

THE MISSING MASTER

This Week's Thrilling Complete School Story.



No. 331. Vol. 8. June 13th, 1914.



Mr. Sawyer swung Gosling off his feet, tucked him under his arm like a sack, and started across the Close towards the School House. "Ow!" roared Gosling. "Lemme down! You're busting my ribs!" (An amusing incident from the long complete school story in this issue.)

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A Grand, New, Long, Complete Story of the Chums
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By FRANK RICHARDS.



There was a scratch of a match, and a sudden glare of light. The broken-nosed man bent over Loder, holding the match so close to his face that he winced and blinked. "It's a kid!" ejaculated the man in disgust. "I ain't Larry Lynx, after all!"
(See Chapter 8.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Shown In!

"THIS 'ere Greyfriars?"

The question was addressed to Loder of the Sixth, who was standing in the gateway of Greyfriars School looking down the road towards Friardale.

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove, were outside the porter's lodge, finding a little harmless and necessary amusement in chipping Gosling, the porter.

Loder looked superciliously at the questioner. The chums of the Remove looked at him curiously.

He was a squat, thick set man, with very broad shoulders,

and short, stumpy legs, evidently tremendously strong and muscular. His head, shaped like a bullet, was adorned with a low-crowned bowler hat, set a little on one side, and looking decidedly rakish. His face was very ruddy, scarred in several places, and the nose was broken. "Pug" was written, as it were, all over his countenance. He looked like what he evidently was, an old prize-fighter, and what he could possibly want at Greyfriars was a mystery.

Loder did not reply to the question, but after one lofty glance at the stranger, looked past him, and seemed unaware of his existence.

Whereupon the gentleman with the broken nose repeated the question, in a somewhat louder tone.

"This 'ere place Greyfriars, young shaver?"

Harry Wharton & Co. grinned. To hear Loder, who was a prefect, and a tremendous swell in the Sixth Form, addressed as "young shaver," was a pure delight to them. Loder jumped. He condescended to direct his lofty glance upon the stranger once more.

"Are you speaking to me?" he asked contemptuously.

The broken-nosed gentleman nodded.

"I ham!" he replied, with unnecessarily aspirated emphasis. "I arsked you, young shaver, if this 'ere place has Greyfriars?"

"Yes; this is Greyfriars!" said Loder coldly. "I don't see how it concerns you, my man. You had better be off. Tramps are not allowed in here!"

"Tramps!" repeated the inquirer. "Who are you calling a tramp? Do you want me to knock you into the middle of next week, young shaver?"

Loder backed away a little. He was a big fellow, and taller than the stranger; but there was no doubt that the broken-nosed gentleman could have knocked him into the middle of next week, or still further along the calendar, if he had liked, and Loder promptly backed out of reach.

"Don't be afride!" said the stranger. "I ain't goin' to 'it you. But don't you call a gentleman a tramp, young shaver! If you don't know a gentleman when you see one, it's time you learned. I'm 'ere to see an old friend, and don't you forget it!"

And he came in at the gateway.

"You'd better cut off!" said Loder angrily. "If you come in here, I'll call the porter to set the dog on you. Who the deuce are you?"

"Name of Sawyer!" said the broken-nosed gentleman. "Enry Sawyer, a nime well known to the fancy, young shaver. I'm 'ere to see an ole pal, I reckon. There's a Mister Lascelles at this 'ere school, ain't there?"

Loder stared at him.

"Mr. Lascelles! The mathematics master? Yes. Do you mean to say that you've got any business with him?"

"You've 'it it!"

"What rot! If you've come here to beg——"

Mr. Sawyer made a threatening movement, and Loder of the Sixth did not finish his sentence. He beat a retreat. Mr. Sawyer frowned after him, and then turned to the group of juniors, who were regarding him very curiously. Mr. Lascelles, the mathematics master at Greyfriars, was very popular with Harry Wharton & Co.—all the more because they knew what was not generally known at Greyfriars—that he had been a pugilist before he became a master in the school. That was a secret, and Harry Wharton & Co., who had learned it by chance, had kept it. They guessed at once that Mr. Sawyer was one of the old acquaintances of the mathematics master, in the days when he had been known in the ring as Larry Lynx. And they could guess, too, that Mr. Lascelles would not be pleased by a personal visit from a gentleman of Mr. Enry Sawyer's description.

"P'raps you young gents will tike me to Mr. Lascelles?" said the broken-nosed gentleman. "I come down 'ere special from London to see 'im."

The chums of the Remove scanned him. There was a bulldog tenacity of purpose in the scarred face of the old pugilist; but there was good-nature, too, and they concluded that he had come to see his old acquaintance as a friend, ignorant of the harm it might do him in the school. The sight of such a visitor for Mr. Lascelles would undoubtedly set the whole school talking.

"Does Mr. Lascelles expect you?" asked Harry.

Mr. Sawyer shook his head and chuckled.

"That 'e don't!" he replied.

"Then, don't you think you'd better write to him first?" Wharton ventured to suggest. "It isn't known here that——"

"That he's got friends like me, you mean?" said Mr. Sawyer, composedly. "Bless your 'eart, Larry won't mind.

He ain't a snob, Larry ain't! One of the best, old Larry—a fist of iron and a 'eart of gold! 'Sides, it's important, and I've got to see 'im!"

"Wot do you want 'ere?" asked Gosling, the porter, coming out of his lodge with a frowning brow. "'Oo are you?"

"Nime of Sawyer!"

"I'm surprised at you young gentlemen talkin' to this pusson!" said Gosling severely. "Wot I says is this 'ere, I'm surprised!"

"Ass!" said Bob Cherry politely.

"Chump!" said Johnny Bull.

Gosling snorted.

"You clear hout of 'ere, my man!" he said, with a wave of the hand towards Mr. Sawyer. "You can't come in 'ere!"

"Can't I?" said Mr. Sawyer. "I'd like to see who'd stop Enry Sawyer when he's come to see an old pal. You're the porter, I s'pose—wot? Well, then, I s'pose it's your dooty to show visitors in, ain't it? You show me in!"

"I'll show you out!" said Gosling angrily.

"You'll show me in," said Mr. Sawyer, coming closer to Gosling. "I want to see Mr. Lascelles—Mr. Lawrence Lascelles wot is a master 'ere. Savvy?"

"Houtside!"

"Are you goin' to show me in?"

"No, I ain't!" said Gosling flatly. "I don't show in your sort. You get houtside, that's wot I say. 'Ere, 'ands off!" yelled Gosling.

Mr. Sawyer had reached out at the school-porter, and grasped him. Gosling struggled in his grasp; but he might as well have struggled with a boa-constrictor. The old "pug" handled him as easily as if he had been an infant. He swung Gosling off his feet, and tucked him under his arm like a sack. Gosling's legs waved in the air behind Mr. Sawyer, and his hands clawed the air in front, and his red and furious face rubbed on Mr. Sawyer's brilliant fancy waistcoat. Carrying the porter as easily as a child, Mr. Sawyer started across the Close towards the School House.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove burst into a yell of laughter.

The sight of the unfortunate Gosling being carried off bodily like a naughty infant was too much for them.

"Ow!" roared Gosling. "Lemme down! Lemme go! Ow! You're bustin' my ribs, you scoundrel! 'Elp! Wot I says is this 'ere—Ow—ow—ow! 'Elp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were shouts of laughter from all sides, as fellows came hurrying up in every direction to see the extraordinary sight.

"My only hat!" roared Coker of the Fifth. "Who is it? What is it?? Why don't you walk, Gosling, you old slacker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'Elp, Master Coker—Master Temple, 'elp me! 'E's a-bustin' of my ribs!" wailed the unhappy Gosling.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Great Scott!" murmured Loder of the Sixth. "Can that ruffian really be a visitor for Lascelles! Great pip! What sort of connections has the fellow got?" And Loder grinned. He did not like Mr. Lascelles, who had more than once chipped in to stop the Sixth-Former from bullying the fags. "My only aunt! This will be a show-up for Lascelles, if he's really connected with that fellow!"

"'Elp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme go, you 'ound—lemme down, you 'orrible ruffian—ow!"

Mr. Sawyer paid no heed to Gosling's roaring and wriggling. He carried him on calmly towards the house grinning affably at the surrounding crowd, who were yelling with laughter. Half Greyfriars had gathered round, and were following them. Mr. Sawyer reached the School House, and strode up the steps into the wide hall, with Gosling still wriggling and panting in his grasp.

"Now you'll show me in to Mr. Lascelles—wot?" said Mr. Sawyer.

"Ow! Ow!"

"Bless my soul! What is all this noise?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, the Remove-master, looking out of his study.

"A visitor for Mr. Lascelles, sir," said Loder maliciously.

"What?"

"Make 'im lemme go, sir!" wailed Gosling. "He's 'urtin' my ribs something erook. Ow!"

"What—what—what——" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "My good man—ahem!—what does this mean? Put Gosling down at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence, boys! This—this is most extraordinary! Put Gosling down!"

"No offence, sir," said Mr. Sawyer, ducking his head to the Remove-master, and taking off his bowler hat with his

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Mr. Lascelles's expression was quite cordial, though a little uneasy, as he faced his visitor. "S'prised to see me 'ere," said Mr. Sawyer. "I 'ope it won't do you no 'arm, my coming 'ere! I suppose they don't know anythin' about your having been a pug?" (See Chapter 3.)

left hand, his right arm being wrapped round Gosling's person. "No offence meant, sir, and I 'ope none taken. This 'ere understrapper couldn't show me in to see Mr. Lascelles—"

"Please put him down."

"Anythin' to oblige, sir," said Mr. Sawyer; and he put Gosling down.

Possibly Mr. Sawyer had a misguided sense of humour. At all events, he put the wrong end of Gosling down first, and the school-porter stood on his head for the fraction of a second, and then tumbled over on the floor, and lay gasping like a pair of very old bellows. The Greyfriars fellows who had followed them in burst into shrieks of laughter.

"You—you have come here to see Mr. Lascelles?" ejaculated the Remove-master. "Really—really, my good man—"

"Here's Mr. Lascelles!" exclaimed Loder, as the mathematics master came into sight in the passage. "Mr. Lascelles, sir, a visitor for you!"

'Enry Sawyer swung round.

"That's 'im!" he said.

Mr. Lascelles stared at him blankly. The well-built, handsome master looked a startling contrast to the bullet-headed, broken-nosed man who claimed his acquaintance. But Mr. 'Enry Sawyer evidently did not see the incongruity. He advanced towards Mr. Lascelles with outstretched, stumpy hand.

"And 'ow goes it, Larry?" he asked affectionately.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE GREYFRIARS TRIPPERS!"

Look and manner showed that he had a very friendly regard for the mathematics master of Greyfriars.

Mr. Lascelles muttered something indistinctly. Everybody could see that he was disconcerted by the sudden appearance of Henry Sawyer in the school. He took the outstretched hand mechanically.

"He knows him, by Jove!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yaas, begad!" murmured Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove. "And he ain't ashamed to show it, either! Didn't I always say he was a sport?"

"You—you know this—this gentleman, Mr. Lascelles?" asked Mr. Quelch, his voice almost failing him.

The mathematics master nodded shortly.

"I know him," he said. "Come into my study, Sawyer!"

"I'm arter you," replied Mr. Sawyer.

The old pugilist followed Mr. Lascelles into his study, and the door closed behind them; and the closing of the door was followed by a general gasp of amazement from the spectators of the strange scene.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Helping Bunter!

"WELL, I'm blown!"

It was Horace Coker, of the Fifth Form, who expressed his feelings with that remark.

The remark expressed also the feelings of the other fellows.

For a man who was unmistakably a retired prizefighter

A Splendid Complete Tale of the
Chances of Greyfriars. Order Early!

to come to Greyfriars and claim the acquaintance of a master there was astonishing enough. But for that master to shake hands with him and take him into his study was more amazing still.

The fellows were simply astounded.

Mr. Quelch, quite nonplussed and overcome, retreated into his study. It was no business of his, he reflected. Gosling was sitting up on the floor, looking very dazed. He peered round him cautiously, as if in fear of seeing the old "pug" close at hand. The man who had picked him up and carried him under his arm like a sack was a terrifying individual to Gosling.

"As he gorn?" Gosling murmured. "Wot I says is this 'ere—I ain't never knowed nothing like it afore in my natural—that I ain't. The 'orrible ruffian! Which I ain't goin' to be 'andled like that there—not if I knows it!"

And Gosling retreated, grumbling to himself.

The fellows, seniors and juniors, who had witnessed the meeting of the mathematics master and the old pugilist, were in a buzz of excited comment.

"Pretty sort of acquaintance for a master here to have?" Snoop of the Remove remarked, with a sneer. "I always said there was something fishy about Lascelles!"

"What would the Head say?" remarked Skinner.

"I say, you fellows, I know about it," piped Billy Bunter, who prided himself upon knowing everything. "Haven't I told you a lot of times that Lascelles and that prize-fighting chap Larry Lynx were the same man?"

"Rats!" said Bolsover major.

"Skinner knows it; he saw his photograph!"

"It's a fact, too!" said Skinner.

"Bosh!" said Bulstrode.

"I don't see why he shouldn't know an old prize-fighter, if he chooses," said Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars; "and I don't see that it's anybody's business but his own!"

"The Head would have something to say if he knew," said Temple of the Fourth. "But I think Lascelles is a brick to stick to an old acquaintance like that. It isn't everybody who'd have owned up to it before a crowd of fellows. The fellow isn't exactly respectable!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Harry Wharton & Co. withdrew from the buzzing crowd. As they knew Mr. Lascelles' little secret, they did not choose to take part in the discussion. There were several other fellows in the Remove who knew it, or suspected it, but the Famous Five and Lord Mauleverer were the only ones who had actual knowledge on the subject.

They had seen the mathematics master in the "ring" at Chilford, as Larry Lynx, and they had heard him explain to the Head, when Dr. Locke was told the facts by an old enemy of the young boxer. Mr. Lascelles was not ashamed of his earlier career in the "ring" as a boxer. But, of course, it would do him no good to have it generally known now that he was a master in a public school.

Too much talk on the subject might make it necessary for him to resign his position at Greyfriars, and that would have been a serious blow to him. The Head had taken a kindly view of the matter, but the board of governors might take quite another view.

"The man must be a silly duffer to come here," Frank Nugent remarked, as the chums strolled out into the Close. "It gives Lascelles away. It makes it awkward for him, and awkward for the Head, if there's much talk about it!"

"I say, you fellows—"

Billy Bunter had followed the chums out. The fat junior's little round eyes were blinking with excitement behind his big spectacles.

"Oh, clear off!" said Bob Cherry crossly. "We don't want to hear what you think about it, Bunter! Shut up!"

"I believe you chaps know more about it than you let on," said Bunter. "I know how you tried to stop Skinner the time he was trying to bowl Lascelles out. I don't approve of this. I'm shocked at Lascelles having such connections! I don't think he's doing his duty to the school—and to us!" added Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Bob.

"My belief is that he is the boxer, and I believe you know it. And I don't believe he's given it up, either," said Bunter.

Harry Wharton started. That was a new idea to him.

Was it possible that the mathematics master was keeping up his old profession—that he was combining with his career as a master at Greyfriars that other and widely different career as a "bruiser" in the ring?

But Wharton remembered the scene when the truth had been made known to the Head; and he had heard Mr. Lascelles say that he had fulfilled his last engagement, and that his career as a boxer was ended for good.

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"Oh, you're a tattling ass!" said Harry irritably. "For goodness' sake buzz off, and don't bother!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Look here, if Lascelles is really doing anything of the sort, he ought to be shown up, and stopped," said Bunter. "That's my opinion. My belief is that that bruiser has come to make arrangements with him about some prize-fight. Under the circumstances, I think it would be justifiable to hear what they say!"

The Famous Five glared at Bunter. That inquisitive youth always deemed it justifiable to play the eavesdropper when his curiosity was aroused.

Billy Bunter was too shortsighted to note the expression gathering on the faces of the Famous Five. He went on eagerly:

"You fellows help me, and I'll soon bowl him out. It's our duty, you know, for the—the honour of the school. You come and give me a bunk up—"

"What?"

"You know that ledge that runs along just over Lascelles' window," said Bunter eagerly. "Well, he always has his window wide open at the top, and if I got on that ledge I could hear every word of what they were saying."

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the fat junior in dumb amazement and indignation. For a moment they could hardly believe that even Billy Bunter had the unparalleled "nerve" to suggest to them that they should join him in a scheme of eavesdropping. Their silence encouraged Bunter. He rattled on:

"It would be as easy as rolling off a form, you know; but I want to be helped on the ledge. I assure you I can hear what's said in the room from that ledge, and it's round the corner of the house, so no one would see us. And one of you fellows can keep on the watch, while the others help me. See?"

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"You—you—you—"

"Don't you think it's a jolly good idea? I'll tell you every word they say, honour bright!"

"Honour bright, you toad!" snorted Johnny Bull. "A lot you know about honour bright! Collar him, you chaps, and—"

"Hold on!" said Bob Cherry, with a sudden gleam in his eyes. "I really think we ought to help Bunter, you chaps?"

"What?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Why, you frabjous ass—" roared Johnny Bull indignantly.

Then he stopped—as Bob closed his left eye. Billy Bunter did not see that sign. But the other fellows did, and they understood that an idea was working in Bob's active brain.

"Come on," said Bob briskly. "No time to lose, or Bunter won't be able to do all his spying—"

"Ahem! I—I don't call it that, Bob Cherry—"

"May as well call a spade a spade," said Bob affably. "But come on! We're going to give Bunter a bunk-up, you fellows. All hands on deck!"

And he seized Bunter by the arm and hurried him round the corner of the house. The Co. followed, grinning. Billy Bunter was to be helped, but certainly not in the way he wanted.

"You see, it's quite easy," said Bunter eagerly. "The ledge runs along a jolly long way. You fellows can help me up a dozen yards from Lascelles' window—up this buttress will do—and I'll crawl along afterwards, over the window. See?"

"I see," said Bob demurely.

The old stone buttress sloped out very wide from the wall. An active climber could have scaled it, and reached the ledge above without assistance. Billy Bunter was not active, however. He spread his fat little hands on the rough surface of the sloping buttress, and Bob Cherry bunked him up from below. Bunter scrambled up, and his feet were soon on a level with Bob's shoulders. He needed to go three feet higher to get his hands on the ledge. He blinked downward. "Easy as winking!" he whispered. "Now you get on Wharton's shoulders, Nugent, and give me another bunk, and it's done."

Bob Cherry pushed him up higher, to arm's length. The Owl of the Remove looked like some fat beetle sprawled on the sloping buttress. His boots were now about seven feet from the ground.

"You can get hold of the cornice over your head now," said Bob.

"I've got hold of it," said Bunter.

"Can you pull yourself up and get hold of the ledge?"

"No, I can't."

"Sure?"

"Of course I'm sure!" snapped Bunter.

"Suppose I were to let you go now and step away, you'd

come down with a slide, wouldn't you?" Bob went on cheerfully.

"Ye-es! Don't step away, you ass!"

"Sorry! That's just what I'm going to do," said Bob calmly. "You can hang on to that cornice as long as you like. When you get tired, you can let go, and come down with a run. You will very likely get a bump. That can't be helped. 'The way of the transgressor is hard,' you know—especially when the transgressor is a dirty spy, and wants to get chaps like us to help him spying."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you rotter!" shrieked Bunter. "D-d-don't get away! I—I can't hold on here! Oh, you beast!"

Bob Cherry withdrew his hands from under the fat junior's boots, and left Bunter without support.

The Owl of the Remove clung to the stone cornice with both hands.

He was too heavy and too clumsy to pull himself up further and get a grasp of the ledge above his head.

And if he let go he would come rushing down the stone buttress, to bump on the ground. He understood now why Bob Cherry had proffered his assistance. As he was a dozen yards from Mr. Lascelles' window there was no chance of his hearing the talk in the master's study. He was suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth, as a punishment for his eavesdropping.

The Famous Five stood back from the wall and roared with laughter. Billy Bunter remained high up on the buttress, clinging frantically to the cornice above. He turned a red and furious face downwards.

"Come and help me down, you beasts! Yow! I—I was only joking, you know; I wouldn't think of listening to what they said! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The roars of laughter drew other fellows to the spot. They stared at the Owl of the Remove, spread-eagled on the high buttress, in amazement.

"What on earth's the little game?" exclaimed Peter Todd, who had the honour of being Bunter's study-mate. "Is this a new thing in gymnastics?"

"Yes, it's the spy-and-eavesdropper exercise," Bob explained. "Bunter wants to listen over Lascelles' window—and that's as far as he'll get."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Help me down! I can't hold on much longer!" wailed Bunter. "Toddy, old man, stand by a pal! Come and help me down! If I let go I shall slide down and have a awful bump!"

"Better hold on, then!" grinned Peter Todd.

"Oh, really, Todd! I can't hold on here for ever!" shrieked Bunter. "Toddy, old man——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Todd, you beast——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on while I fetch a cricket-stump, Bunter!" yelled Bolsover major. "Your bags want dusting! I'll dust 'em!"

"Ow! Yow!" roared Bunter, in anticipation.

Bolsover major dashed away, and was back in a twinkling with a cricket-stump. He could just reach Bunter's bags comfortably with the stump. And he did!

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yow! Yow! Yaroooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. "Go it, Bolsover!"

Bolsover major "went it" with a will. Billy Bunter squirmed and wriggled under the whacks that fell thick and fast upon his defenceless person. He made wild efforts to drag himself up higher, but in vain. And Bolsover did not give him a rest. The stump rose and fell as if by machinery, and the dust flew from Bunter's trousers. A crowd of fellows stood round shrieking with merriment. Bunter was shrieking, too—but not with merriment.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Leave off! I shall fall! Yarooooh!"

"He's coming!" roared Bob Cherry.

He came!

Bunter's aching arms could stand the strain no longer. He let go the cornice and slid down the buttress to the ground. He came down with a sprawling rush, and rolled over on the ground yelling. The juniors screamed with laughter. Bunter rolled four or five feet from the wall, and then lay still and groaned deeply.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Groan!

"Hurt?" asked Bob quite cheerfully.

"Ow! My neck's broken—I—I mean my leg! I've sprained my backbone—yow!—in two places—grooh! I'm dying! Yow—ow!"

"Put him out of his pain, then," said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "We don't want to see him suffer! Now, all together, and jump on him! When I say 'three' jump! One, two——"

Before Bob could say "three" Billy Bunter was upon his feet with marvellous alacrity, considering that his leg was broken and his backbone sprained in two places. With

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EVERY MONDAY, **The "Magnet"** LIBRARY, ONE PENNY.

equal alacrity he burst through the ring of laughing juniors and fled.

"Come back!" roared Bob Cherry. "You're not dead yet——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Billy Bunter did not come back—neither did he seek further assistance in playing the eavesdropper. He did not stop till he was in No. 7 Study in the Remove passage and had turned the key in the door. Then he sank, gasping, in the study armchair, feeling that life was not worth living for a fellow with a strict sense of duty in a school where he was so cruelly misunderstood.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Left in the Lurch!

"MY heye!" said Mr. Sawyer, glancing round Mr. Lascelles' study. "You are well fixed up 'ere, Larry, and no bloomin' error!"

"Sit down," said Mr. Lascelles.

"Thank you, Larry!"

Mr. Sawyer sat down.

The stumpy, muscular bruiser, in his loud, check clothes, his glaring fancy waistcoat, his striking tie, with his close-cropped head, and broken nose, seemed strangely out of place in the master's study at Greyfriars.

But he did not seem to realise it. Mr. Sawyer had plenty of self-confidence, a great faith in himself. He sank comfortably into the deep, leather armchair, then he pulled out a short, black pipe.

"You don't mind, Larry?" he asked.

"Not at all."

Mr. Sawyer filled the pipe with a strong shag, struck a match upon his trousers, and lighted it.

Strong fumes of tobacco filled the study.

Mr. Lascelles did not sit down. He remained standing, with one elbow resting on the mantelpiece, looking at his visitor. The well-dressed, handsome master, with his clear-cut, intellectual face, offered a strange contrast to his friend. Yet Mr. Sawyer evidently was his friend. Mr. Lascelles' expression was quite cordial, though a little uneasy.

"S'prised to see me 'ere?" said Mr. Sawyer, when his pipe was fairly going.

"Yes."

"I 'ope it won't do you no 'arm, my comin' 'ere," said Mr. Sawyer, with momentary uneasiness. "I s'pose they don't know anythin' 'ere about your 'avin' been a pug?"

Mr. Lascelles smiled.

"It is known to a few," he said. "But the secret is kept. Of course, it would not do me any good to have it known here."

"I s'pose not. Course, I ain't said a word to give you away." Mr. Sawyer seemed anxious to impress this upon the mathematics master. "Not a syllable! I come 'ere simply as an old friend on a visit, and nobody need suspect nothing from that—wot?"

Mr. Lascelles only nodded. The old "pug" seemed unconscious of the fact that he was a very remarkable kind of friend for a master in a public school to possess.

"And I ain't goin' to drop in hovey day, Larry. Don't you be afraid of that. I knows a thing or two—I ain't a fool," said Mr. Sawyer, with a wise shake of the head. "I say, you don't mind me callin' you Larry, now you're so toffy 'ere?"

"Not at all."

"Oh, orl right, then!" said Mr. Sawyer. "I knowed you ain't the kind of man to put on hairs over your old pals. We been old pals, ain't we?"

"I shall never forget that I owe you a great deal," said Mr. Lascelles.

"Yes, I did 'elp you on at first," said Mr. Sawyer ruminatingly. "There was you, a young gent fresh from college, with your 'ead crammed with all sorts of knowledge—matty-matticks and Greek and things—wot wouldn't fetch a single brown—wot? And you could box like a cherub, and 'ad the very gift for the ring. And there was me—you remember the first time we met. Fifteen rounds. You only a beginner then, and me a experienced pug, and you finished me in the fifteenth. And from that bower we was pals. And I 'olped you to get on in the ring and make a living at it, didn't I?"

"You did!"

"And you did very well—wot?"

"Very well indeed!"

"You can't be making so much tin now as you did then, Larry?" said Mr. Sawyer. "This 'ere is very toffy, but there ain't much money in it."

"Not nearly so much."

"Then why did you make the chynge?" demanded Mr.

Sawyer. "You give up the fancy, to be a schoolmaster. I must say I'm s'prised at you, Larry! This 'ere is all right, I dessay, but it ain't a man's life like t'other."

Mr. Lascelles smiled genially.

"You see, I wanted this all the time," he explained, "but it isn't easy for a man fresh from the University to get a good position. I was quite fitted for the post, but there are more applicants than posts in these days. As I did not care to sponge on friends and relations, I came pretty near starving before I turned my skill in boxing to account. I took it up only in a small way at first. But for your friendship and assistance, I might never have made a success of it—"

"Oh, you'd 'ave come to the top, anyway!" said Mr. Sawyer. "No doubt about that. But I 'elped to make the beginnin' easy, bein' as I knowed the ropes."

"But when, through the influence of my friend Mr. Quelch I obtained the offer of this position, I was quite willing to give up the boxing. I filled my last engagements, and gave it up for good. I intended to say nothing about it, but I was betrayed by a boxer I had beaten in the ring, and I had an explanation with the Head. Luckily, he took a kindly view of the matter—"

"Proud to 'ave Larry Lynx in his school, I dessay!" Mr. Sawyer remarked.

"Well, not exactly. But he agreed to overlook the matter—of course, upon condition that I gave up boxing definitely. That was understood."

Mr. Sawyer's face fell.

"You didn't promise?" he exclaimed.

"There was no need. It was an understanding."

"But you ain't exactly given your word?"

"Not in words, certainly; but it's understood."

Mr. Sawyer drew a breath of relief.

"You're stickin' to this, then? You ain't no hidea of going back to the mittens?"

"None at all."

"But don't you feel sometimes—jest every now and then—that you'd like to 'ave another mill—jest one fight agin, with the mittens on, and the crowd lookin' on round the ropes—wot?" said Mr. Sawyer persuasively.

"Perhaps—yes," said Mr. Lascelles slowly. "But it's impossible. That kind of thing is incompatible with my position here."

Mr. Sawyer rubbed his square jaw in a thoughtful way.

"You was always given to sich jaw-crackin' words," he said. "Wot might that mean, now?"

The master laughed.

"I mean I can't run the two things together. I should be asked to resign my position here if I should appear in the ring again."

"And you'd rather keep up this 'ere?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, I don't understand it," said Mr. Sawyer, shaking his head. "But I never did quite understand you, Larry. You was always a queer fish in some ways. Well, I ain't proposin' to you to come into the ring agin for good. But jest once—"

Mr. Lascelles shook his head.

"I have wrote to you about it two or three times," said Mr. Sawyer, "and each blessed time you answered that it was impossible. Then I says to myself, says I, that I'd come and see you and put it to you like one man to another. You see, it's a peccoliar case. There's the Bermondsey Slogger—you remember him—Jim Hooker?"

"I remember him."

"You beat him once, but it was a close finish. He's simply thirstin' to go for you agin, Larry. He says you're afraid to meet 'im. Says you've disappeared from the ring 'cause you duran't face 'im."

"Never mind."

"But I do mind," said Mr. Sawyer indignantly. "Ain't you my old pupil? Didn't I fust shove you forrard? Ain't I been your trainer? 'Ere's the Slogger offering to meet you for a thousand pounds a-side, and me knowin' 'eaps of gents willing and ready to put their money on you. An' the Slogger, every time I meet 'im, jeerin' and sneerin'. Says as 'ow you're funky of 'im, and as 'ow you've thrown me over too, and won't meet him to oblige me. And I've said to 'im that you'll do it jest to oblige an ole pal. I've told my pals that you was sure to do it to oblige me. I thought as 'ow you'd be glad for one more bust. I says to myself, says I, he must be gettin' sick of the schoolmaster business, and simply dyin' for a round or two in the old style. That's wot I thought. It was all practically arranged. Then I writes to you, and you replies that it can't be. I come to talk you over, Larry. You can't leave your old trainer in the lurch. You can come outer this jest for once. Think of me, with the Slogger jeerin' and sneerin' that my old pupil is funkign him, and my pals all thinking, and some of 'em sayin', that you've thrown me over now you've become a toff. They knows you've become a toff, though I've kept it dark where

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you are and wot you are, accordin' to agreement. But it's 'ard on me now—don't you see that?"

"Yes, I see that, old man. But—"

"Then you'll do it jest for once? You can beat the Slogger. It will be a 'ard tussle, but you'll beat 'im, and there'll be a thousand quid on it."

"It can't be done!"

Mr. Sawyer made a hopeless gesture.

"It's 'ard on me," he repeated. "I depended on you as an old pal, and I've as good as give my word as you'll turn up."

Mr. Lascelles' face was very grave.

"I'm sorry, old fellow," he said—"very sorry! But it's quite impossible. I've a clear understanding with Dr. Locke that that is all over for good. If I took it up again—even for a single occasion—I should be deceiving him. I could not do it without resigning my position here."

"P'raps if I was to see the 'eadmaster, and explain to 'im—" suggested Mr. Sawyer.

"I'm afraid that would be quite useless," said Mr. Lascelles, with a smile. "The Head would hardly understand your point of view. And I could not possibly ask him. And it is not only the Head—there is the Board of Governors. The matter might get to their ears, and Dr. Locke would be placed in a very awkward position if he did not ask me to resign. I'm sorry; but it's quite out of the question."

"Then I've come 'ere for nothing?"

"I'm afraid so."

Mr. Sawyer rose to his feet.

"Well, I can't s'ye as this is treatin' an old pal like an old pal!" he said reproachfully. "There wouldn't be no need for anybody to know. I s'pose the 'Ead don't read the boxin' noos in the 'Pink 'Un,' does he? But you was always an obstinate lass, Larry. I'm disappointed."

"I'm sorry!" said Mr. Lascelles. "It can't be helped. Anything else I could do—"

"There ain't nothing else," said Mr. Sawyer, with dignity. "You're leavin' an old pal in the lurch, that's wot you're doin' of!"

"Don't put it like that, Harry. I'd oblige you if I could; but it can't be done," said Mr. Lascelles, his handsome face quite distressed. "It's impossible!"

"Things that's impossible 'appens sometimes," said Mr. Sawyer, with a queer look at the master. "P'raps you'll change your mind—"

"I can't."

"P'raps you will—p'raps!" said Mr. Sawyer, evidently following some curious train of thought in his own mind. "We shall see. I won't 'ang on any longer 'ere. I'll be off. Good-bye, Larry, and if you change your mind, you know where to write."

"I cannot change my mind."

"We shall see," said Mr. Sawyer enigmatically. And he shook hands with the master, and Mr. Lascelles went to the door with him.

A good many curious eyes watched Mr. Sawyer as he walked across the Close again. He nodded affably to Harry Wharton & Co. Gosling looked at him from his lodge, but did not come out. He was very anxious not to get to close quarters with Mr. Sawyer again. The old prizefighter, with a clouded brow, walked out of the gates.

Mr. Lascelles remained in a very thoughtful mood in his study. The visit of 'Eary Sawyer had brought back his old life freshly to his mind, contrasting strangely with the quiet, scholarly existence he led at Greyfriars. Perhaps there was a glimmer of regret in his handsome face—and certainly he felt keenly the disappointment of his old friend. He owed much to Mr. Sawyer—very much—and he admitted it. But it could not be helped, and Mr. Lascelles tried his best to dismiss the matter from his mind.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Picnickers!

"AND a dozen ginger-beer!" said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "Don't forget the ginger-beer!"

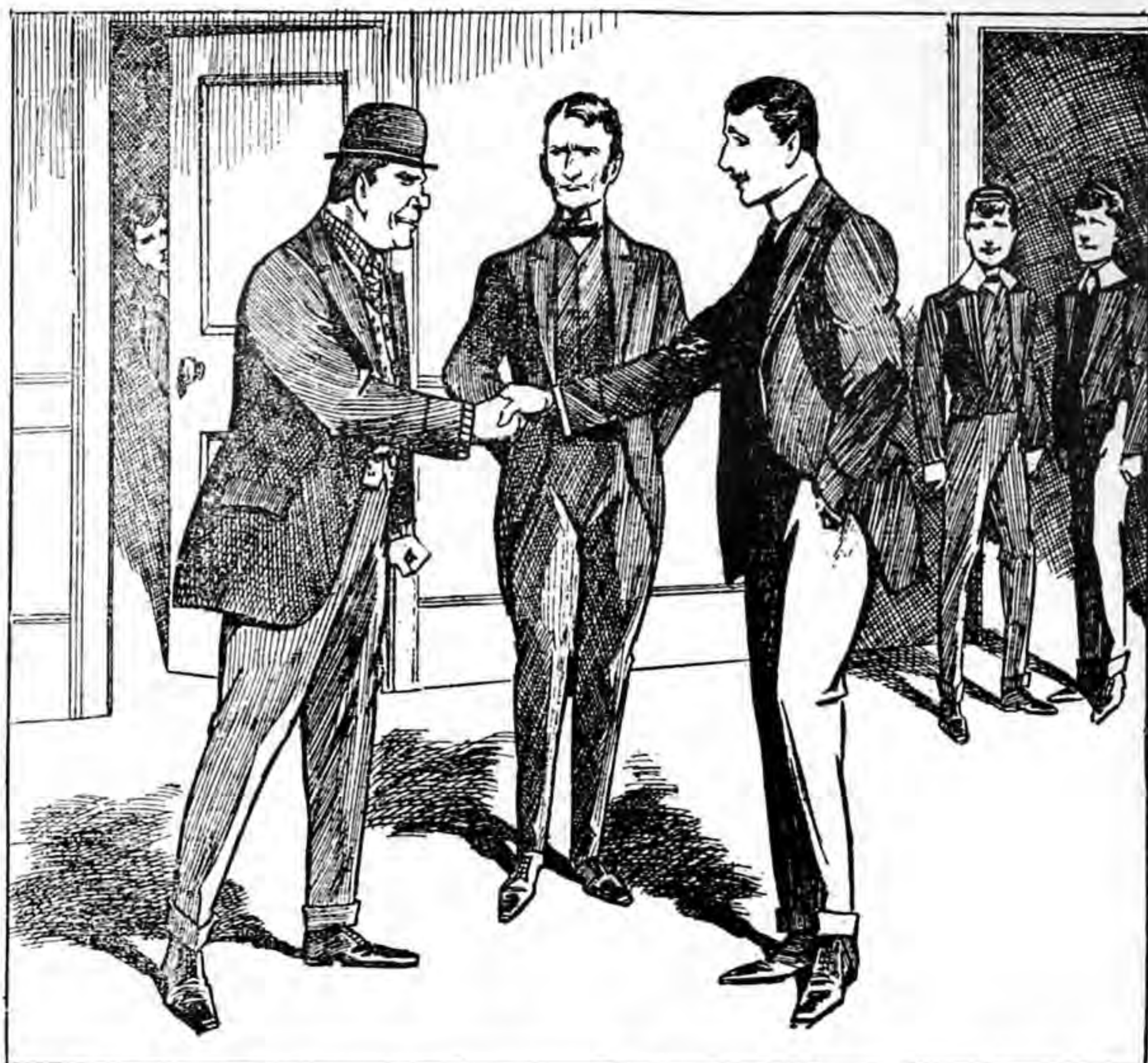
"The basket's pretty full," remarked Nugent.

Mrs. Mimble placed a dozen bottles of ginger-beer into the big lunch-basket on the counter of the little shop.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars, a few days after Mr. 'Eary Sawyer's visit to the school.

Harry Wharton & Co. were preparing for a little picnic. All of them were going, and they had pooled funds for the purpose—hence a very large order for Mrs. Mimble.

The lunch-basket was a good size, but it was filling to the very brim. The chums of the Remove were very cheerful looks. It was a sunny afternoon, and their spirits were as sunny as the weather. They were to meet Marjorie & Co., their girl chums from Cliff House, on the way. And Bob Cherry especially was looking radiant. He was always radiant



"Ow goes it, Larry?" asked Mr. Sawyer affectionately. Mr. Lascelles muttered something indistinctly, and took the outstretched hand mechanically. "You—you know this—this gentleman?" asked Mr. Quelch. "Yes," answered Mr. Lascelles. "Come up to my study, Sawyer!" (See Chapter 1.)

when Marjorie Hazeldene was near, though when he was with her he generally found very little to say.

Billy Bunter blinked in at the doorway of the tuckshop. Bunter had a wonderful nose for smelling out a feed. He seemed to know by instinct whenever a picnic was being planned. At the sight of the lunch-basket, Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his big spectacles.

"I thought I should find you fellows here," he remarked. "Do you want anybody to help you carry that basket?"

"No, thanks!"

"I'll come with pleasure——"

"The pleasure would be all on your side, then," growled Johnny Bull. "Buzz off!"

"Oh, really, Bull, I don't mind your little jokes!" said Bunter cheerfully. "Of course, I knew you meant to ask me. You wouldn't leave an old pal out. I'm coming with you."

"You're jolly well not," said Bob Cherry.

"I hope you're not going to be mean——"

"Look here," said Harry Wharton. "We're going to meet Marjorie & Co. for the picnic, and they don't like you. So clear off!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, of course, you know they want me to come! You know jolly well that Marjorie won't enjoy the picnic unless I'm there. I can't help you fellows being jealous; it's not my fault that girls like me," said Bunter.

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with dignity. "Some chaps have fascinating ways with girls; but I think jealousy is mean. Besides, I'll promise not to encourage them——"

Whiz!

An orange, deftly aimed by Bob Cherry, smashed on Bunter's fat chin, and he staggered back out of the doorway.

"Yow-ow! Oh, you beast!"

Bunter looked in again, and popped out just in time to escape an apple, which whizzed past him into the Close. He did not look in again.

"Where's Hazel, I wonder?" said Harry Wharton, as he closed the basket, and fastened the lid. "It's time to start. It's nearly an hour's walk to the Grange."

Bob Cherry picked up the basket, and swung it off the counter.

"Come on!" he said.

They left the tuckshop, Bob carrying the basket. Bunter was waiting for them outside, dabbing his chin with his handkerchief.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Rats!"

"You can't go and picnic at the Grange any more," said Bunter. "It's been let."

"Bosh!"

"It has, really," persisted Bunter. "Penfold says he saw lights there the night before last. And there was a man in

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MONDAY—

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the grounds when I passed the place yesterday. You can't go there any more. Now, I'll show you a lovely place to picnic in the woods—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Hazel!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Come on, Hazel! It's time to start!"

Hazeldene of the Remove joined them. Hazel was not a close chum of the Famous Five; but as he was Marjorie's brother, he was generally asked to take part in little excursions like this. And as he was generally "stony," he was not expected to share in the "exes" of the excursion.

"I'm coming with Hazel," said Billy Bunter. "Hazel's my old pal—"

"Am I?" grinned Hazeldene. "This is the first I've heard of it. Is that fat beast coming along, you fellows?"

"Oh, really, Hazel—"

"No, he isn't," growled Bob Cherry. "I won't have him at any price. Buck up, you chaps!"

The Famous Five and Hazeldene started for the gates. Billy Bunter trotted after them. The Owl of the Remove was as thick-skinned as a rhinoceros, and it was not easy to hurt his feelings.

"I say, you fellows," he remarked. "It's quite true about the Grange being let. You can't picnic there any more. Now, you'd better let me show you a place—"

But the juniors were not listening. They were walking very fast down the lane, and Billy Bunter's fat little legs had to go like clockwork to keep up with them. Bunter was very soon out of breath; he was never in good condition.

"I say, you fellows," he panted. "Don't walk so beastly fast! I say—"

The juniors grinned, but made no reply. They walked faster, and Bunter had to break into a run to keep up with them. The perspiration poured down his face, and he gasped and panted as he trotted on. The afternoon was warm, and the sun streamed down on the lane, and Bunter was in a state of exhaustion before a mile had been covered. His run slackened down, and he dropped behind.

"Will you stop for me, you beasts?" he shouted.

"No fear!"

"You jolly well won't be able to picnic at the Grange. I tell you—"

Bunter's voice died away behind. Harry Wharton & Co. strode on fast, and the fat junior disappeared from view. He stopped to rest on a stile for about ten minutes, and then wearily laboured on after the picnickers. But they were far out of sight by that time.

"I say, is there anything in that, about the Grange being let?" Hazeldene asked. "We can't picnic there if it is."

"Of course there isn't. It's only Bunter's gas," said Bob Cherry. "The place has been empty for years and years. It won't ever be let, I expect. Besides, Marjorie's meeting us there."

The juniors came in sight of the Grange at last. It was an old Georgian building, standing in extensive grounds, with a view of the sea. The house, which was very large, was in a bad state of repair. The wide grounds had been neglected for years, and were over-run with weeds, growing thickly among old fruit-trees and currant-bushes. There was a high wall round the garden, covered with thick ivy and creepers, in wild profusion. The place was lonely; and it had never been occupied within the memory of anyone at Greyfriars. The fellows frequently picnicked in the shady old garden in the summer. The house itself was locked up, but one of the doors was broken, probably by tramps in search of shelter. Fellows had sometimes explored the old building, in the rooms of which there still remained much of the massive old furniture which had not been used for perhaps a quarter of a century.

There were two or three gates in the old wall, but the fastenings had long since gone, and they generally stood open. The house was supposed to be in Chancery, which accounted for its neglected state.

A leafy lane turned off the road to lead up to the gates of the Grange. In the little lane the girls from Cliff House were waiting—Marjorie Hazeldene and Miss Clara and Wilhelmina. They had arrived first.

"Here we are again," said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "You've got here first!"

"It's not so far from Cliff House," said Marjorie, with a smile. "You are not late."

Bob Cherry relieved Marjorie of the basket she was holding, and the party proceeded up the lane together, under the big beech-trees, towards the Grange. The old wooden gates were closed.

Harry Wharton uttered a sudden exclamation, as he tried to open the gate.

"By Jove! It's fastened."

"Some ass has fastened it, then," said Bob. "It's not let. There isn't even a caretaker here. Bust it!"

"There's no lock," said Harry. "It's fastened with a

padlock and chain. Hallo! There's somebody in the garden."

A man was coming down the weedy path towards the gate. The juniors looked at him rather belligerently. He certainly did not look like a man who would be a tenant for such a building as the Grange. He wore a jersey and loud check trousers, and no collar, and had a cap on the back of his head, and a pipe in his mouth. His features strongly resembled those of a bulldog, and two of his front teeth were missing. He looked like one of the rowdiest of the excursionists who sometimes came down to Pegg Bay in the summer.

"'Allo!" he called out. "Wot do you want?"

"We want to come in," said Bob Cherry indignantly.

"You can't come in 'ere."

"Why not?"

"The 'ouse is let now."

"And you're the tenant, I suppose?" asked Harry Wharton sarcastically.

"Wot if I am?" asked the man in the jersey, taking the pipe out of his mouth. "I tell you, you can't come in 'ere, so be off!"

"Well, if you tell us that a chap of your description has taken this house, we'll tell you that it's a thumping whopper," said Bob disdainfully. "If you're picnicking here, you're welcome; there's room for everybody. We're coming in."

"You ain't coming in."

"Perhaps the house is let," said Marjorie, in a low voice.

"Perhaps we'd better—"

"But it can't be let to that chap," said Harry. "Why, the rent would be very high, and that fellow is a cheap bounder from London. And he doesn't look like a caretaker, does he?"

"Ha, ha! No!" said Bob. "Of course, he's taken possession, and wants to keep us out from sheer cheek. We're jolly well going in. Why, we've always picnicked here!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "It is more likely that that esteemed person is a tramp, and has put up here, and wishfully desires to keep other people out."

"That's it," said Harry, with a nod. "We can get in at one of the other gates—one of them is quite broken down."

"Come on!" said Nugent.

They moved along the wall, and reached the broken gate. Entrance was easy enough there. The picnickers walked into the garden.

The man in the jersey came running up excitedly.

"Don't I tell you you can't come in 'ere?" he shouted.

"You can tell us as often as you like, but we're coming in all the same," said Harry Wharton coolly.

"This 'ere 'ouse is let—"

"Rats!"

"Look here," said Wharton impatiently. "We knew you're a blessed tramp, and you want the place to yourself; but you're not going to have it. See? There's plenty of room for everybody. Let us alone."

"You clear out! I'll bludging well chuck you out if you don't go!"

The juniors grinned. It was not likely that the bulldog-like man, powerful as he looked, would be able to "chuck out" six sturdy juniors.

"Come on and begin the chucking, then, Mr. Cheeky Tramp!" said Bob Cherry invitingly.

"Are you goin'?"

"No fear!"

"Then 'ere goes!"

And the man made a rush at them. Probably he thought that schoolboys would scatter before his attack and vanish. If so, he was egregiously mistaken. The Famous Five lined up to meet him, and as he reached them five pairs of hands were laid upon him at once. He was swept off his feet, and, in spite of his struggles, he was carried bodily to the gateway and pitched out.

He rolled on the ground, and sat up, staring blankly at them.

"Come on again!" said Bob. "You're getting the chucking-out; and you can have as much as you like!"

"You young 'ounds—"

"Enough of that!" said Wharton sternly. "You've chosen to make yourself disagreeable, and you're not coming in here again. Clear off, or we'll jolly well bump you!"

"My heye! I tell you—"

"Clear off!" shouted the juniors.

"I ain't clearin' off! I—"

"Bump him!" shouted Bob Cherry.

The juniors rushed upon him. Then the gentleman in the jersey changed his mind about clearing off. He cleared off promptly. And the Greyfriars party, chuckling, and very satisfied with their victory, returned to the garden and prepared for the picnic.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Drops In—And Drops Out!

"THIS is jolly comfy!" Bob Cherry remarked. It was certainly very comfortable.

The Grange stood on the slope of the hill, and from the shady old garden the picnickers could see the blue, wide waters of the bay, and the great sea beyond. On the blue waters gleamed white sails in the distance, with here and there the trail of smoke from a steamer. The garden was wild and neglected—rich with tangled creepers and flowers all over the old lawn, and shaded by great trees. It was an ideal spot for a quiet picnic.

Johnny Bull had lighted the spirit stove, and Nugent filled the tin kettle from the bottle of water. Marjorie made the tea. The juniors preferred ginger-beer; but they had thoughtfully provided tea for their guests. A spotless cloth was spread on the grass; equally spotless crockery gleamed upon it. And the good things provided for the feast—ham, and hard-boiled eggs, and cake, and jamtarts, and nice little rolls—made a most enticing array.

"Ripping!" said Miss Clara, who was given to using boyish expressions. "This takes the cake, doesn't it, Wilhelmina?"

Wilhelmina Limburger was a German young lady, very plump, and with a good appetite. She was disposing of ham and eggs at a rate that Billy Bunter might have envied. She smiled with serene satisfaction.

"Goot!" she remarked laconically.

"I wonder if Bunter will drop in," remarked Hazeldene, with a glance round towards the gate.

"No sign of him yet," grinned Bob Cherry. "And that tramp seems to have taken himself off. Awful cheek to try to keep us out of here."

"The cheekfulness was terrific."

"After tea we'll go over the house," said Bob, with a glance towards the silent, sombre old building. "Tom Brown and Bulstrode explored it last week, and they say it's a jolly old place, with big, broad banisters you can slide down."

"Good egg!" said Miss Clara. "I've thought of exploring it before, but—but it is so quiet and gloomy. The fisher-people say it is haunted."

"Haunted by rats, I expect," said Wharton, laughing. "Nothing more dangerous than that—rats and tramps, sometimes."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, suddenly looking over his shoulders. "Is that bouncer coming back? I heard somebody."

"It was the wind, I think," said Marjorie. "I saw those rhododendrons move."

"If he comes back we'll bump him again!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Hark!"

A sudden, sharp voice rang through the garden.

"What are you doing here?"

The juniors jumped up from the grass. The girls rose, too, looking somewhat alarmed. They could see no one in the garden but themselves.

"Who the dickens was that?" exclaimed Nugent in astonishment.

"Get out of this at once."

"My hat, who is it?" exclaimed Wharton. "That sounds like P.-e. Tozer's voice. But where is he?"

"If I 'ave to come to you, you'll know it," went on the voice. "You're trespassing 'ere. This 'ouse is let. Get off!"

The juniors looked about them in amazement. They knew the voice of Mr. Tozer, the village policeman of Friardale. But they could not see him.

"I—I—think we had better go," murmured Marjorie. "Perhaps we are not allowed in here, even if the house is not let."

"Everybody comes in here who wants to," said Harry. "Besides, let Tozer show himself. What is he skulking for?"

"Where are you, Tozer?" shouted Bob Cherry.

"I'm 'ere, outside this 'ere gate, and I orders you to go out. You're trespassing, and if you don't clear off, I'll report you to the 'Ead."

"I—I say, we'd better go," said Hazeldene nervously.

The juniors looked at one another doubtfully. They did not want to have their picnic interrupted; and the place had always been free to all comers. But to resist the authority of the law would perhaps be a serious thing. The girls were already alarmed. Even Miss Wilhelmina had ceased eating.

Bob Cherry strode angrily towards the gate whence the voice proceeded. He looked outside for Police-constable Tozer, but could not see him. Bob was suspicious of a trick. He remembered Billy Bunter's troublesome gift as a ventriloquist. The fact that the constable did not show himself made him suspicious.

"He's not here," Bob called out.

"Are you going to clear off?" called out the commanding voice from a different direction.

"Where are you?" shouted Wharton, exasperated.

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"Never you mind where I am. You get out of these 'ere premises. You're trespassin', that's wot you're doin'!"

"Let us go!" said Marjorie.

"Hold on," said Bob, coming back from the gate. "I don't believe it's Tozer at all. Why shouldn't he show himself?"

"It's his voice," said Hazeldene.

"I've heard Bunter imitate his voice before. He can imitate anybody's voice."

"Bunter!" exclaimed Marjorie. "Ah, I thought I saw the rhododendrons move!"

Bob did not wait for any more. He made a sudden rush towards a huge mass of rhododendrons at the side of the old tangled lawn. He disappeared into them, his companions watching him. The next moment there was a sound of a terrific disturbance. Wild yells, and a sound of bumping on the ground, and a crashing of the rhododendrons, and then Bob Cherry reappeared in sight, dragging a fat prisoner by the collar.

"Bunter!" roared Johnny Bull.

"Ow, ow, ow! Leggo! It was only a j-j-joke! Yow-ow!"

"I'll j-j-joke you!" growled Bob Cherry. "You fat toad—you beastly fat bouncer!"

"Yaroooh! Leggo!"

Bob dropped his prisoner on the lawn. Billy Bunter roared, and sat up, and set his spectacles straight on his fat little nose. The juniors gathered round him wrathfully.

"I—I say, you fellows, it's only a j-j-joke, you know," stuttered Bunter. "I didn't mean to frighten you—he, he, he!"

"You didn't frighten us, you silly owl!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You fat rotter!" said Bob. "You wanted to spoil our picnic."

"I say, you know——"

"Bump him!" said Miss Clara, sitting down on her camp-stool again. "Give him a jolly good bumping, the fat bouncer!"

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Marjorie.

"Good egg!" exclaimed Bob. "Lay hold!"

"Here, I say, you fellows, leggo!" wailed Bunter. "I'm quite fagged out, following you here, I am really. I knew you wanted me to come, of course. It was only your little joke. I—I can take a joke with anybody, you know."

"Don't bump him!" said Marjorie, laughing. Marjorie's word was law; and the juniors released Billy Bunter, and let him drop on to the grass again.

Bunter squirmed up, and blinked round through his spectacles. There was a self-satisfied smirk on his fat face now. Bunter was quite convinced that Marjorie—and, indeed, all the Cliff House girls—had a very great regard for him, and to this he attributed the fact that Marjorie had spoken up for him now. He even went so far as to wink one eye at Bob Cherry; as much as to say, "I told you so." Bob nearly exploded. Only Marjorie's presence saved Billy Bunter from being slaughtered there and then.

"It's all right," said Bunter. "I don't mind joining you. After tea I'll give you a ventriloquial entertainment, if you like. If you'd told me in time, I'd have stood my whack in the feed. Thanks. I'll have some ham to begin with."

And Bunter calmly sat down to the picnic.

The juniors regarded him helplessly. Bunter's coolness overcame them. In the presence of the Cliff House girls they did not care to use violence; and nothing short of bodily violence would have kept Bunter away from the picnic. He was already helping himself to a lion's share of the good things.

"I say, you fellows, I've seen that chap Sawyer again," said Bunter affably. "He was in the village as I came by, talking to a man outside the pub, the Cross Keys. Come down to see Mr. Lascelles again, I expect. Nice sort of a pal for a Greyfriars master to have. Pass the butter, Bob, old chap. Don't be greedy!"

Bob did not move.

"Pass the butter, Franky, old chap," said Bunter.

"If you call me Franky——" began Nugent in suppressed tones.

"Eh! What?" asked Bunter loudly.

"N-n-nothing—here's the butter," said Nugent hastily.

"Pretty comfy here, ain't it?" said Bunter, with his mouth full. "He, he, he! You fellows did look scared when you thought old Tozer was after you. He, he, he!"

"Shut up!" growled Bob.

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"Oh, really, Bob, old fellow—"

Bob Cherry suppressed his wrath with difficulty. Bunter was enjoying himself now, but the enjoyment of the picnic was much diminished for the rest of the party. But tea was finished at last, and Bob proposed to make a move to the house.

"What's the good of exploring that old place?" said Bunter. "Besides, I know it's let now, and you can't go in."

"Oh, rot!"

"I'll have a stroll round the garden while you're rooting about in there," said Bunter. "You'll stay with me, won't you, Marjorie?"

"No," said Marjorie.

"Ahem! You'd like a stroll round the garden, Clara—"

"No," said Miss Clara.

"H'm! I think, upon the whole, I'll have a rest here while you're rooting about," said Bunter. "I don't want to clamber up and down dusty old stairs, thanks."

"You fellows go in," whispered Bob Cherry, who was almost choking with wrath. "I'll follow you."

The Co. understood, and they grinned. One of the back doors of the house was open, and it was easy to enter. Harry Wharton & Co. went in, with Marjorie and Clara and Wilhelmina. Bob Cherry lingered behind. When the party were out of sight in the house, he turned back to Bunter. Bunter was sprawling on the grass, his head pillowed in his hands, and he blinked at Bob Cherry with a fat grin.

"You needn't look so jolly ratty!" he said. "It's not my fault the girls like me. A chap can't help it if he's got fascinating ways. Girls always do run after really good-looking chaps— Here, I say! Wharrer you up to? Groo-hoogh! Yah! Oh!"

Bob Cherry did not speak. He was kicking Bunter as if he mistook him for a football.

The Owl of the Remove rolled over on the grass, and Bob followed him, still kicking. Billy Bunter jumped up, yelling, and Bob continued to kick. Bunter made a wild break for the gate, and Bob made a break after him, hopping and kicking.

"Yah! Oh! Stoppit! Chuckit! Groo-hoogh! Oh! Ow!"

Kick—kick—kick!

Billy Bunter rated out of the gate, and fled, and Bob Cherry paused, breathless. He shook his fist after the vanishing junior; and then, somewhat appeased, turned back into the garden and joined his chums in the house.

"Bunter's gone," he remarked casually.

And the Co. grinned, but did not ask any questions.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Strange Discovery!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. rambled through the old house. It was the first time they had explored the building, though many other of the Greyfriars juniors had done so. The old house had been deserted for many years, but they were not surprised to see, here and there, signs of recent occupation. Tramps often made the old building a resting-place, and lighted fires there, and camped there for days at a time. The furniture was smothered with dust, what there was of it. In the old kitchen, floored with stone flags, a fire was low in the grate, and the remains of a meal lay on the table. Wharton started as he looked about the room. There were many new utensils there, and he was surprised to see them.

"Jolly curious that a tramp should bring all these things with him," he remarked.

"It is odd," said Marjorie. "Is it possible that the house is let after all?"

"If it's let, where are the tenants?" said Harry. "No fear! That chap's camped here, and very likely he wanted to stay for some time, and didn't want to be known. He's cleared right off now."

"But he's left his property behind," said Miss Clara.

"He'll come back after we're gone. Let's have a look upstairs."

They ascended the broad old staircase. Everywhere the dust was thick, and cobwebs hung in heavy festoons. But in two of the old bed-rooms the windows were open, and fires had been lighted, and there were signs of habitation. Bob Cherry uttered a sudden exclamation as he stopped outside a door on the second floor.

"My only hat! Look here!" he exclaimed.

The juniors gathered round, with looks of wonder. Outside the door two strong iron brackets had been screwed on the doorposts, and an iron bar stood in the corner against the wall. The door opened outwards, and the bar and the brackets were evidently for the purpose of securing it later. They were evidently new—fresh from the ironmonger's. They

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had been put up that day or the day before. The juniors gazed at them in amazement.

"What on earth does that mean?" Wharton exclaimed.

"Looks as if somebody was getting ready to keep a prisoner here," said Bob, rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "They can't be going to turn the place into a prison or a lunatic asylum, I suppose?"

"Blessed if I can understand it."

"Let's look into the room," said Nugent.

The door was locked, the key on the outside. Wharton unlocked it, and pulled open the door.

The interior was in deep shadow. Shutters were closed on the window outside. Through the shutters came only a dim gleam or two of the sunshine without.

"These shutters are new," said Bob, tapping them with his knuckles. "Look here! Quite new, and jolly thick wood, too! They're screwed down!"

The juniors gazed at one another in blank astonishment.

Shutters screwed down on the only window, and a bar provided for the door! What did it mean? It evidently meant that the room was to be used for a prison. But why, and for whom? What strange mystery had the juniors stumbled upon in that deserted old building?

"Looks as if the house is let, after all," said Nugent, in a low voice. "Tramps couldn't have done this."

"But why should a tenant want to fix a room up like this?"

"Blessed if I know."

"There's something jolly fishy about it," said Harry.

"Somebody might have taken the house for a private lunatic asylum, perhaps; but—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Somebody's come in!" exclaimed Bob.

There was a sound of footsteps below. Then a voice was heard—the voice of the man in the jersey, whom the picnickers had turned out of the garden.

"They're in the 'ouse, I believe."

"Come out of this," said Wharton, in a low voice.

The party trod cautiously out of the shuttered room, and Wharton locked the door again, leaving it as he had found it. There were already steps on the stairs. The three girls were looking a little scared.

"Don't be frightened," said Harry reassuringly. "They can't hurt us. Even if the house is let, we're doing no harm here."

The man in the jersey appeared on the broad stairs, looking upward. He uttered a shout as he caught sight of the juniors.

"Ere they are, Mr. Sawyer!"

"Mr. Sawyer!" ejaculated the juniors with one voice.

A bullet-head, adorned with a low-crowned bowler hat and a broken nose, came into view on the dusky staircase.

It was Mr. Sawyer, the strange visitor who had come to Greyfriars a few days before to visit Mr. Lascelles.

The juniors stared at him blankly.

Another man—a rough-looking fellow with only one eye and a curiously battered face—was behind Mr. Sawyer on the stairs. Mr. Sawyer was looking very grim, but his expression relaxed as he beheld the juniors.

"Allo! It's you young gents, is it?" he exclaimed.

"Didn't I see you the other day at Greyfriars—wot?"

"Yes, Mr. Sawyer," said Harry Wharton. "Glad to see you again!"

"How do you do?" said Bob Cherry affably.

"The topfulness of the afternoon to you, my esteemed friend!" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Mr. Sawyer's companions were looking surly and scowling. The old pugilist himself looked very curious. Upon the whole, his expression was good-natured. Harry Wharton & Co. had made a good impression upon him on the occasion of his visit to Greyfriars.

"So it's you," said Mr. Sawyer, after a pause. "Well, orlight. But you ain't allowed in 'ere, you know, now the 'ouse is let."

"Let, is it?" said Bob.

"Yes. Didn't Badger tell you so?"

"Which I did," growled the man in the jersey, "and they kicked me hout! And now, wot I says, Mr. Sawyer, is this—"

"Never mind what you says, Badger. Young gents, and young ladies, I s'pose you don't mean any 'arm ere, but now the ouse is let you must not come in."

"But what has it to do with you?" asked Harry Wharton. "Even if the house is let, I suppose you are not employed to look after it, are you?"

Mr. Sawyer stared.

"The 'ouse is let to me!" he explained.

"You!"

"Yus," said Mr. Sawyer. "Why not?"

"My hat!"



The Famous Five stood back from the wall, and roared with laughter. Billy Bunter remained hunched high up on the buttress, clinging frantically to the cornice above. "Come and help me down!" he roared. "I—I—I was only joking—I wouldn't think of listening to what they said!" "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 2.)

"You see," said Mr. Sawyer, apparently thinking that some explanation was necessary—"you see, I'm training a man for a big fight, and we want a quiet place to train in, to keep away from reporters, and such. You know how they reporters simply 'aunt a man when he's trainin' for a big fight. So I've took this 'ere 'ouse for a month, for trainin' purposes—see?"

"Oh!" said Wharton. "So you're the tenant?"

Mr. Sawyer nodded.

"I am. I left my pal Badger in charge, and he comes to me and says, says he, that a gang of trespassers was in the place—"

"Well, if you've taken the house, I suppose we are trespassing," said Harry. "But the place has always been open to all comers, you know, and—"

"Orlright," said Mr. Sawyer affably. "It's O.K. You didn't mean any 'arm. I know that. You get out now and no 'arm's done. That's all right!"

"Right-ho! And as you're the tenant, we apologise for THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 331.

coming in like this," said Harry. "Of course, if we'd known—"

"That's orlright," said Mr. Sawyer affably. "Don't mench!"

The picnicers went downstairs. Mr. Sawyer was still affable, but he was evidently anxious to see them off the premises. They wondered whether his anxiety had anything to do with that mysterious room they had discovered. They quitted the old house—Mr. Sawyer "shooing" them, as it were, off the premises, in a good-natured but determined manner. He "shooed" them out of the garden in the same way, and took off his hat very politely to the young ladies as they departed.

"Well, that beats the band!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, when they were outside the old ivied walls again.

"He was very kind, I think, though he is rather a dreadful looking man," Marjorie remarked. "The other men looked very bad-tempered."

"I think they would have liked to go for us," said Harry, laughing. "But Sawyer is an old sport. It must be so with

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him a good bit of money to take that house even for a month. I suppose it's really just the place for what he wants it for."

"But what does he want a barred room for?" said Bob Cherry. "He doesn't mean to bar his man in a room to keep him away from the reporters, does he?"

"Ha, ha! I should think not."

"But they haven't taken all that trouble for nothing," said Bob.

"N-no! It's jolly odd. But Sawyer is a decent chap," said Harry. "I don't think it can be anything fishy. Anyway, I suppose it's no business of ours."

That was certainly the case—but the juniors could not help thinking about the odd circumstances of the barred room, with the strongly-shuttered window. For whom had that room been prepared—for that it had been prepared for some inmate could hardly be doubted. The chums of the Remove walked home to Cliff House with their girl chums; and then sauntered away in the sunset to Greyfriars. And, as they went, their thoughts turned, in spite of themselves, upon that mysterious barred room in the lonely old house.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. No Surrender!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here we are again!"

Bob Cherry uttered the exclamation suddenly, as the juniors came to the stile at the end of the foot-path through the wood. They had rambled along the shore for an hour before going home, and then taken the short cut through the wood. It was already growing dusk in the woods. As they reached the stile, they caught sight of two figures in the lane beyond—two figures they knew very well.

One was the athletic, well-set-up figure of Mr. Lawrence Lascelles, the mathematics master at Greyfriars School. The other was the ubiquitous Mr. Sawyer. After his visit to Greyfriars, the juniors had never expected to see him again—but they seemed fated to drop upon him pretty often, as it turned out.

The two men in the lane were deep in talk, and did not see the juniors. Mr. Lascelles' face was clouded, and a little excited. It seemed to the juniors that Enry Sawyer was expostulating with him, and urging something upon him, and that the mathematics master was perilously near losing his temper. They were not surprised to see Mr. Lascelles there, as he frequently walked down to the village of an evening to play chess with the vicar. Mr. Sawyer had, perhaps, observed his habits in this respect, and had made it a point to meet him in the lane.

"I have told you I cannot do what you want!" Mr. Lascelles exclaimed, and his voice, sharp and angry, came clearly to the ears of the Co. "I tell you I have given all that up for good. The understanding between Dr. Locke and myself on that point is quite explicit. Larry Lynx has disappeared from the ring for good. And if you trouble me any more about the matter, Sawyer, I shall lose patience, I warn you!"

The juniors looked at one another uneasily. Mr. Lascelles' exclamation let in a ray of light upon the purpose of Enry Sawyer's visit to Greyfriars. They could not help being interested; but they did not want to hear what was not intended for their ears. Before, however, they could decide what to do, Mr. Lascelles went on:

"You should not meet me in public like this. You know that it may do me harm, if we are seen together."

"Gettin' ashamed of your ole pals now?" grunted Mr. Sawyer.

"Nothing of the sort. But you know that I have to consider the appearance of things. If I place Dr. Locke in an awkward position with regard to me, I shall have to resign my position in the school. Do you want to drive me to do that?"

"I dunno as I'd mind. You'd 'ave to go back to the ring, then."

"You can't mean that, Sawyer! You're not the kind of man to blackmail me? That's what it amounts to, what you've said."

"I'm your old pal," said Mr. Sawyer doggedly. "I'm your pal still. But you're leaving me in the lurch over this 'ere fight with the Bermondsey Slogger—"

"I have told you—"

"Hemm!"

It was a loud warning cough from Bob Cherry, and Mr. Lascelles' voice died away suddenly. He looked sharply round. The juniors scrambled over the stile into the lane.

They raised their caps to Mr. Lascelles respectfully, and walked on without speaking. The mathematics master glanced after them, his brow darkly clouded.

"You see," he exclaimed, in a lower voice, but in passionate tones, "we have been seen already by Greyfriars boys."

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Some of them I can trust not to chatter, but one of them is sure to talk! It will be all over the school this evening that I have met you again!"

"An' you're ashamed to be seen with the man wot fust put you up to makin' a good thing out of the ring!" said Mr. Sawyer sullenly.

"You know it is not that. Was I ashamed to own you as my friend when you came to Greyfriars? But I am bound in honour—Dr. Locke has my assurance, amounting to a promise, that my connection with my former life is entirely broken off. What do you think would be the effect on the parents of the boys, if it came out that a master in the school had once been a fighting-man in the prize-ring? Dr. Locke would be compelled to ask me to resign—and if he did not, the governors would. I waited three years for the position I now hold. I obtained it only through the kind influence of a friend. Do you want me to lose it again?"

"Keep it dark, then," said Mr. Sawyer, "only don't leave your old pal in the lurch. You've got to meet the Slogger!"

"I cannot!"

"Look 'ere," said Mr. Sawyer hoarsely. "I got money on it. I've put up my money on you, 'cause I was sure you wouldn't leave an old pal in the lurch. If you fail me, I stand to lose a clean hundred."

"I'm sorry; but if you had told me, I should have warned you not to do anything of the kind. It's impossible! I've told you so twenty times."

"And you've told me, in the same breath, that I can ruin you at the school, if I choose," said Mr. Sawyer, with a somewhat ugly look creeping over his battered countenance.

Mr. Lascelles looked him steadily in the face.

"You can," he said, "but you won't!"

"'Ow do you know I won't?" said Sawyer surlily.

"Because you're a sportsman, and my old pal, and you've never played a dirty trick in your life," said Mr. Lascelles. "I know you, Sawyer."

Mr. Sawyer's grim face relaxed.

"You've got me!" he said. "You know I wouldn't go for to do anything to hurt you, Larry. But this 'ere is 'ard on me!"

"About the money? I can make that right. I've got some put by, that I made in the ring; and I owe it all to you, or most of it—"

Mr. Sawyer raised a knobby hand, with a gesture of great dignity.

"Don't you think I wants your money," he said. "I don't! Wot 'urts me is your leaving an old pal in the lurch like this 'ere—and the Slogger jeerin' and sneerin' at me, and tellin' me that my old pupil 'as lost his pluck. Ain't I always took a pride in you, and backed you up, and put my money on you? You can't say I ain't. And now you goes and leaves your old pal and trainer in the lurch. It ain't sportsmanlike, Larry!"

Mr. Lascelles made a weary gesture.

"I've told you it can't be helped," he said. "Why, if Larry Lynx appeared in the ring again it would be in all the papers—there would be no end of talk. It would be bound to become known at Greyfriars! It's not only what I should lose there, but the Head would feel that I had deceived him, and he has been a kind and generous friend to me. You must see that it is impossible."

"But you'd like to meet the Slogger, all the same?" said Mr. Sawyer shrewdly.

"Well, I admit that I'd like to meet him, and knock the conceit out of him, too! I think I could do it, though I'm rather out of training." There was a quick keenness in Mr. Lascelles' face; for the moment he was no longer the mathematics master at Greyfriars, but Larry Lynx of the prize-ring.

Mr. Sawyer's eyes gleamed; he fancied that he read yielding in the master's eyes.

"That's all right," he said eagerly. "I'll take you in 'and, and I'll put you through regular practice agin. I've took a place down 'ere, easy walk from the school, where you can go into trainin', and never a soul know a word about it. You jest walks over there for a couple of hours a day, and I has my men ready, and you goes through the trainin', and it's all as dark as you choose."

"You've done that, after what I told you!" exclaimed Mr. Lascelles, his tone altering.

"I 'ave!"

"Then you thought—"

"I thought you'd come round," said Mr. Sawyer persuasively. "Say you will, old pal, jest for this once!"

Mr. Lascelles' handsome face hardened.

"I'm sorry you've taken all that trouble," he said, "for it's all for nothing. I tell you I can't do as you wish. And that's final!"

"Come over one evenin' jest for a little round or two," urged Mr. Sawyer. "Jest drop in, and let the boys see you

again. When you feel the mittens on your 'ands once more, you'll feel the old life comin' back, and you—"

"Quite possibly!" said Mr. Lascelles, with a dry smile, "and for that reason I cannot come. It's no good, Sawyer, you may as well give it up!"

"I ain't giving it up!" said Mr. Sawyer, doggedly. "You're going to meet the Slogger."

Mr. Lascelles made an angry gesture.

"Does that mean that you're going to waylay me like this, and keep on this persecution?" he exclaimed. "If so, I warn you —"

"No, it don't!" said Mr. Sawyer surlily.

"Then what do you mean?"

"You'll find that out, Larry. But you're goin' to meet the Slogger, I tell you that; you mark my words," said Mr. Sawyer. And then he turned and walked away quickly.

"Sawyer! What —" But Mr. Sawyer was walking rapidly away, and the mathematics master stopped.

The old pugilist disappeared into the dusk, and Mr. Lascelles, with a clouded and worried brow, walked on slowly towards the vicarage.

Meanwhile, Harry Wharton & Co. had reached Greyfriars.

"Not a word about seeing Lascelles with that chap, of course, you fellows," he said, as they came in at the school gates.

"Of course!" said Bob.

But Hazeldene demurred.

"Why not?" he demanded. "What do you want to make a secret about it for? The man came here openly enough the other day."

"It won't do Lascelles any good to be talked about," said Harry.

"That's his look-out," said Hazel, with a shrug of the shoulders. "He shouldn't have such acquaintances."

"Look here, Hazel, Lascelles is a good chap —"

"Good enough to you," said Hazel. "You're one of his pet pupils. I think he's a beast myself, always making us grind. The man here before him never used to grind us as he does."

"He was a slacker."

"Well, I prefer slackers, when it comes to making a chap grind at maths," said Hazel, with a yawn. "I don't see what you fellows see in that man Lascelles. I don't like him. And I don't see why I should keep his blessed secrets."

And Hazel walked away to prevent further argument. Bob Cherry breathed hard through his nose.

"If that chap wasn't Marjorie's brother —" he murmured, but he did not finish. Hazel was Marjorie's brother, and so he was not to be "hammered."

"The silly ass will chatter!" said Nugent, in disgust. "All the Remove will be talking about it in an hour."

Nugent was quite right. Hazel confided the whole story to the junior common-room, and in less than an hour everybody who cared to know knew that Mr. Lascelles had met the old prizefighter again, and that out of his own mouth the admission had dropped that he was truly Larry Lynx, the one-time "pug."

Hazel had not a reputation for adhering with exact strictness to the truth; and Harry Wharton & Co., when referred to for corroboration, declined to say anything on the subject, excepting that Hazel was a silly ass, and that fellows who listened to him were silly asses, too.

But when Mr. Lascelles came in, a good many fellows looked at him curiously, and a faint flush that came into his cheeks showed that he was quite conscious of the scrutiny. He had returned a good deal earlier than was his custom after his evening visit to the vicarage, a circumstance that the Remove fellows noted, too. As a rule, he played chess with Mr. Lambe until eleven o'clock. Apart from that flush in his cheeks, the mathematics master gave no sign of observing the unusual attention of the juniors. He went directly to his study, and closed the door after him, and the Remove saw him no more that evening.

"His old pal is worrying him, what?" grinned Skinner, who had his own special dislike for the mathematics master, as all the slackers had. "The amiable Sawyer seems to be getting on his nerves. I wonder how long it will be before the Head speaks to him about it? Somebody ought to tell the Head."

"Oh, shut up!" said Bob Cherry.

And then Walker the prefect came in to hustle the Remove off to bed, and they turned out of the common-room. It was Loder's duty that week to see lights out for the Remove, but Loder of the Sixth was apparently otherwise engaged. In the Remove dormitory, after lights-out, there was a buzz of talk, in which the Famous Five did not take part — for the talk ran entirely upon the subject of Mr. Lascelles and his "old pal" the pugilist — till the juniors tired of it and dropped off to sleep.

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PENNY.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Done in the Dark!

"ERE he comes! Steady, now!"

It was a faint whisper in the darkness under the trees, close to where the path from the vicarage entered the lane—a whisper so faint that it could not be heard by the one whose footsteps sounded on the path through the thick gloom of the night.

But it was heard by the men who were skulking in the shadows of the trees, and there was a low whisper in response.

"We're ready, boss."

Then deep silence.

Loder the prefect did not hear. Loder of the Sixth had been too busy that evening to see lights-out for the Remove, and his chum Walker had taken the duty on himself. Loder's business had been outside Greyfriars; very peculiar business, too, for a Sixth-Former and a prefect of the old school.

Loder's business had been to tempt the goddess Fortune at the game of poker in the back-parlour of the Cross Keys. Fortune had been very unkind to Loder, and he had stayed on later than usual, hoping that luck would turn, until all the ready cash he possessed had gone into the pool, and there was no chance of luck turning. The sporting gentlemen at the Cross Keys did not play on "tick." So when Loder was cleared out, the only thing for him to do was to clear out also, which he did in a very bad temper. And he then made the discovery that it was turned half-past eleven, and that he would not be back at the school before midnight—a discovery which added to his bad temper.

So, as the hour was so late, Loder took the short cut through the churchyard—a path generally avoided at night—and as there was no one to see him, Loder ran all the way, till he came out into the path near the vicarage gates. There he slacked down, breathless, and walked on at a more moderate pace towards Friardale Lane. All the lights were out in the vicarage, and the path was densely dark under the shadows of the trees that over-arched it on both sides. But having left the churchyard behind, Loder was not nervous, and he walked on carelessly enough, only thinking about his losses, and wondering what he should do for "tin" until his next allowance came.

In the darkness he did not see three dim figures lurking in the deep shadows of the trees, and he did not hear the faint whisper among them.

He came on unsuspectingly.

There was a sudden rush of feet in the darkness, hardly heard on the soft grass, and the three dim figures were upon Loder of the Sixth.

Before he knew what was happening, before he realised that he was attacked, an open sack was dragged down over his head, and his arms were pinioned on both sides by a strong grip.

"Got 'im!"

The muttering voice came to Loder's ears through the sack, and, muffled as it sounded, the tones seemed familiar to him.

He began to struggle blindly.

"Take it easy!" said the muffled voice. "'Tain't no good strugglin', cully! We've got yer! Don't be afride! You're in friends' 'ands!"

Loder felt a looped rope tighten round the sack, and it secured his arms down to his sides in the sack.

He shouted, but the sack muffled his voice.

There was a chuckle from his captors.

He was lifted off his feet and carried away—where he could not guess. With his face covered by the sacking, he could not even make a guess at the direction he was taking.

He was carried perhaps thirty yards, and then he was lifted higher, and laid down. The feeling showed that he was laid in a vehicle of some description.

He heard the sound of a horse, of rattling harness. He felt two men climb into the vehicle after him, and heard the third man gather up the reins.

Then there was a patter of horse's hoofs.

Wheels rolled rapidly under him. The two men seated beside him kept their grip upon him, as if in expectation of some attempt to break away.

But Loder made no such attempt.

He was not a coward, but he realised his helplessness. There were three men—three powerful ruffians—to deal with, and his arms were bound by a strong rope, knotted round him over the sack. It was useless to shout. There were not likely to be passers-by on that lonely road at midnight, and a blow would have stunned him as he lay helpless, and stifled his cries. And Loder was more amazed than alarmed.

What did it mean?

He had been kidnapped—kidnapped by men who were

evidently lying in wait for him. What could it mean? Why had they kidnapped him? What on earth was he worth to them? Where were they taking him? What could it all mean? His brain was in a whirl. And that husky whisper that he was in the hands of friends! It was an appalling mystery. What troubled Loder most of all was the fact that he was being carried away from Greyfriars. If he were unable to return before morning he grew cold all over at the thought. If his nocturnal excursions once became known to the Head, he knew what it meant—expulsion from the school, without the slightest mercy. He had risked it often enough, but he had never dreamt of a mischance like this. Who were these men? What did they want with him? Where were they taking him?

The vehicle rattled on. Loder guessed that it was a trap—and not a large one, by the way he was huddled up in it with his unseen, unknown companions. The trap had been in readiness—these ruffians had been ready for him—but how had they known he was coming that way? It was only because of the lateness of the hour that he had taken that short cut through the churchyard, and so had come out into the vicarage path. They could not have known. And then it dawned upon him that he had been mistaken in the dark-

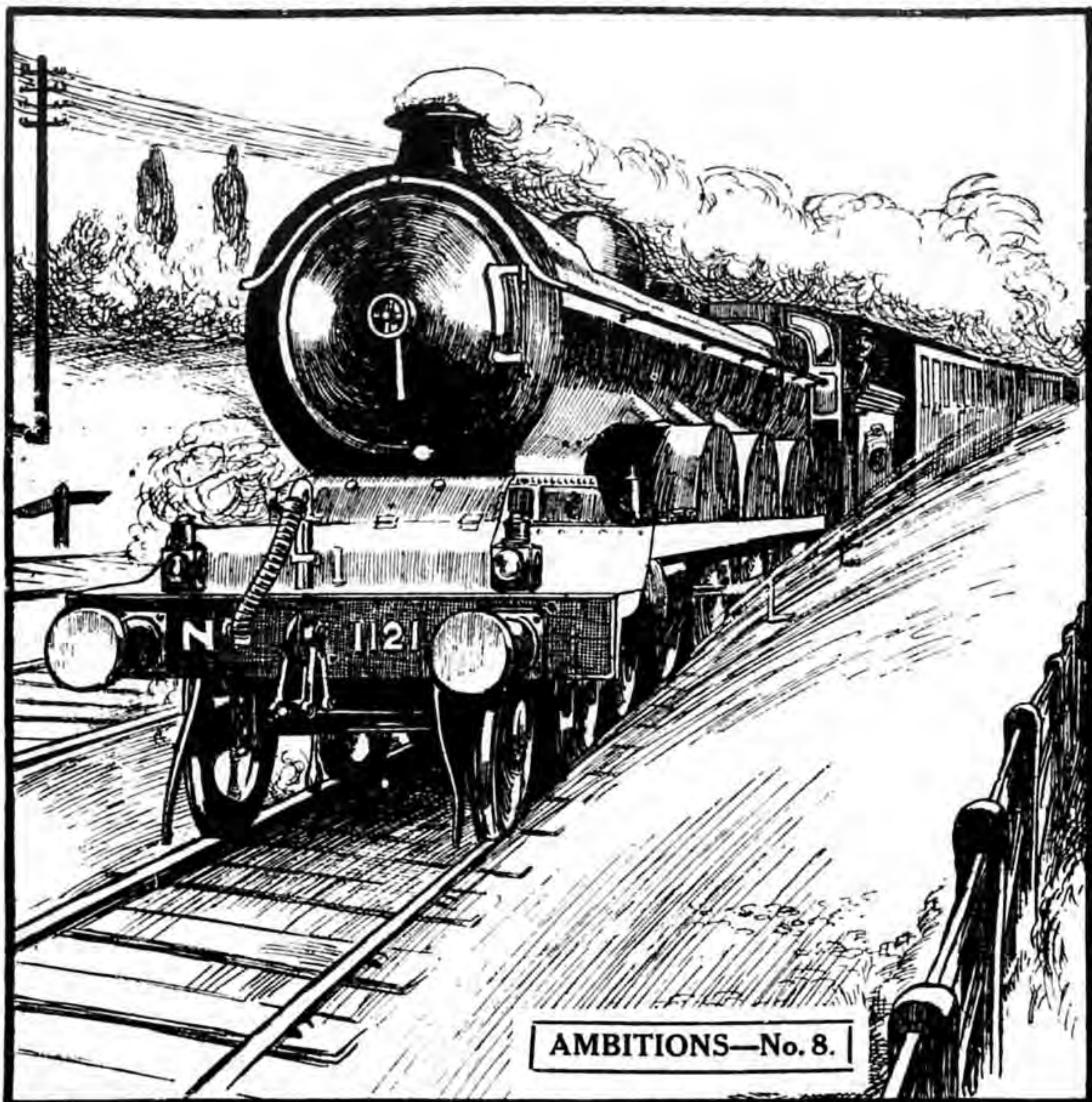
ness for someone else. He had gone that way by blind chance; and these rascals had been waiting for someone, and had not expected a chance wayfarer that way at such an hour, and they had slipped the sack over his head so quickly that they had not had a chance of discovering their mistake.

That was it, undoubtedly. Who on earth had they been waiting for, on the vicarage path? Not the vicar. It was absurd to suppose that fat, unctuous Mr. Lambe was the intended victim of the kidnappers.

Besides, he would not be leaving the vicarage at that late hour. Yet they must have been lying in wait for someone from the vicarage—the path led from nowhere else, excepting from the churchyard—and the churchyard path was never used at night. Then Loder suddenly remembered that Mr. Lascelles paid a visit every Wednesday evening to the vicarage to play chess with Mr. Lambe, and generally left about eleven. Then he understood.

It was Mr. Lascelles they had been waiting for. And they had heard only his footsteps—they had not seen him—and so he had been collared and taken off.

And then like a flash came the recollection of where he had heard that husky voice that had muttered through the sack—



AMBITIONS—No. 8.

The above picture strikingly illustrates the nature of a profession which many lads are ambitious to adopt. The steady nerve and mechanical skill required in an engine-driver in charge of one of the latest monster locomotives makes this position a much-coveted one.



Bob Cherry appeared in sight, dragging a fat prisoner by the collar. "Bunter!" roared Johnny Bull. "The spoofer!" "Ow! Ow! Ow! Leggo!" roared Bunter. "It was only a j-j-joke! Yow—ow!" "I'll joke you!" said Bob Cherry. (See Chapter 5.)

it was the voice of the broken-nosed man who had come to Greyfriars to see the mathematics master, and who had spoken to Loder at the gate.

Mr. 'Enry Sawyer!

Loder had heard some talk at the Cross Keys about Mr. Sawyer, the old pugilist and trainer, who had honoured that delectable establishment with his custom for two or three days past. He was hanging about Friardale for some reason; and Loder understood the reason now.

As he realised how matters stood, Loder began to wriggle in the sack. Once he made these ruffians understand that they had made a wrong capture, they would doubtless release him. And yet—would they? Perhaps they would guess that he knew too much to be safely released. But it was worth trying, at all events.

"Keep quiet, Larry!" muttered a voice over him. "'Tain't no good makin' a fuss—and we ain't goin' to 'urt you!"

Loder, in spite of his uneasiness, almost grinned in the sack. The name "Larry" showed him that his surmises were correct. Lawrence was Mr. Lascelles's Christian name—and Loder, too, knew the undercurrent of talk at Greyfriars that connected the mathematics master with Larry Lynx the boxer. He was quite certain now.

"Let me out!" said Loder.

There was a chuckle. The sack muffled his voice and dis-

guised his tones, so their unfamiliarity did not warn his captors of their mistake.

"Not likely, Larry! We got you. But you ain't comin' to any 'arm—you knows as we're all your old pals!"

"Let me out. I'm not the man you take me for!"

"Draw it mild, Larry!"

"Not so much jore there!" came Mr. Sawyer's voice from the front of the trap.

"Larry's talkin', boss!"

"Don't answer 'im, then."

Loder struggled in the sack.

"Can't you understand?" he shouted. "I know you take me for Mr. Lascelles—or Larry Lynx, as you call him. I'm not Mr. Lascelles!"

"He, he, he!"

"I—I'm—" Loder had been about to give his real name, but he paused in time. If it were known at Greyfriars that he was out of bounds at that hour of the night, it was ruin to him. It would not do to place it in the power of these rascals to betray him—perhaps to blackmail him. His voice died away. There was another chuckle from the kidnappers. Evidently they were tickled at the idea of their prisoner denying his own identity to get loose from their clutches.

"I tell you I'm not Lascelles!" Loder exclaimed. "Haven't you any sense? Lascelles is three inches taller than I am, and he must weigh a lot more. He's ten years older!"

There was no chuckle this time. Loder's words had made an impression upon the unseen men in the trap.

"My heye!" muttered a voice. "I thought 'e was werry light for Larry, Badger!"

"He didn't put up the fight you might 'ave expected from Larry!" muttered the other voice. "I say, boss, if there's bin a mistake—"

"Mistake!" snorted Mr. Sawyer. "Bosh! You're a fool, Toodles. Didn't we wait for him for a hower and a 'arf?"

"Somebody else—"

"Who'd come down that there path at that hower? Do you think you've got the vicar?" Mr. Sawyer snorted again.

"You couldn't 'ave lifted that fat old lamb into the trap!"

"I don't care—it ain't Larry!" said Toodles sulkily.

"Larry's got three stone more than this 'ere spadger, I should say!"

Mr. Sawyer appeared impressed by that observation. The trap stopped, and Loder heard him hooking the reins over a branch by the lane-side. Then he scrambled round in the trap.

"Got your knife, Toodles?"

"'Ere it is. Wot—"

Loder shuddered with horror. Was that to be the result of their discovery of their mistake—sudden, merciless murder? He struggled frantically in the sack, and yelled with terror.

"Help—help! Murder!"

"Shet up!" growled Mr. Sawyer, his hand shoving the sacking violently over Loder's mouth. "Nobody's goin' to 'urt you. 'Tain't Larry—he ain't a shriekin' coward. I wonder what slinking polecat we got 'old of, arter all? Got your knife? Cut a slit in the sack and let's see his 'dial!"

Loder ceased to struggle as he realised what the knife was wanted for. He lay very still; he did not want the knife to gash his face as well as the sacking.

The keen blade was drawn across the sacking, making a slit before Loder's face. Rough fingers pulled the edges back, and Loder's face was uncovered; though still invisible in the darkness. He felt the fresh air on his cheeks, and he blinked in the darkness. Only shadowy branches overhead, and dim forms around him met his gaze. He heard Mr. Sawyer fumbling. There was the scratch of a match, and a sudden flare of light. The broken-nosed man bent over Loder, holding the match so close to his face that he winced and blinked. Then the old puglist uttered an exclamation of disgust.

"It's a kid!"

"'Tain't Larry, anyway, boss!"

"My heye, this 'ere is a gol!" muttered Badger. "We got the wrong pig by the hear, and no bloomin' error! Wot's to be done?"

"Done!" growled Mr. Sawyer. "I got a good mind to take 'im along and chuck 'im into the blooming sea. I seen this young shaver afore somewhere. Speak up, you young villain, you; wot's your name?"

"Smith!" panted Loder.

"Liar!" said Mr. Sawyer, reading the lie easily enough in Loder's twitching face and slinking eyes. "Not that it matters a rap to me whether you're Smith, Jones, or Robinson. Wot do you mean—ah, I know you now. You're the young shaver wot I spoke to t'other day at Greyfriars, when I came to see my ole pal—and was so cheeky to me, hey?"

"I—I didn't mean to be—"

"So you says now!" sneered Mr. Sawyer. "And wot was a young gentleman of Greyfriars doin' out at midnight—eh? I don't know much about your school, but I s'pose that ain't allowed. Pretty goings-on, wot?"

"I—I had gone out for a walk—" stammered Loder.

"At midnight! Liar!" said Mr. Sawyer again.

Loder was silent.

"Wot's to be done?" said Toodles. "We don't want this young spadger. But he knows now wot we're arter."

"And one word to Larry—" muttered Badger. "If Larry knows wot we're arter, the gime's up, guv'nor!"

Mr. Sawyer muttered savagely to himself. Evidently he was very much disturbed by the mistake that had been made.

"One of you bungling jossers orter 'ave seed as it wasn't Larry!" he growled.

"Well, you didn't see, boss—"

"Oh, don't jore!" said Mr. Sawyer crossly. He was evidently not in a reasonable mood. Loder found his voice again.

"I—I— You can trust me! I—I won't speak to Lascelles! I'll keep this dark."

The match had gone out. But Loder could see now the gleam of Mr. Sawyer's eyes in the darkness above him.

"You'll keep it dark?" repeated Mr. Sawyer.

"Yes, yes!"

"You know that there's a gime on foot to collar Larry and take 'im orf?"

"Yes, I couldn't help—"

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OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE GEM" LIBRARY, "THE PENNY POPULAR," "CHUCKLES," 1d. Every Wednesday. Every Friday. Every Saturday. 2.

"For all you know, we may mean to 'arf murder 'im, or rob 'im," said Mr. Sawyer.

"He's no friend of mine."

"You mean, you'll 'old your tongue, and let 'im get it in the neck—jest wot we choose to do to 'im?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Well, you dirty, sneakin', cowardly polecat!" broke out Mr. Sawyer, in a sudden burst of eloquence. "You crawlin' skunk—that's 'ow you'd treat a man like Larry, is it? I knowed when I first set heyes on you that you was a wrong 'un!"

Loder bit his lips; he had certainly gone the wrong way to work to placate Mr. Sawyer. It was not easy to understand that gentleman. Loder couldn't be expected to guess that a man who was planning to carry off Mr. Lascelles by bodily force was at the same time his enthusiastic admirer, and devotedly attached to him. That was a puzzle that a keener fellow than Loder might never have comprehended.

"If you're that sort of blighter, you ain't to be trusted—not a hinch!" said Mr. Sawyer emphatically. "You're a toad—that's wot you are! A rank wrong 'un!"

Mr. Sawyer added some more expressions which need not be reproduced. The old "pug" had not learned his eloquence in a polite school.

"But wot are you goin' to do with 'im, sir?" muttered Toodles despairingly.

Sawyer rapped out an oath.

"Do with 'im? He ought to 'ave his bloomin' neck wrung, but we can't do that. And we can't send him back to the school to jore. We got to keep him quiet till arterwards."

"Let me go! I promise—"

"'Old yer tongue!" growled Mr. Sawyer, in disgust. "'Old your jore! Keep 'im quiet 'ere, cullies—if he yells out agin, Knock 'im over the 'eak. He ain't Larry, and it don't matter 'ow you 'andle 'im. Keep him quiet. We've missed Larry now—'tain't no good goin' back. Another time'll do—easy enough so long as Larry don't know the gime. Keep that sneakin' spadger quiet!"

"There'll be trouble over this 'ere, boss. This 'ere is kidnappin'," muttered Toodles uneasily.

"And wot was it if we'd nailed Larry, you hass?"

"That's different. Larry wouldn't have rounded on his old pals. But this spadger—"

"Can't he 'elped now. It's the whole hog or none," said Mr. Sawyer finally. "Let 'im go, and he'll jore; he couldn't 'elp it. Then we lose our chance with Larry."

"He'll jore afterwards," said Toodles sulkily; "and then we'll find ourselves in Queer Street."

Mr. Sawyer swore.

"I tell you, it can't be 'elped. I ain't goin' to give up the whole gime, an 'ave the Slogger sneerin' and jeerin' at me, because this crawlin' 'ound was out on the ran-dan when he orter been in bed. Nothin' risk, nothin' win! I tell you, we've got to go the old 'og. Keep him quiet, that's all."

And Mr. Sawyer unhooked the reins from the branch, and drove on again. Loder's heart sank. He had been kidnapped by mistake; but he was kidnapped, all the same. He could not return to Greyfriars—he was a prisoner. And even the prospect of seeing the kidnappers punished afterwards was marred by the reflection that then his own conduct would come to light. He would have to explain what he was doing in Friardale at midnight. That would have to be kept dark. He would have to invent some story that he had been seized at the school. But in that case he would have to let the kidnappers escape scot-free, to keep them from disclosing the facts. Loder's reflections were far from pleasant as he lay in the trap, rolling away in the darkness to he knew not whither.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Absent!

WALKER of the Sixth had a surprise the next morning at Greyfriars.

Walker dropped into Loder's room early, to ask him how he had got on at the Cross Keys the previous night. If Loder had had good luck, Walker intended to borrow a small sum. But his curiosity upon that point was not destined to be gratified. Loder was not in his room. Loder was not an early riser, and it was especially unlikely that he would have risen very early, after a late night. And Walker noted that the bed showed no signs of having been slept in. Walker stared blankly at the undisturbed bed. Where on earth was Loder?

He had stayed out the whole night, there was no doubt about that. Walker's face turned quite pale as he thought of it.

"The utter ass!" Walker muttered. "He must have been drinking; and never came home! He'll be coming home by daylight. Eat Scott! If anybody see him coming in—"

Carne of the Sixth looked into the room. Walker started guiltily.

"Hallo! Where's Loder? Not up yet, surely?" said Carne.

Walker closed the door hastily.

"He hasn't come in!" he said.

Carne whistled.

"Phew! The thundering ass! Not come in all night! Well, this beats it—even for Loder! I never thought he'd have such a nerve. If he's spotted—"

"It's all up with him if he's spotted," said Walker. "Of all the thumping fools—"

"He'll try to make out that he's been out for an early stroll," said Carne thoughtfully. "Let's get out of gates, and see if we can see him. We can stroll in with him. It will look a bit more probable—"

"But his bed. If anybody sees it—"

"We can soon alter that, fathead!"

Carne caught hold of the bedclothes, and rumbled the bed, giving it the appearance of having been lately left by its occupant.

"Good!" said Walker. "That won't give him away now. But what a thumping ass!"

The two Sixth-Formers left the study together. They hurried out into the Close, which was deserted at that early hour. Only a few of the fellows were down. Carne and Walker hurried towards the gates. Gosling blinked at them sleepily. He was just unlocking the gates.

"Loder come back?" asked Carne, in a careless way. "He went out for an early stroll."

Gosling shook his head.

"Ain't seed him, sir," he replied.

Carne nodded, and the two seniors sauntered out. Loder, being a prefect, had a key to the private gate, as all the prefects and masters at Greyfriars had. If he had gone out for an early stroll, before the school gates were opened, he would have let himself out that way. As a matter of fact, it had been at half-past nine the night before that Loder had let himself out at the little gate.

Walker and Carne hurried down the lane, looking about them anxiously for a sight of Loder. They expected to see him coming up from the direction of the village. He must know that the rising-bell had gone at Greyfriars, and that he would soon be missed. But there was no sign of him.

They stopped half-way to the village.

"Go on to the Cross Keys?" asked Walker dubiously.

"In the daylight?" growled Carne savagely. "No fear! If Loder hasn't sense enough to come in before brekker, he can look out for himself. I'm not going to risk that."

"We shall be late for chapel if we don't get in," Walker remarked, looking at his watch. "Let's get back."

They returned to Greyfriars, just in time for early chapel. Loder did not appear there.

Neither did he appear at the breakfast-table. Mr. Lascelles, the mathematics-master, took the head of the Sixth Form table, the Head breakfasting in his own house with his family.

Mr. Lascelles glanced along the table, and noted the absence of the prefect.

"Is not Loder down?" he asked.

"He's gone out for a stroll, sir," said Walker. "He seems to be late back."

Mr. Lascelles nodded, satisfied. The Sixth Form were allowed many little freedoms that were denied to fellows of a less exalted position in the school. It was unusual for them to cut "brekker," but it was not unknown. It was not till the Sixth Form were assembled for class that Loder's absence excited general remark. Dr. Locke took the Sixth; and, of course, he observed that Loder was not there.

Walker made his explanation, that Loder had gone out for an early morning stroll, and had not yet come in. But he made it nervously. Loder's prolonged absence was beginning to alarm him. Something of a very unusual nature must have happened to keep the prefect away from the school. Had there been an accident? Had Loder, returning late at night, fallen in with footpads—tramps—some ruffians or other—and been hurt? Such things had happened. Footpad outrages were not unknown in the neighbourhood. And there were ruffianly longshoremen at Pegg—tramps, who sometimes made a kind of nesting-place in the old Grange. And Loder might have fallen in with some of them. And if he had won in the poker game, and had money about him—Or had there been some quarrel over the play at the Cross Keys—and had Loder received some hurt there? The sporting gentlemen at the Cross Keys were not a set whose tempers could be fully relied upon if they lost much money. Walker was getting scared. And he was careful not to say that he had seen Loder go out that morning. If the facts came to light, Walker did not want to be mixed up in the business as a confederate of the black sheep of Greyfriars.

The Head frowned.

"Very well!" was all he said.

But he frowned several times during morning lessons—Loder not appearing. Mr. Lascelles came in to take the Sixth for third lesson, and he remarked that Loder was not there.

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EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

"Surely Loder has returned, Walker?" he asked.

"It seems not, sir."

"He has not come in for lessons?" exclaimed the mathematics-master.

"No, sir."

"That is very strange. You say you saw him go out for a stroll this morning?"

"I—I didn't say I saw him, sir," said Walker hurriedly.

"I said he had gone out for a stroll."

"Then who did see him?" asked Mr. Lascelles sharply.

"N-nobody, sir, that I know."

"What! Then how do you know that he went out for a stroll?"

"I—I concluded he had, sir, as he was up and gone out when I called into his room this morning," faltered Walker.

"You made the statement to me as if you knew it for a fact," said Mr. Lascelles severely.

Walker bit his lip; feeling anything but chummy towards the absent Loder at that moment. If the fellow had turned up for lessons, Walker's statement at the breakfast-table would not have been questioned. But he had not turned up.

"Then it seems to be the case that Loder is missing, and that no one saw him leave the school?" the mathematics-master exclaimed.

"I—I suppose so, sir. I concluded—"

"You should not have stated your conclusions as facts, Walker. Is Loder in the habit of taking these early morning strolls?" asked Mr. Lascelles.

Walker was silent then. He could not say it was the case, as all the Sixth knew very well that Loder was a slacker, and never turned out of bed till he had to. It was Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, who replied to Mr. Lascelles' question.

"No, sir; he certainly isn't."

"It is very extraordinary that he should have gone out this morning, and not returned," said Mr. Lascelles; "still more extraordinary that no one appears to have seen him go out. Something must surely have happened to him. Is it quite certain that he went out this morning? He may have been missing all night, for anything we know to the contrary. Do you know if he went out last evening?"

"It was his turn of duty to see lights out for the Remove, sir," said Wingate. "He couldn't have been out."

Walker shifted uneasily. He had taken over that turn of duty for Loder, and he knew that the fact must come out, as soon as inquiry was made. And it was certain that there would be inquiry now. Loder's disappearance would throw the whole school into a ferment as soon as it was generally known.

"I—I did that for Loder last night, sir," he stammered.

"Indeed! Did Loder go out?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"Then why did you take over his turn of duty with the Remove?"

"He—he asked me to, sir."

"But he must have had some reason for asking you," said Mr. Lascelles, with a penetrating glance at Walker; and the prefect felt an inward panic as he wondered how much Mr. Lascelles suspected of Loder's true character. The mathematics-master was a very keen and observant man, and goodness only knew what he might suspect.

"I—I think he had a headache, and wanted to go to bed early," said Walker falteringly.

"Did he tell you so?"

"Nunno, sir."

"You concluded that?" asked Mr. Lascelles, with a sarcastic inflection in his voice.

"Ye-es, sir."

"Upon what grounds?"

"He looked rather seedy, sir," said Walker desperately. "I thought he had a headache or something. And he went to his room immediately."

"You did not see him again?"

"No, sir."

"You say you called in his room early this morning? Did you notice the bed—whether it was unmade—whether it had been slept in?"

"I think it had, sir," stammered Walker, inwardly wishing that Carne had not been so clever. If it came out that Loder had been out all night it must be known that the bed had not been slept in. But by this time in the morning the bed must have been made; and the housemaid, of course, would remember that the bedclothes had been disturbed. That might be traced to Carne and Walker now. Carne looked worried as he thought of it. He had intended to make things easier for Loder, never dreaming that the hopeless ass would stay away from the school like this.

"You think it had?" repeated Mr. Lascelles. "Surely you know for certain? However, I can ascertain that from the housemaid."

"I am sure it had, sir," said Walker, in desperation.

"Very well! No one here has seen Loder this morning?"

There was a general dissent from the Sixth Form.

"Very well! Something must certainly have happened to Loder, and it is possible that it happened so long ago as last night. You should not have stated so positively at breakfast that Loder had gone out for a stroll this morning, Walker. You misled me, and time has been wasted. I must go to the Head at once about this."

And Mr. Lascelles left the Form-room hurriedly, leaving the Sixth in a buzz of surprise and excited comment.

When Mr. Lascelles returned, ten minutes later, he did not speak of Loder again. But when the Sixth were dismissed they found that Loder had not yet returned.

A quarter of an hour afterwards all Greyfriars knew it.

And from the head of the Sixth down to the smallest fag all the Greyfriars fellows were asking themselves the question, without being able to find an answer to it: What had become of Gerald Loder?

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Looking for Loder!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. of the Remove discussed the strange disappearance of Loder with as much interest as the rest of Greyfriars—perhaps with more.

The chums of the Remove were on the worst of terms with Loder, who was a bully, with a special "down" on the Famous Five. Many a time they had had their rubs with him, and as often as not Loder had had the worst of the little encounters. Now that he was missing, the chums had the natural feeling that perhaps they had been a little too rough on Loder. Now it was possible that he had met with a serious accident, Bob Cherry remarked that old Loder had had his good points, after all; and the Co. agreed with Bob. They hoped sincerely that their old enemy was not hurt in any way, but it seemed pretty certain that he must be. Only a serious accident could have kept the prefect away from the school without notice for a whole morning.

"Only I don't believe his accident happened this morning," Harry Wharton said, when the Co. discussed the matter in the Close after morning lessons. "It's all piffle about his going out for an early stroll. He never does."

"Too much of a slacker," said Bob, with a nod; and then, remembering that Loder might be badly injured at that very moment, he added hastily: "I—I mean, he was a late riser—ahem!"

"And he didn't see lights out for us last night," said Harry. "That meant that he was going out himself, I should imagine."

"But his bed had been slept in."

"How do you know?"

"They say that Walker found it disturbed when he looked in this morning; and Skinner asked the housemaid, too, and she said it looked as if it had been slept in when she made the bed."

"Walker was the first in the study: he may have fixed up all that when he saw that Loder had been out all night," said Wharton shrewdly. "Of course, he would expect him to come in very early. Loder never goes out for an early stroll; and we're pretty certain he went out last night. And so, putting two and two together, I fancy the accident—or whatever it was—happened last night. I suppose we can't say so, as that would be giving Loder away. Walker and Carne know it very well, and they can say so if they choose."

"But if he doesn't come back, the Head ought to know," said Johnny Bull. "The police will have to search for him. They ought to know the facts."

"He must be found soon!" said Harry.

They knew that wide inquiries were being made for Loder. The Head had telephoned to the police-stations at Courtfield and Friardale, but he had not received any news of an accident. No one answering to Loder's description had been run over or met with any other accident, so far as could be discovered.

Dr. Locke was greatly puzzled.

If Loder had met with some accident, surely he should have been found by this time. Even if the accident had been a fatal one the body could not remain undiscovered. Yet nothing was known of him.

But if it was not an accident, what could have happened? Was the boy in some unknown difficulties, and had he deliberately absented himself from school? If so, he had not gone home; for a telegram to Loder's home had been answered by another, stating that nothing had been heard of him there.

He had gone out of the school apparently for a walk in the morning, and had failed to return—had vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up.

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It was an amazing mystery.

Some of the fellows—and perhaps Mr. Lascelles—suspected that he had vanished over night, and not in the morning; but that did not shed any light on the mystery of the disappearance. At night or in the morning Loder's vanishing was equally amazing.

If he had been attacked by footpads he could hardly have been murdered by them; and even so, his body would have been found.

It was incredible that a Sixth-Former and a prefect should run away from school, and do so without leaving any explanation for the Head, or sending any explanation to his people.

There remained the theory that he had been kidnapped. But why should anybody take the trouble to kidnap Loder? There had been an attempt once to kidnap Lord Mauleverer of the Remove; but Mauleverer was a millionaire, and Loder certainly wasn't.

Billy Bunter propounded the startling theory that Loder had run away to sea to become a pirate—a suggestion that was greeted with a howl of laughter.

"It's an accident, of course," said Coker of the Fifth, with a sage shake of the head. "Loder's been walking on the cliffs, and he's tumbled into some hole, and can't get out. Lots of holes in the cliffs where a chap might lie till the crack of doom if he wasn't searched for."

"I shouldn't wonder," agreed Potter of the Fifth. "S'pose we ask the Head to let us off lessons this afternoon to search for him? We—ahem!—we're awfully attached to old Loder."

"So we are!" said Coker brightly, as if it had just struck him. "Loder wasn't half a bad sort; he believed in keeping those cheeky juniors in their place. I think that's a ripping idea! Go and ask the Head."

"Ahem!" said Potter. "Perhaps you'd better ask him —"

"Greene might like to go," said Coker thoughtfully.

"You've got a rather nice way of putting things, Greeney."

Greene acknowledged the compliment, but declined to go to the Head and ask for a half-holiday merely on the chance of Loder's having broken his neck.

"It's too good an idea not to be used," said Coker.

"Let's go and speak to Wingate."

They found Wingate talking to Mr. Lascelles. Mr. Lascelles had been down to Friardale to the police-station, and had come back without any news. He was looking concerned. He did not like Loder; but, like the rest of the masters, he was troubled by the thought that some serious accident might have happened to the prefect.

Coker & Co. came up, glad to catch Mr. Lascelles. He was so kind and good-natured that they felt he was the very best person to break their ripping idea to. If he took it kindly, he might mention it to the Head. Coker & Co. felt a little natural diffidence about approaching the Head themselves upon the subject.

"Any news, sir?" asked Coker.

"None!" said Mr. Lascelles.

"That's too bad, sir. I—we—we've got rather a good idea, sir—a sort of suggestion to make," murmured Coker.

"Make it, by all means, Coker!"

"It seems that Loder went out strolling this morning, sir. Well, he may have strolled on the cliffs. Lots of places there where a fellow may have tumbled down and not been able to squeeze out. In fact, sir, that seems to me the only way of accounting for Loder not coming back."

"It is quite possible, Coker."

"Well, sir," pursued Coker, encouraged, "I was thinking—we were thinking—that the Head might like us to go out and search for old Loder. We're awfully cut up about it, sir." Coker did not look very cut up, as a matter of fact; but, of course, his face may not have betrayed his inward feelings. "So, sir, we're quite willing to spend the whole afternoon, if necessary, looking for Loder."

Mr. Lascelles smiled slightly.

"Even at the cost of missing your lessons, Coker?"

"Yes, sir," said Coker heroically, "even at the cost of that, sir. We feel that we can't do too much for poor old Loder."

"That is very kind of you, Coker."

"Well, sir, we'd all like to be kind to old Loder at a time like this," said Coker, quite deaf to the inflection of sarcasm in the master's voice.

Greene and Potter coughed uncomfortably; they were not quite so obtuse as Horace Coker.

"It's not a bad idea, sir," said Wingate. "An accident on the cliffs is the only thing I can think of, too. One of the juniors was lost there once before you came here, sir. If all the fellows set out to look for Loder, there's no doubt he'd be found this afternoon, if he's laid up somewhere along the shore."

Mr. Lascelles nodded assent.

"I will mention it to the Head," he said. And he went into the house.

Coker & Co. exchanged glances of satisfaction. However deep, or otherwise, their concern might be for the bully of the Sixth, there was no doubt whatever that they would enjoy a ramble over the cliffs that afternoon much more than the usual grind in the Form-room. Their satisfaction was increased when, an hour later, a notice was posted up on the school noticeboard in the Head's handwriting. It was brief, but to the point.

"All boys, senior and junior, who wish to join in the search for Gerald Loder will be excused from lessons this afternoon.—H. LOCKE, Headmaster."

There was a suppressed cheer from the crowd of fellows who read the notice. They voted the Head a brick.

"Jolly sensible old sport, the Head," said Coker. "It was my idea. I suggested it to Lascelles, and he told the Head—"

"Who couldn't possibly have thought of it himself?" asked Bob Cherry sarcastically. "What would the Head do with Coker as a right-hand man, you chaps? Oh where, and oh where would he be?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll all go," said Harry Wharton.

"Yes, rather."

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

All Greyfriars, to the last fag, intended to join in the search; and all those who had any funds went to the school shop to lay in provisions for a long outing. So far as a good many of the fags were concerned, it was probable that the search for Loder would somewhat resemble a picnic on a large scale. Still, it was certainly an excellent idea.

If Loder, strolling on the cliffs, had fallen into some crevice, and lay there injured, as was quite possible, surely he would be discovered, with more than two hundred boys roaming the cliffs and the shore in quest of him. After dinner the whole school turned out, and Greyfriars was deserted. Some of the masters, including Mr. Lascelles and Herr Gans and Monsieur Charpentier, joined in the searching. Quite an army marched down to the shore, and scattered among the cliffs. The juniors were warned to be in by the usual hour for locking up, but the masters and the seniors were left to their own discretion in the matter.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Missing Master!

DUSK descended upon the old Close at Greyfriars.

Tired and dusty, in twos and threes, the searchers came dropping in.

Weary fags, tired with clambering and scrambling over cliffs and rocks, limped in at the gates.

And every new arrival was hailed with questions. Had he seen anything of Loder? And to all questions the reply was the same. No, he hadn't.

Gosling was going down to lock up when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived. The Famous Five looked very tired and dusty. They had taken the task very seriously, and had spent the whole afternoon searching the crevices and crannies of the cliffs for miles. But they had had no luck. They had used all the skill they had acquired in practice as Boy Scouts; they had hunted for "sign," but there was no sign to be found. Gerald Loder had disappeared without leaving a trace behind.

"Any luck?" asked Temple of the Fourth, as the Co. came in.

"None. No news here?"

"None!"

And the chums of the Remove went in to tea.

More and more fellows came dropping in, and Gosling had to open the gates a good many times; but for once juniors were not in danger of being reported for being late. All of them brought the same news, or, rather, lack of news; they had discovered no trace of the missing prefect.

It was remarked that Walker and Carne of the Sixth were looking very blue. They had taken part in the search, with the same want of success as the rest. But the other fellows did not know where their search had led the two black sheep of the Sixth. They had found an opportunity, as a matter of fact, of dropping in at the Cross Keys, and questioning Mr. Cobb.

Mr. Cobb was surprised and alarmed to hear that Loder had disappeared. He assured them that Loder had left his place quite safely the previous night soon after eleven o'clock. His evident alarm was an assurance that nothing had happened to Loder at the public-house. He had left the Cross Keys; but he had not reached Greyfriars. Somewhere be-

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tween the public-house and the school he had vanished. Walker and Carne, therefore, did not go down to the cliffs. They knew Loder could not have gone there at night. But where had he gone? They cudgelled their brains over that mystery in vain.

They were worried on their own account as well as on Loder's. Mr. Cobb was alarmed, for if it came out that a Greyfriars fellow had been playing cards at his public-house almost till midnight, it would certainly do him harm. Mr. Cobb's licence had been in danger before, and it was in greater danger than ever now. And Walker and Carne knew that it was their duty to tell the Head that they were certain that Loder had disappeared overnight, and not in the morning at all. But they could not do so without revealing their own connection with the sporting set at the Cross Keys. And that meant ruin to them. Mr. Cobb urged them to keep silent for all their sakes; and though they cared little about Cobb, they cared very much about themselves. They kept silent as to what they knew; but it was no wonder that they looked decidedly "blue."

The police were searching for Loder, but they believed that he had disappeared during an early morning walk. Not being in possession of the facts, their search for the missing prefect was more than ever likely to be futile. Walker and Carne knew that; but they kept silent. They dared not tell what they knew; but their knowledge lay a heavy load upon their minds. It was their punishment for foolish and reckless conduct; and the punishment was heavy.

Their glum looks were observed, and caused much sympathy. No one had suggested that they were so attached to Loder, for their glumness was attributed to their friendship for the missing Sixth-Former.

At calling-over, a good many of the seniors were still absent. They dropped in one by one, or in twos or threes, later in the evening, footsore and unsuccessful. At half-past eight calling-over was taken again, and then all the fellows answered to it. There was only one of the searchers who had not yet come in—Mr. Lascelles.

"Larry's keeping it up," Bob Cherry remarked to a group of juniors at the doorway, who were waiting to see the mathematics master come in. The juniors sometimes alluded to Mr. Lascelles as Larry—not in his hearing, of course.

"Nine o'clock," said Harry Wharton, rather uneasily. "He can't be searching for Loder in the dark."

"He isn't the kind of ass to have any accident," said Nugent, reading Wharton's misgiving in his face.

"He doesn't know the cliffs as we do. He's new here," Tom Brown remarked.

"I hope he'll come in before we go to bed," said Harry.

But Mr. Lascelles did not come in.

At half-past nine the Remove went to their dormitory as usual; and the mathematics master was still absent from Greyfriars.

They did not sleep soon.

About midnight Harry Wharton awoke from an uneasy slumber. He could hear a slight sound of someone moving about downstairs. He slipped out of bed, and quitted the dormitory.

Lights were still burning in the lower part of the house; a most unusual circumstance at that hour. Wharton went softly downstairs, and caught sight of Wingate and Herr Gans in the hall, speaking together in low tones.

"Wingate!" Harry called out softly.

The Greyfriars captain started, and looked up the stairs.

"What are you doing out of bed?" he exclaimed gruffly.

"I woke up. Is there any news?"

"No."

"Has—has Mr. Lascelles come back?"

"Not yet. Go back to bed."

"He hasn't come in?" exclaimed Wharton.

"No, I tell you. Cut off!"

Wharton returned to the dormitory. He was disturbed and uneasy. Why had not Mr. Lascelles returned? Another accident. It seemed utterly improbable. But why had he not come back?

Harry Wharton slept but little more that night. He had a great regard for the mathematics master, and he was alarmed about him, much more than about Loder. He was glad when the rising-bell clanged out in the morning.

The Remove turned out eager for news; and Wharton was the first down. A housemaid was turning out the lights.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE GREYFRIARS TRIPPERS!"

A Splendid Complete Tale of the
Chums of Greyfriars. Order Early!

Evidently vigil had been kept all night in the School House. Mr. Quelch came out, looking very disturbed, and Wharton ventured to speak to him.

"Did Mr. Lascelles come in, sir?"

The Remove-master shook his head.

"He has not returned," he said. "There must have been an accident of some kind. It is very extraordinary."

The school was buzzing with it before long. Loder's disappearance had startled all the school; and now the mathematics master had vanished. It was mystery on mystery! Pelion piled upon Ossa, as Temple put it poetically. What had become of Mr. Lascelles?

"He didn't know his way about the cliffs, as we do," said Bob Cherry dolefully. "Poor old Larry's busted a leg, or something, in the dark. I wonder whether we shall get another day off."

Inspector Grimes came over from Courtfield to see the Head early that morning. He went away looking very grave. The disappearance of Mr. Lascelles, following that of Loder, evidently flabbergasted him, as Bob Cherry remarked.

All Greyfriars was "flabbergasted," for that matter.

The Head was looking decidedly worried at morning chapel. The fellows wondered whether there would be lessons that morning. In the excitement that was reigning in the school, little work was likely to be done. They were not surprised when a notice appeared on the board, giving permission to the school to renew the search. The general impression was that Mr. Lascelles had fallen down somewhere in the cliffs, and was lying there helpless; and the Greyfriars fellows were very keen to find him. It was a day out for the whole school; and the shore, and almost every crevice in the long range of cliffs, was searched again and again. But the day wore on without any discovery being made. Mr. Lascelles had vanished as completely as Gerald Loder had done. When dusk fell once more upon the old school, the searchers came in wearily—unsuccessful.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Kidnapped by Pals!

"YOU can't say no, Larry!"

Thus Mr. 'Enry Sawyer.

The scene was a room in the dismantled old house on the hill, where Harry Wharton & Co. and the Cliff House girls had picnicked. It was a strange scene. There were four persons in the room—Mr. Sawyer, and his comrades Toodles and Badger, and Mr. Lascelles, the mathematics-master of Greyfriars. Mr. Lascelles sat in a deep, old-fashioned armchair. His hands were secured with a strong cord, loose enough to allow him free movements, but knotted too securely for him to break away.

His handsome face was pale with anger.

Mr. Sawyer's manner was apologetic, sheepish, but determined. The old pugilist was a man of determination. He had taken a great amount of trouble, and considerable risk, in carrying out his fixed idea. And he had succeeded, so far. Larry Lynx, his old pupil, known at Greyfriars School as Mr. Lawrence Lascelles, was in his hands at last. Mr. Sawyer had not made a mistake the second time.

It had been easy enough. The master, tramping homeward tired and weary after a long hunt on the cliffs, had been seized in the dusky lane; a sack thrown over his head, a looped rope passed round him and drawn tight. He had not been expecting anything like an attack; he had been taken completely by surprise. Roped up in the sack, he had been whipped away by the three pugilists. They had seized him within a quarter of a mile of the Grange, and they had carried him after dark to the old house, safely. When the sack was removed from his head, the angry and astonished master found himself a prisoner, in the hands of his old friends.

His amazement was extreme, and so was his anger. But Mr. Sawyer, attached as he was to his old pupil, was not a man for half measures. Mr. Lascelles' hands were secured, and he was helpless. The three pugilists had seen him in the ring too often, and knew his prowess too well to run any risks with him. Given the free use of his hands, it was quite possible that Larry Lynx could have "knocked out" Mr. Sawyer, Badger, and Toodles, all together.

"Larry, old pal, you can't say no, now."

"You can't, Larry," said Toodles, almost beseechingly.

"Look wot a lot of trouble we've took with you."

"You ain't got the 'cart to do it!" affirmed Badger.

Mr. Lascelles set his lips hard.

"Will you have the kindness to tell me what this means?" he asked.

"Don't you know well enough?" said Mr. Sawyer. "I've asked you—you can't deny 'ow I've asked you—to oblige an old pal. 'Ere's the Slogger sneerin' and jeerin' at me, sayin' as my old pupil ain't the pluck to stand up agin 'im in the

ring. 'Ere's me, with a 'undred quid put on you, afore I knows that you'd leave me in the lurch. 'Ere's many sportin' gentlemen keen to see you meet the Slogger, and to put up a thousand quid—which the same is yours for the trouble of takin' it. And you says no—always no. Naterally, I takes the law into my own 'ands. And 'ere you are."

"Yes, I am here," said Mr. Lascelles, with a shrug of the shoulders. "That's plain enough. And, now I am here, what are you going to do with me?"

"Ave some sense, Larry!" said Mr. Sawyer, in a tone of mild expostulation. "'Ere's your old punchers, all ready to stand up for you to slog 'em, in the old way, for to git into form agin arter neglectin' yourself so long, wastin' your vallyble time schoolmasterin' and sich. 'Ere they are, all ready to stand up and be knocked erbout—wot?"

"Bless your 'eart, quite ready," said Mr. Toodles.

"And the 'arder you 'its, the better we'll like it," declared Badger.

"And then you gits into form, and the fight comes off with the Slogger. You outs 'im, and pouches a thousand quid!" said Mr. Sawyer temptingly.

"Do you mean to say that you've kidnapped me, to train me for a fight?" demanded Mr. Lascelles, his amazement overwhelming his anger, as he realised the extraordinary scheme that had been developed in Mr. Sawyer's determined mind.

"That's the size of it, Larry."

"You—you—you duffer!" exclaimed Mr. Lascelles. "I think you must be insane, Sawyer. I shall not do anything of the kind. I shall not change my mind; I cannot. This does not make the slightest difference to me. The moment you loosen me, I shall walk out of this place."

"Will you? Then you won't be loosened in a 'urry. You ain't goin' to 'ave your 'ands loose, old pal, till you've give your solemn davy to train regler, and meet the Slogger."

"I shall not promise anything of the kind."

"Which I know you're a man of your word," said Mr. Sawyer. "Once you give your davy, you'll stick to it. It's easy enough. You'll come over 'ere regler to train. We'll get the big fight fixed for a month ahead, and then——"

"I tell you it cannot be!"

"And I tell you it can be and will be," said Mr. Sawyer obstinately.

"Once for all, I will do nothing of the sort. Now let me go!"

"We didn't nail you for to let you go agin," said Mr. Sawyer calmly. "You'll change your mind, Larry; I know that. You can't reely mean to go back on an old pal in that way. You'll 'ave time to chynge your mind. 'Ere! We've got comfy quarters all ready for you; shutters screwed down on the winder, and nice iron bars to the door. You'll feel as though you was in the stone jug. But that's your look-out. You'll be fed regler, on the fat of the land. We'll look arter you, won't we?"

"We'll look arter you," said Toodles and Badger together.

"Is it possible that you mean to keep me a prisoner here, unless I agree to train and meet the Slogger?" Mr. Lascelles exclaimed.

"Exactly! That's the hidea."

"But—but this is preposterous! Do you know that you are breaking the law? That you may be sent to prison on a charge of kidnapping?"

"I know that; if our old pal chooses for to give us away, and round on us," said Mr. Sawyer steadily. "But I don't think as you'll do it, Larry."

"Larry ain't that sort," said Toodles solemnly.

Mr. Lascelles burst into an angry laugh. He was intensely exasperated; and yet there was something touching in the dog-like fidelity of the rough-and-ready trio, combined with their grim determination to overcome his resistance to their plans.

"You're taking an unfair advantage of me," he said. "You know I won't do anything to have you punished."

"Course you won't," said Toodles. "That wouldn't be our Larry!"

"But don't you see the harm you're doing me? I shall be missed from the school—searched for—and ultimately found. You can't keep me hidden here long. But——"

"You won't be found in a 'urry," said Mr. Sawyer, with a smile. "It will take 'em some time to guess as your old pals 'ave collared you, and took this 'ere nice place for you to roost in nice and comfy, Larry."

Mr. Lascelles frowned. It was quite true. He would never have dreamed of such an outrageous scheme himself; and the police were not likely to think of it. A man might be kidnapped by his enemies; but to be kidnapped by his friends was a little too startling for anyone to guess that it had happened. He looked at the three rough, scarred faces, and he read relentless determination there. They were devoted to him. They would have gone through fire and water for him, if necessary. But they would not give him his liberty unless he promised to carry out their wishes, and appear in the

prize-ring once more as Larry Lynx, to meet the famous Slogger of Bermondsey.

It was an absurd, unheard-of situation, almost comic; and yet it was very real, and very serious for the mathematics-master of Greyfriars. He knew the trouble and the anxiety that would be caused at the school by his disappearance, and the difficulty he would have in explaining matters without betraying his attached but troublesome old "pals." And he could not think for a moment of delivering Mr. Sawyer & Co. up to the police as kidnappers.

That was not to be thought of.

The three pugilists watched his face anxiously, hoping to read signs of yielding there. But they read nothing of the sort. Mr. Sawyer was determined; and so was his old pupil. The mathematics-master of Greyfriars had no intention whatever of giving way. It was impossible for him to do so without resigning his position at Greyfriars for good; and that was a little too much. But he understood only too clearly that the outcome of this affair might be that he would have to resign.

"They ain't found the other yet," Mr. Toodles remarked, with a slight grin.

Mr. Lascelles started.

"The other! What other? What do you mean, Toodles?"

"Which we made a mistake the first time," explained Mr. Sawyer. "We knowed you was at the vicarage, and we laid for you. And a bloke come down the path, and we shoved the sack over 'im and collared 'im—and it wasn't you. But we got him looked up safe and sound."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Lascelles, aghast. "Do you mean to say that that is what has become of Loder? You have kidnapped a Greyfriars boy?"

"He's a Greyfriars boy right enough, but he wouldn't give 'is name," said Mr. Sawyer calmly. "Said it was Smith; but I knowed he was lying."

Mr. Lascelles showed signs of agitation now.

"You—you fool!" he said. "Loder will make the worst trouble he can over this. You will be prosecuted! Why didn't you let him go when you found you'd made a mistake?"

"He knowed too much; and he'd have jawed, and we shouldn't 'ave got you," said Mr. Sawyer coolly. "I knowed it was a risk, but we 'ad to take it."

"Then he is here?"

"Next room to yours," said Mr. Sawyer cheerfully.

"Good heavens! This will mean imprisonment for all of you!"

"P'r'aps—arter the Slogger's beaten!"

"You—you duffer!"

"P'r'aps we can make terms with the young gent," said Toodles, with slow solemnity. "He won't want his 'ead-master to know us he was comin' 'ome from a pub late at night. I s'pose that ain't allowed at Greyfriars?"

"So that was it!" muttered Mr. Lascelles. "It was night, then. I suspected as much. I am glad he has come to no harm; but you must let him go."

"Arter the fight, yes—or arter you've promised to meet the Slogger," said Mr. Sawyer. "Not afore that!"

"Look here, Sawyer—"

"You can't say 'No,' Larry. You'll meet the Slogger!" said Mr. Sawyer coaxingly.

"I cannot!"

Mr. Sawyer sighed.

"Well, it goes agin the grain to be 'ard on an old pal, and an old pupil," he said; "but you drives me to it. Tike 'im to his room, boys!"

"I appeal to you, Sawyer, have a little sense. You're acting against the law—you're doing harm to me and yourself too. Let me go at once, and I'll try to keep Loder's tongue quiet!"

"Will you meet the Slogger?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then there ain't nothin' more to be said. I'll arsk you agin to-morrer, and agin the day arter—for a month of Sundays if you like. Tike him in!"

Mr. Lascelles set his lips. He knew that argument was useless in the face of Mr. Sawyer's determination. Five minutes later he was shut up in the room Mr. Sawyer and his friends had so carefully prepared for him. The room was furnished now, and food was on the table.

In the door a gap had been sawn, for food to be passed through. After Mr. Lascelles' hands were once free, his gaolers did not intend to risk unbarring the door until they had his promise.

The door closed on him, the iron bar fell into place, and the key was turned in the lock. He was a prisoner—as secure as if he had been immured in a cell in a prison. Mr. Sawyer blinked through the slit in the door.

"Put your 'ands 'ere, Larry, and I'll loose you," he said. "I ain't makin' an old pal uncomferable, not me!"

Mr. Lascelles silently extended his hands, and the cord was cut. He was free to use his limbs now, but the freedom was useless to him. Mr. Sawyer's face looked at him through the slit in the door, with a curious expression upon it—half apologetic, half exasperated.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE GREYFRIARS TRIPPERS!"

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"You won't say 'Yes' now, Larry?"

"No!" thundered Mr. Lascelles.

"I'll wait, then!" Mr. Sawyer sighed. "When you chynge your mind, all you've got to do is to put your 'ead to this 'ere 'ole in the door and yelp. One of us will allers be in 'earin' of you. Good-night, Larry!"

Mr. Lascelles made no reply. The old "pug" stumped away, leaving the mathematics master of Greyfriars a prisoner, and a prey to extremely unpleasant reflections.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Wharton Puts Two and Two Together!

"COME into the study—and mum's the word!"

Harry Wharton whispered the words softly to Bob Cherry in passing him. Bob looked surprised, but he did not reply, simply nodding.

Another night had settled darkly on Greyfriars—on a school throbbing with excitement and anxiety.

Mr. Lascelles was missing, as well as Loder, and the mystery of it hung like a cloud over the school. The police were puzzled; the Head was at his wits' end; the boys were astounded, perplexed, alarmed.

Too thorough a search had been made for it to be supposed that Mr. Lascelles had met with an accident on the cliffs—or Loder either. They were not to be found, and the theory of two accidents, both leading to complete disappearance, was incredible.

And even if Loder had committed the improbable action of running away from school, it was impossible to imagine that Mr. Lascelles had done so. The vanishing of the mathematics master, in fact, cleared up to a certain extent the mystery of Loder's disappearance.

He must have been kidnapped—there was no other possible solution—and if he had been kidnapped, doubtless Loder had been kidnapped also. Where, when, by whom, and why, remained impenetrable secrets; but there could hardly be any doubt about the fact.

And that much being practically established, it became known that the Head had decided to "gate" the whole school until the matter was cleared up. Some secret kidnapper was at work; and, for all the Head knew, he—or they—might have further designs. There would be no more searching done by the Greyfriars fellows, lest there should be another inexplicable disappearance to follow.

Harry Wharton had passed the word round to his chums to meet in the study after preparation.

Wharton's brow had been clouded with deep thought for some time. When the Famous Five were gathered in No. 1 Study, the juniors looked inquiringly at their leader. They knew that Wharton had something of importance to say, and they guessed that it referred to the disappearance of Mr. Lascelles.

"Well, what's the little game?" Bob Cherry asked.

"We can't look for Lascelles any more," Nugent remarked.

"That's just what I'm going to suggest," said Wharton quietly.

Johnny Bull whistled softly.

"School's gated," he said.

"Can't be helped. This is among ourselves, of course. It seems to be pretty clear now that there has been kidnapping."

"Can't think of any other explanation," said Nugent sagely. "Can't imagine two accidents—two complete disappearances of the body—or two persons clearing off without warning. Coincidences don't happen like that. They don't come back because they can't come back. It's a clear case of kidnapping—though why, goodness knows! Loder's not rich; and as for poor old Lascelles, we know he's not rolling in wealth by any means. They could have nailed Maully much more easily, I should think—or Smithy—or Inky here, with a better chance of making a profit out of it!"

"It's not a case of kidnapping for money," said Harry quietly.

Nugent stared.

"You speak as if you know!"

"I think I do."

"Oh! Do you mean to say you've got an idea where Lascelles is?"

"I believe I could walk straight to the very spot."

The chums of the Remove stared hard at Wharton. His quiet statement almost took their breath away.

"I won't ask you if you're joking," said Bob, after a pause; "but how the dickens can you possibly know anything about it?"

"I've been thinking." Wharton's tone was low and quiet. "You remember last Wednesday afternoon we picnicked with Marjorie at the Grange?"

"What the deuce has that—"

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"We explored the old house afterwards, and we made a queer discovery there—a room with new shutters screwed down over the window, and a new bar and brackets outside the door!"

"Oh!"

"It all looked as if that room had been specially prepared for a prisoner: we thought so at the time."

"We did," said Bob, in a low voice. "But—but—"

"And a couple of days afterwards Lascelles vanishes, and is being kept a prisoner somewhere," said Harry quietly. "It isn't a very big jump—from the prison to the prisoner. It's simply putting two and two together, I should say!"

Bob Cherry scratched his curly head.

"My hat!" he said. "My only summer hat! You think that Lascelles—"

"We know he's being imprisoned somewhere. And we know that the old house has been suddenly taken, and a room in it fitted up for keeping a prisoner safely. We should be duffers if we didn't think of that in connection with Mr. Lascelles's disappearance—now we know that he must have been kidnapped!"

"Hold on!" said Johnny Bull, in his slow way. "The tenant of the Grange is that pugilist chap Sawyer, and he's a friend of Lascelles. Men don't kidnap their friends!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"That staggered me a bit when the thought first came into my head," he admitted. "Only it's a peculiar case. You remember what they were saying when we came on them in the lane. Sawyer wanted Larry Lynx to take on a new fight, and was urging him; and Mr. Lascelles refused point-blank. Sawyer may have lost his temper with him, and done this, or he may have some scheme of forcing or persuading Lascelles. I know it's a queer business, and I don't intend to say anything outside this study about it. But I can't help thinking of that barred door in connection with the fact that Mr. Lascelles has been taken away and imprisoned somewhere!"

"And Loder?"

"That beats me. I don't see in the least why they should kidnap Loder," confessed Harry, "unless he may have found out something about them, and they're keeping his mouth shut. But I'm not concerned about Loder now. This is the case about Lascelles, in a nutshell. Mr. Sawyer urges him to oblige him in a certain matter—he refuses—Sawyer takes a lonely house near Greyfriars, and has one room barred up to use as a prison-cell—then Lascelles disappears. Putting it together like that, it looks to me as if there's only one possible conclusion."

"My hat, it does!"

"Only we don't want to tell what may turn out to be a cock-and-bull story, and risk being laughed at!" said Harry. "I'm not going to the Head with this, or to Inspector Grimes. My idea is that we should put it to the test ourselves!"

"Ourselves!" murmured Bob.

"Yes, to-night!"

The juniors looked silently at Wharton. They understood now what he had in mind—an expedition to the old house under cover of darkness—secretly, to discover whether the mathematics master was imprisoned there. It was a risky business; but the idea of the adventure appealed to them, and their attachment to Mr. Lascelles made them quite ready to run the risk—risk of violence from Mr. Sawyer's rough companions, and of punishment from the Head of Greyfriars if their escapade was discovered.

"And if he's there?" asked Nugent, after a long, long pause.

"If he's there we may be able to help him out, or simply clear off with the news and tell the police, according to circumstances," said Harry. "And if it's all moonshine, if I'm mistaken, we needn't say a word about the matter at all."

There was another long pause.

"Well, are you fellows game?" asked Wharton at last.

"I'm game," said Bob at once.

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh declared that the gamefulness was terrific, and Nugent and Johnny Bull nodded assent.

"Midnight, then," said Harry. "I'll call you. And not a word, mind!"

"Not a giddy syllable."

Nothing was breathed outside the study on the subject. If the theory was all "moonshine," the juniors did not want to be laughed at for their pains. But the more they thought about it, the more certain it seemed to them that that barred room in the old Grange could tell the secret of Mr. Lascelles' disappearance. It was, as Wharton had said, simply a case of putting two and two together.

Harry Wharton & Co. went to bed with the Remove as usual, with an elaborate carelessness of manner. They joined easily in the chatter of the dormitory, till the juniors dropped off to sleep. Wharton did not sleep. He was too

anxious. The other members of the Co., relying upon their leader, slept, while Harry kept vigil, and heard the hours strike with slow monotony.

The captain of the Remove had fixed upon midnight for the excursion, as the safest time. Masters and boys would all be asleep by that time. And the strange tenants at the Grange, too, would most likely be sleeping.

Midnight sounded at last through the still summer night.

Wharton stepped quietly out of bed. Deep silence and slumber reigned in the dormitory. A touch, a whisper, was sufficient to awaken his comrades. The Co. turned out without a word, and dressed themselves quietly. They had placed rubber shoes ready under their beds, to put on instead of their boots. Silent as ghosts, they dressed, and placed bolsters and pillows in their beds, to deceive a careless glance if any of the other fellows should awake. Then they stole from the dormitory. Five minutes later they were in the Close, leaving a window at the back unfastened for their return. The moon was glimmering down on the road as they dropped from the school wall.

"Keep in the shadow," said Harry.

They tramped along the lane under the shadows of the trees. A light gleamed out in the dimness ahead, and the five juniors crouched close in a gap of the hedge as Police-constable Tozer of Friardale tramped past unsuspectingly. Mr. Tozer passed on, and vanished with heavy tread, and the juniors crept out of the hedge and pursued their way, their hearts beating fast. It was nearly an hour before the Grange loomed up on their sight—a dark mass against the shimmer of the moonlit sky.

Not a light glimmered from the old building. If it was occupied, the occupants were in bed.

The gate by which they had entered on the half-holiday had been repaired, but it was easy to climb over it. In a few minutes more they were in the grounds, keeping cautiously in the shadows of the trees.

"Blessed if I don't feel like a giddy burglar!" Bob Cherry murmured.

Wharton did not speak. Standing in the darkness under the trees, he scanned the old house, upon which the moonlight fell.

Bare, uncurtained windows glimmered in the soft light among the masses of old ivy. Very clear and distinct among the bare windows, the single window guarded with shutters showed up, a black patch on the ivy. The shutters were dark. There was no light in the room. Round the shutters, screwed fast to the window-frame, the thick old ivy rustled softly in the breeze from the sea.

"There's the room!" murmured Nugent. "But—"

Wharton set his lips.

"If Mr. Lascelles is here, he's in that room," he said. "Those three fellows must be in the house. But we've got to risk that if he's there. Only, before we run that risk, we must know whether Lascelles is there or not."

"Throw a stone up," Nugent suggested.

Wharton shook his head.

"They might hear it as well as Lascelles, and he may be fast asleep."

"Then how—"

"I'm going up the ivy."

"It's risky," muttered Bob uneasily.

"Pooh! Not in this clear light, and the ivy's strong enough to bear any weight. Not so risky as climbing into the Remove dorm by the window—and I've done that. You fellows keep in cover. You can cut some sticks here in case there's trouble."

"All serene."

Wharton stepped quickly across the path of moonlight towards the house, and disappeared into the thick masses of the ivy.

His chums watched him anxiously.

In the moonlight the ivy swayed and shimmered under the weight of the climber as Harry Wharton pulled himself up from one stout branch to another. Higher and higher he went, a moving shadow on the mass of shimmering dark green.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

All's Well That Ends Well!

LARRY LYNX, alias Mr. Lawrence Lascelles of Greyfriars, started and awoke.

He had thrown himself on his bed late that night, to sleep. For twenty-four hours he had been a prisoner in the old house. A dozen times Mr. Sawyer had come to the slit in the door to speak to him, to urge him to give way. Each time Mr. Lascelles' answer had been the same—a decided "No!" His resolution was unshaken, but

so was the resolution of his old trainer. The day had worn away, heavily and dully to the angry, imprisoned man. Dully and heavily, too, to Loder of the Sixth, locked in the adjoining room. But of Loder Mr. Lascelles had seen and heard nothing.

The kidnapped master had early given up the hope of escape. The thick shutters screwed on the window defied his utmost efforts. The barred door was impervious to any attack he could make on it. The incarceration was telling upon his temper. Had his captors come within reach of his hands, they would have learned that Larry Lynx had not forgotten, during his days as a mathematics master, the art of delivering a knock-out blow. But they were very careful to keep out of reach.

Mr. Lascelles' only hope was that he would be found, and there seemed little chance of that. And it was not a wholly satisfactory hope, for, in spite of his kidnapping, he did not want the rigour of the law to descend upon his old trainer and his two devoted bulldogs, Toodles and Badger. But how long that preposterous situation was to last he could not imagine, nor how it would end. The anxiety he knew must be felt at Greyfriars troubled him greatly. It was very late before he slept—his second night—in that barred room of the old house.

And now he suddenly awoke.

Like most men in a state of perfect physical fitness, Mr. Lascelles awoke with a clear brain, and all his wits about him.

Tap!

He knew what it was that had awakened him—a tap at the window. It was repeated as he sat up in bed.

Tap!

He was amazed. The window, he knew, was a good forty feet from the ground, yet someone was evidently outside, tapping on the wooden shutters. The window was open—the top sash quite down; outside, the shutters closed over it, with only a few narrow slits to let in the air.

Tap, tap!

The master sprang from the bed, and quickly approached the window. Who it was, what it meant, he could not guess; but it was easy to learn.

He put his lips close to a narrow slit in the shutter, and whispered:

"Who is there?"

There was a faint exclamation without.

"Is that you, sir—Mr. Lascelles?"

"I am Mr. Lascelles. Who are you? I know your voice."

"Wharton of the Remove, sir."

Mr. Lascelles stood rooted to the floor.

"Wharton! You! Is it possible? At this hour! What are you doing here?"

"Looking for you, sir."

"Good heavens! But—but how did you get to the window? Have you a ladder? Yet surely you cannot have—"

"I'm on the ivy, sir. I've climbed here."

"My boy!" Mr. Lascelles' voice was a hoarse whisper. "You are in danger!"

"That's all right, sir. I've climbed ivy before. They're keeping you a prisoner here?"

"Yes."

"Then I was right! I'll explain afterwards how I guessed it, sir. I've got some friends down in the garden—four chaps, sir. We'll soon have you out of this. If you'd rather, we'll get the police here—"

"No, no!" exclaimed Mr. Lascelles hurriedly. "Wharton, my brave lad, you have done me an incalculable service—more than you can think. You have said nothing of this, I gather—"

"No, sir."

"Good—very good! Listen! I was kidnapped by some foolish fellows who wish me to do something I cannot do. But I don't want them punished."

"I know, sir. Sawyer and his friends."

"I don't see how you know, but it is the fact. If you could get into the house you could release me if you could find the door of this room."

"I know where it is, sir. I've been in the room myself. Where are those fellows?"

"I think they sleep downstairs. They will not hurt you, even if they hear you. But if you are careful—"

"I'll be careful, sir. They sha'n't hear me. Do you know anything of Loder?"

"He is in the next room to this. He was kidnapped in mistake for me in the dark on Wednesday night. Take care how you descend, Wharton. If anything should happen to you—"

"I'm as safe as houses, sir. I've climbed ivy more than once, higher than this." Wharton did not add that it was the ivy under the window of the Remove dormitory. That was not a judicious confidence to make to a Greyfriars master. "I'll get down now, sir; it's all serene."

A rustle of the ivy followed.

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"Whistle when you are safe down," said Mr. Lascelles. "Then I shall know you are safe."

"Yes, sir."

The ivy rustled. The rustle died away. Ten minutes later there came a faint whistle from below, and Mr. Lascelles breathed more freely. Wharton was safe upon the firm earth again. With a new light in his eyes, the imprisoned master dressed himself quickly, and waited for the sound of the junior at the door. He posted himself at the slit in the door, his eyes piercing the darkness of the passage without.

Meanwhile, Harry Wharton had rejoined his chums in the shadows of the garden. They looked at him eagerly, but in silence.

"He's there," whispered Wharton. "I've spoken to him. Loder's in the next room to him. Two birds with one stone. He wants us to get in and open the door for him, without making a row. We can find a window. Come on!"

"Good luck!" murmured Bob.

They crept cautiously round the silent house. The windows on the ground floor were all closed and fastened. But there were a good many broken panes in the windows, and they soon found one where a shattered pane made it easy to reach through and take hold of the catch. The catch was pushed back, the sash raised. It creaked ominously, and the juniors listened in breathless anxiety. But there was no sound of alarm. One by one they climbed through the window, and stepped into the room inside. Within, the house was densely dark, and they had to grope their way, holding to one another, making no sound in their rubber shoes. But outside the room a bare curtainless window afforded light, and on the staircase the moonlight glimmered in. From some room close at hand came a sound of heavy snoring. The juniors, in spite of the anxiety of the moment, could not help grinning as they heard it, as they wondered what the snoozer would think when he awoke and found the prisoners flown.

Silently they crept up the broad staircase, glimmering with bars of silver light from the high windows. A few minutes more, and they were outside the barred door. The key was in the lock. Wharton turned it back, and lifted down the bar. Bob Cherry pulled the door open.

There was a sudden, deep breath in the darkness of the prison-room.

"Here you are, sir!" murmured Bob.

"Thank you, my lads!"

Mr. Lascelles stepped out of the room.

"Wait here!" he whispered.

He moved quietly to the next room, and they heard him turn back a key. They looked into the room as the door opened. The moonlight shone in at the window. Two bars had been screwed across the window to make it secure, and their shadows lay black in the moonlight on the floor. On a bed Loder of the Sixth lay asleep, in his clothes. Mr. Lascelles touched him lightly on the shoulder, and the Sixth-Former awoke with a sharp cry.

"Silence!" whispered the master.

Loder sat up, staring at him blankly, his face white in the moonlight.

"You, sir!" he muttered.

"Yes. Get up, and follow me; but don't make a sound."

"Ye-es, sir."

Loder's nerves were evidently in tatters. But he obeyed without a word more. He started as he saw the juniors outside the door. But he did not speak.

Mr. Lascelles led the way quietly down the stairs. The juniors and Loder followed him.

Again that heavy snore fell upon their ears. It died away as they moved down the old, wide-pannelled hall to the door. Mr. Lascelles opened the door, and the fresh night wind blew upon their faces.

The master held the great door open, and signed to the boys to pass him. They did so, and the master was the last to leave. He did not close the door quietly. He dragged it shut with all his force.

Slam!

It was a crash that seemed like thunder to the startled ears of the juniors, and it rumbled like thunder through every recess of the empty old house.

"Great pip!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That will wake them—"

"They'll be after us!" panted Loder.

"It does not matter now," said Mr. Lascelles quietly.

"They could not hurt us. Let us be gone, however."

The juniors understood. The slam of the door was a warning to Mr. Sawyer and his friends to make themselves scarce while there was yet time. They ran quickly down the path to the lane. When they looked back lights were flashing in

(Concluded on page 27, column 2.)

NEXT
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"THE GREYFRIARS TRIPPERS!"

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A Wonderful Story dealing with the Thrilling Adventures of Ferrers Lord—Millionaire, and his comrades, Ching-Lung—Juggler and Ventriloquist; Rupert Thurston, and Gan-Waga, the Eskimo.

READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is engaged on one of his adventurous expeditions, in company with Ching-Lung (the Prince of China), Rupert Thurston, Gan Waga (the Eskimo), also Prout, Maddock, Barry O'Rooney, and the rest of the famous band of stalwart seamen. Their quest is a field of blue orchids, which is said to exist somewhere up the great Amazon River, and their craft is a small steam launch named the Blue Orchid, which has been captured from Lord's enemy in this enterprise, a German millionaire named Hausmann, who is continually pursuing the millionaire in his magnificent yacht, the Medea. Mainly owing to the craft of Vasco, a friendly native whom Ferrers Lord befriended on one of his earlier adventures, Hausmann is successfully thrown off the trail, and Ferrers Lord and his companions succeed in reaching Obidos. After staying there a day or two, they once more set out on their quest. They stumble across a village which is reigned over by a beautiful woman, who is known as Althara the Merciless. The adventurers are captured and taken prisoners. Ching-Lung, however, tells her he is a wizard, and by simple, yet wonderful, conjuring, he earns a reward from the queen. This takes the shape of a cup of wine, out of which the queen first drinks. By this sign, no one may harm the drinker. "Tarlace," a native of the village who had once been amongst English sailors, whispers to Ching-Lung to pass the cup quickly to his companions. This the prince does, and thus saves the lives of all the crew. Maddock is caught by Charkoni, and Barry O'Rooney, a few minutes later, walks into a trap made by Charkoni. Ferrers Lord and Rupert Thurston discover marks of the struggle outside the wizard's hut, and make investigations. They discover a secret tunnel, in which is a kind of miniature railway. Setting the truck on the lines, they shoot down a hill, just as they hear a moan. Charkoni is found and tied up. Ferrers Lord and Thurston find Barry and Maddock, and bring them back to the surface. Meanwhile, Ching-Lung has to go to the Palace to give the queen more exhibitions of his prowess as a juggler. After leaving there, Gan-Waga and Ching-Lung hear firing, and discover that Hausmann and his men have arrived at the village. Many natives are slain, and the Prince and his companion have a narrow escape, only being rescued by Althara in the nick of time. They are in a punt, when suddenly the queen claps her hands, and calls for Charkoni. The wizard seems to drop from the skies into the water, and there they see him, dead. Meanwhile, Prout & Co., pursued by the Germans, seek safety in the jungle.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Narrow Escape—Vasco's Story.

For a short time they rested under the shadow of a rock. To escape the dreaded fever they knew they must climb. It looked almost impossible at that point.

"They took the stuff up to build the columns," said Filson, "and if they could take up hundreds of tons of stone, I think we ought to manage it. It isn't as if we had anything to carry. Wish we had," he added, with a rueful sigh. "There's a path somewhere about, depend on it. Let's look about."

Presently Joe whistled. He had found a break in the rocks and a well-worn pathway that zigzagged over the face of the cliff. They ran to him.

"Funniest thing I ever seed," remarked the carpenter.

"What is?"

"Why this is. There was a whoppin' great stone there a minute ago blocking up the path. I caught 'old of that branch to scramble over, and the stone slipped right back."

"You must have shoved it, by honey," said Prout.

The remark was so absurd—for the stone weighed several tons—that the others were forced to laugh.

"It's some fancy arrangement," said Joe, "that the niggers have rigged up. This is a place of refuge in time of war. It was just a lucky fluke that I found it, for you can't see no sign of a path from outside."

Filson stood scratching his head. The stone seemed quite rigid.

"If you can move it in you can move it back," said the engineer of the lost Blue Orchid; "but we've got to find out the dodge. It won't do to leave it for Hausmann to find. I'd sleep sounder with that closed."

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"By honey, look out!" yelled Joe. "It's shutting itself!"

They leapt out of the way, for the great stone was in motion. With a rumbling groan it slid into the gap. The men looked at one another rather uneasily. Then Prout shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"That sight would have given me a jar yesterday, mates," said the steersman; "but it'll take more to-day. We've got enough misery of our own, by honey, without worrying about walking rocks. These are the borders. First dodge the fever, second find a place to sleep, and third to potter arter grub and water."

And Prout went stolidly up the steep path whistling gloomily, followed by his comrades in misfortune. The path turned in and out. It was human handiwork, and a few warriors could have held it against an army. A last turn brought them to a circular tunnel bored through the solid cliff. They could see the light shining through it. Prout gave a warning yell and stopped back.

"What's up?" asked Filson.

"It's down, by honey, not up, and I nearly went," growled Prout. "We've come to the end of this bag of tricks."

A black gulf, some fifteen feet wide, stopped any further advance. No athlete, however skilful, could have jumped it, for the roof of the tunnel was too low to afford a take off. Joe blew his nose loudly.

"Now what's to be done? Speak up one of you!"

"You're the leader and boss," said Filson; "so you'd better do the speaking, hadn't you?"

"Stop it, stop it!" said Joe. "Don't let's have any bad temper, boys. It must be a case of sticking together, as

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we've always done afore. The niggers have some dodge for getting across, so let's try and tumble to it."

"Here's a cave!"

Prout went and shook hands with the stoker. These were the only words he had uttered since their flight from the compound. He had been trained under Harold Honour, Ferrers Lord's famous engineer, and from Hal Honour he had learned the value of silence.

"By honey, a cave it is or summat like one!" said Prout, taking a soiled match from his waistcoat pocket and striking it on his trousers. "We'll look into the subject. Found it. Give me a 'and, Joe."

He dragged out a stout plank, and then looked about. Prout was soon satisfied. The cave had one grisly guardian—a human skeleton. Whistling more gloomily than ever, the steersman came out. Joe and Filson had already spanned the chasm with the plank. It was only nine inches wide and the gulf's depth was unknown, but they were all sailors and as nimble as cats. The stoker went first, and the rest crossed safely. Joe jerked the plank over after him. His jaw dropped, and he remained with his ear bent over the dark gulf, one hand—a hand that shook visibly—raised in warning.

"S-s-sh!" he hissed. "D-do you hear it?"

His voice was as shaky as his hand. Prout felt his knees growing weak, and clutched Filson's arm. Either they were all mad, or the strains of music were rising out of the ink-black pit. They turned and bolted into the light of day. It was too much even for such nerves as theirs—too uncanny, too impossible.

"What was it, by honey?" gasped Prout. "Am I orf my dot? What was it?"

"Somebody playin' a 'arp," stammered Joe. "I'm sure it was a 'arp."

"And who, in the name of silliness, would be sittin' at the bottom of that 'ole playin' a 'arp?" said Prout. "I ain't much superstitious, but, by honey, that's given me a twist. There ain't a 'air on my 'ead, and ain't been for ten year, but, as I'm a livin' man, I felt my 'air standin' on end! If I'd 'eard that when I was crossin', I'd have tumbled in—couldn't have helped myself. My 'eart's fair jumpin' now, and I tingle all over. Phe-ew! By honey, that was a twister!"

It had scared them all. Joe drew himself up, and then went back into the tunnel. The sounds had ceased. He came out, shaking his head in a hopeless, puzzled way, utterly mystified.

They were in a saucer-shaped hollow. In the very centre stood one of the stone columns. The hollow was well-wooded, and here and there were stretches of grass. The sides of the cliffs were honeycombed with caves, many of them overgrown with verdure. At the base of the column a spring bubbled, and a draught of the clear, cold water revived them magically.

"When I can get that music business off my chest," said Prout, "I'll talk to you."

"Have a smoke now and talk now, if you must talk," said Joe. "What's the use of wasting time? We want some grub, and talking won't get that. I'm going to explore, Tommy. You can talk all day if you like."

"Who's getting cantankerous now?" said Filson. "You soon jumped on me for being a bit sharp with Tom."

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"You'd be cantankerous if you were as hungry as me," retorted the carpenter. "I don't want to interfere, except just to hustle you up a bit. What Tom tells me to do, I'll do; but it's ridiculous to sit sucking our thumbs."

Joe stepped into the nearest cave. It was lighted by a shaft that pierced the rock transversely, and probably did double duty as a window and a chimney. There was a pile of dry wood in one corner and a heap of litter in another, but nothing else, with the exception of a large earthenware pot of native manufacture. It was a useful article, for it was undamaged, and it would stand fire. The unfortunate part of it all was that they had nothing to boil in it.

"If they use this place as a refuge, it's only common-sense to think they keep supplies handy," Joe reflected. "They couldn't come and hide 'ere without nothing to eat. Very likely they haven't needed to use it for years, or, maybe, centuries. Those niggers didn't dig out these places; you can see that with one eye."

Joe entered cave after cave. There were bones and broken potsherds in most of them, but little else. Prout had led his search-party round the other way. Some spears were found, so rusty that they were utterly useless. It was plain enough that the caves had not been inhabited for ages.

"By honey!" said Prout, coming face to face with Joe, "we sha'n't get very fat 'ere. I've not seen even a sparrow or a hummin'-bird. There's plenty of lizards and a few snakes, but we'll be hungrier afore we tackle them. All we can do is wait for dark and then stalk the town. If we can't get any news we may get some loot."

They talked the plan over. They did not know that there had only been a handful of warriors in the town when Hausmann had made his attack, though it surprised them that the German victory had been so cheaply gained. Their idea was to creep out at dusk and attempt a raid, silent and bloodless if possible, and get away with any stores they could lay hands on.

"And if we learn that they've got the others," said Prout firmly, "by honey, we'll make the biggest bid to get 'em clear that livin' men can make, and take what comes on it!"

The rest nodded, and lighted their pipes. They were prepared to face anything now. As the shadow of the column grew longer, Filson, who was staring moodily across the hollow, happened to raise his eyes. For a second he remained paralysed, as a human hand appeared through a wide crack in the masonry. Before he could even use his tongue, a man's face emerged, followed by two arms and two writhing shoulders. Then Filson found his voice.

"It's Vasco! Look! It's Vasco!"

"By honey!" said Tom Prout, and the others were dumb.

Like a snake, the Indian writhed his body through, teeth and eyes flashing. The dust on his face had been turned into mud by the perspiration.

"Someone must catch me," he said gaspingly, "or I shall break my neck, for I cannot bring my legs through to fall feet first. Death of a dog! It would be a pity to crack my skull after such a climb."

"I'll catch you, sonny," said Prout. "And I sha'n't drop you either, by honey!"

The steersman flung off his coat and bared his powerful arms. He braced himself firmly, his legs apart. Vasco dropped headlong, but his skull did not touch the ground. Prout had caught him safely. He shook hands with them silently and went to the spring. No questions were asked until he had drunk and washed himself. He rolled a cigarette, lighted it, and spread out his hands.

"Of the prince and of Gan-Waga I can tell nothing," he said, "and of the others it is little, but that the Germans have not taken them. Death of a dog! I have eaten darkness for hours, but it is good to see you. You shall hear my story, but it shall not be long."

He leaned gracefully against the pillar and blew out a cloud of smoke.

"You are all asleep," he went on, "and I am asleep also, but I sleep light. I see his Excellency the prince and Senor Thurston go out with the native. After a time I rise and go to the gate also. I see no sentries, but in the dust I see the marks of boots. Only one pair of boots go further than a hut, and these are the boots of the prince. In the dust I read much. I read of a struggle that ends in the hut."

"The hut is a devil-man's. I enter, and read more things. Those who have entered do not go out. That is strange, for I find no other way, and they are not inside. With trouble I move the devil-man's bed. Below is a well and a ladder. I descend. The devil-man's bed goes back, and I am a prisoner. Soon I find a tunnel and prints of boots and naked feet. I follow but have only few matches. I am

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE GREYFRIARS TRIPPERS!"

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lost, and I wander and wander till I see a light high up. I climb and climb and climb. I am here!"

Vasco flourished his cigarette to signify that his tale was told.

"Whose was the bootmarks in the tunnel, Vasco?" Joe asked.

"His Excellency's and Senor Thurston's. They are following the man who has captured Maddock and O'Rooney. The man is Charkoni."

"How do you know they were following him? They may have been taken prisoners too," said Filson.

"Oh, no. They are striking match after match. They are not prisoners."

"Then it's a poor look-out for Charkoni, hang him!" growled Prout.

"Now, I'll tell you what we done," Vasco listened gravely, and gave a quiet smile when Prout mentioned their plan.

"You shall stay here, comrades," he said, "and I will go and bring back food. If they have not burnt the town, all for a time is well. Bah! I can creep like a snake. I will go, so be satisfied."

A sudden suspicion crept into Prout's mind, a suspicion that Joe and Filson were also beginning to feel.

"Don't you be in such a hurry, Vasco," he said. "I want a bit of information from you, my friend. How did you know the Germans had come, for a start; and for the second start, why didn't you warn us?"

"Just what I've been axing myself," added Joe; and Filson and the stoker nodded. "That yarn of yours don't seem to hang together nicely. Just square it up for the good of your precious health."

Vasco the guide smiled again and made a second cigarette.

"I tell but a poor tale, seniors. Though I follow his Excellency, I do not follow at once. No doubt I sleep, and so time passes quickly. Again, I spend much time in the hut searching for the secret. Just as I find it, I hear the rifles being fired. How can I warn you, when the Germans are gathered near the compound to shoot down the fugitives from near the palace? And whose servant am I save my master's? He is in danger, for Charkoni is cunning. If I go out I am shot, so I go to help my master, for I cannot help you. Is that answer enough?"

"Sorry I spoke," said Prout heartily. "You've done your best, old chap. We'll think about you going down there later on. It's a sickenin' sort of mess, by honey! I'm going to sleep."

How Ching-Lung was Made Commander-in-Chief of the Queen's Army, and Why He Resigned!

Althara the Queen stepped out of the punt without a backward glance at the body of her wizard. The corpse sank as the air caught in the devil-man's clothes leaked out.

"Lose Queen's favour and kill self," said Tarface, with chattering teeth. "Ugh! Jump off altar."

"What altar?"

"Up there—big altar up there!"

"It's a queerish thing and a creepy one," thought Ching-Lung. "Must have struck his head a bang as he fell. And why did he rope himself up? What sort of a place is this, Tarface?"

"Nat know. Never come here before. Ugh!" Tarface gave a shuddering sigh. "Bad place!"

He helped Ching-Lung to carry the Eskimo up the steps. At the head of them was a grassy slope, and above that a terrace. Ching-Lung opened his eyes. At the utmost he had expected a hut, but he was amazed to espy an elaborate building with a broad, cool verandah. He was even more astonished when the Queen appeared, carrying pillows and rugs. When Gan-Waga was comfortably settled, Althara leaned over the balcony and uttered a peculiar call.

"Tell the Yellow One that his comrade is in safe hands," she said, "and that he may leave him without fear or doubt that evil can befall him."

Ching-Lung's face clouded at what he heard.

"That means I've got to leave him—eh? I'd sooner lose my ears."

"Lose life if not obey. Queen got thousands of warriors yet," said the native.

An old crone came hobbling up the steps. The Queen spoke to her.

"He all right," said Tarface. "Woman much clever doctor, cure blowpipe poison even. He no hurt. If die, Queen kill her. Woman much clever—do anything. He get well quick."

"I expect he will with a nurse like that. I know I should," said the prince, "if the first sight of her didn't kill me outright. Poor old Wagtail, I'll have to tell him I'm going, or he'll fret to death."

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FRANK RICHARDS

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Gan-Waga seemed to understand perfectly. He whispered, "Not be long, hunk, Chingy." And Ching-Lung promised and meant it. It would have taken something to keep him away from the wounded blubberbiter. He gave Gan's head a gentle pat, and followed the Queen into the building. It cost an effort, for his ribs were stiff now, and every movement hurt him. The blinds were drawn, and the large room was pleasant and cool. Ching-Lung was heartily glad of the cup of wine a girl brought to him.

"You go tell Queen all about bad men," said Tarface. "How many, and how can fight."

"Fire away, then," said Ching-Lung.

He repeated the story in the simplest language he could for the sake of the translator, who had not a great knowledge of English, although he was improving fast.

"Althara the Queen say what you do—ask your wives."

"You idiot, I haven't got any wives," said Ching-Lung, "so how can I ask? Oh, you mean she wants my advice. I can give her good advice. Tell the Queen," he went on slowly, "that I cannot see all the future, for I know not whether my comrades are alive or dead. The Queen has taken away our firesticks, but I know where they are hidden. Her warriors cannot fight these dogs in open battle, for the firesticks will mow them down like grass. But they may conquer by stealth and by cunning. The tall chief is the greatest soldier in the world, and I am next." (Bit of a howler that, thought Ching-Lung.) "Let me lead the Queen's army."

Tarface looked quite frightened.

"Me got say that?"

"Of course you have, idiot. Do you think I'm talking for fun?"

Althara was a good head taller than the prince. She broke into a peal of laughter.

"Oh, little Yellow One," she answered, "you will make a mighty warrior. Indeed you are a wizard, but never knew I a wizard who loved the noise of battle. Charkoni is gone, and even Charkoni shirked the fight, though, for a witch-man, he was brave. The Queen smiles when she would weep."

"Nice for me," grumbled Ching-Lung. "Tell her she won't laugh enough to cover a sixpence if she lets her soldiers go at these men. They'll swallow them like oysters. I'm not particularly keen in developing into a commander-in-



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chief, but I offer myself for the post. You'll be my head man, Tarface."

The native winced, and his mouth worked as if he had swallowed a pint of vinegar. Tarface objected to imperilling his valuable life even for the glory and dignity of being second in command. He was fond of his skin.

"What does she say?"

The interpreter's expression of woe was answer enough. Ching-Lung knew that he was the commander-in-chief of Althara's army, a magnificent force of about two thousand men, whose language he could not speak, and who were armed only with spears and shields. It was a cheerful prospect—most cheerful.

"Come."

Ching-Lung bowed. The Queen swept through the curtains, and the moment she was out of sight, Tarface seized the wine-jar, and put it to his lips. When he laid it down it was much lighter.

"You got me kill," he groaned, wiping the tears out of his eyes. "You got me dead."

"What have I done?"

"I no fight. You done it. I dead—I dead."

"You're a mighty hero, daddy," grinned Ching-Lung, "but you needn't be frightened. There are two fellows who won't get killed in this war if they can help it."

"But commander go in front this country."

"They don't go in front where I come from," said Ching-Lung, "and I'll stick to the rule. But—"

The prince jumped up and seized Tarface by the ear just as that gentleman was making for the wine-jar the second time.

"None of that. As you're my only interpreter, you've got to keep sober or I shall talk to you with my boot. Let that stuff alone. What? You're going to kick? I didn't say so!"

People who presumed on Ching-Lung's size to take liberties generally repented. The native struggled, and the next instant, to his intense amazement, he was out of the room and rolling down the grassy slope with the wine-jar bounding after him. A tree checked the career of Tarface, but the jar went on and burst to fragments.

"You'd better get up and be good, chappie," said Ching-Lung. "I want some cigarettes, so find some."

Tarface rubbed himself and groaned.

"You one big fool, me two big fool," he said, with a sigh, "and we both get kill."

All the same he found cigarettes. Ching-Lung went down and sat beside Gan-Waga, over whom the old crone was brooding like an ugly vulture waiting for its prey to die that it might feed on it. The Eskimo's pulse was weak but steady, and there were no symptoms of what Ching-Lung dreaded—fever. A pot simmered over a chafing-dish, and Ching-Lung looked into it, and saw a chicken. He became easier in his mind. Gan seemed to be in good hands.

"Queen want you."

"Bother you and the Queen into the bargain!" grunted Ching-Lung.

Ching-Lung had another pleasant surprise when he was ushered into a room where a bath stood filled with tepid water. He stripped off his coat and waistcoat. His shirt was soaked with blood that had dried, and when he attempted to remove it the pain made him change his mind at once.

"Ough! I shall have to soak that off, Tarface," he said, getting bodily into the bath in trousers and shirt. "Jove, that's a relief! I shall want you to help me, old chap."

"Oh, I help you."

It was a nasty graze, and the flesh looked dark and angry along the edges of the wound.

"If I'm going to have any trouble with that, Tarface, I shall have to resign," said his Highness. "It hurts like toothache. You told me the old woman was a bit clever. Trot her along. O-o-h!"

The old lady knew her business. Ching-Lung did not care for the look of the lady's ointments, but the relief was almost magical. She washed out his clothes and took them away. Ching-Lung lay down and threw a rug over himself. For the next two hours his thoughts were anything but sweet. The woman came back, and he dressed and roused Tarface, who was dozing in the sun.

A woman's terrified scream rang through the building, and a wail of horror from the interpreter answered it. Tarface dropped like a log, stunned by fear. Althara had reeled against the wall of the outer room, dumb now, and trembling like a leaf. For in the doorway stood the ghastly, skull-bedizened figure of Charkoni, the devil-man.

"I resign," said Ching-Lung, as he leapt forward. "I resign."

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand serial next Monday.)

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"THE GREYFRIARS TRIPPERS!"

THE MISSING MASTER!

(Concluded from page 23.)

the windows of the old house. But they stayed only for one look. Then they hurried on towards Greyfriars.

There was a surprise for Greyfriars School the next morning.

When the fellows came down they were astounded to find Mr. Lascelles and Loder had returned. They were still more astounded to discover the part Harry Wharton & Co. had played in that return.

Mr. Lascelles had made an explanation to the Head. What had passed between them the fellows did not know, but the Head appeared satisfied.

Inspector Grimes, who came over immediately from Courtfield with his notebook ready, was far from sharing his satisfaction.

For the information the prefect and the mathematics-master could give was of the vaguest, so far as identifying the kidnappers was concerned.

Loder explained calmly—he had had a talk with Walker and Carne already—that he had been out for a morning stroll, when he was suddenly seized in the wood from behind, a sack thrown over his head, and he was carried off. He had not seen his captors, neither had he seen them while being kept a prisoner in the Grange.

Mr. Lascelles' information was not much more useful. He, too, had been kidnapped with a sack thrown over his head, which prevented him from seeing the man who had seized him. Afterwards, certainly, he had seen them in the house, but his description of them was so general that it might have fitted a hundred men in the district. Not a single word of untruth escaped Mr. Lascelles, of course. He was more scrupulous in that respect than Loder. But he did not feel called upon to tell the inspector all he knew.

Inspector Grimes made a hurried visit to the Grange, and searched it. But the birds had flown. Nothing was found but empty beef tins, old crusts, used bottles, and odds and ends of that kind. Mr. Sawyer and his friends had vanished, warned by that timely bang of the door, which Inspector Grimes did not know anything about. The inspector inquired carefully after the man named Sawyer, who had taken the house for a month from the local estate agent. But Mr. Spooks was only able to tell him that it was a man with a broken nose, who had paid his rent in advance, and, therefore, was not asked for references. The whole affair was very mysterious, and Mr. Grimes was greatly discouraged by the fact that the Head of Greyfriars and Mr. Lascelles seemed quite without interest in the matter—indeed, seemed bored with it, and careless whether the kidnappers escaped or not. Mr. Grimes gave the matter up in disgust at last. But he and his subordinates kept a very careful look-out afterwards for a broken-nosed man, looking like an old pugilist, in case that gentleman should reappear in the neighbourhood to try the game on again.

But the broken-nosed gentleman was quite aware of his danger, and he took excellent care not to reappear in the neighbourhood. The force of circumstances had been too much for Mr. Henry Sawyer, and he had been compelled, reluctantly, to abandon his plan of pitting Larry Lynx against the Slogger in the ring. Mr. Sawyer was, perforce, compelled to endure the unpleasant "jeerin' and sneerin'" of the redoubtable Slogger. But, as he confided to his staunch pals Toodles and Badger, he was lucky to keep out of the stone jug, considering how the matter had turned "hent," an opinion in which Mr. Toodles and Mr. Badger heartily concurred.

Mr. Sawyer wrote a very pathetic and reproachful letter to Larry Lynx, which made Mr. Lascelles smile. But the old pug did not venture to visit Greyfriars again.

It was a nine days' wonder at Greyfriars, and there was much talk and many curious glances at the mathematics-master. But he seemed unconscious of it all. And as the Head seemed perfectly satisfied there was nothing more to be said. Harry Wharton & Co., of course, kept their own counsel, and, needless to say, their midnight escapade was forgiven, in view of its fortunate results.

The Famous Five were very pleased with themselves, but that, as Peter Todd observed somewhat sarcastically, was nothing new. And they were always in the good graces of Mr. Lascelles from that eventful night which had seen the rescue of the Kidnapped Master.

THE END.

(Another splendid, long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Monday, entitled: "THE GREYFRIARS TRIPPERS!" By Frank Richards. Order in advance. Price One Penny.)

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"THE GREYFRIARS TRIPPERS!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In our next magnificent, long complete story, Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, commemorate Founder's Day—a whole holiday at the old school—in great style. Reinforced by Miss Marjorie and Miss Clara, of Cliff House School, and by Vernon-Smith, once called the Bounder, they take a little trip abroad, which is destined to be very full of incident indeed. Hazeldene, of the Remove, the brother of Marjorie, is also of the party, and it is he who provides the jarring note which somewhat mars the spirits of the excursionists.

It is Vernon-Smith's treat, and the Bounder, as if anxious to atone for his previous behaviour, exerts himself to the utmost to make the trip a success.

When the trouble arises with Hazeldene, Vernon-Smith takes the matter into his own capable hands, and wins the admiration of Harry Wharton by his kindness and forbearance towards the wilful and wrong-headed Hazel, who has caused so much trouble to

"THE GREYFRIARS TRIPPERS!"

A QUESTION OF SPECIAL INTEREST.

For the last couple of week's part of the Chat column of our famous companion paper "The Penny Popular" has been occupied by correspondence from readers of that journal, urging that the adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars, our popular schoolboy heroes, should find a place in the good old "Penny Popular." According to the letters, it would be only fair play to do this, and thus give the chums of Greyfriars equal prominence with the chums of St. Jim's. This is a matter which is likely to be of great interest to my "Magnet" Library readers, many of whom are, of course, regular readers of "The Penny Popular" also; and I hope they will all take a hand in this correspondence, and express their opinions on a matter of such general interest and importance. The letter, signed "Fairplay," in the current issue of "The Penny Popular," is one which contains a practical suggestion, and should certainly not be missed by any reader interested.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

A. Paterson (Toronto).—You have my full permission to condense a story into a play for your own use, providing you mention where it came from at every performance.

Masters A. M. McClurgh and John Nixon of Belfast wish to thank S. W. H. for kindly forwarding me the message contained in the bottle which they cast in the sea.

S. J. (Toronto).—Many thanks for your letter.

A. Hailey (Highgate).—I am afraid I cannot do as you suggest at present.

"Chickleton" (Fulham).—Please send me your name and address that I may communicate with you by post.

Roy Harris.—If Harry Wharton & Co. reappear in "The Penny Popular," the fact will be duly announced. I regret I cannot trace the story you mention.

Cyril Fish and E. W. Hopkins (Leicester).—Very many thanks for your letter and photograph. The latter has been added to my collection.

S. A. H. (Haverhill).—The Christian names of Vernon Smith, Bulstrode, Morgan, and Stott, are Samuel, George, Owen, and Herbert respectively.

"A Regular Reader."—The answer to your first question is in the negative. Esmond is still at Greyfriars. Bolsover is a passably good player.

W. R. W. (Plaistow).—Little nourishment comes from any food unless well masticated. Milk puddings tend to increase one's weight, being very nourishing.

REMARKABLE CRICKET FEATS.

Although remarkable and brilliant feats at cricket are numerous enough, it is a bit difficult to know where to begin when dealing with them, for there are so many variations of opinion as to where "good" leaves off and "remarkable" begins.

Batting, of course, comes first to mind, and no wielder of the willow has given finer exhibitions than the Jam Sahib of Newanagar, or "Ranji," as all cricket lovers still call him. His marvellous performance in the 1896 Test Match will never be forgotten. Going in first wicket down, he carried out his bat for 154 out of a total of 305, every English-born batsman being pinned down to purely defensive tactics. No wonder Giffen subsequently described the Indian Prince as the "batting wonder of the age."

Overnight, when "Ranji" was not out midway through his innings, the Australians at a council of war deliberately decided to abandon all idea of attempting to get the wizard out, and to concentrate the whole of their efforts upon the fellows at the other end!

Another great performance was that of M. A. Noble, in the Manchester Test, in 1899. The weather was broiling hot, and things were not going well with the Australians, but Noble played with extraordinary restraint, and remarkable ability for over eight hours. The crowd whistled the "Dead March" as an example of their humour, but nothing disturbed the Australian, who went on quietly doing his best to save his side from defeat.

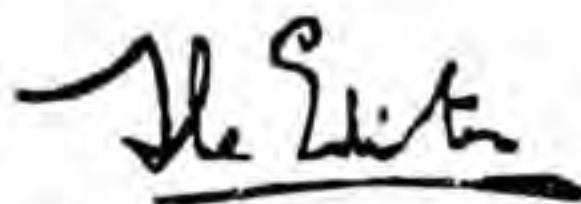
Mr. A. C. MacLaren once gave a magnificent exhibition under somewhat similar circumstances. It was in George Hirst's benefit match, at Leeds, in 1904. Lancashire had to follow on, and, to keep Yorkshire from winning, had to retain possession of the wickets for the whole of one day. It was of no use attempting to make runs; defence was the only hope, and "Arlie" gave his side a splendid lead. He played faultlessly for over two hours, for five runs! But it was not stone-walling or dull cricket. He met every ball with the centre of the bat; the leather, however, would persist in going straight to some fieldman or other. This steady work took the sting out of the bowling and fielding, and the County Palatine were enabled to save the game.

Some Remarkable Innings.

One of the most accomplished "barn-door" cricketers the summer pastime has ever known was Louis Hall, the Yorkshire professional, and his stone-walling never proved of more value to his side than it did against Kent, in 1885. The "Tykes" were in an apparently hopeless position, but by going in first and staying in for over three hours on a treacherous wicket, Hall enabled them to make a draw. True, he only scored twelve runs in that time, but in this case runs were of no use, whereas time was everything.

Barlow, another famous stone-waller, once played through an entire innings for five runs, while Scotton, in one of the Test matches, defied the efforts of the Colonials to dislodge him for four hours and a half, during which period he collected thirty runs! For nearly an hour and a half he never made even a single!

(More "Remarkable Cricket Feats" next week.)





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