are exploring the inside of Mysteria, Hal Honour, the engineer, takes a walk. He is captured by Julius Faber and his men, and is imprisoned in their camp. During the night, however, he awakens, and sees that Faber himself is keeping guard. He enters into conversation with him, and suddenly the engineer raises his clenched fists, and strikes Faber senseless to the ground. In the meantime, a great landslide takes place in the interior of the island.

(Now continue this splendid story.)

The Cavern Ablaze—A Futile Voyage—Two Brave Hearts.

For minutes, as they crouched down, dazed and deafened with appalling sound and blinded with dust, the explorers imagined that Mysteria was crumbling into atoms. A thousand thunderstorms seemed to be raging in the cavern; a thousand siege-guns seemed to be firing continuous volleys. A seething wave, with a creamy top, dashed against the island, and rolled back. Then came a glare that spread rapidly in brightness. The very water was ablaze. The retreating wave took back tongues of flame on its crest. One of the naphtha-lamps had been overturned, spilling the spirit, which burned as well on water as on land.

The dust began to clear, for there was no current of air to keep it floating. Another fall might come at any moment, and their strained eyes were turned roofwards in fascination. By good fortune, they had not been near the hole. Ching-Lung and the millionaire were the first to realise that the landfall was nothing really terrifying. In that hollow vault, where the echoes magnified and distorted every sound, a whisper became almost a shout, a shout a gunshot, a gunshot a salvo of cannon. Round and round, flung back from wall to wall, from wall to roof, and from roof to water, the echoes crashed and rumbled, and hooted and boomed. They outlasted the dust and the waves. But at length they grumbled and groaned themselves into silence.

"Who ain't stone deaf, souse me?" said the bo's'un. "Can anybody 'ear?"

"Oh, I can hear, sonny," answered Ching-Lung, whose arm was round the trembling Eskimo, "but my ears are so jolly sore that you needn't shout. It's all serene, Wagtail. We're alive and smiling. Cheer up and chuckle, my old warrior. We're still as right as rain."

"Truth, ut's the heaviest rainfall Oi iver knowed, sor," said Barry. "Oi've hearrd of ut rainin' cats and dogs, and also pitchforks, but niver did Oi see such rain as this, at all, at all."

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FRANK RICHARDS

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"CHUCKLES!" 1/4

"Get away from the fissure," said Ferrers Lord. "Keep clear of that."

They hurried forward, clambering over the debris. If another fall occurred, it would naturally take place in the vicinity of the broadening fissure, which was sapping the stability of the hill. The millionaire was first. He saw the flame-tongues leaping round the wheels of the second lamp. They were too late to save it.

"Back!" he shouted. "Back to the right!"

All knew what to expect. A wave of hot, stifling air leapt towards them. Clouds of smoke poured up. They dashed away to the very edge of the water.

"She'll go in a minute, by hokey!" said Prout. "She'll go the minute she boils."

The fire-stream had surrounded the lamp, and the fierce flames were licking the metal drum and heating the naphtha. It could not last long, for spirit boils at a low temperature. A pillar of flame roared up from the burner as the pressure increased. Then there was an explosion as the lamp burst, and the very air seemed on fire.

It rained fire, but it was a rain of fire that water could not extinguish. Every spot that fell still burnt even on the surface of the underground lake. The heat became more oppressive, the smoke grew denser. The stench of the burning spirit dried their throats and parched their lips.

"Do you see, Lord?"

Ching-Lung's voice was only a whisper, but the millionaire understood. Every snaky spear of flame was pointing in one direction—towards the hole in the roof. The air, heated and expanded, was rushing upwards. The cavern was becoming a vast oven, and the hole was the flue. The naphtha aflame on the water was being sucked towards the island by the upward rush of the smoke and heated air. Like corks riding on the rim of a whirlpool, they were being dragged towards the centre.

A fit of coughing seized Gan-Waga. Prout, too, began to snort. Swiftly each separate patch of flame joined the

general conflagration, as if drawn by a magnet. A black, whirling column of smoke poured through the roof.

Each lamp had held thirty-six gallons of naphtha when first lighted. It was as bright as day, though the flames had a reddish tinge. The heat became scorching. Foot by foot they backed into the water.

"It can't last long," said Ferrers Lord. "We shall soon have seen the worst of it, lads."

"What's them? What's them, souse me?" yelled Prout.

Perhaps the smoke blinded them and distorted their vision, but through the gloomy screen, great, shadowy monsters were moving, lashing the blood-red water into foam, diving, plunging, and rolling, and flinging up crimson spray.

Gan-Waga did not see them. His body was a dead weight in Ching-Lung's arms.

"Courage—courage!" said Ferrers Lord.

The heat diminished, the flames spluttered and sank. They crawled ashore and sat down. The very ground felt hot.

"Give me some brandy," said Ching-Lung. "I'm a bit anxious about poor Gan-Waga. He can't stand this kind of work, poor old chap, and the heat has added the finishing touches. He's gone clean over."

"Here's the brandy," said Ferrers Lord. "Merely rub his temples with it. Let me look at him."

Gan-Waga's eyes were tightly closed. The millionaire felt his pulse.

"Let him alone," he said. "He will come round presently. Our little expedition, Ching, has turned out somewhat of a fiasco. It is now another case of patience."

"Honour can do nothing."

"Nothing in that smoke—except come back. Probably Rupert will act first."

"What can he do?"

"Wait and see," said the millionaire, smiling. "This is the summit of our resources, to wait and see."

There was a silence. The flames were dying out.

"Bedad," said Barry's doleful voice, "O'd sell all that's left of me ancestr'nal home, Ballybunion Castle, for an ounce of thick twist, a clay pipe, and a dhray box of matches! Oi wud, this blissid minute."

"Show the light again, Ferrers."

Gan-Waga had opened his eyes.

"Cheer up, kiddy," said Ching-Lung. "What's the matter?"

"Nots knows. Dat yo', Chingy?" murmured Gan-Waga weakly.

"You bet! Who else?"

"Yo' nots leaveses me, Chingy?"

"Not till the giddy cows come home," said Ching-Lung, with a laugh. "You can make your little mind easy on that particular point. Rupert will be along in a minute, so keep your pecker up. We're all here and happy. Go to sleep, Eskimoses, and don't worry. This picnic will soon be over."

Prout rubbed his bald head reflectively.

"I can't make it hout, Ben," he murmured: "it licks me, by hokey!"

"What licks you, souse me?"

"Why, that Heskimo," said the steersman, chewing a plug of salty tobacco. "I've seed him do things as would scare me to think on, and I reckoned him as brave as forty lions. What's bowled him over, messmate?"

Ben shook his head, for he did not understand.

"I gives it up, souse me," he answered.

But Ching-Lung knew, and so did Ferrers Lord. It was not to be expected that in a few years the Eskimo chief could shake off the superstitions and traditions of his lifetime and of his people. The vast ice-caverns and rock caves of his Northern home were haunted by monsters and demons—so he had been taught. And when that dreadful shape arose in the glare of the lamp, hissing and lashing, and broke their boat to atoms, it was little wonder that poor Gan imagined that he had encountered one of the demons about whom withered old crones had told hair-raising stories in the snow-huts far away, while the North wind howled and looted among the towering icebergs.

The crashing thunders of the cavern scared others as well as the explorers. Joe, who was toasting his toes at a comfortable fire, and cooking potatoes over it in a tin billy at the same time, bit his pipe clean in two. As the pipe had an amber mouthpiece—it was a gift from Ching-Lung—this fact says something as to the quality of Joe's teeth and the greatness of his excitement.

"It's a landslip!" he yelled, jumping to his feet. "Here, sir—I—what—"

Joe's voice was utterly smothered. Rupert dragged out his binoculars.

"Both lights are gone!" he gasped.

His voice, too, was lost in the uproar. Five minutes before he had seen the lights, both at rest, and both burning steadily and clear. Now they had vanished as if they had been blown out. But they showed again long before the

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sound had died away. One was still steady, but the other seemed to have multiplied itself a hundredfold.

"Take the glasses, Joe. What do you make of it?"

"One lamp has been knocked over, sir. That's the naphtha all alight."

"Quick! Let me look again. Yes, that's what it is. Try the instrument."

The carpenter dashed to the telegraphic apparatus.

"It ain't any good, sir!" he cried. "Either they won't answer, or else they can't. Yes; they do. Oh, go to pot! I don't want you!" he added angrily. "It's the Lord of the Deep again, sir."

"Ask them if they've had a message. We may have missed one."

No walls of rock or steel can check these mysterious waves; but when the answer came back from the submarine, it was not a cheerful one. They had intercepted four messages from Joe, but had received nothing from Ferrers Lord. The men crowded round with anxious faces.

"That stuff is burning like a furnace, sir," said the electrician. "I can see it with the naked eye!"

"They may have done it on purpose," said Thurston hopefully. "Try again, Joe!"

It was no use. Again the submarine signalled that they had the message. Joe sent them a rude reply. The glare became brighter and brighter. Then came a booming sound, and a blaze of red.

"That's the other lamp blowed up," said one of the men.

The instrument was ticking and clicking again. The Lord of the Deep wanted to know what was happening.

"Better build a raft, sir," said Joe. "I don't like it."

"Nor do I. We'll build one," said Rupert.

He was terribly anxious. Joe yelled to the men. Seizing axes and saws, they dashed through the tunnel, and worked like demons. Darkness closed down.

"Who knows the way here, Joe?" he asked.

"Only the cook, sir," said Joe. "We came back this way, and I showed him—at least, Prout did—where poor Barry had come a buster. I think he could find it, for he's a smart little chap, sir. We ought to send somebody!"

"I'll send, then. Don't stop for a second!"

Rupert Thurston telegraphed the order. Mortal men had never worked harder, and yet how tediously the building of the raft went on. Joe was engaged in manufacturing the sweeps. The perspiration rolled out of the gallant carpenter as he chipped and planed. There were tools of all kinds at hand. Hal Honour, when on an adventure of this kind, might have forgotten his hat, or even his boots, but he never forgot the tools.

When the raft was completed, it was clumsy, ugly, and heavy; and still the men from the submarine had not arrived.

The sweeps were clumsier still, and dreadfully weighty, but they were the best they could make.

"Quick—quick, lads!" cried Rupert. "It must be getting dark!"

"One minute, sir," said Joe.

Joe was always thoughtful. He had taken the bearings of the lights, and he dashed back for the compass. He pushed the raft clear, and seized the steering-pole. Two men seized each sweep.

"Aboy! Vere you vas, is ud?" shouted a voice.

Six men rushed down to the shore, the little chef leading them.

"Bravo, cookey!" cried Joe. "We can't hear from the chief, so we're off to find him. You wait for us!"

"Dot vas all righdt, Choe," called the little German. "I vill gook der tinner vor you—ja, I vill der tinner gook. Bud to nod pring home dot vicket Esgimo. Himmed! Trown him, Choe, vor he is ein vat tog in ud!"

"How's the sun?" cried Rupert.

"Going down, sir. It'll last about half an hour."

The raft carried six electric lamps, but without the sun to guide them it would be almost a thankless task to find the hole in the roof.

"Try a shout, sir," suggested Joe.

"Halloo—halloo—halloo!" bellowed Rupert.

The shout met with no response, except from the echoes which screamed it back again and again.

"Give 'em a 'and to starboard there, sir," said the carpenter. "The other two are pullin' 'em round!"

Thurston, standing up, pushed at the sweep. Joe took up a lamp, and flashed it on the water. The water was covered with a greasy black scum.

A washing-tub pulled by a child's wooden spade would have made as much headway as that leaden raft.

"Come to the pole, sir," said Joe, "and try to keep 'er just where I've marked!"

"That's almost due south."

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"That's it, sir. That's the bearings I took for the fire, sir," said Joe.

The lights dimmed a little, and Joe helped with the sweeps. They pulled their best.

"That light yonder seems showin' up more, Joe," said one.

Certainly, unless the atmosphere had cleared, the light was brighter. Joe rubbed his eyes and looked again.

"Where are you steering, sir?"

"Just where you told me," answered Rupert. "Practically due south."

Joe looked at the compass, and scratched his head. For a few seconds the problem baffled him.

"And we're going right back. Bust it! It's the rotten island that's turning round!" he yelled. "It's the island!"

There could be no other explanation for the phenomenon, for the compass, in the ordinary way, could not tell a deliberate lie. The magnetic north was as fixed as the stars. It was faithless Mysteria that had shifted.

"Shove her ashore," said Joe.

The raft touched land. Thurston's face was white and haggard. Joe went straight up to the instrument.

"Build fifteen-foot canvas boat at once," he telegraphed. "Must have it at dawn!"

"All right," came the answer.

"Vy vas ve nod ein leedle rafdt, Choe, is ud?" said the low voice of Herr Schwartz. "Himmel! I vas der pesdt rower on der peautiful Rhine. Dunder und blitzten! led us dogedder go, Choe!"

Joe did not doubt the cook's courage. He went straight to Thurston. It was a desperate venture.

"You'll let us go, sir?" said Joe.

"Yes, my brave lad," said Rupert; "but I shall go with you."

Again Joe scratched his head.

"All right, sir," he answered. "We shall be only too proud. There's one thing that's worrying me, sir."

"What's that, Joe?"

"I want to know what's appened to Mr. Honour, sir."

Thurston had not given the engineer a second thought. He was aware that he had gone up to the top of the hill, but that was many hours ago. It was night now.

"It's strange," he said—"very strange."

"If anything appened to him, sir," went on Joe bluntly—"and—and you know what I mean, sir; I must speak plain, Mr. Rupert—who's going to navigate the ship, sir?"

Rupert turned away, and paced up and down.

"Cut that raft in three, and splice one part up!" cried the carpenter.

If anything had happened to Hal Honour! If that dark vault had swallowed his comrades up for good and all! Rupert alone could navigate the vessel. Her best and bravest—Ching-Lung, Ferrers Lord, gallant Prout, clever Maddock, and jovial Barry, to say nothing of their idol, Gan-Waga—all had vanished into that abode of gloom. But there were two hundred others. Rupert would have given his life to go.

Duty said "No." He had other lives to look after.

And so, in silence, two brave hearts pulled away into that impenetrable gloom—Joe and the cook.

A Successful Escape from One Danger Throws the Engineer into Another.

Harold Honour would not have faced the horrors of the forests of Mysteria for the value of all the jewels of the East. It had taken him no time to free his ankles. His sleep had refreshed him, and the prospect of escape stimulated his tough muscles to energy. Men of such stamina as his are rare. He worked not only with his brains, but also with his hands, and rough labour had tuned up his sinews like wire.

Unless Julius Faber had a skull like a steel plate, it would be long enough before he recovered his senses. Crouching in the shadow, Honour again began to consider. There was only one path to freedom, and that was the sea. It was worth the attempt, at any rate. He crept back to where Faber lay, and searched him for a knife, having already secured the cinnabar-hunter's revolver.

The taste of water, after such long abstinence, had quickly brought back the liking for rum, and the men had drunk a good deal. Honour was not aware of this, but it was a fact that told in his favour. The fire sank lower and lower, until it was a mere smudge of dull red. Taking fortune in his hands, the engineer crept past the sleepers, and almost went headlong into the creek over what his sense of touch told him was a stout rope.

"A near thing," he muttered. "How's she fastened up?"

He pulled gently on the rope. The side of the canoe

touched the bank. Honour dropped into her, and at once found a paddle. She was a great, unwieldy craft, and he began to think that it was a case of jumping out of the frying-pan into the more unpleasant region of the fire. With a pair of sweeps he might have managed her in some fashion, but with only a clumsy, single-bladed paddle he was doubtful.

Another pull on the rope brought her up with a jerk. Her bows were also moored to the bank. He cut the stern hawser, and dragged himself forward. Presently he had severed the second rope. Above him, darker than the sky, towered the figure-head of the canoe. He pushed the paddle against the bank, and forced the canoe into the middle of the creek. Then Hal Honour took off his boots.

He could just make out where land and water met, and dipped in the paddle, dodging from side to side. It was arm-breaking and heart-breaking work. The canoe seemed to be made of lead, and she was as stubborn as a mule. Once she dug her nose into the bank, and her stern swung round, threatening to block the channel. He managed to work her clear.

"If Faber comes to," he muttered, "and gives the alarm—well—Get on, you unwieldy brute!"

Honour barely progressed a yard in a minute at first, but gradually he gained experience, and each thrust of the paddle began to tell. He could see much more clearly. The creek had broadened out. His heart thrilled as he heard a wavelet ripple along the canoe's sides and felt her rise upon it, though almost imperceptibly. He was nearing the open water.

Up went her nose again, and a white surge hissed under her. He worked the paddle with redoubled energy. In five minutes more the waves were chopping around him, and Mysteria lay dark behind.

The engineer laughed. There was a fairly strong tide. He pulled with it for ten minutes, and then let the great canoe drift. It was too dark to attempt to rig up a sail of any kind, even if he could find the materials. Suddenly he heard shouts.

"Yell away," he chuckled. "You're a quarter of an hour late."

Nothing could be done except allow the canoe to swim with the tide or with the current, whichever it was. He



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opened the face of his watch, but the watch had stopped, probably when he fell. Then, utterly astounded, the engineer ducked down, making himself as small as possible.

"'Ere! What's this brimstone game?" snarled an astonished voice. "What are we afloat for?"

So he was not the only tenant of the canoe. The wooden-legged man—Honour knew his voice—had crawled into it to sleep. Was he the only one?

"Say, what's the brimstone row? Can't none of yer answer?"

There was a note of alarm in the cripple's shout. Honour could hear him scrambling about in the stern.

"What the—brimstone—ere—dash and 'ang it—where?" gasped Stumpy, incoherent with surprise and dismay.

His head and shoulders appeared dimly against the light.

"Faber, Fatty, Derrick!" he bellowed. "Are yer asleep? What the brimstone are we doin'?"

Stumpy was shuffling forward, terrified at receiving no answer. Suddenly the dread truth dawned upon him.

"The brimstone boat 'as broke loose," he almost screamed, "and there's only me on her! Ain't you there, Faber? Ain't you there, Derrick? Fatty, ahoy! Are you dead?"

A stream of blasphemy followed. His hand had encountered the severed rope.

"It's Faber—it's Faber!" he hissed. "The brimstone 'ound has sold me! He's done a deal wi' that 'Onour, and sold me! They've all sold me! I knowed a sight too much, and they've turned me adrift! They wanted me out on it! And now——"

He stared wildly about him, gnashing his teeth with rage and fear. Mysteria was a mile away. He began to groan dismally and then to curse. Honour kept quiet, but there was a smile on his lips. He had nothing to fear from the cripple.

"The brimstone dogs!" groaned Stumpy. "I'm done, I'm done, I'm done!"

A moment later a match was struck and then another. The light revealed the cripple's terror-stricken face. The breeze quickly extinguished the match, but not before Honour understood that Stumpy had found a bottle of rum. The sobbing, moaning, and cursing went on for fully an hour. Cramped though he was, Honour did not stir. The mutterings became more maudlin and less frequent. Then something, evidently the bottle, fell with a crash, and the harsh cry of a seabird and the swish of the waves alone broke the silence.

"As drunk as any gentleman of sixty years ago," laughed Honour softly. "I suppose he takes the same medicine for all his complaints. Anyhow, the rum has saved me the trouble of twisting his wicked little neck!"

He made his way astern as noiselessly as he could. Stumpy was breathing heavily. With one hand just touching the cripple's throat, but ready to close upon it, Honour explored for matches, and found them in Stumpy's pocket.

"He won't waken," he thought.

Another search was rewarded by the discovery of a hurricane-lamp, but there was no oil in it. He soon found the oil-drum, and it was well filled. The engineer lighted the lamp and explored the canoe.

Faber had provisioned it as if for a long voyage, except for fresh water. Honour set to work to step the mast and set the sail. He dragged the gaff up to the throat, and the sail filled, but only for a second. Every scrap of wind had gone, and the canvas hung in idle folds and crumples against the spar. Then a thick mist came down, and continued for four solid hours.

"What the brimstone madness——" panted the voice of Stumpy at length.

The engineer looked over his shoulder. The cripple was regarding him with red-rimmed, frightened eyes.

"Lie down!"

Honour showed the hilt of a revolver.

"Oh, I say, guv'nor!" said Stumpy. "What's the meaning o' the brimstone game? 'Ow did you do it? Where are we? What 'ave you done wi' the rest? Be a pal, mate!"

Stumpy's head was almost rum-proof. At the sight of the engineer half his terrors had flown. Like most cheats and rascals, he had almost implicit faith in a man of reputed honour. He knew that Hal Honour would do him no harm. And he was not alone. That, of itself, was enough to fill him with joy.

"Let's be pals, guv'nor?" he whimpered.

Hal's answer was to show the revolver a second time, and to point suggestively to the sea.

"No, guv'nor; none o' that brimstone silliness!" said the cripple. "I knows you wouldn't do it. You wouldn't take no mean advantage of a poor, 'armless cripple—I knows you wouldn't, guv'nor. I ain't done nothin' to yer. Bless yer, I was thinkin' all the time 'ow I could get you away from them brimstone pack of cutthroats. I was, straight, sir. Sure as I live I was, guv'nor!"

The engineer made no reply. In no direction could he see the faintest vestige of a ripple that promised even a puff of wind. The rising sun looked like a disc of copper. He was THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 313.

FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"PETER TODD'S PLOT!"

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ONE
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very thirsty, but his soul rebelled against the very thought of rum. In a wrinkle of a tarpaulin the dense fog of the night had left about half a teacupful of water. He drained it carefully into a tin mug and drank it. The flavour of the tarpaulin was pronounced, but the water was better than spirit.

"Guv'nor," whined Stumpy, "I wants——"

"Shut up, or I'll knock your head off! Keep there?"

Honour searched the various lockers until he brought a fairly good telescope to light. It revealed nothing but water and sky, though he used it diligently. In what direction the canoe had drifted he could not tell. Had there been a supply of water on board, the adventure would not have been so disquieting. But this magnificent Briton could not live on rum, and there was no prospect of rain.

"Are there any tools here, rat?" he called out sharply.

"In the 'ole under the figure'ead, guv'nor," said Stumpy meekly.

The engineer's blue eyes glistened. The tools were in a sack.

"Open these!" he said, passing two large tins of corned beef to the cripple. "Take out the meat, and scrub them clean!"

"All right, guv'nor."

Seizing a saw, Honour attacked the hideous figurehead of the canoe, while Stumpy carried out his orders. Then the engineer stripped a sheet of zinc from a case. Punching a series of holes in a pail, he filled it with wood, and set a fire going. Then he set to work. He was in his element; and the cripple watched him with interested eyes.

Tap, tap, tap! sounded the hammer, and, with all the skill of a magician—a magician he was—the rough zinc formed itself into curling tubes. Over their edges trickled the solder, at the touch of the soldering-iron closing up the seams. The sun rose higher and hotter, but Honour did not pause, except to point to a paddle, and direct Stumpy to saw it up for fuel.

Then he seized the two empty tins. At length the strange-looking apparatus of coils and pipes was ready.

"Reef up, five!" said Hal Honour, jerking his chin towards the sail.

Stumpy was quick to obey. In another half-hour the task was ended. One of the tins, filled with seawater, was hissing in the fire-bucket. The other was empty, and rested in another pail, which also contained seawater. In a few hours the man of miracles, with only a few crude tools, had converted a couple of meat-tins and a sheet of zinc into a rough, but quite serviceable, apparatus for distilling fresh water from salt.

"Stoke!" he said. "Use paddle-boxes; and keep bucket cool."

Stumpy was his slave now. Drop by drop the steam condensed itself into water, and plashed into the tin, quite free from salt.

Honour never gave his handiwork a second glance. He was quite certain that it was perfect. But the fuel was going too fast. He brought out a tin of condensed soup, and again thrust the soldering-iron into the fire. This was a simple task. There was plenty of wick for the hurricane-lamp, and in a very short time the soup-tin was converted into a lamp with three burners. He filled it with oil, of which he had a good supply.

"Let fire out, and use that!" said the man of few words.

"He's brimstone—brimstone!" gasped the amazed cripple.

Still the blazing day gave no promise of a breeze. Honour, to whom an idle moment was worse than poison, cleaned and repaired his watch with nothing except a penknife and a handkerchief, and guessed at the time by the height of the sun. After that he fished with some success.

The heat was blistering, and the smoke from the fire rose in a straight pillar. As the sun began to sink there was water for both of them to drink.

"Go to sleep!" said Honour.

"And you, guv'nor?"

"The same," replied Hal Honour; for there could be no treachery unless the man went mad.

Danger, like misfortune, makes queer bed-fellows. The greatest engineer of modern times and the stunted, crippled rascal stretched themselves out. Around them lay the dark, silent water. The lamp burned steadily as they slumbered, making them pure water for the morrow, and the sky was one blaze of stars.

The lion and weasel slumbered together. And, for the first time in twenty years, Stumpy had gone a clear day without touching strong drink, thus establishing a record. But how would it end?

(This grand serial will be continued next Monday.
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My Readers' Page

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FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"PETER TODD'S PLOT!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In our next grand long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, the juniors of the Remove are considerably worried on the account of Wingate, the popular captain of the school.

Owing to various accidental discoveries they make, the chums make up their minds that Wingate is allowing himself to drift into evil ways, they therefore determine to save him from himself. Peter Todd is especially keen on the idea, and lays a deep plot by which Wingate may be induced to see the error of his ways.

Needless to say, the juniors do not receive much encouragement from the captain—very much the reverse, in fact. They persevere, however, and although

"PETER TODD'S PLOT"

cannot claim to be much of a success, yet everything is satisfactorily cleared up in the end.

A PERSONAL MESSAGE TO EVERY CHUM.

"Chuckles!" our latest companion paper, is still booming—"hot cakes isn't in it!" as one newsagent remarked—and I am sure all my MAGNET chums must be proud of the success achieved by the bright little paper which is literally the outcome of their own suggestions and ideas. Certainly I am proud of it, and very grateful to my thousands of reader chums, too, for such a success as this latest one of ours could only have been achieved by the loyal efforts of a huge band of willing helpers. Such widespread interest has been aroused by our latest venture, that I venture to say that there is hardly a boy or girl in the country who has not at least heard of "Chuckles!" while it will not be very long before the same cheery word, with all that it stands for in the way of funny pictures, splendid stories and bright colours, will be familiar to almost every young Colonial throughout our vast overseas possessions.

The day of the comic paper, which supplies its readers with the unwholesomely sensational and trashy type of reading-matter, is past. The new style—"Chuckles!" style—has put this type of paper on a higher plane altogether.

In "Chuckles!" I provide my chums—in addition to the amusing pictures—with wholesome literature of the same high order and distinctive interest as that which has made the famous companion papers, "The Magnet" and "Gem" libraries, and "The Penny Popular," so deservedly popular. It is my firm conviction—and always has been—the average British boy and girl prefers this wholesome type of literature, which is all too seldom offered them; hence my efforts to give them such fare. And from the way in which these efforts have been supported, I do not feel that I can be far wrong.

Next Saturday's "Chuckles!" is yet another splendid example of the value that can be given—both in quantity and quality—for one halfpenny, and I am going to ask every one of my readers to do me the favour of getting at least two copies—one for himself, and one for his friend! Will all my loyal reader-chums, boys and girls alike, just do me this one good turn? Thank you, I know you will!

Remember when buying next Saturday's issue of "Chuckles!" the great new halfpenny coloured comic paper, say:

"I'LL TAKE TWO COPIES, PLEASE!"

A READER'S MESSAGE IN CIPHER.

One of my readers, who was evidently a careful follower of our winter evening problems, sends me the following quaint-looking epistle, in which the cipher given in Winter Evening Problem No. 11—published in No. 308 of "The Magnet" Library—is made use of:

4 5 1 18. — 5 4 9 20. 18 18

9. — 1. 12. 23. 1. 25 19. — 12. 15. 15. 11. —

6 15 18 23. 1 15 4. — 20 15. — 20 5 5. — 15. 1 7 14. 8 20. —

8 20 18 25. — 25. 45 11. — 9. — 15. 20 21. 18. 14. — 25 15. 21 10. —

7 15 15 4. — 27 9 19 5 5 19. — 6 15 18. — 1. — 5 1 16 16 25. —

14 5 23. — 25 5 1 18. —

25 15 21 18 19. — 20 15 21 22 25. —

4. — 18 5 1 4 5 18

which, being interpreted, reads as follows:

"Dear Editor,—I always look forward to 'The Magnet' every week. I return your good wishes for a Happy New Year.

Yours truly.

"A READER."

My reader has my best thanks for his message and good wishes. The use of ciphers is very interesting, and I know that quite a number of my chums regularly correspond with one another by means of postcards written in this simple but ingenious cipher-code.

THE HOME WIZARD—No. 2.

Two Coins Made Into One.

Having thus turned one coin into two, the wizard may proceed to show that the two are in reality one only, the second being in fact merely—in spiritualistic phrase—the astral double of the other.

To demonstrate this, he takes a small-sized pocket-handkerchief, and spreads it squarely over a plate, with its sides parallel with the edges of the table.

In the centre he lays the two sixpences, the borrowed one undermost, and invites the most sceptical gentleman of the company to satisfy himself that they are really there, and that there is "no deception."

He then turns down in succession all four corners of the handkerchief in such a manner that they shall just cover the coins.

Inserting the first and second fingers of each hand between the folds of the handkerchief, he draws the hands slowly apart, at the same time lifting the handkerchief, and allowing the coins to slide out on the plate.

Strange to say, however, it is only the borrowed coin which does so, the other having mysteriously disappeared.

The magical agent in the present instance consists of a tiny pellet of soft wax, which is lightly pressed, till needed, against the lowest button of the performer's vest. While the sceptical gentleman is scrutinising the coins, he scrapes this off with the nail of the forefinger, and, in the act of turning down the first corner of the handkerchief, presses it against such corner, which he folds down so that the pellet shall rest on the centre of the uppermost coin. The wax makes the coin adhere to the handkerchief, and the act of moving the hands apart draws it into the right hand, the borrowed coin alone falling on the plate, on which it is in due course handed back to the owner.

(Another splendid conjuring article next Monday.)

The Wizard

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