

"THE OLD BOYS' CHALLENGE!"

A Magnificent Long Complete Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars. By Frank Richards.



MR. PROUT AND PAGET OPEN THE INNINGS!

(An Amusing Scene in the Splendid Long Complete School Tale in this Issue.)

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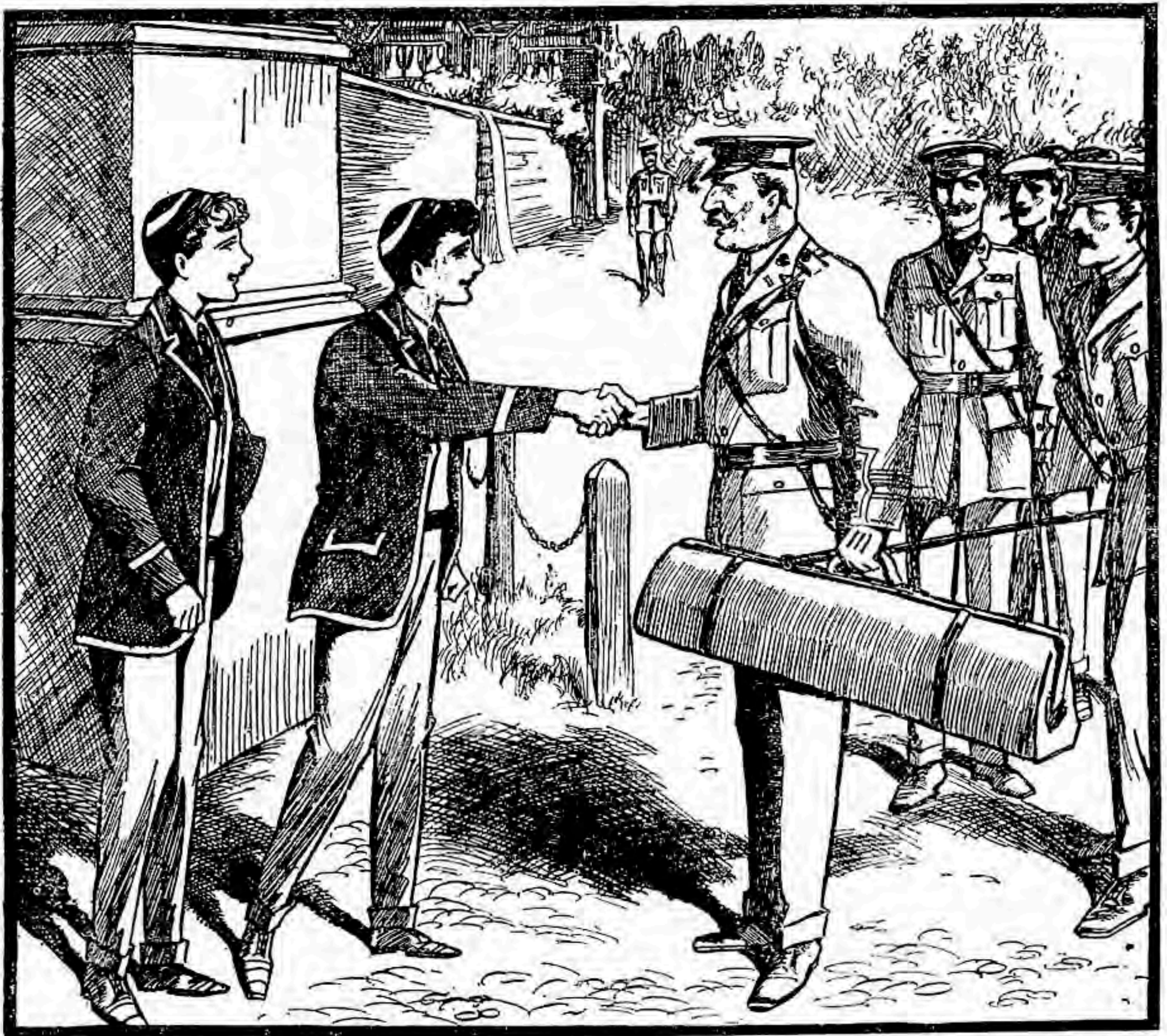
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THE OLD BOYS' CHALLENGE!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Harry! How are you, my boy?" "Who—what—" gasped Bob Cherry. "My hat! It's Colonel Wharton!" Harry Wharton dashed forward, and grasped the colonel's disengaged hand. (See Chapter 2.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. When Rogues Fall Out!

"WHO'S game for a spree?" Loder of the Sixth asked that question from the depths of a cosy armchair in his study. Walker and Valence, who shared with Loder the

distinction of being the blackest of black sheep within the walls of Greyfriars, were sitting at the study table, each of them struggling with a refractory cigarette, though they did not seem to be altogether enjoying themselves.

"All depends what sort of a spree," yawned Valence.

"If it's nap, or poker, or something of that sort, count me in."

"And me!" echoed Walker.

Loder's eyes glistened.

"Good! You fellows have always had the true sporting instinct. We'll get to bizney after lights-out."

"You'll play in this study, of course?" said Valence, a trifle uneasily.

"In this study—yes, I don't think!" said Loder scornfully. "It's about time we had a little flutter again. Why, old Banks, at the Cross Keys, must have forgotten our chivvies by now! Let's give him a look in."

"I—I say," began Valence, "I don't half like the idea, you know. Things aren't what they were. It's not quite the thing to cut these giddy capers in war-time."

Loder sneered.

"So you're beginning to show the white feather?" he asked unpleasantly. "Hang the beastly war! Why should a fellow give up having a good time because a giddy War Lord chooses to run rampant? You're game, eh, Walker, old man?"

James Walker was far from being affable. He threw his half-smoked "fag" into the fireplace and looked squarely at Loder.

"No, I'm not game," he said, "and that's straight from the shoulder. I don't mind an occasional flutter in normal times, but it's playing it jolly low-down to gamble and drink when the country's at war. And my pater's at the front, too," he added, remorsefully.

"My hat!" gasped Loder. "Why, you were only too pleased just now at the idea of gambling in this study. Now you're kicking against doing it in a pub! Where's the difference? There's not a great gulf between the two, that I can see."

Walker was silent.

"The inference is obvious," Loder went on. "You're afraid to break bounds, and you conceal your funk by talking a lot of tommy-rot about patriotism. You're a white-livered coward, and so is Valence! And I wouldn't ask you to come to the Cross Keys with me now at any price, hanged if I would!"

"Look here—" began Valence angrily.

"I'm looking—and the sight of you makes me feel ill! Precious pair of pals, I must say! Get out of my study!"

"W-what!"

"Gone deaf all of a sudden?" asked Loder. "Get out of it, I say! I'm fed up with you!"

Walker and Valence exchanged glances. Loder's temper was always a very uncertain quantity, but he usually vented his wrath on the juniors. That he would pour out the vials of his indignation on the heads of his own cronies seemed incredible.

"I'm waiting!" said the prefect grimly. "Scat—and close the door after you!"

"I'll see you hanged first!" growled Walker.

Loder strode forward, with the intention of pitching his fellow Sixth-Formers neck and crop out of the study. A sudden knock at the door, however, interrupted him.

"Come in!" he growled.

Trotter, the page-boy at Greyfriars, entered with a letter, and the prefect snatched at it eagerly. It bore a London postmark, and Loder ripped open the envelope with a peculiar gleam in his eyes. Walker and Valence looked on, scowling. Trotter, with a curious glance at the three seniors, left the study.

"My hat!" exclaimed Loder suddenly. "My only hat!"

"Well?" asked Walker. "Ain't you going to pitch us out? We're waiting."

"Oh, rats! What's the sense in carrying on like a set of fags?"

Walker and Valence stared at Loder in amazement. A moment before he had been breathing out threatenings and slaughter, so to speak. Now his demeanour seemed to have undergone an entire change. He was even amiable.

"Blessed if I'm keen on a row," said Valence; "but I thought you were looking for trouble, Loder. What's up—good news?"

"I should say so! Look here, you chaps, I've won ten quid!"

"Go hon!" said Walker, unmoved.

"It's a fact! You remember I had a bet on with a

London bookie for the Loamshire Stakes? Well, Fairy King romped home. It was a giddy walk-over, and they've sent a note to say I've won."

"Where's the ten quid?" demanded Valence.

"Oh, that'll come along right enough! I guess you fellows want to alter your minds now about that little spree—what? You'll come to the Cross Keys now, I suppose?"

"Something wrong with your supposer, then," said Walker. "I stick to what I said about gambling in war-time. You can go your own way, Loder, and I'll go mine!"

And James Walker stamped out of the study.

Loder sniffed scornfully.

"Hang him!" he ejaculated. "He can go to blazes, for all I care! Look here, Valence, old man, don't let yourself be influenced by that idiot and his supposed patriotism. Come down to Friardale with me to-night, there's a good chap. Two's company, you know."

"So it may be," said Valence, "but I'm not coming, all the same. I'm fed-up with playing the giddy ox. Walker's right, and you jolly well know it. I'm not a blessed plaster saint, but I draw the line at pub-haunting at a time like the present."

"Then you won't come?" asked Loder unpleasantly.

"Thanks—no!"

"Get out, then!"

"I think I will. If you imagine I'm going to suck up to you on the strength of a doubtful ten quid you're very much mistaken. Good riddance!"

And Valence followed Walker's example, slamming the door of the study with a bang which resounded the length of the Sixth-Form passage.

Loder's brow was black as thunder as Valence retreated. For fellows of his own kidney to treat him with scorn and contempt seemed unheard of. But it only quickened Loder's determination to have a good time on the strength of the ten pounds forthcoming from the London bookmaker.

He scribbled a hasty note to Mr. Banks, the rascally card-sharper at the Cross Keys, saying that he would turn up at ten that night. This done, he strolled out into the Close and posted the letter in the school box. Bogg, the local postman, was labouring up the drive from the school gates to make the afternoon collection.

"That's all right," muttered the prefect. "Banks'll get the note by this evening, and those two fools will wish they'd joined me. Here's to a high old time!"

But had Gerald Loder foreseen the consequences of the "high old time" he was anticipating, that letter to Banks would never have been posted.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Old Boys!

"SISTER ANNE, sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?"

Bob Cherry, of the Remove, asked that cheerful question of his companions, as they stood sunning themselves in the old gateway of Greyfriars. It was a half-holiday, and the chums of the Remove intended to improve the shining hour by indulging in a cricket-match with the Upper Fourth. But the time was not yet ripe for the game to commence, and the juniors had sauntered down to the gates in their flannels, to bask in the bright June sunshine.

"There's not a soul in sight," said Squiff, in reply to Bob Cherry's question, "excepting Bogg, the postman, and he's going towards the village."

"Look the other way, ass!" said Bob politely.

"Oh!"

The chums of the Remove followed Squiff's gaze. A motley collection of men—some of whom were in khaki—came toiling towards the school gates. The foremost of the little party was a stern, upright-looking warrior, who grappled with a huge cricket-bag, and gave vent to a sudden exclamation as he drew near to the Greyfriars juniors.

"Harry! How are you, my boy?"

"Who—what—" gasped Bob Cherry.

"My hat!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "It's Colonel Wharton!"



Walker dashed the cricket-bat aside, and sprang upon Gerald Loder. His fist shot out, catching the cad of the Sixth squarely on the point of the jaw. Loder fell like a log. "Get up and have some more, you worm!" said Walker furiously. (See Chapter 8.)

Harry Wharton dashed forward and grasped the colonel's disengaged hand.

"Great Scott, uncle! This is a giddy surprise, if you like! I thought you were at the front!"

"Up to a month ago, I was," assented the colonel, in his deep voice. "But an illness which I contracted in the trenches compelled me to return home. I should have notified you of the fact, Harry. However, I have not been idle. These gentlemen whom you see here are old boys of Greyfriars, and have come to spend a few days at the old school. We intend to show you, among other things, that some of us can still handle a bat and bowl a good-length ball!" he concluded, with a twinkle in his eye.

"That's ripping, uncle!" said Wharton, with enthusiasm. "Let's take your bag, and we'll go along to old Wingate. He's captain of the first eleven, you know."

Colonel Wharton handed the bulky cricket-bag to his nephew, and shook hands cordially with Cherry, Nugent, and Squiff, with whom he was already familiar. The other old boys, glancing with interest, not unmingled with affection, at the school where, many years before, they had spent such a ripping time, made their way towards the main building. A fine-looking lot of fellows

they were, and there was more than one among them who had "made good," and upheld the high traditions of the old school; and a good many Removites who were sauntering in the Close threw admiring glances at Colonel Wharton and his colleagues.

"What a novel wheeze to have a 'Past versus Present' match!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Old Wingate'll have to put a class eleven in the field to wipe up the old stagers!"

"I agree with you, my boy," smiled Colonel Wharton. "We are fortunate enough to have the services of Lieutenant Towers, who made such a name with Hampshire a few years back."

"Ye gods!" exclaimed Wharton. "That's rather thick, isn't it? He'll be above our weight!"

"I'm not so sure of that," replied the colonel. "You see, we're a curious admixture of good and bad. That young fellow in civilian clothes, for instance"—he indicated a smart-looking young man with a moustache—"assures me that he hasn't handled a bat since he left Greyfriars. For all that, he seems a smart young fellow—just the sort we want out in Flanders—though it's not for me to judge him on that point. There are men who bear a hidden burden of pain or ill-health for which

the recruiting-officers make no allowance. That's why I have refrained from speaking to Dick Chester—I think that's his name—on such a subject. I've never seen him before. He was at Greyfriars after my time, I fancy; but he joined our little party in the train, and informed us that he was an old boy of this school. I thereupon asked if he would care to come into our team, and he cordially consented."

Harry nodded.

"It'll be a good game, anyway," he said. "I'll ask one of the fellows if Wingate's about. He may have cleared off for the afternoon. Hi! Dutton!"

Tom Dutton, the deaf junior at Greyfriars, was coming down the corridor with a bat tucked under his arm. He started at the sound of his name.

"Is Wingate in his study?" asked Wharton.

"So would you!" said Dutton promptly.

"Eh?"

"I reckon you'd look ruddy if you'd been slogging away at the nets," said the deaf junior.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Wharton.

"The lad seems somewhat slow of comprehension," said the colonel mildly. "I say, my boy, is Wingate hereabouts?"

"Oh, you would, would you?" said Dutton fiercely. "You'd give my ear a clout—eh? Better try it on! You may be a blessed soldier, but I'm not going to be bullied by you, and that's straight!"

"Oh, lor'!" groaned Bob Cherry. "A megaphone, a megaphone—my kingdom for a megaphone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't take any notice of Dutton, uncle," said Wharton hastily. "He's deaf as a doorpost! We'll go and rout Wingate out ourselves."

And the party proceeded along the passage, the old boys viewing their familiar surroundings with keen interest.

George Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, and of the school first eleven, was chatting in his study with Courtney of the Sixth. The seniors looked up in astonishment as a host of old boys, accompanied by half a dozen juniors, invaded the study.

"What the merry dooce—" began Courtney.

"It's all right, Courtney, old man," said Bob Cherry. "They're only the shades of your forefathers, come to fix up a cricket challenge!"

Colonel Wharton laughed; and Wingate, who had recognised Harry's uncle, grasped the warrior's hand warmly.

"Jolly glad to meet you, sir!" he exclaimed. "You've brought quite a little escort—what?"

"All old boys of Greyfriars," said the colonel. "Allow me to introduce you to Lieutenant Towers, who captained the first eleven a dozen years ago. These other gentlemen are also keen sportsmen, though we've fallen somewhat into decay, I fear. A little desultory football in Flanders constitutes the whole of our recent athletic performances. Come right in, Chester! Now, you chaps in khaki, make room for Mr. Chester!"

The old boy thus addressed came rather awkwardly into the study, and shook hands with Wingate.

"Pleased to meet you," he said, with a laugh that scarcely seemed to have the ring of sincerity about it. "You're looking awfully fit. Same remarks apply to you, Courtney."

Courtney started.

"Excuse me," he said; "you have the advantage of me, Mr. Chester. I don't remember to have met you before!"

Dick Chester coloured, and strove vainly to conceal his embarrassment.

"I—er—that is to say," he began, "I remember hearing some of the kids mention you by name. They said you were a pal of Wingate's, so I naturally concluded you were the chap they meant when I came into this study."

Courtney nodded. The explanation seemed to be decidedly feeble, but Colonel Wharton relieved the situation.

"Our burning desire, Wingate," he said, "is to fix up a match with your first eleven. Have you a blank day on Saturday?"

"No; we're playing Courtfield Athletic."

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"Oh! That's doocid unfortunate. I was hoping we could have the match on that day."

"That'll be all right," said Wingate easily. "It's very doubtful if the Athletic can raise a team—most of their men have enlisted—and the match would probably have been scratched, anyway. I'll drop a note to their secretary to-night, cancelling the fixture."

"Good man! A 'School versus Old Boys' match should be rather novel. Though, of course, the result is assured in advance."

"Yes; the Old Boys'll probably be licked by an innings and unlimited runs!" grinned Courtney.

"Not a bit of it, my bonny boy. You'll want to hide your diminished heads when we've finished with you. An Old Boys' team beaten? Not by all the blood of all the Towers!"

"We shall see what we shall see," said Bob Cherry sagely. "Perhaps the colonel will excuse us now, as we've got a game on with the Upper Fourth. Old Temple'll be tearing his hair!"

"Blow Temple!" said Nugent. "Let's stay and entertain the Old Boys."

"Very good of you," drawled Lieutenant Towers; "but Dr. Locke has invited us to tea. Anything the matter, Chester?" he broke off suddenly.

Dick Chester's face had gone a shade pale at the mention of the Head's name. He braced himself together with an effort as all eyes were directed upon him.

"I'm all right," he said hastily, with a gaiety which belied his looks. "Don't think I'll stay to tea, though. I'll take a stroll down to the village. Always was fond of Friardale. So-long!"

And Chester, with a short nod, quitted the study.

"Rummy sort of chap, that!" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Rather!" agreed Wharton, as the juniors made tracks for the cricket-field. "There's more in him than meets the eye. He didn't seem frightfully keen on meeting the Head, I noticed."

"Same here. Wonder why he wants to fight shy of him?"

"Perhaps he was expelled from Greyfriars, and doesn't relish the idea of yarning with the Head, in case the subject crops up."

"Possibly. Then, again, Dr. Locke might ask him why he hasn't joined the Army. He looks fit enough, goodness knows! Still, it's no business of ours. Let's get down to the cricket!"

And a few moments later the juniors, absorbed in the fine summer pastime, had banished from their minds the mystery—if such it could be called—which centred around Dick Chester.

THE THIRD CHAPTER:

A Bombshell for Loder!

TRUE to his resolve, Gerald Loder made tracks for the Cross Keys shortly after dusk. His visits to the disreputable haunt involved little difficulty, for the prefects of Greyfriars were each possessed of a key to the side gate in the Head's garden.

Loder was in an unusually reckless mood. Between his desire to score off Walker and Valence, and the knowledge that he had virtually won ten pounds, he was determined to "paint the town red," and indulge in a series of "flutters," which, if detected by the authorities, would bring about his speedy expulsion from the school.

But Gerald Loder was too old a hand at the game to tie a rope round his neck. He believed in living up to the eleventh commandment, "Thou shalt not be found out," and although he had sailed very closely to the wind many a time and oft, the extreme penalty of "pub-haunting" had not yet been brought home to him.

The prefect walked swiftly along the towing-path, and as he came in sight of the Cross Keys he discerned a light in the back parlour. Apparently Mr. Banks was sitting up, waiting for his prey.

But when Loder let himself in by the back entrance and went into the parlour, he found it deserted. He turned aside into the billiard-room, where Mr. Banks was engaged in a game with a smart, well-set-up young fellow

with a moustache, whom Loder did not remember having seen before.

"Good-evenin'!" said Banks, pausing to chalk his cue. "You'll excuse me for a few moments—wot? I'm anxious to finish this 'ere game."

"That's soon done," said the stranger, as he deftly secured "a cannon off the cash." "My game, Banks, old man. She'll out!"

With a very bad grace, Banks drew out a couple of dirty-looking currency notes for ten shillings from his coat-pocket. The position of having to "shell out" was a novel and altogether disagreeable one for him. He handed the notes to his companion, who pocketed them with a quiet smile.

"Thanks, Banks!" he said.

The ridiculous jingle of the two words made the bookmaker flush with anger.

"You can git out!" he said savagely.

"Very good advice," drawled the stranger. "I'll act upon it. You can have your revenge at any time for the asking. You know where I'm staying. Good-night!"

Banks snorted. The young man picked up his hat and passed out, glancing curiously at Loder as he went.

"Who was that fellow?" asked Loder, as he accompanied Banks into the parlour.

"Dunno," growled Banks. "He done me down for a quid, that's all I know. An' I'm fairly expert at billiards, too. Thought a cove like him wouldn't beat me in a month of Sundays!"

"Can't be too sure about these things, Banks," said Loder. "Pride goeth before a giddy fall, you know."

"I'll get me own back!" muttered the bookmaker. "But never mind about him. Hi, Cobb! Come in, there's a good feller, and bring the cards!"

Mr. Cobb, the disreputable-looking landlord of the Cross Keys, shuffled into the room.

"Hallo, Master Loder!" he exclaimed. "You're quite a stranger. Glad to see your face agin. You've come well supplied with the ready, I 'ope?"

"Not exactly," said the prefect. "But I'm roping in ten quid in a day or two, so it's all right, I suppose?"

He showed Cobb the letter he had received from the London bookmakers, and the landlord nodded.

"That's good enough," he said. "Your word's as good as your bond, Master Loder. Not that you're likely to be on the losin' side, though," he added hastily.

"If I am, you'll take my I O U's up to ten quid?" asked Loder.

"Certainly!" said the amiable Mr. Cobb. "Anythink to oblige."

And the three occupants of the room commenced their little gamble.

Nap is a game at which a great deal of money may be won or lost—generally lost. Loder had not the slightest chance against the two experienced players, even if they played fairly.

But that they never dreamed of doing. They cheated him as much as they dared; and if he won sometimes—as he did—it was only to keep up the hollow pretence of a game; they could have fleeced him in every round if they had chosen.

Half an hour passed—an hour—two hours. The whole building was silent save for the movements and occasional muttered remarks of the gamblers in the inn parlour.

At last Loder threw down his cards, with a haggard look. He had lost to the extent of ten pounds, for which amount the two scoundrels sitting opposite had his I O U's.

"I'm cleaned out!" muttered the prefect.

"Quite out?" asked Mr. Cobb.

"Yes."

"Hard cheese!" said Mr. Banks sympathetically. The recovery of the sovereign which he had lost at billiards—with a great deal of interest—had considerably mollified the rascally bookmaker. He was even agreeable.

"These things will happen," he said sagely. "Wonderful how luck will change!"

Loder nodded in a dazed fashion.

"Ten quid gone to pot!" he muttered. "It's the worst stroke of luck I've had for ages! Won't you go on, Cobb, and take my I O U's for, say, another fiver?"

Mr. Cobb affected sudden alarm.

"'Pon my word," he exclaimed, "it's nigh on midnight! I must get to bed!"

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"You could stay up long enough to win my money," said Loder bitterly.

Mr. Cobb turned upon him with an indignant air.

"Oh, come off! Surely you can behave like a sportsman?" he said. "You can have your revenge any time you like, but there's no fun in playing on till the small hours of the morning! And about those I O U's," he added, clearing his throat, "you'll let us have the cash when your ten quid arrives, won't you? I'm pretty short just now. These restrictions on drink are beginning to ruin my custom."

Loder brightened up somewhat. The knowledge that he was shortly to receive a cheque from the London firm had gone out of his mind in the excitement of the last hour or two. After all, when the cheque came to hand, he would hand it to Cobb and Banks, and meet the world once more with clean hands. True, he had gained nothing by his nocturnal escapade; but that was better than falling head-over-ears in debt.

The prefect returned to Greyfriars by way of the towing-path, and let himself in at the side gate. Noiselessly he proceeded to his study in the Sixth-Form passage. Arrived there, he lit the gas, and picked up a letter which lay on the table. It had apparently come by the evening post.

Swiftly the prefect ripped open the envelope, then he uttered an exclamation of dismay. The note was from the firm of bookmakers in London—the second he had received from them that day. It was very brief, and very much to the point:

"Dear Sir,—Owing to a falling-off in the number of our clients, we have decided to suspend business during the war."

"All outstanding accounts, whether for money won or lost, will be held over until business is resumed once more.—Yours faithfully,

"ROLLETT & RAIKES,

"Racing Specialists."

Loder stood transfixed for a moment, so unexpected was the shock. Then he threw himself into a chair and tried to face the facts. The callous letter of Messrs. Rollett & Raikes spelt ruin to the unhappy prefect, for ten pounds was a sum which could only be raised under extreme difficulties. The blow was rendered doubly severe by the fact that only that day Loder had received the assurance that the money was his.

He remained in the chair, a victim to the wretched thoughts which rushed in upon his brain. He must raise the wind somehow, for neither Mr. Banks nor Mr. Cobb would be prepared to grant him much grace. They would "put the screw on" until the money was theirs—that was certain.

Loder rose unsteadily to his feet and put out the gas. Then, undressing in the dark, he got into bed—but not to sleep. Dawn was creeping in at the study window ere Gerald Loder sank into a troubled and uneasy slumber.

Not far away, Walker and Valence, free from the snares of the Friardale sharks, were safe in the arms of Morpheus; but for their errant schoolmate the future loomed black and ominous. Verily, the way of the transgressor is hard!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Prout Has an Inspiration!

"WELL hit, sir! Oh, well hit!"

It was the following afternoon, and the Old Boys were practising with some of the juniors at the nets. Colonel Wharton was batting, and, opening his shoulders to a lob from Peter Todd, he had sent the leather soaring away into space.

"Gettin' your eye in—what?" drawled Lieutenant Towers, buckling on his pads prior to having a "knock."

The colonel smiled, and got the full face of the bat to one of Hurree Singh's deadliest balls.

"We'll give 'em a close run for their money, at any rate, Towers," he exclaimed.

There was no doubt that the Old Boys were in fine fettle. The Remove's bowling was not to be despised, as a rule, but Colonel Wharton was simply making hay of

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

it. Perhaps some of the spirit which he had shown on the battlefield at Neuve Chapelle was being infused into his cricket.

Afternoon lessons were over, and Mr. Quelch, in company with Mr. Prout, the Fifth-Form master, strolled up to watch the Old Boys at practice. Not that Mr. Quelch was at all keen on cricket; indeed, most of his spare time was devoted to his beloved "History of Greyfriars," a work which, sooner or later, was to take the scholastic world by storm.

But Mr. Prout has persuaded his colleague to come and watch Colonel Wharton's batting for a few moments, and the Remove-master had graciously assented.

"A capital game—cricket!" said Mr. Prout, with enthusiasm. "Capital! Bless my soul! Colonel Wharton seems to be letting himself go!"

Squiff had sent up what he intended for a "lob." Unfortunately, however, it proved to be a full-toss, and the batsman positively leapt at it. It was a great hit, the ball travelling almost as far as the Form-room windows.

Mr. Prout sighed.

"It is a standing regret of mine," he said, "that I allowed my cricket to fall into decay. When I was at the 'Varsity, Quelch, such a hit as we have just witnessed was an everyday achievement on my part."

"Indeed!" murmured Mr. Quelch.

It was hard to imagine the fat, flabby Fifth-Form master playing the role of a Trumper or Hobbs.

"Even now," pursued Mr. Prout, "I feel that I possess some latent ability in the noble sport. I wonder if—er—I might be allowed to take a turn at the nets?"

"My dear Prout, it would be most undignified!" said the Remove-master reproachfully.

"I fail to see the matter in that light. Why, Lascelles often indulges in a game of cricket with the juniors!"

Mr. Lascelles was the mathematics master at Greyfriars, and was deservedly popular, mainly because of his partiality to sport. His batting was a revelation; and probably Mr. Prout's would be likewise—though a different sort. Politeness, however, forbade Mr. Quelch to tell him so.

Meanwhile, Colonel Wharton continued to hit. He got the better of a leg-ball from his nephew, and sent it almost to the outskirts of the ground; when suddenly a fieldsman dashed up, apparently from nowhere, and brought off a magnificent catch.

"Splendid!" exclaimed the colonel, in amazement. "The man's a marvel! Here you are, Towers. I'll take a back seat after that!"

And Lieutenant Towers replaced him at the nets.

"Dear me!" muttered Mr. Quelch. "That was indeed a fine catch! Who is the individual responsible for it, Prout?"

"An Old Boy named Chester," replied Mr. Prout. "He informed Colonel Wharton that he had left Greyfriars ten years. Both Dr. Locke and myself have been here longer than that, yet neither of us remember him. However, ten years will do much towards changing a man's personal appearance, and it is small wonder that I do not recognise him."

Quite a crowd of fellows had assembled round the nets by this time, for Lieutenant Towers, the famous County amateur, was giving a display of hurricane hitting. The wiles of the Remove's best bowlers were lost on him, and it was not until Wingate and Courtney joined the players that he was disposed of, the captain of Greyfriars uprooting his middle stump.

Mr. Prout looked very thoughtful as the two masters went in to tea. Whenever Mr. Prout was taken this way, he was usually on the point of making a terrific pronouncement.

"When does the Old Boys match take place?" he asked suddenly.

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Mr. Quelch, somewhat stiffly. "It is a matter of small moment to me."

"Ahem! I believe it is fixed for Saturday. In that case, to-day being Thursday, there is a clear day before the match is played."

"Well?" asked Mr. Quelch, with an air of little interest.

"I have been contemplating rather a novel scheme. Why should not an eleven—composed mainly of masters—

be raised, to engage in a friendly match with Colonel Wharton's eleven to-morrow?"

Mr. Quelch jumped.

"My dear Prout," he exclaimed, with unabashed frankness, "I have never handled a cricket-bat in my life!"

"It is never too late to begin," counselled Mr. Prout. "Many a cricketing genius has been discovered when on the wrong side of forty. Unlike football, which calls for the primitive methods of a barbaric age, cricket is a mild game, requiring little exertion."

"I am sorry I cannot enter into an argument with you on that point," said Mr. Quelch. "Suffice it to say that nothing would induce me to take up the game at my time of life."

"Pooh! That is absurd! Why, Colonel Wharton and some of his colleagues are quite as old as you and I. The teams, in my opinion, would be very evenly matched."

"I am not prepared to discuss the pros and cons of the matter," said Mr. Quelch testily. "I cannot, of course, interfere with your suggestion, but I am determined not to be made the laughing-stock of the school to satisfy a mere whim on your part."

Mr. Prout glared.

"It is not a whim!" he declared hotly. "It is a sound, practicable idea. However, as you seem resolved to give me no encouragement, I will consult some of the other masters. By hook or by crook, I will get together an eleven, provided Colonel Wharton falls in with my idea—of which, being a sportsman, he is bound to approve."

And, with this parting shot, Mr. Prout rustled haughtily away, and took his place at the Fifth-Form table.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Prout's Eleven!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

Billy Bunter, the prize porpoise of the Remove, blinked in at the door of No. 1 Study as the chums of the Remove were finishing their tea. His fat face was red with recent laughter, and his little, round eyes positively gleamed with amusement.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Come for a feed, Fatty? If so, you can travel! There's nothing doing!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Buzz off!" said Nugent, seizing a loaf of bread with a war-like air. "This is not the Society for Stuffing Overfed Cormorants!"

"Hold on a jiff, Franky!" laughed Wharton. "Let's hear what Bunter's got to say. He seems to be simply bursting with importance."

"Oh, it doesn't matter!" said Bunter loftily. "You weren't prepared to give a chap a hearing in the first place, so you can go and eat coke!"

"Right-ho!" said Wharton cheerfully. "Scat—and close the door after you! You might pass me one of those veal-and-ham patties, Bob."

The mention of those appetising delicacies made Bunter linger.

"I say, you fellows, don't be beasts!" he exclaimed. "I've got something awfully funny to tell you. It's about old Prout."

"Go ahead!" said Wharton, handing the dish of patties to the Owl of the Remove. "What's the latest with Prout? Has he winged a Zeppelin?"

"Not exactly," mumbled Bunter, with his mouth full. "He's getting up an eleven to play the Old Boys."

"What!"

"It's a fact," continued Bunter. "I happened to be passing Prout's study, and heard him jawing to your uncle, Wharton. The door being open, I caught some of their conversation. Of course, I wasn't eavesdropping. I hope I'm above that sort of thing."

"Quite so," said Nugent solemnly.

"It appears that the Old Boys have got a blank day to-morrow," Bunter went on, "and Prout suggested that he got together some sort of an eleven to give 'em a friendly game. You might hand a chap some buttered toast, Nugent. I've finished these patties. Well, the colonel seemed surprised at first, but he agreed on the wheeze, so Prout went to scout round for an eleven."

"My hat!" gasped Wharton. "Paul Prout—cricketer! This prances off with the whole giddy biscuit factory!" "Bunter must be telling whoppers, as usual," said Nugent.

"I'm not," said Bunter seriously. "It's honest Injun." "He'll try and raise a team from the members of the staff—gardeners and odd-job men thrown in," gurgled Bob Cherry. "Imagine Prout and Gosling opening the innings!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "It would be a sight for the gods!" grinned Wharton. "I don't suppose he'll get much support, though. Quelch will refuse for one. He's not over-anxious to make a prize ass of himself. Then there's Larry Lascelles. He won't play for a cert. Capper and Twigg might follow Prout's lead; but where's the rest of the eleven coming from?"

"Where—oh, where?" murmured Bob Cherry. "I vote we go and see what's happening," said Nugent. "There might be an appeal for recruits."

"Ha, ha, ha!" The juniors left the study, while Bunter, monarch of all he surveyed, remained to finish up the tea.

Quite a little crowd were gathered round the notice-board in the Rag when Harry Wharton & Co. arrived on the scene. The fellows appeared to be on the verge of going into hysterics.

"What's on?" demanded Wharton, going up to the group.

"Don't ask me!" sobbed Russell. "It's Prout on the war-path again! He'll be the death of me! Oh, dear! Read it!"

The announcement which had rendered the Removites so convulsed with mirth was on a sheet of foolscap paper, in the handwriting of Mr. Prout. It was headed:

"TO THE OLD BOYS OF GREYFRIARS. A CHALLENGE."

and ran as follows:

"In order to show that the masters of this institution have not forgotten the delights of their 'Varsity days, and to prove that, so far as the noble game of cricket is concerned, the hand of the undersigned has lost none of its cunning, I hereby challenge the team of Old Boys, captained by Colonel Wharton, to a friendly game on Little Side, to take place to-morrow afternoon at three.

"Will those who desire to enrol under my banner kindly report themselves in my study?"

"The services of a referee are also in requisition, though fouls are not expected to be frequent."

"(Signed) PAUL PROUT."

Beneath this humorous notice appeared another—"Stop Press" news, so to speak:

"There has been a very disappointing response to the request contained in the above announcement. Messrs. Twigg and Capper have decided to give their services, but the other masters, through indisposition and other causes, are unable to play.

"I therefore appeal to all the cricket-loving members of my own and other Forms to fill in the eight vacancies thus created. The eight boys whose signatures appear below will be definitely chosen.

"Come, boys! One volunteer is worth ten pressed men!" P. P."

"Poor old Prout!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "He's finding that a cricket captain's path ain't a rosy one. So far he's got three names. Who's going to enlist under his giddy banner?"

"Don't all speak at once!" grinned Nugent.

The Fifth-Form master's appeal, so far from having the desired effect, was regarded with undisguised amusement by the Remove. It was a matter for speculation whether Mr. Prout would succeed in raising an eleven at all, unless he demanded the services of the kids in the Second and Third. Even in that quarter, however, there would be no mad rush of applicants, unless the fags wished to carry out some gigantic jape.

"Perhaps some kindly-disposed person will officiate as referee, umpires being barred?" suggested Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ask Alonzo," said Nugent, as the Duffer of Greyfriars came up to the notice-board.

"My dear fellows," purred the gentle Alonzo, "from the sounds of ribaldry which recently uprose, there seems

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to be something afout of an unusually sensational and humorous nature."

"Good old dictionary!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Really, my dear Cherry—"

"Say, Toddy," exclaimed Vernon-Smith, "would you care to do the Good Samaritan bizney, and act as referee in a match to-morrow?"

Alonzo reflected.

"My Uncle Benjamin," he said, after a pause, "often reads me a friendly homily on the value of being obliging, and my uncle's precepts are worthy of emulation. They shine like good deeds in a naughty world. But what, I pray, are the duties of a referee in a cricket match?"

The Bounder nearly choked.

"Oh, he's supposed to keep law and order generally," he said. "If a player makes himself objectionable, the referee cracks him on the boko with a stump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear Smith, I am afraid such a violent action would bring about a severe concussion."

"Go hon!"

"Which are the teams engaged in the forthcoming campaign?" asked Alonzo.

Wharton indicated the notice-board, and the Duffer read Mr. Prout's stirring call to arms for the first time. Unlike the rest of the Remove, Alonzo was seriously impressed. The juniors watched his perusal of the notice with keen amusement.

"Well, my pippin," said Bob Cherry at length, "have you decided to be referee?"

Alonzo shook his head.

"Someone worthier than I must perform those onerous duties," he said. "Might I trouble you for the loan of your fountain-pen, Nugent?"

"Certainly," said Frank, handing it over.

Alonzo approached the notice-board once more, and began to write. The juniors watched him in silent wonder.

"What's the little game, Toddy?" asked Wharton, when Alonzo had finished. "You're not going to referee?"

"No, I'm going to play."

Wharton stared at him blankly.

"You're going to pip-pip-play?" he stammered.

"Certainly."

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors shrieked. They simply could not help it. The thought of seeing Mr. Prout rigged out in full cricketing armour tickled their fancy, but the idea of Alonzo Todd, the prize freak of the Remove, standing up to the bowling of an ex-county player, was too much.

"Carry me home to die!" sobbed Bob Cherry, throwing himself at full length on the floor, and kicking up his heels in a paroxysm of merriment. "This takes the bun, beats the band, and prances off with the whole giddy box of tricks!"

"My dear Cherry—"

"Hallo, what's all the cackling about?" asked Coker of the Fifth, coming upon the scene with Potter and Greene.

"Did you ever know fags to be serious?" sniffed Potter.

"Can't say I did, except when the Fifth were on the warpath!" said the mighty Horace. "Now, where's the notice young Skinner was telling us about?"

"Here!" said Greene, going up to the notice-board. "Listen, O King!"

And he proceeded to read the announcement.

Coker listened with interest. He was a loyal enough fellow at heart, and Mr. Prout's unfortunate predicament had aroused his sympathies.

"Put me down!" he exclaimed. "I'll do my bit, anyway."

Potter and Greene looked at their leader in amazement. The Removites chuckled.

"You are surely j-j-joking, old man?" gasped Potter.

"Rats! What should I want to joke for, George Potter? And don't 'old man' me! Shove my name down, please; and you'll get a thick ear if you cackle at me, Greene!"

Greene discreetly turned a loud guffaw into a cough. "Here you are!" said Potter, producing a pencil. "You can sign your own rotten name. Blessed if I'm going to be held responsible for the actions of a maniac!"

"Why, you—you—" stuttered Coker. "Oh, dry up!" said Potter. "You make me ill!" He threw the pencil on to the nearest desk and stamped out of the room. Greene followed.

"Looks like trouble in the giddy family!" said Bob Cherry amiably.

Coker snorted. "Go and eat coke!" he exclaimed. "It doesn't come within my code of honour to leave a Form-master in the lurch. There seems to be a strange lack of enthusiasm in this school."

Horace Coker picked up the pencil, and signed his name beneath that of Alonzo Todd. He started a little on seeing the Duffer's name, but the fact that Mr. Capper and Mr. Twigg were down to play reassured him. Then, with a warlike glance at the Removites, he left the room.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Vernon-Smith. "The team's gradually growing. They've got five."

"It'll be complete by bed-time, I expect," said Nugent.

He was right. When the juniors looked into the Rag before calling-over, eleven names greeted their gaze. The team which was to do service against the Old Boys was indeed a fearful and a wonderful combination.

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" gasped Wharton. "Just listen to this:

"Prout, Capper, Twigg, Alonzo Todd, Coker, Fisher T. Fish, Bunter—"

"Spare us!" groaned Nugent.

"Bunter minor—"

"Oh, Jehoshaphat!"

"Paget, Gatty, and Tubb!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were doubled up with unrestrained laughter.

"Why, it's worse than Mauly's eleven that went over to Rookwood!" chuckled Wharton.

"And the Old Boys are a little bit above Rookwood's weight!" grinned Nugent.

Bob Cherry, convulsed with merriment, staggered up to the notice-board, and began to write. Wharton caught his chum hastily by the arm.

"What are you doing, Bob, you ass? Surely you're not going to play with those freaks?"

"No, my infant!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I think I'll be umpire, as the chaps don't seem to be falling over each other for the job. My hat, but it ought to be doocid funny! I shall burst something, I'm sure!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bed-time, you kids!" said Courtney genially, looking in at the door.

He went up to the notice-board as the juniors quitted the Rag, and a broad grin overspread his countenance as he read Mr. Prout's notice, and scanned the team written beneath it. That grin still remained when, half an hour later, he saw lights out in the Remove dormitory.

The match on the morrow was likely to be, in all conscience, a sight to see and wonder at!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

"Flannelled Fools!"

"I SUPPOSE we'd better put in some practice at the nets—what?" yawned Lieutenant Towers, with a languid puff at a particularly fat cigar.

"It will hardly be necessary, I think," laughed Colonel Wharton. "The opposition which Mr. Prout will provide for us is hardly likely to prove a formidable one."

The Old Boys were reclining at ease in the Head's garden after lunch next day. Colonel Wharton had good-naturedly consented to play against Mr. Prout's eleven, but even he would have been staggered had he

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OUR COMPANION THE BOYS' FRIEND PAPER8: Every Monday.

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known the sort of side the Fifth-Form master intended to place in the field.

"Guess we'll sally forth to the fray," said Dick Chester. "It'll be a bit of practice for us, anyway."

As the Old Boys made their way towards Little Side they passed Gerald Loder of the Sixth, who was coming out into the Close.

The prefect nodded genially to Colonel Wharton; then he gave a sudden start as his eyes fell upon Dick Chester.

The Old Boy returned his gaze, and changed colour. He made no comment, however, but passed on with the others.

Loder stood rooted to the ground. The man he had just seen, despite his transformation into cricket flannels, was identical with the individual who had deprived Mr. Banks of a sovereign in the billiard-room at the Cross Keys.

The prefect's brain worked rapidly. His first thoughts were that he might be "shown up" for his visit to the inn, but he at once dismissed this possibility from his mind, for Chester would hardly like it known that he, an Old Boy of Greyfriars, had no better way of spending his evenings than by "pub-haunting." He could not split on Loder without fear of the prefect's retaliation, and this thought was as balm in Gilead to the harassed Sixth-Former.

Loder went on his way with a lighter heart.

Meanwhile, things were beginning to move on Little Side. Mr. Prout's fat face wore a worried frown, as well it might, for he had not bargained on fags being drafted into his eleven. However, he had distinctly stated in his notice that those who signed their names would be definitely selected, and there was no backing out now.

Paget and Gatty and Tubb had assembled in their flannels, and their faces were wreathed in smiles. The young rascals of the Third were evidently "all out" for a good time at the expense of Mr. Prout. They knew that the Old Boys could wipe them off the face of the earth, so to speak, but the honour of playing against an ex-County man outweighed any feelings of regret at being on the losing side.

Mr. Capper and Mr. Twigg were in the pavilion with Mr. Prout, whom they felt inclined to massacre. They had entered into the Fifth Form-master's scheme with zest, thinking that many valued members of the first eleven would be playing. Had they known that such freaks as Alonzo Todd, Fisher T. Fish, and Bunter were in the team, they would have cut off their right hands rather than play. But there was no retracting now. They had to go through with it.

There was one circumstance which brought a gleam of hope to Mr. Prout's troubled breast—he had the services of Horace Coker. Mr. Prout had great faith in Coker. He regarded him as a very valiant trencherman. And there could be no doubt whatever that Coker was always a very valuable asset in any game—to the opposition!

"Here we are!" said Colonel Wharton briskly, as he stepped into the pavilion. "Why, Prout, where have your eleven wandered to?"

"They are all here," said Mr. Prout wearily.

The colonel glanced at the three masters and Coker.

"I—er—fail to see—" he stammered.

"They are all here," repeated Mr. Prout, a trifle testily. "There are eleven, I think."

"But these boys—"

"All of them are taking part in the match."

"Great Scott!"

The colonel hardly knew whether to laugh or be angry. He did not relish the prospect of leading his redoubtable warriors against such crass idiots as Bunter.

"Suppose we toss for choice of ends?" asked Mr. Prout.

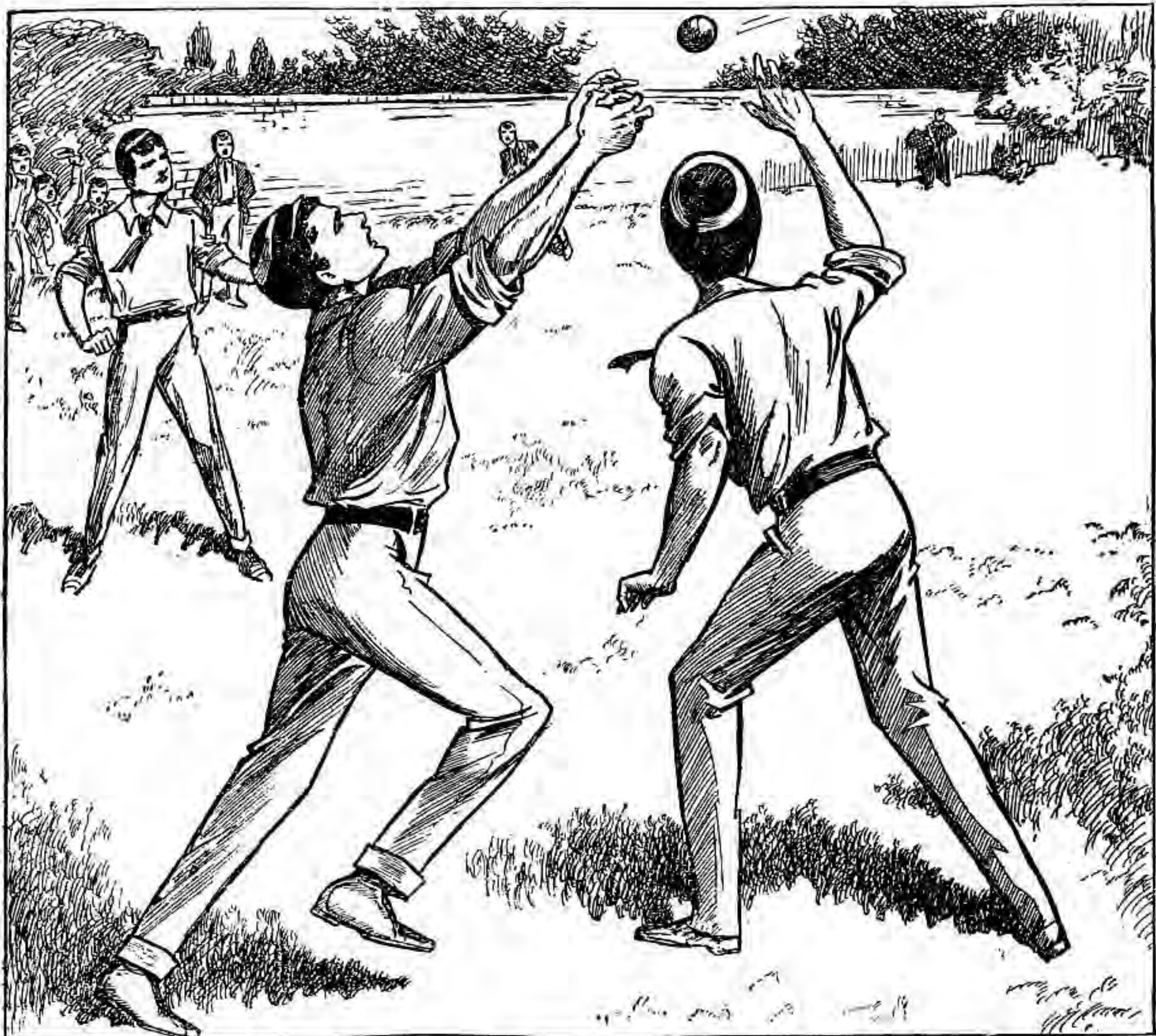
"What?"

"I think that is the usual proceeding, is it not?"

"Cricket's changed since I played it last, then!" muttered the colonel.

He drew out a coin and spun it into the air.

"We toss for choice of innings," he said mildly.



Loder ran forward, and allowed the ball to pass over his head. There was a sound of pattering feet behind him—a sound of quick breathing—and then, smack! The ball reposed safely in the outstretched palm of James Walker! (See Chapter 10.)

Mr. Prout lost the toss, and the colonel stepped out to acquaint the others of the fact.

"Better put 'em in first," said Lieutenant Towers, who was inclined to be irritable when he saw the nature of the opposition. "It's a single-innings match, and we'll get through with the fiasco as quickly as possible."

"That seems the best way," assented the colonel.

A few moments later a wild burst of ironical cheering arose. Mr. Prout, clad in a blazer of divers colours, and in the full glory of pads and batting-gloves, came out to open the innings with Paget of the Third. Paget was grinning expansively, and he had much ado to keep pace with Mr. Prout's giant stride.

The Fifth Form-master was to take the first over. Bob Cherry, who was umpire, gave him his centre with a cheerful grin. Lieutenant Towers gripped the leather hard, and commenced his run.

Mr. Prout stood up gallantly to receive the first ball. He was resolved that his defence should be founded as upon a rock.

Crash!

There was a sudden shattering of wickets, and Mr. Prout turned to survey the wreckage.

"How's that?"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"MAULY'S FLIRTATION!"

"Out!" said the umpire cheerfully.

"Astonishing!" gasped Mr. Prout, with a sickly smile. "I should hardly have expected to miss a trial-ball."

"A—a what?" exclaimed Lieutenant Towers.

"I presume that we have not seriously embarked upon the game yet?"

"My dear sir, surely you don't imagine we are indulging in a little preliminary fun-making?" said the lieutenant drily. "The game has started in earnest, and as two of your wickets were uprooted by the ball, you are out!"

"Astonishing!" murmured Mr. Prout again. "Out! And after all the trouble of putting on a pair of pads, too!"

He sighed, and walked back to the pavilion with a worried frown.

Mr. Twigg, the master of the Third, took his place. Mr. Twigg's knowledge of cricket was very limited. He stood yards out of his crease, and about five seconds after the ball had been delivered, shut his eyes, and smote fiercely. In that five seconds the ball had wrought sad havoc with Mr. Twigg's wicket. The batsman glared at Lieutenant Towers, and proceeded to join the unfortunate Mr. Prout in the pavilion.

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

Mr. Capper was the next victim, Lieutenant Towers disposing of him with a slow leg-break at the first delivery. A man who had accomplished the "hat-trick" in County matches was not likely to find it difficult to repeat the performance against a team of impossibles.

Mr. Capper muttered a doubtful imprecation under his breath, and strode off the pitch.

The crowd cheered Lieutenant Towers with alacrity. The three masters—presumably the mainstay of the team—had each been bowled for an inglorious duck's-egg!

"You're next, Coker!" snapped Mr. Prout.

"No fear, sir!" Coker replied. "I'm going in later on, to stop the rot."

"Ahem!"

"Better send young Tubb in now, sir."

"I'm on!" chortled Tubb.

And, without hearing if Mr. Prout approved or otherwise, the Third-Former picked up his bat and went to join Paget at the wickets.

Despite the small stature of the batsman, Lieutenant Towers bowled quite well. He did not wish the ridiculous farce to be of a long-drawn-out nature.

Tubb survived the remaining three balls of the over, and then Paget had his first "knock." The bowler at the other end was not so formidable as the old Hampshire player, and Paget met each ball with a bat like a barn-door. He failed to score, but his wicket was kept intact, and that was something.

Ten runs had been scored before the fags were separated, Tubb being easily run out while attempting the impossible. It looked as though those ten runs would complete the total, too, for the two Bunters, Alonzo Todd, and Fisher T. Fish, who followed on, returned to the pavilion in quick time.

Man after man came in, padded and gloved, and looking capable of mighty things. With grim faces they crouched to meet the oncoming ball. When it came, it usually carried a stump or two with it.

Coker came in last, to pull the game out of the fire, as he informed Mr. Prout. Whereat Mr. Prout, despite his great faith in Coker, snorted audibly.

At the first ball Coker leapt out of his crease like a tiger, and smote hard. More by accident than design he hit the ball, and it travelled towards the boundary. Then a figure in white dashed up, and—smack! The ball reposed safely in the palm of his hand.

"All out for ten!" groaned Mr. Prout, mopping the perspiration from his forehead. "Oh, dear! it seems to be a forlorn hope!"

The crowd were almost in hysterics. They recovered sufficiently to clap Paget, who had carried out his bat for five. This was not a great score, but out of a total of ten—two being byes—it was yeoman service. Paget bowed his acknowledgments as he came up the pavilion steps.

There was a brief respite, and then Colonel Wharton and Lieutenant Towers went in to bat.

There was a grim look on their sunburnt faces. They meant to teach Mr. Prout a lesson, and resolved to go in for hurricane hitting. Coker and Mr. Capper went on to bowl, and their bowling was knocked far and wide, Lieutenant Towers sending almost every other ball out of the ground.

The score rose rapidly. Fresh bowlers were tried, but all to no purpose. The bowling was bad, the fielding worse.

Mr. Prout, in the long field, was given plenty of running about, and his fat face was perspiring profusely. Perhaps Mr. Prout had the feeling that he was "too old at forty." Anyway, of one thing he was certain—he would never again, under any circumstances, take upon himself the onerous task of captaining a cricket eleven!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Driven to the Wall!

"WATCHIN' the cricket, eh?"

Loder of the Sixth gave a start as the familiar voice of Mr. Banks hailed him. The prefect had sauntered down to a quiet spot beneath the trees, to solace himself with a novel, and to watch, from time to time, the hurricane hitting of Colonel Wharton and Lieutenant Towers.

"Banks!" he muttered, flushing with anger. "You here! What d'ye mean by showing your face at Greyfriars? How dare you!"

"How dare I?" murmured Mr. Banks, gazing up at the sky as if for an answer to his own question.

"I've told you scores of times that it would get me into a pretty mess if you were seen on the premises," said Loder thickly. "Clear off before you're spotted."

Mr. Banks cleared his throat.

"There's a little matter of ten quid which I want to settle," he said. "At least, it ain't me—it's Cobb. He wants the cash at once, as he's in rather a hole."

"Hang him!" muttered Loder savagely.

"Of course, I didn't mean to come up to the school if there was any other way out," said Mr. Banks smoothly. "But Mr. Cobb has got quite desprit. 'Go along to Master Loder,' says he, 'and get that ten quid without delay. It's bound to have arrived from London by now.'"

"It hasn't!" snapped Loder.

"No! And why's that, I wonder?"

"The firm has gone broke."

Mr. Banks grinned, and began to whistle "Tipperary."

"Oh, dry up!" said Loder irritably. "I've been swindled—that's the long and short of it. You shall have the money as soon as I can raise it."

"I want it now. I ain't to go back without it."

Loder looked startled.

"Who said so?"

"Cobb."

"Cobb's a fool! He ought to know I can't stump up at a minute's notice. Go and tell him so. And for goodness' sake don't come here again! It's too risky."

Mr. Banks produced a cigar, bit off the end, and proceeded to light up.

"My orders," he said firmly, "was to get the money now, or else make a report to your headmaster."

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed Loder, his face livid. "It's more than you dare do!"

"Not a bit of it, young shaver. Orders is orders, and they've got to be obeyed. I don't care tuppence for myself. My share of the ten quid can wait. It's Cobb I'm thinking about. He lost heavily last night to the same chap as beat me at billiards; and, as it's a debt of honour, it's got to be paid at once. An' he's relying on your cash to help him out."

Loder looked haggard. He was in a tight corner, and his usually cunning brain could devise no way out. He had been face to face with situations of a similar kind before, but had generally contrived to extricate himself. It seemed as if Nemesis had overtaken him at last.

"Look here, Banks," he said desperately, "give me till to-morrow night, there's a good fellow."

Mr. Banks pondered for a moment.

"If I was sure of getting it then——" he began.

"You will," said Loder earnestly. "I'll swear to it! I'll raise it somehow, if I have to go through fire and water to get it!"

"Now you're talking!" said Mr. Banks admiringly. "P'r'aps, if I put it very nicely to Mr. Cobb, he'll hang on till to-morrow night."

Loder nodded.

"Now get off!" he said. "The match'll be over soon, and some of the fellows will be strolling this way."

"Half a minute!" said Mr. Banks, flicking his cigar on his coat-sleeve. "How are you going to raise it?"

"Hanged if I know!"

"Then suppose I make a little suggestion?"

"Fire away!"

"It's this," said the bookmaker, lowering his voice; "an' it's a purely personal matter, you understand, jest between you and me. Why not have a little bet on to-morrow's match?"

Loder started. He would have gone to almost any

ANSWERS

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lengths, in his present frame of mind, to secure the necessary money.

"We can make it ten quid, if you like," pursued Mr. Banks, warming to the subject.

"You want me to back the school to win, of course?" said Loder. "In that case, there's nothing doing. The Old Boys have brought down a crack eleven."

"It don't matter to me which way it is," said Mr. Banks untruthfully. "Back the Old Boys, by all means, if you think they'll win. I'm simply givin' you a chance of raising the cash. So there you are, Master Loder. If the Old Boys win, you rope in ten quid. If it's a draw, then the bet's off."

"That'll suit me down to the ground!"

Loder could scarcely believe his good fortune. He had backed the Old Boys against the school—the past against the present—and nothing could be more in his favour. It was evidently unknown to the bookmaker that the Old Boys numbered an ex-County player in their ranks. Colonel Wharton, too, was a foeman worthy of his steel. The two men had both completed their centuries in the match with Mr. Prout's eleven, and were still going strong. True, the bowling to which they were opposed was frightfully feeble; at the same time, their mighty hits and tremendous rate of scoring spoke volumes for their cricketing ability.

"We'll leave it at that, then," said Mr. Banks. "I hope you bring it off, in a way, for we don't want no unpleasant scandals with the headmaster. So-long, Master Loder!"

"Go carefully, for goodness' sake!" warned the prefect. "If you're seen in the grounds there'll be inquiries made, for a cert."

"That's all right. My jigger's in the hedge yonder, and I'm too old a hand to get collared."

So saying, the bookmaker strolled off, leaving Loder in a more satisfied frame of mind than he had experienced for some time.

A golden chance was his now. The Old Boys would win, and the burden of debt would slip from the prefect's shoulders. The fact that he was acting disloyally to his school did not enter his mind for a moment. Neither did Loder anticipate the consequences if the Old Boys lost. It was up to him to see that they didn't lose, and he meant to safeguard his position as much as possible.

A burst of cheering from the other end of the ground disturbed the prefect's train of thought. Colonel Wharton and Lieutenant Towers had declared their innings closed. The Old Boys had scored two hundred and seventy runs, without the loss of a single wicket! They had been hitting out recklessly during the last hour, and each of the batsmen should have been caught out at least half a dozen times. But the "field" had no more notion how to catch a ball than fly. Mr. Prout was hot and extremely "wrathy," and the ironical cheer which greeted him when he left the field hardly improved his temper.

It was likely to be a long, long time ere Mr. Prout issued another cricket challenge!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Straight from the Shoulder!

"BUSY, Wingate?"

"Not particularly. Trot right in!"

Gerald Loder "trotted" in. He was looking unusually genial—a fact which clearly showed he had an axe to grind.

"I wanted to see you about to-morrow's match," he said. "Any chance of a game?"

Wingate pondered for a moment.

"The team's not made out yet," he said. "Still, there's no reason why you shouldn't play, if you're fit. But I'm not going to have any passengers in the team. I'm keen as mustard on licking the Old Boys. If you play, you'll have to put up the game of your life."

"Rely on me," said Loder earnestly. "I'll play like the very deuce."

The captain of Greyfriars nodded.

"That's all right," he said. "I'll count you in."

"Look here," Loder remarked, with an anxiety in his tone which any but the unsuspecting Wingate would not have failed to notice. "Do you think the school will pull it off?"

"We shall put up the best game we know, of course."

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NEXT MONDAY—

MAULY'S FLIRTATION!"

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ONE
PENNY.

If every man does his level best, I feel pretty confident we shall bag the honours. The Old Boys are a team of veterans, more or less, and our youth ought to pull us through."

Loder winced. The confidence of George Wingate rather unnerved him. He had expected the captain to say that the task was a bit above the weight of the first eleven.

If the mighty men of the Sixth should win, the results would not bear thinking of, so far as Loder was concerned. He would be twenty pounds in debt, with the combined threats of Messrs. Cobb and Banks hanging over his head. Such a terrible state of affairs must be avoided at all hazards. By fair means or foul, Greyfriars must go under, and the Old Boys come out on top.

Loder's object in getting into the team was typical of the black sheep of Greyfriars. He was there to let his side down, if things looked black in connection with his ten-pound bet. Had Wingate known the thoughts which were passing through Loder's mind at that moment he would have kicked him out of the study without ceremony, and probably have reported him to the Head. But, fortunately for Loder, Wingate's thoughts, like those of Eugene Aram in the poem, were "other where."

"It ought to be a rattling good game," said Loder, as he turned to go. "Is Walker playing?"

"Yes."

"Good biz! I want to have a chat with him. Good-night, Wingate!"

"Good-night!"

And Loder quitted the study. An idea had just occurred to him whereby he hoped to still further strengthen his treacherous designs. He would induce Walker to assist in letting the side down. With two men doing their utmost to impair the chances of the school eleven, the Old Boys would be almost certain to romp home.

Walker was in his study, oiling a cricket-bat. He was surprised to see who his visitor was, as there had been strained relationships between Loder and himself since his refusal to visit the Cross Keys.

"Hallo!" said Loder affably. "Getting ready for the fray—what?"

Walker nodded.

"Squat down!" he exclaimed. "You've been giving your old pals the cold shoulder lately. Still ratty because we didn't come to the pub that night?"

"Not at all, old man," said Loder hastily. "There was something to be said for your point of view, after all."

"I should reckon so!" growled Walker, rubbing away industriously at his bat. "Pub-haunting in war-time's the giddy limit!"

"I wish I'd taken your tip," said Loder. "I've landed myself in a frightful hole!"

"Sorry to hear it," replied Walker; though he didn't look exactly sorry.

"It happened this way," explained Loder. "The ten quid I won from that scoundrelly bookmaking firm in London didn't turn up."

"I didn't imagine it would," said Walker drily.

"Oh, rats! Who was to know that the rotten concern would close down owing to the war—and on the very day I received a letter saying I'd won, too!" growled Loder.

"Anyway, on the strength of that ten quid I had a little flutter with Banks and Cobb, and lost!"

Walker gave a start.

"You mean to say you gambled away the whole blessed lot?"

"Yes."

"Phew! That means to say you've got to raise ten golden quidlets!"

"That's so. And you can help me, Walker."

Walker shook his head.

"I'm stony," he said. "And even if I weren't, I don't see why I should stump up. You got yourself into the mess, and it's your place to get out of it."

"But you can help me in another way," said Loder, lowering his voice. "You're playing for the first eleven to-morrow."

"Rather! But what's that got to do with it?"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"It's like this. I've backed the Old Boys to win, and we can have a big say in it. You could contrive to get a duck, make some idiotic bloomers in the field, and be off colour generally. Twiggez-vous?"

"I see," said Walker ominously.

"I should do the same, of course," Loder went on; "and the School wouldn't have a dog's chance. To beat the Old Boys, every man jack must be at the top of his form. So if only nine men put up a decent game, Greyfriars would go under."

"That's so," said Walker quietly.

"So if you'll back me up, everything in the garden will be lovely."

"And if I don't?"

"Then you're a rotten cad!"

"I think I'll be a cad, then!" exclaimed Walker, white with passion. "You—you rotter! I wonder you've got the nerve to come here with such a low-down suggestion! You want me to help you sell the match—eh? Well, here's my answer!"

Walker dashed the cricket-bat aside, and sprang upon Gerald Loder. His fist shot out, catching the cad of the Sixth squarely on the point of the jaw. Loder fell like a log.

"Get up and have some more, you worm!" said Walker furiously.

Loder declined the invitation. His head seemed to swim for a moment, and he could not have risen had he chosen to do so. Walker had hit straight from the shoulder, and the blow had taken Loder by surprise, completely bowling him over.

"Hang you!" muttered the fallen senior, clasping his injured jaw. "I'll—I'll—"

"Hullo! What's the trouble?"

George Wingate looked into the study in astonishment. Walker was not particularly renowned as a fighting-man, and the sight of Loder lying hors de combat, with Walker prancing around him with brandished fists, made Wingate gasp.

"What on earth——" he began.

"It's all right, Wingate," said Walker. "Just a little row between ourselves, that's all."

Loder gave a gasp of relief. He had feared that Walker might split, and explain to Wingate why he had hit out—with disastrous results to the scheming prefect. Walker, however, had chosen to keep his own counsel.

"Better chuck it," advised Wingate. "It's infra dig to be scrapping like a pair of fags."

He helped the prostrate Loder to his feet, and quitted the study.

"You can thank your lucky stars you're well out of that," said Walker. "I came within an ace of splitting."

Loder groaned, and caressed his jaw.

"And now you can get out!" said Walker. "If you think I'm going to let the first eleven down to-morrow, you're very much off-side. I shall play the game of my life!"

And James Walker spoke as if he meant it.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Past v. Present!

"GO it, Greyfriars!"

A mighty shout arose from two hundred youthful throats as Wingate and Courtney, in their pads and batting-gloves, stepped out of the pavilion to open the innings for the school.

Greyfriars had turned out in force to witness the Titanic tussle. Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevelyn had come over from Cliff House, and were being well looked after by Harry Wharton and his chums; and Frank Courtenay, once "The Boy without a Name," was among the spectators, together with the irresistible Caterpillar.

"Franky," murmured that youth, with a languid air, "what the dooce did you want to drag me over here for? I'm sure I shall go to sleep."

He yawned portentously.

"Frightfully exhaustin' game, cricket—what?"

"But you're not playing it, you ass!" laughed Courtenay.

"Thank goodness for that! I'd be on the verge of

expirin' if I were in Wingate's shoes. My hat! There's energy for you!"

Wingate had got off the mark in fine style. He opened his shoulders to a half-volley from Chester, and drove it to the boundary, amid a perfect storm of cheering.

The captain of Greyfriars was in great form. He treated the second ball in like manner to the first, and fourteen runs were on the board when the field changed over.

"I say, you Highcliffe bounders, it looks a sure thing for us!" piped Billy Bunter.

"Keep off the grass—er—Grunter!" drawled De Courcy. "Push him out of the way, will you, Franky? He's disturbin' my line of vision, dear boy."

Courtenay grasped the fat junior by his coat-tails and swung him aside, just as an ominous groan proclaimed the downfall of Arthur Courtney's wicket.

"I say, you fellows," said Bunter, "that wasn't a bad ball for a common cad of a soldier!"

"Dry up, you rotter!" muttered Skinner from behind. "Private Ray's thoroughly decent!"

Because of those men who had endured cheerfully the inferno of the trenches, who had marched and fought and died like heroes—because of the many nameless graves in Belgium and Flanders—Harold Skinner, like many another little used to generous thoughts, had come to respect the "common soldier." And even to Skinner, whose notions of fairness were vague, it didn't seem right to class Private Ray as a "common cad."

Arthur Courtney came off, looking very dispirited. He had contributed a "big round nought" to the total of fourteen.

Dick Ray—an industrious bank-clerk who had enlisted as an ordinary private—had all the inborn qualities of the true bowler. He seemed unstoppable. North and Valence and Carne followed on, and their wickets fell like ninepins. Wingate alone seemed to be touching his true form.

And in the pavilion Gerald Loder was putting on his pads and chuckling with infinite satisfaction. Things were looking up, so far as his chances of winning the bet were concerned.

"Oh!"

There was a general groan of disappointment as Wingate's wicket went down to a fast ball from Chester. Loder picked up his bat and walked briskly out to join Dudley at the wickets. He was last man but one.

So many good batsmen had failed against the brilliant bowling of the Old Boys that if Loder was also off colour the fact would cause little surprise. But the prefect did not mean to arouse suspicion by getting out at the first opportunity. He scraped about for quite five minutes before scooping up an easy catch.

The spectators looked glum as James Walker took Loder's place. But they were soon moved to enthusiasm, for Walker played a delightful game. He had scant regard for Chester's "scorchers," and knocked Private Ray's slows all over the field. Dudley, who was a quiet and retiring fellow, kept his end up gallantly; and the last-wicket partnership was an excellent affair, yielding thirty-eight runs.

But the evil had been done. Greyfriars had been disposed of for the very moderate total of sixty. Lieutenant Towers, if he got going, was likely to exceed this off his own bat.

"Buck up in the field, you fellows, for goodness' sake!" growled Wingate, whose patience seemed to be at a low ebb. "It would be too foul to get whacked by an innings!"

"Quite so," said Courtney. "Hand me one of those vanilla ices, Cherry, there's a good chap. I can always get more devil into my bowling after one of those!"

Bob Cherry grinned, and passed over the tray of ices.

A few minutes later Lieutenant Towers and Colonel Wharton opened the innings for the Old Boys. They were accorded a rousing cheer, given with great heartiness and sincerity. Never in the history of Greyfriars had there been a Past versus Present match, and although the school had started badly its followers were not lacking in admiration for the opposition, led by a

couple of stalwarts who, but a few weeks since, had been braving the hardships of battle in the trenches.

Whether the vanilla ice had affected Courtney's bowling to any appreciable extent or not, he was certainly in fine form. Lieutenant Towers was inclined to take risks at first, but he soon changed his tactics. Courtney was dead on the mark every time.

Runs came at rare intervals, but thirty were on the board before the two soldiers were separated. Lieutenant Towers being run out from a smart throw-in by Dudley.

"Phew! This is hot work!" muttered Courtney, mopping his brow. "Who is this coming forth now? Chester, or me old eyes deceive me. A fastish yorker should settle Chester's hash. I'll try one."

Courtney followed the recipe. A moment later Chester's leg stump lay flat, and the batsman was beginning the sad, unending walk to the pavilion, thinking with the poet: "Thou wast not made to play, infernal ball!"

From that time fortune favoured Greyfriars. They could do nothing wrong. The Old Boys were good, but not consistently so. Some of them had not handled a bat for years, barring the brief practice at the nets since their stay at the school. The wickets went down with delightful rapidity to the bowling of Wingate and Courtney, and the spectators shouted themselves hoarse.

Loder, in the long field, gritted his teeth with rage. He was not out of the wood yet, and he knew it. What had seemed at first to be a "sure thing" for the Old Boys was now nothing of the kind.

The prefect shuddered at the thought of Wingate's men winning the match. He would be twenty pounds in debt, with no means whatever of raising the money.

"They sha'n't do it!" he muttered fiercely. "I'll prevent it, somehow!"

Crack!

Colonel Wharton, who was still batting, stepped out at a half-volley from Wingate, and sent the leather hard and high in Loder's direction. It was not a difficult catch, and the spectators waited in breathless anticipation.

Loder sprang at the ball, fumbled with it for a brief second, and then a gasp of dismay arose as it was seen to slip from the fieldman's hand and roll to the boundary.

"My word!" exclaimed Colonel Wharton, breathing hard. "I thought it was all up that time!"

Wingate frowned as Loder threw in the ball.

"Buck up, Loder!" he shouted. "You should have held that one, you know!"

"Rats! I tried my best; but a chap can't do miracles—especially when he's got the sun in his eyes!"

The colonel, having been let off so easily, proceeded to make merry. A sudden shout from the pavilion announced that the Old Boys had passed their opponents' total.

"This is rotten!" growled Frank Nugent. "If Loder had only held that catch!"

"Loder's a fumbler!" snorted Bob Cherry angrily. "He ought never to have been in the team, in my opinion. Why, old Walker's worth twenty of him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Perhaps Loder is off colour?" suggested Marjorie Hazeldene. "Every player seems to strike a bad patch at one period or another."

"Loder's bad patch is permanent," said Wharton. "I never did know him to put up anything approaching a decent game. He's giving my uncle a joy-day, and no mistake!"

"Look at that," said Squiff suddenly.

Colonel Wharton had let himself go again, and this time Loder had an excellent chance of bringing off a successful catch. But he bungled the ball hopelessly.

"They'll be a hundred up soon!" groaned Nugent. "Loder ought to be publicly pulverised."

Wingate was looking considerably annoyed. He was mad with himself for having played Loder, who was giving a disgraceful exhibition, such as might have been expected from a kid in the Second or Third. Loder was the one weak spot in an otherwise highly efficient fielding side, and the First Eleven were paying dearly for his repeated "bloomers."

When at last the Old Boys' innings came to a close the score was a hundred and twenty—double that of

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ONE
PENNY.

Greyfriars. Colonel Wharton had carried his bat for fifty-five.

"We haven't an earthly!" growled Wingate, as the players adjourned for refreshments.

"Oh, don't say that!" said Courtney.

He was deeply concerned by Wingate's attitude. It was not often that the captain of Greyfriars spoke so despondently.

"That idiot Loder's made a ghastly mess of things!" Wingate went on. "I'd rather have had Coker of the Fifth!"

Gerald Loder approached the couple with a sullen look on his face. Wingate glared at him.

"You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, Loder!" he said. "A fine sort of game you've played, I must say! Why, you had two gilt-edged chances that wouldn't have been missed by a kid in the kindergarten!"

Loder sneered.

"You didn't do so thundering well yourself!" he exclaimed. "Fancy letting a giddy veteran knock your bowling about like that! Nothing much to write home about, is there?"

Wingate clenched his fists and strode forward. Then he dropped his hands to his side again.

"I won't quarrel with you," he said quietly, "but you're a rank outsider, if ever there was one. And I'll take jolly good care not to include you in the team after this, that's all!"

And Wingate turned on his heel, and walked away with Courtney.

"Buck up, old man!" said that worthy. "We ain't beaten yet—not by a very long way. A game's not lost till it's won, you know."

George Wingate smiled.

"You're right, Courtney!" he said. "There's a glimmer of hope that we might pull the game out of the fire after all. We'll try, anyway."

"That's the spirit!" said Courtney cheerfully.

And the two seniors joined the rest of the players at the refreshment-table.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Game for the Gods!

"GUESS we'd better be gettin' back to Highcliffe," drawled De Courcy. "This match seems to lack the staggerin', dramatic incidents which I've been told characterise the noble game. In short, Franky, it's all over bar shoutin'!"

"Rats!" said Frank Courtenay promptly. "You stay where you are, old son. Wingate & Co. mean bizney this time!"

The Caterpillar sighed.

"What an obstinate boulder you are, Franky!" he murmured. "Still, I'll humour you. I can't forget the bad old days, when you snatched me like a brand from the burnin'. I think I'll recline on a rug for the rest of the game, and you can wake me up if there's likely to be one of those tense, melodramatic finishes, when everybody's wavin' and shoutin' and cheerin'. See?"

Courtenay laughed.

"You might ask young Lord What-his-name if he's got a spare rug he can lend a chap!" yawned De Courcy. "I'm afraid of spoilin' my togs."

The immaculate Caterpillar placed the care of his clothes above a great many other considerations. He was of the nuts natty.

Courtenay, ever obliging, strolled over to where Lord Mauleverer, the slacker and dandy of the Remove, lay curled up on the grass, slumbering peacefully, and shook him by the shoulder.

"Yaw—aw—aw!" yawned his lordship.

"Pardon the intrusion," said Frank, "but would you mind lending De Courcy a rug? He's like you—got that tired feeling?"

"Yaas; it's in the air, isn't it?" yawned Mauly innocently. "Frightfully fatiguin', cricket!"

The slacker of the Remove spoke as if he had been batting for many hours on a fiery wicket.

Courtenay chuckled. His lordship and the Caterpillar were two of a kind.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"MAULY'S FLIRTATION!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Can I have the rug?" asked Frank.

"Certainly, dear boy! Yank one off, will you? But don't make me have to sit up. It's too much fag."

Frank Courtenay took one of the rugs, and Lord Mauleverer closed his eyes once more. A few moments later the Caterpillar had followed his example.

Meanwhile, the cricket had been of a bright and entertaining order. Wingate went in first—with Walker this time—as the latter had made such a meritorious show in the first innings.

Private Ray and Chester had the bowling, and the two prefects soon got the whip-hand of it. They drove, and cut, and pulled to leg in fine style, and the onlookers thundered their applause. Walker in particular was thoroughly set, and seemed booked to stay at the wicket until further orders.

Loder, in the pavilion, was tortured with anxiety. The fortunes of the game were fluctuating in such a way that he was experiencing alternate hopes and fears. His opinion of James Walker, given in muttered tones under his breath, would not bear repetition.

The first-wicket partnership was dissolved at last, when Lieutenant Towers took a turn with the ball. The ex-County man held a hot return from Wingate, and the captain of Greyfriars was accorded a great reception by the cheering crowd. There was hope for Greyfriars yet.

But the ensuing batsmen were not up to Wingate's weight. The scoring came mostly in singles, and wickets fell at regular intervals to the lieutenant's hurricane bowling.

Batsmen came and went, and James Walker alone remained. He was indomitable, great—yea, great!

The score was 70 for seven when Loder went in to bat, and all eyes were upon the unpopular prefect. Bob Cherry avowed that if Loder failed to "come off" in the second innings he would be flayed alive. Harry Wharton seconded this amiable proposition, which was carried unanimously.

Gerald Loder survived the remaining balls of the over, and for a time all went well. Walker batted away industriously at his end, and a hundred went up on the board.

Wingate & Co. were in high feather. They were not out of the danger zone yet—not by a very long way—but their chances of victory, though remote, were certainly present. Games had been pulled out of the fire when in a more one-sided state than this.

But soon a change came o'er the spirit of the Sixth-Formers' dream. Loder was batting, and he managed to cut one of Chester's balls in the direction of cover-point.

"Come on!" he yelled, preparing to run. Then, in a frenzy, he added: "No, go back!"

But the mischief had been done. Walker was already dashing down the pitch, and his wicket was down the next moment. There was a deep groan from the spectators, for Walker had been thoroughly set.

"It was Loder—the rotten cad!" said Squiff, who seemed on the verge of tears. "He deserves to be lynched!"

Walker paused before he came off the pitch, and spoke to Loder.

"You fool!" he muttered. "You ran me out!"

There is only one thing to be done on occasions of this kind. It is for the guilty man to grovel. But Gerald Loder showed no signs of grovelling.

"Easy run there, you know!" he said reprovingly.

Walker nearly choked.

"Why, you—you—" he spluttered. Then, with feelings too deep for words, he strode off the pitch.

"Hard cheese, old man!" said Wingate feelingly. "Loder seems to be all out to spoil the game, and if we lose, he shall hear from me afterwards."

The remainder of the innings flickered out tamely. Loder was clean bowled, and only some careful batting by Courtney and North brought the score up to 140. Walker had made his highest score in first eleven cricket—71. Had Loder played the game, he would probably have reached his century.

But it was no use sighing for what might have been. The last stage of that great struggle was about to be fought out, and the Old Boys required 80 runs to tie—81 to win. With an old Hampshire player in their ranks it seemed inevitable that they would succeed; and Loder could afford to ignore the indignant remarks of his school-fellows, for his ten pounds appeared to be the dearest of "dead certs."

"It ought not to be a herculean task—what?" smiled Lieutenant Towers, as he went in to bat with Colonel Wharton. "They're plucky beggars, though. I thought at first we should lick 'em by an innings; but they're game."

"Very game!" said Colonel Wharton. He knew something of the plucky and never-say-die methods of the Greyfriars fellows, and did not share his companion's optimistic views.

The colonel's fears were confirmed. He stayed in long enough to amass half a dozen runs—being missed by Loder when only 2—and then an unstoppable ball from Courtney wrecked his wicket.

"Good man!" exclaimed Wingate, in great elation. "That's one of 'em disposed of, at any rate!"

Courtney grinned. Dick Chester was the next man in. Chester was an excellent man in the field; but his batting was not of the type which stamps the true Hayward. When weighed in the balance, it was found wanting.

Courtney plunged his hands into the sawdust, and started to run. A moment later there was a delighted roar. The Old Boy's centre stump lay prostrate.

"Bravo, Courtney!" exclaimed Clara Trevelyn, clapping her hands in an ecstasy. "How ripping!"

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Marjorie, in tones of reproach.

"Well, it was ripping, and I'd say it again!" pouted Clara. "It was top-hole!"

Marjorie Hazel-dene sighed, and gave it up.

A schoolmaster named Whiteman was in next. Mr. Whiteman's cricket was of the rustic order. He hit hard and high.





Bob Cherry dashed to the rescue. He pinioned Chester to the platform, while Vernon-Smith, with a deft movement of his fingers, wrenched at the man's moustache. It came away in the Bounder's hand, and there was a startled cry from Bob Cherry. "Paul Tyrrell!" (See Chapter 14.)

When allowed to do so, he hit often. In the first innings, however, he had left early, a prey to short slip. On this occasion history repeated itself.

Courtney sent down a splendid ball, which the batsman got to with difficulty. It rose in the air, and Dudley, dashing up, brought off a magnificent catch.

"The hat-trick!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, in great excitement. "Old Courtney's done the hat-trick! Give him a cheer, you fellows!"

The "fellows" responded. They cheered with such heartiness that the sound reached the ears of Dr. Locke, who was in his study.

The field crossed over, and Wingate was confronted with the difficult task of getting rid of Lieutenant Towers. That gentleman, however, stuck like the proverbial limpet. He realised that he was the hope of his side, and played up like a Trojan.

The score began to mount—slowly at first, and then

with a rapidity that became distinctly alarming. Men came and went, but Lieutenant Towers remained impervious to the Sixth-Formers' bowling.

Wingate's rugged face wore a desperate look. Loder, in the long field, was almost haggard with suspense.

Crash!

One of Courtney's fastest, true as a die, smashed the middle stump of Lieutenant Towers' partner. The applause was terrific.

Sixty for eight wickets!

Twenty-one runs were needed by the Old Boys to ensure them a victory. It was a stiff proposition, and the "Present" felt decidedly hopeful.

Lieutenant Towers, who was thoroughly set, could have scored thrice twenty-one in his present form, but the best of batsmen can do nothing unless well supported at the other end.

Private Ray was to go in next, but Colonel Wharton

wisely changed his tactics and sent in Townsend, a less-experienced player. Townsend was a red-headed, irritable man, whose cricket was both erratic and unreliable. He was the sort of man who made a century in one match and a duck's-egg in the next.

The present occasion was no exception to the rule. Suffering from stage-fright, the batsman nervously struck at his first ball. He missed, and the leather cannoned against his leg, which was obviously dead in front of the wicket.

"How's that?" snapped Courtney, smiling in anticipation.

"Out!"

Then the school rose as one man and cheered lustily. The game was as good as won. Lieutenant Towers twirled his moustache and looked despondent. It was indeed rough luck on the old county player. He had kept his wicket intact as valiantly as Horatius kept the bridge of old; yet he seemed doomed to be on the losing side.

Last man in!

Dick Ray was the cynosure of all eyes as he came out of the pavilion, fastening his batting glove with a resolute air. Private Ray, who was home on a week's leave from the front, showed none of the stage-fright which had brought about the downfall of his predecessor. His nerves had been trained in a hard school. A man who had been as cool as a cucumber in the midst of bursting shrapnel, was not likely to be trembling at the prospect of helping to score twenty-one runs.

There were two more balls of Courtney's over. The first Private Ray left severely alone. It was a few inches away from his off-stump, and he had no desire to offer a simple catch to point.

The last ball of the over was treated with scant courtesy. Ray sprang out at it, lifting it on to the roof of the pavilion for six.

Wingate bowled the next over, and Lieutenant Towers reaped a rich harvest therefrom. Wingate was a good bowler on his day, but he failed to "come off" on this occasion, and the lieutenant made merry. He always contrived to get either a two or a four, so that he secured the bowling every time. At the end of the over he had added twelve runs!

Two to tie—three to win!

Arthur Courtney, in his next over, sent down every conceivable ball he knew. Private Ray stopped every one dead. He meant to leave the winning hit to a better player than he, and knew that his partner would have little difficulty in doing the needful off Wingate's bowling. So Courtney's over proved blank, and the field crossed over amid a breathless hush.

Everyone's eyes were glued to the game now. Even De Courcy, idle and indifferent though he had appeared to be, was sitting bolt-upright on the grass, gripping his chum's arm tightly. Lord Mauleverer shared in the general anxiety.

Lieutenant Towers faced Wingate. The captain of Greyfriars sent down the best ball he knew. There was a click, and the ball went soaring away from the lieutenant's bat. Away and away, to where Gerald Loder stood, shaking with suppressed excitement!

The crowd watched the prefect eagerly, anxiously. Would he atone for past blunders by bringing off a splendid catch at the eleventh hour?

But Gerald Loder had too much at stake to think of holding the catch. He would miss it—he must miss it—or serious debt, with certain ruin in its wake, would surely follow.

Loder ran forward, and allowed the ball to pass over his head. There was a sound of pattering feet behind him—a sound of quick breathing—and then, smack! The ball reposed safely in the outstretched palm of James Walker!

"By gad!" murmured Lieutenant Towers, pulling up short in the act of running. "I thought the age of miracles was past—what? By gad!"

How Walker had saved his side he could hardly have described himself. He knew that Loder would fumble the catch—knew that he would have won money from a rank scoundrel, bringing lasting discredit on the fair name of Greyfriars School—and he ran as if his life

depended upon it. On and on, till his outstretched right hand held the spinning leather!

Greyfriars had defeated its old scholars by two runs!

James Walker was the hero of the hour. Led by Bob Cherry, the crowd simply swarmed on to the field, and, seizing the prefect despite his struggles, bore him off shoulder-high to the pavilion.

It was a new and altogether delightful experience for Walker, who had rarely been in the limelight. He felt that he had deserved well of his country.

"Franky," said the Caterpillar, with emphasis, as the two chums went in to tea with Harry Wharton & Co. "I used to wonder why you went stark, starin' mad on cricket. I see different now. It's an amazin' game—amazin'!"

"Then why don't you play it, you blessed slacker?" laughed Courtenay.

"P'raps I may, in that vague and indefinite period known as 'one of these days,'" yawned the Caterpillar. "Stranger things have happened. Who knows?"

And the two chums sat down to a first-rate repast in No. 1 Study.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Loder in Luck!

THERE was great rejoicing within the historic walls of Greyfriars that night. The victory of the first eleven was no fluke. The honours of the game had gone to the better team, for it was admitted on all sides—even by the Old Boys themselves—that had Loder played the game, the margin between the scores would have been considerably wider.

And what of Gerald Loder himself? The rascally prefect, with all his cunning schemes dashed to the ground, sat alone in his study, chewing the end of bitter reflection. He had staked almost everything to serve his own ends—and had lost! With help from Walker, he could have frustrated the success of his side. But Walker had failed him—Walker, who was usually his right-hand man in any caddish movement which was afoot. And not only had Walker refused to help. He had hindered. By a supreme effort he had caught out an ex-Hampshire player who had fifty runs to his credit, and who had given the impression that he could remain at the wickets until the crack of doom. In short, James Walker had turned traitor.

Loder's first impulse had been to rush into Walker's study, and endeavour to wipe up the floor with him. But such a proceeding wouldn't do. Walker might be inclined to tell what he knew of Loder's transaction with Banks, and in that case a warm time would ensue for the Bully of the Sixth. So Loder decided that it was best to let sleeping dogs lie.

The net result of Loder's plotting was that he was twenty pounds in debt, and the scorn of his schoolfellows. The black sheep of Greyfriars had never been popular; at the same time, he had seldom been so much in the school's black books as at present. He had come within an ace of being mobbed for his bad play. Only the fact that Greyfriars had won, and that the thing would be distasteful to the Old Boys, had prevented it.

The cash difficulty was a serious one. At any moment now Banks or Cobb might enter the study, with a loud-mouthed demand for twenty pounds.

Twenty pounds! Loder laughed hoarsely. In his present impecunious state he could hardly raise twenty pence.

What he was to do if one of the scoundrels suddenly appeared upon the scene, Loder didn't for the life of him know. He hoped and prayed that they would give him a few hours' grace, and postpone their threatening demands until the morning.

For hour after hour Loder sat in his chair. The evening dragged out its slow length, and the sounds of revelry which had been issuing from the various studies died away.

It was the prefect's duty to see lights out for the Remove, but in his present frame of mind, and with the knowledge that Harry Wharton & Co. would have some unpleasant things to say to him on the subject of the

Old Boys' match, Loder felt that he had better keep off the grass. Courtney, or some prefect equally obliging, would probably deputise for him.

Rat-tat-a-tat!

A sudden knock at the door of the study brought Loder to his feet. He was trembling as he stood, and could only just muster the words, "Come in!"

The intruder entered. It was not Banks; it was not Cobb, and Gerald Loder positively gasped with relief. His visitor was Dick Chester, the Old Boy whose appearance at Greyfriars had caused much mystery and comment.

"Good-evening!" said Chester, closing the door. "Burnin' the midnight oil—what?"

Loder nodded. He could not trust himself to speak for the moment.

"You'll excuse the intrusion, I know," went on the Old Boy, "but I saw the light under the door, and thought I'd look in."

The prefect looked curious. It occurred to him that this man must have some strange motive in roaming the school corridors at such an hour. He was probably up to some game or other, and at this thought Loder grew bold enough to speak.

"What on earth," he said, "are you prowling around for at this time of night?"

"Aha!" laughed Chester. "I'm the naughty villain in the play: Men love the darkness, you know, because their deeds are evil. Got a fag?"

Loder handed his visitor a cigarette. Chester lit up, and glanced thoughtfully at the prefect's haggard face.

"In trouble?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes," said Loder, seeing no particular reason why he should conceal the fact.

"Serious?"

"Very!"

"Because of the match to-day, I suppose?" said Chester. "You put up a doddid poor game, you know."

Loder coloured. Even the Old Boys, then, had seen his repeated efforts to hinder the school's chances.

"It's partly that," he said, "and partly that I'm—Well, dash it! I don't see why I should tell you. Who are you, anyway?"

"Merely Richard Chester, of no occupation," said the other. "Still," he added, puffing reflectively at his cigarette, "I thought I might be able to help you."

Loder's eyes gleamed. The words brought a sudden hope to his breast. Here was an Old Boy who, although he might not be the possessor of twenty pounds in ready money, could probably spring a few pounds, with which Loder might appease the joint demands of Messrs. Banks & Cobb.

The prefect's mind was soon made up.

"The fact is," he said, "I'm in debt to the tune of twenty quid."

"Phew! That sounds bad. You must be what they call a giddy blade, a dog, and a goer."

"I'm all those," said Loder ruefully. "But I don't want anybody to point out to me the error of my ways. I want some practical help. If you could only make me a loan, so that I could get out of this scrape, I'd be everlastingly grateful. You would be paid back at the earliest opportunity."

Chester nodded.

"That's all right," he said easily. "How much did you say it was—twenty quid?"

"Yes," said Loder, hardly able to believe his good fortune. "Can you really spring it, Mr. Chester?"

The Old Boy took from his inner coat-pocket a leather purse containing currency notes. He carefully counted out twenty of them, and held them ready in his hand.

"I'll lend you these," he said, "on one condition. I want you to do me a favour."

Loder nodded eagerly.

"Providing it doesn't land me in a worse hole than I'm in at present, I'm on!" he exclaimed.

"Then," said Chester, going closer to the prefect, and whispering almost fiercely in his ear, "tell me where the proceeds of the School Games Fund are kept."

Loder sprang back a pace in sheer astonishment. The import of what Chester had just said to him nearly took his breath away. He had not bargained on finding an Old Boy of a respectable school like Greyfriars seeking to rifle money from the Games Fund, for theft must be his motive. Even Loder, rank outsider though he

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was, felt just a twinge of shame at the thought that an Old Boy should stoop so low.

But the realisation of his own sorry plight brought a new phase of the situation home to the prefect. After all, the man was prepared to hand him twenty pounds, and that would see him clear of his trouble. All he had to do was to betray to Chester the whereabouts of the box in which the sporting funds were secured. He need have nothing to do with the actual theft—he could wash his hands of the whole affair—and if there were a risk, surely it was worth taking, for the sake of clearing his debt?

Loder's battle with his conscience was very brief. His mind was soon made up, and he turned to Chester.

"I'll do it," he said hoarsely; "but if you should get collared, for Heaven's sake don't try to implicate me!"

"Catch me getting collared!" said Chester scornfully. "I've been at this game too long for that. Many's the time when I've cracked a crib, and got well away long before anyone thought of raising an alarm."

Loder was astounded, as well he might be. For an Old Boy of Greyfriars to try and emulate the celebrated Raffles seemed unheard of. It was a circumstance which seemed to stamp public schools as hotbeds of iniquity—places where men of the cracksman type received their training.

"Well," said Chester briskly, "you'd better get it off your chest. I want to get to bizney!"

"You won't split if you're nabbed?" asked Loder cautiously.

"No, hang you!"

The prefect moistened his dry lips.

"The Games Fund box is in Wingate's study," he said, "inside the safe. It'll be a pretty good haul, too—a matter of fifty pounds, I should say."

Chester rubbed his hands.

"Ah, I thought it might be Wingate's study," he said. "But I wasn't sure about it, and didn't want to go on a fool's errand. Thanks very much for the information—er—Loder. There's your twenty quid!"

He laid the notes on the table, and Loder snatched at them eagerly.

"That sees me clear!" he exclaimed. "But, I—I say, There'll be an awful row when they discover the theft!"

"I shall be many miles away when that happens, I hope," said Chester. "By the way, which is Lord What's-his-name's study—that Remove kid, you know?"

Loder hesitated.

"Come on," urged the Old Boy. "You've earned your twenty quid easily, you know."

"It's the end one in the Remove passage," said Loder, who considered he might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. "You can't miss it. It's more like a millionaire's lounge than a kid's study."

"Again many thanks," said Chester. "You won't see me after this. Good-bye!"

The couple shook hands, and the Old Boy proceeded on his errand of larceny.

It was a long time that night before sleep visited the eyes of Gerald Loder. He was in momentary expectation of hearing the sound of a scuffle in Wingate's study, or in one of the corridors. But when dawn appeared, the old building was still serenely quiet, and the vigilant prefect soon fell asleep out of utter weariness. And as the first rays of morning light fell upon Loder's face, haggard even in slumber, one might have felt more than a vestige of pity for the unhappy senior who had taken to the path of dishonour, and who had become nothing short of an accomplice in crime.

But Gerald Loder's day of reckoning was at hand!

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Like a Thief in the Night!

WHEN the rising-bell clanged out the following morning, Loder sprang from his bed and dressed in feverish haste. He was burning with a desire to know what had happened in the night, and if the thief had got clear with his plunder.

But there was nothing in the nature of an alarm.

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"MAULY'S FLIRTATION!"

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry
Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

Things were in their normal state, and neither Wingate nor Lord Mauleverer seemed to have experienced any losses. It dawned upon Loder that there must have been a hitch of some kind in Chester's midnight escapade, and the Old Boy had probably postponed his nefarious designs.

The prefect's surmise proved correct. He saw Chester in the Head's garden later in the day, when most of the fellows were out on their usual Sunday stroll, and the Old Boy beckoned to him at once.

"I wasn't successful last night," he said, in a low tone. "I disturbed Wingate's beauty-sleep, and only just got clear of the study in time. Confound the fellow! But I'll manage the business to-night, somehow. By the way, our good friend Banks has been hanging about in the Close—presumably on the look-out for you. You'd better buck up and settle with him, before any of the kids come back."

Loder hurried off, and found the bookmaker loitering beneath the elms. He could not help thinking that it was a bit thick for Banks to come on such an errand on a Sunday; but he refrained from telling the rascal so, in case of a disturbance.

"Here's your money, Banks," he said curtly. "I said I'd raise it somehow, and I've kept my word. I'll take your receipt for it, please."

The bookmaker's greedy fingers closed on the notes, and he scribbled out a receipt with a satisfied smile. He had not really expected Loder to be "well heeled," and more than suspected that the prefect had come by the money dishonestly. But he deemed it prudent to keep a still tongue.

"Thanks, Master Loder!" he said. "You've paid up like a real sportin' gent. And Cobb and I'll be glad to see you at any time. We don't get such pleasant evenings at the Cross Keys as we used to."

"I'll come when I get some tin," promised the prefect. "So-long!"

And he watched Banks off the premises with a light heart. He had been afraid that the cardsharper had known of his efforts to ruin the school's chances against the Old Boys; but Banks had said nothing on the subject, and, all things considered, Gerald Loder had got out of his scrape very well. He had a few more words with Chester, and then went into his study to tea.

The non-success of his nocturnal escapade had irritated Dick Chester not a little. He was a young man unused to failure, and was determined that his purpose should be accomplished before another night had passed. In the meantime, he was careful to behave as naturally as possible; and when Colonel Wharton returned, having accompanied Wingate and some of the juniors on a long walk beside the coast, Chester mingled with them and contributed to their conversation, though his thoughts ran in other channels. He related a vivid account of how, when a boy at Greyfriars, he had broken bounds at midnight to scale the Black Pike, and threw in a lot of highly-coloured details, which Harry Wharton & Co. cheerfully "swallowed." But all the time he was reflecting, with a feeling of inward satisfaction, that George Wingate would probably sleep as sound as a top that night, after the long walk of the afternoon.

The evening wore on, and the Remove were at length shepherd up to their dormitory by the prefect on duty. When the seniors' bed-time approached, Chester took a solitary stroll, feeling that anything was better than inaction.

The lights of Gosling's lodge were extinguished on his return, and he scaled the school wall, and noiselessly crossed the moonlit Close.

"Time I got a move on," he muttered. "If the little game falls through to-night I guess I'll give up burgling and start keeping rabbits!"

Chester made tracks for Lord Mauleverer's study in the Remove passage. He had been long enough at Greyfriars to know something of the almost criminally careless ways of the schoolboy earl. It was by no means unusual for Lord Mauleverer to leave large sums of money lying about, and even the clumsiest of thieves would have small difficulty in reaping a rich harvest, provided he knew where Mauly's luxurious apartment was situated.

The Remove passage was dark and deserted. Not a sound broke the stillness of the June night. Chester gave a low chuckle as he silently pushed open the door of the end study. The light of the moon clearly showed up the interior of the room, and the Old Boy crossed over to the sofa, where the blazer worn by Mauly on the previous day had been carelessly thrown.

Chester went through the pockets of the blazer with experienced hands. From one of the side pockets he drew forth a pocket-book, and gave a low exclamation of delight. His luck was in with a vengeance! The pocket-book contained a wad of banknotes.

"This saves me the trouble of fagging up to the Remove dormitory!" he murmured. "By gad, but what a careless lunatic this chap must be! He seems to give people an invitation to pick his pockets!"

Hark! What was that? The Old Boy paused guiltily as a rustling sound came from without. It ceased, however, almost immediately, and the burglar breathed freely again.

Chester counted out the notes. There were six in all, each for five pounds. It was more than he had expected, for juniors at public schools were not usually so extravagantly supplied with funds. But Lord Mauleverer was always "rolling in filthy lucre," as Bob Cherry expressed it.

"Now for the Games Fund," muttered Chester, pulling out his watch. "Half-past eleven! It's rather early, but the sooner I get the job done with the better. Here goes!"

And he proceeded to Wingate's study.

The task before him was one requiring skill and nerve in plenty; but the cracksman never faltered. In half an hour his work was accomplished, and he crept stealthily to the bed-room he had occupied since the Old Boys came to Greyfriars. It was a room adjoining the school sanatorium.

"There's no train till the seven-thirty in the morning," he reflected; "but the chances are a thousand to one against the losses being discovered by then. And even if they were, who is to suppose, barring Loder, that Dick Chester, a respectable Old Boy of this institution, is the thief? No one in the world! By my halidom, I've done well this night, and no mistake!"

And Chester turned in, his eyes sparkling with intense satisfaction.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Vernon-Smith on the Warpath!

HARRY WHARTON sat up in bed in the Remove dormitory, and rubbed his eyes.

The rising-bell had just gone, and most of the juniors were leisurely turning out.

Bob Cherry, generally the first astir, glanced over at his leader.

"Wherefore that worried look, Harry, old son? You look as solemn as a boiled owl!"

Wharton laughed.

"I thought I heard some burglar johnny prowling around in the middle of the night, that's all."

The juniors were interested at once.

"Why in the world didn't you wake us?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Well, it might have been a false alarm, you know. Anyhow, I had the toothache like fury, and went down to the study to get some stuff for it. The passage was dark, and I thought I heard footsteps at the far end of it. But there wasn't a soul to be seen, so I hopped back to bed, and thought no more about it until now."

"It was your place to acquaint your uncles with what you had heard," said Bob Cherry sternly.

"Oh, rats! I don't suppose it was a burglar! But it occurred to me that that ass Mauly might have been leaving money about, as usual."

"We'll jolly soon see about that," said Bob Cherry, seizing a sponge. "Mauly, you giddy slacker, get up!"

Lord Mauleverer started on a portentous yawn, which was immediately checked as Bob splashed the wet sponge over his mouth.

"Groo! Wharrer you up to?" yelled his lordship, spluttering frantically.

"Rousing a giddy slacker!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Mauly, old man, we want to know how many banknotes you've left lying about."

"Banknotes, dear boy?"

"Yes, you crass idiot!"

"I don't remember havin' left any about," said Lord Mauleverer, making an heroic effort to think. "In fact, I'm sure I haven't. They're all in my pocket-book, now I come to think of it."

"Where's your pocket-book?" asked Wharton.

"Eh?"

"Where's your pocket-book, you burbling duffer?"

Mauly looked distressed.

"I really forget where I left it," he stammered.

"What!"

"You see, it's such an awful bore to remember things," said the slacker feebly.

"Waal, I swow!" ejaculated Fisher T. Fish, the Yankee junior. "I guess this beats the band!"

"What was the value of the notes?" demanded Nugent.

"Forgotten, dear boy!"

"You—you frabjous chump!"

"I know," said Vernon-Smith suddenly. "Mauly had a whacking remittance one day last week. There were six fivers altogether. His pocket-book was in his blazer on Saturday, because it fell out on to the rug where he was lying, and I picked it up and put it back. You remember, Mauly?"

"Yaas!" said Mauleverer, recollecting. "That's right, dear boy!"

"Then it must be in your blazer now," said Wharton. "I suppose you haven't forgotten where you've put that?"

"No. It's in my study—on the sofa, I think."

"Great Scott!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Thirty quid lying about on a sofa! It's a gilt-edged chance for any thief, I reckon!"

"But who'd be likely to steal it, dear boy?"

"That's what we've got to discover," said Wharton grimly. "Let's buck up and dress and get along to the study."

Wingate of the Sixth came into the dormitory as the juniors finished dressing. The captain of Greyfriars was looking very grave.

"Get a move on, you kids!" he said. "The rising-bell went a quarter of an hour ago."

"All right, Wingate, old man—keep your hair on!" said Squiff cheerfully. "We've just been discussing the mystery of the midnight prowler."

"What's that?" asked Wingate sharply.

Harry Wharton explained what had happened in the night, and a grim look came over the prefect's rugged face.

"It may not have been a giddy burglar," said Harry; "but it's best to make sure. That ass Mauly left thirty quid in notes on his sofa."

Wingate started.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "Is that so, Mauleverer?"

"Yaas, begad!" murmured his lordship, looking very distressed.

"Then the matter must be gone into at once. During the night someone has broken into my safe and stolen the proceeds of the Games Fund."

The Removites looked startled. There was something in Wharton's theory, after all.

"You kids will keep mum about what I've told you," said Wingate. "We don't want a scandal, with the Old Boys still here."

He left the dormitory, and Wharton, with a few others who were fully dressed, accompanied him.

When the little party reached the schoolboy earl's study their worst fears were confirmed. The pocket-book was still in the pocket of Mauly's blazer, but the banknotes had vanished.

"I rely upon you, Wharton," said Wingate, "to help me clear this matter up. I don't want to drag Dr. Locke into it until we have investigated things on our own account. Is there anyone whom you suspect?"

Wharton shook his head.

"It beats me altogether," he said.

"Vernon-Smith came forward. There was a curious gleam in the Bounder's eyes, and he looked as if he could throw some light on the strange affair.

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"Do you know anything about this, Smith?" asked Wingate quickly.

"I've got an idea who the giddy thief is," said the Bounder. "I've been keeping my optics open lately, and a certain chap's conduct has been jolly suspicious. I've got pretty sure grounds for saying so, too."

"Tell me the boy's name at once."

"It isn't a boy," said Vernon-Smith quietly. "It's an Old Boy."

Wingate stared at him incredulously.

"Be careful what you say, Smith," he cautioned.

"I know it sounds awfully thick, Wingate; but that fellow Chester has behaved very curiously since he came here. In the first place, he has fought shy of the Head and the masters as much as possible. Then, again, I've reason to know that he's been associating with the rotters at the Cross Keys, which is hardly what you might expect of an Old Boy. And on Friday, when I had to go into the Head's garden for a cricket-ball, I saw him tinkering with a bunch of skeleton keys. As a matter of absolute giddy fact, I think he's no more an Old Boy of Greyfriars than I am!"

"What on earth is he, then?"

"An impostor, you bet. He's come here under false colours so that he could do the Raffles bizney and make off with a good haul. Anyway, we'll soon prove it. If he was responsible for the robbery, he's probably well away by now. We can tell by looking into his bed-room—it's next door to the sanny."

"Something in that," said Wingate thoughtfully. "Go up and see, Smith."

The Bounder left the study. He came back in a few moments, flushed and excited.

"Chester's gone!" he exclaimed. "I thought I was right. Mrs. Kebble, who was cleaning the stairs on that wing, said she saw him go tearing off soon after seven o'clock. He's apparently caught the seven-thirty from Friardale."

"In that case he's given us the slip," said Wingate, looking at his watch. "It's gone half-past now. The best plan would be to wire up the line and have him stopped at London; but we've got no actual proof that he stole the money, and it would be awful if a bloomer was made."

"Can't we collar him in some other way?" asked Wharton.

Wingate hesitated.

"There's one thing," said Vernon-Smith, who seemed to be the brains of the party. "Lieutenant Towers has got a fine car. I wonder if he'd lend it to us?"

"By Jove, that's possible!" said Wingate excitedly. "I didn't think of that!"

"Chester will have to change at Courtfield Junction," continued the Bounder, "and we could intercept him there. But we must get off the mark at once if it's going to be done."

"It shall be done," said Wingate. "I'll ask Mr. Quelch if you kids can come with me. How many are there? Wharton, Smith, Cherry, Nugent, and Field. That's five. Wait here a moment."

Wingate secured the necessary permission, and Lieutenant Towers, with great geniality, lent his magnificent Daimler car for the occasion. Wingate did not tell either Mr. Quelch or the lieutenant the nature of his journey, but he assured them that it was a matter of grave and vital importance.

A few minutes later the car, with Vernon-Smith at the steering-wheel, sped down the school drive and along the white, hard road to Courtfield.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Chester Plays the Game!

"HERE we are!" roared Bob Cherry, as the car came to a halt outside the railway-station in Courtfield. "Jump out, you fellows!"

"It's an open question whether we're in time," said Wingate. "I'll look after the car, you kids. Bunk on to the platform—quick! It looks as though there's a London train in!"

The juniors bounded on to the platform just as the train was on the move.

"We've drawn blank!" growled Squiff. "The fellow's in the train, and it's like hunting for a needle in a haystack."

But Vernon-Smith's keen eye had already alighted upon their quarry. The Bounder had caught sight of Chester smoking complacently in a second-class carriage, and in a twinkling he whipped open the door and sprang upon the footboard. The next moment he had gripped the Old Boy by the arms and dragged him on to the platform. The train was fairly under way at the time, and both Chester and the Bounder received a severe shock as they bumped down and rolled over—Smith uppermost. The other juniors rushed on to the scene, and a fierce struggle ensued.

Chester fought with the strength of a lion. He realised what the consequences of detection might mean, and put every ounce of strength into his fight for liberty. His right fist shot out and caught Frank Nugent under the chin, and the Bounder's grip on his arms loosened. It seemed for the moment that the man would make good his escape.

But Bob Cherry dashed to the rescue. He pinioned Chester to the platform, while Vernon-Smith, with a deft movement of his fingers, wrenched at the man's moustache. It came away in the Bounder's hand, and there was a startled cry from Bob Cherry.

"Paul Tyrrell!"

The impostor groaned. He had played a daring card, and had lost when within an ace of succeeding.

"Good heavens, Bob," gasped Wharton, "it's your cousin!"

There could be no doubt whatever on the subject. The false moustache had proved an effective disguise; but now that the Bounder had removed it the features of Paul Tyrrell, Bob Cherry's rascally cousin, were easily recognisable.

"You scoundrel!" said Bob fiercely. "I thought you were abroad."

Tyrrell laughed bitterly.

"I was," he assented, "but I had to come back to the Old Country. It's all very well to expect a man to cut himself off from society and turn over a new leaf. I didn't have a dog's chance. I had no money, no friends. So I scraped together a little cash by hard work and paid my passage back to England."

Bob Cherry might have been expected to soften at his cousin's remorseful tone. But he didn't.

"You worm!" he exclaimed. "I wonder you had the nerve to come to Greyfriars again, after what happened before, when you passed yourself off as a football coach."

We let you down lightly over that, but you'll get no mercy this time. I suppose you were responsible for the thefts at the school last night?"

"Yes, hang you!"

"Well, you must pay the giddy penalty! Yank him along to the car, you fellows!"

The bogus Old Boy was seized by many hands and taken to the car, where Wingate was waiting. The captain of Greyfriars was astounded when Harry Wharton explained matters, and he imparted a grim look upon the unhappy Tyrrell.

"The police-station's the best place for you," he said sternly. "Bundle him into the car, you kids!"

Tyrrell was pushed into the automobile, and Vernon-Smith drove off to the police-station in Courtfield. The wretched captive said no word until the building came in sight, and then he burst into a torrent of appeal.

"Have pity!" he muttered hoarsely. "When a man's down, you can't realise what lengths he's driven to. And I wasn't solely to blame, either. Loder, one of the seniors, showed me where I should find the money. Take it, and let me go!"

Bob Cherry looked his cousin straight in the eyes.

"You shall have your wish," he said, "providing Wingate agrees. For two pins we'd have you arrested, but it would only bring disgrace on Major Cherry's good name. That consideration alone prevents you from getting it in the neck. What do you say, Wingate?"

"Better let the rascal go, for the sake of avoiding a scandal," said Wingate. "Hand me that money, you cur!"

The Bounder drew the car to a standstill.

Paul Tyrrell could hardly believe his great good fortune. He gave over the proceeds of the robbery; then, burying his face in his hands, burst into tears.

The juniors watched him in silence. They could not help being a trifle impressed by the man's remorse, though they doubted if it was really sincere.

Tyrrell looked up.

"It's more than I deserve," he said; and his voice was strangely quiet. "I mean to go straight in future—straight as a die! Oh, I know you don't believe me! I've said I'd play the game before, and gone back on my word; but I'll prove it now!"

He stepped out of the car, and the Greyfriars fellows watched him cross the road.

"My hat!" said Wharton suddenly. "He's going into the recruiting-office!"

Wharton was right. Paul Tyrrell no longer intended to tread "the primrose path of dalliance." He offered his services to King and Country, and they were accepted.

Twenty minutes later he came out of the recruiting-office—no longer a rogue and adventurer, but a private in Kitchener's Army—a unit of that vast host of loyal subjects who were fighting as only Britons fight, to stay the flood of Prussian barbarism. And Wingate and the juniors, moved with admiration for the course he had taken, shook him warmly by the hand before returning to Greyfriars, and wished him good luck in his new career.

"We'll keep strictly mum about this affair," said Wingate, as the car sped through the country lanes. "I'll deal with Loder myself. He'll feel pretty blue by the time I've finished with him, for I'm going to give him the thrashing of his life!"

And Harry Wharton & Co., who knew that George Wingate was a fellow of his word, chuckled grimly.

The Old Boys left Greyfriars that evening, and the fellows turned out in force to accord them a hearty send-off. Colonel Wharton was rejoining his old regiment—the 21st Lancers—at once; and as he passed out of the school gates, with his nephew and Lieutenant Towers, the old Close rang again with loud and hearty cheering for the instigator of "The Old Boys' Challenge."

THE END.

("Mauly's Flirtation!" is the title of next Monday's grand, long complete tale of *The Chums of Greyfriars*. It is a great yarn, full of rich humour, and no "Magnetite" should miss it.)

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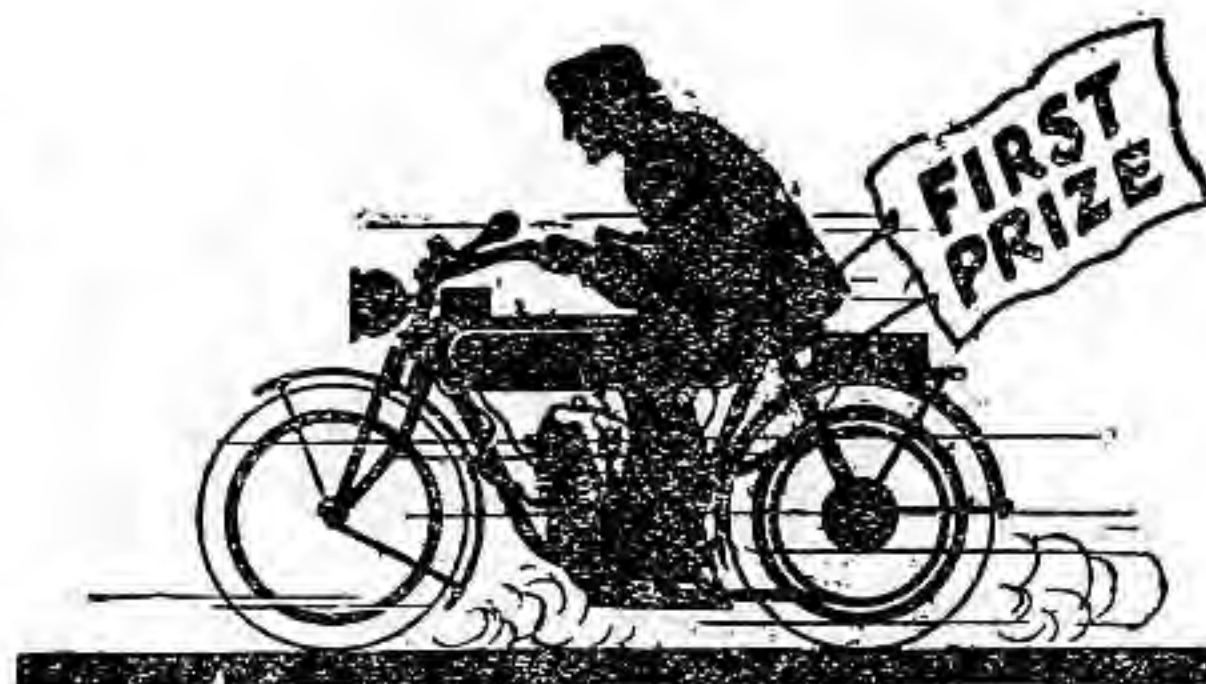
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OPENING CHAPTERS. START TO-DAY!



Driven to Sea!

The Opening Chapters of a Magnificent New
Serial Adventure Story.

By T. C. BRIDGES.

THE FIRST INSTALMENT.

Dick Damer, in consequence of an offer received from his uncle, goes out to Australia to live with him. As soon as he arrives he hears of his uncle's death from a man named Wesley Crane, his uncle's former partner.

Wesley Crane, in furtherance of a scheme known best to himself, has Dick drugged and smuggled aboard the Rainbow, a small schooner commanded by Captain Cripps, and bound for an unknown destination.

On the fourth day out a derelict is sighted. Captain Cripps and Dick go aboard, where they discover a boy, who has been left behind, overpowered by gas-fumes. He is sent aboard the Rainbow, while Captain Cripps remains on the derelict.

Just then a storm rises; the derelict founders, and Captain Cripps is drowned. The castaway, a youth named Barry Freeland, takes charge of the Rainbow, in the absence of other authority. He discovers among the late captain's papers, a letter from Wesley Crane to the captain, hinting at a shady transaction, and also finds a chart showing a mysterious island.

The comrades determine to trace this island, and obtain the pearls which they believe to have been hidden there, as it is discovered that Dick, as his uncle's next-of-kin, is entitled to them. In due course they reach the island, which they believe to be uninhabited.

They are surprised, when sailing in the lagoon, by shots which are fired at them from the shore, and go inland to investigate. After exploring for some time, Barry sees a man's head peeping from some bushes, and raises his rifle to his shoulder. But the other gets his shot in first, and Barry falls heavily to the ground.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Barramunda.

A very passion of rage filled Dick's soul. Without one thought to the fact that he was going to almost certain death, he made a furious dash at the brown-faced horror behind the ferns.

He saw the black muzzle of the rifle rise and cover him, and some instinct told him to duck. The whiplike crack filled the heated air with sound, and he felt the wind of the bullet past his cheek. Again his enemy pulled the trigger, but this time there was only an empty click. Either a misfire, or the magazine was empty.

With a snarl like that of some beast, the monkey-faced man fumbled wildly for fresh cartridges. Dick gave him no time. In the boy's heart had waked a Berserk rage, inherited from some long-forgotten ancestor. Fear was forgotten. He

saw red, and his one instinct was to kill the man who had caused Barry Freeland's death.

With a tremendous bound he crashed through the hedge of ferns, and, striking the other with the whole of his weight, bore him down.

His clutching fingers gripped the lean throat; then the monkey-faced man was flat on his back, gurgling horribly, as Dick, kneeling on top of him, choked him savagely.

"Steady, kid! Don't slay him. He may be useful."

Dick looked up, and his eyes nearly started from his head. Barry, with blood running down his face, yet strong on feet and clear of voice, was standing over him.

"I—I thought you were killed!" gasped Dick; and then—what between heat and shock and the unwonted passion of anger—he suddenly collapsed. Everything around danced mistily before his eyes—a grey fog seemed to cover them; he felt himself heeling over.

It was the splash of cool water on his face that brought him to his senses. He opened his eyes and saw Barry standing over him.

Barry, with his face all streaked and mottled with blood-stains, was not a pretty sight, yet he seemed quite unconcerned, and was looking down at Dick with something very like a grin on his lips.

"You are the limit!" he observed.

Dick, horribly ashamed of his collapse, began to struggle to his feet. He was still giddy and shaking.

"Lie still, you ass!" ordered Barry.

"B-but the man with the gun—" protested Dick.

"He won't use his gun again in a hurry. He'd never have used it again if I hadn't come up when I did."

He burst into his loud laugh, which echoed oddly through the still heat of the blazing afternoon.

"You certainly are the queerest kid I ever ran against," he continued. "I'm hanged if I thought you had it in you to charge old Monkey-face the way you did! Can't think how he missed you."

"I—I ducked," answered Dick, flushing. "You see, I—I thought he'd killed you."

"He wasn't far off," Barry remarked as he took off his hat, and bent down.

"Look at that," he said, pointing to a neat little furrow about three inches long across the top of his scalp. The hair was gone, and the skin just scored. "The blow knocked me out for a moment," he explained. "It was just as well you tackled the chap like you did. If you hadn't, he'd most certainly have bagged us both."

"I—I'm glad I did right," said Dick humbly.

Barry laughed again.

"Gosh! I'd never have believed it of you if I hadn't seen it. There's hope for you, kid, after this."

Never had words of praise been sweeter to Dick. He scrambled up.

"Let me tie up your head for you," he said.

"Bless you, that's no odds! I'll just stick it in the pool a minute. And now that we've got our friend the gunman, best thing we can do is to take him back to the ship. I don't want to leave those Chinks to themselves any longer than I need."

The monkey-faced man was quite beyond doing any further mischief. Barry had seen to that. He lay flat on his back, his hands and feet lashed with sailor-like neatness.

While Barry washed the blood off his face at the pool, Dick stole across and looked at the man.

Oddly enough, the vicious, beast-like look had quite passed from his face. He lay staring up into the tree above him,

paying no attention whatever to Dick. Dick, watching him, noticed that he had a great scar on the top of his head. It had healed badly, and the hair had not grown across it. It must have been a terrible wound. It seemed to have cut deep into the very bone. Dick was filled with wonder that any man could have survived such an injury.

Barry came back, and Dick pointed out the scar.

"You're right. Someone must have swiped him good and hard," Barry answered. "Tell you what, I believe he's loony."

"What—from the blow?"

"That's it. A crack on the head often sends a chap off his nut."

"Then that might explain his shooting at us," said Dick eagerly. "And—the skeletons. Perhaps that was some of his work."

Barry whistled thoughtfully.

"It's on the cards," he muttered. "Just the sort of thing a loony chap would do. Wonder if he killed them, or whether they were his pals, and someone else came along and swatted the lot of them?"

"Murdered them, you mean?" asked Dick, in an awed voice.

Barry burst into his loud laugh.

"What else, you juggins? Did you think they turned up their toes and died in a neat little row like that?"

A month before, Dick would have been horribly shocked by Barry's levity; now he was only mildly surprised.

"Rum things happen in the islands," added Barry, as he turned to the prisoner and took the lashings off his ankles. "Now then, old bird," he said, "you're coming along with us. Comprehend? And no more gun play this journey."

The white-haired man rose to his feet quite quietly. Barry rove a length of cord to the lashings on his wrist, and made him walk ahead.

"Quiet as a sheep, ain't he? Tell you what, Dick, we'll take him past the skeletons, and see what he says."

Dick shivered. The idea of passing again those gruesome relics was anything but pleasant.

The prisoner, however, did not seem to mind. As soon as they reached the second glade, and caught sight of the skeletons, he hurried forward.

"Hallo, my hearties! How goes it?" he shouted, addressing the skeletons. "Here, you've been lying there long enough! Wake up, lads! The ship's a-waiting!"

There was something indescribably horrible in his greeting and in the whole scene. Even Barry, tough as he was, looked uncomfortable.

"Mad he is," he said to Dick—"plumb, loony."

"The ship's waiting in the lagoon. The pearls are aboard," went on the poor lunatic. "There's a fair wind, boys. We'll sail to-night for Sydney. Pink pearls, white pearls—they shine like moonlight. We're rich for the rest of our lives, if ye'll only wake up and help me sail the schooner home."

"I can't stand this," said Dick, with sudden sharpness. "Come on, Barry!"

For once Barry made no objection.

"All right. Take his arm."

"Come along, old chap," he said quite gently, speaking to his prisoner. "You're right about the schooner. I've got her waiting in the lagoon. But these chaps can't help you; they've got to stay behind."

The old man seemed unwilling to leave the poor, dead bones, but after a while he yielded, and they got him away down the bush-path, and so to the beach.

The moment he set eyes on the boat he broke into a run, and it was all the boys could do to keep up with him.

On the way out to the schooner he fell very silent again, but his queer, deep-set eyes fairly blazed with excitement. Barry had untied his hands, and he sprang aboard the schooner as lightly as a boy.

"He's a seaman, anyway," said Barry. "Wish he could tell us what's happened. There's been some black doings on the island."

"He may come round, and remember," suggested Dick. "I've read of cases like that."

"Ay, they do happen. I mind a chap in my fust ship, the Mary Power. Joe Forte, his name was. Good sailor, but sort of loony, and never spoke to anyone. We thought he was dumb. One day, in a squall, he fell off the top o' the deckhouse, and we picked him up for dead. But he came round, and—bless you!—when he woke up he'd forgotten all about his voyage in the Mary Power, and thought he was back on a ship called the Hero. And talk—he talked as well as you or me! Look at the old chap!" he added. "He knows his way about."

The castaway was making straight for the companion. The boys followed him, and saw him go direct to the cabin. When they reached him, he was staring round in a puzzled fashion.

"She's not the same as she used to be. The cabin's bigger," he said, in a querulous voice.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"MAULY'S FLIRTATION!"

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ONE
PENNY.

"That's all right," said Dick soothingly. "You come along to your bunk, and get a wash and a change. Supper will be ready soon."

"That's right," whispered Barry. "You handle him. Give him a change out o' the slop-chest. He'll look more like a man when he's got some clothes on. Those rags are fit to scare a shark."

Dick nodded, and took the old chap to the spare cabin. When he brought him back to supper Barry stared.

"Gosh, I wouldn't ha' known him!" he said. "Why, he isn't so old after all."

The change was truly startling. Dick had persuaded the castaway to shave, and he had cut his hair. A good wash had left his face and hands several shades lighter, and a decent suit of clothes and a clean collar completed the transformation.

"I don't believe he's more than fifty," said Dick. "And he's as quiet as you please. Not a bit of trouble."

Chang came in with supper, and the castaway took his place at the table with the other two, and ate his food as quietly and decently as possible. His manners, indeed, were much better than Barry's, and Dick felt quite proud of his charge.

"Get him off to bed as soon as you can," whispered Barry to Dick. "You and I have got to have a chin."

The old chap made no trouble about going to bed, and Dick came back to the cabin.

Barry had Wesley Crane's letter before him, and was frowning over it.

"This is a rum go," he began. "I can't make head or tail of it. From this letter it looks to me as if Crane had sneaked the chart out of your uncle's papers, don't it?"

"Not much doubt of that," answered Dick, who was secretly flattered at being consulted.

"But it don't say who Kempster was, nor how your uncle got hold of the chart," continued Barry. "Anyways, Crane must ha' thought he was on to a good thing, and my notion was that this was an unknown island with a lagoon full of shell, and that Kempster had discovered it and sold or given the secret to your uncle."

"That seems reasonable," said Dick.

"Reasonable! Then how the mischief does this chap come to be marooned here? Who are the dead men? What's happened?"

Dick considered a moment.

"Perhaps my uncle sent an expedition, unknown to Crane, and they fell out over the pearls. There might have been a mutiny, and the mutineers killed their officers and cleared out with the schooner and the pearls."

Barry nodded.

"Yes, that would explain it. Or another schooner may have happened in on top of the first and tackled her. There are always a lot o' dirty pirates cruising round these seas."

"Then wouldn't the first schooner be lying here somewhere?" suggested Dick.

"No; they'd ha' scuttled or sneaked her."

"What do you think of doing?"

"May as well see if there are any pearls or shell left in the lagoon. I shall go down first thing in the morning."

Before turning in Dick took a peep at the castaway. He found him sleeping like a baby, but just to be on the safe side he locked the cabin door on the outside and took the key.

It was a needless precaution. The man was still sound asleep when, at dawn, Dick unlocked the door.

The ship was astir early. Barry was eager to test the lagoon, and immediately after breakfast a diving-dress was got up, together with the pump and other apparatus.

Chang looked over the side, measuring with his eyes the depth of the water.

"No wantee dless," he said suddenly to Barry. "Me tink divee klite easy."

"Why the mischief didn't you say so before?" growled Barry. "All right. You go down one time, and see what the shell is like."

Chang nodded, and disappeared down the fo'c's'le hatch. Inside two minutes he was back, stripped to the buff, his yellow skin gleaming in the sunlight.

In one hand he carried an open basket, under the other arm a plummet-shaped stone with a loop of cord through a hole at the smaller end.

"Why, he's a regular professional diver!" said Barry, aside to Dick. "Look at the reef scars on his chest and shoulders! And I never knew it."

Without hesitation the man stepped down on the diver's

ladder which had been put over the side. He reached the water level, stepped off, and shot down into the transparent depths below.

Breathlessly Dick watched him sink into the gorgeous growth of weeds and coral, scattering the shoals of brilliant-hued fish in his swift descent.

He reached the bottom, where the black sea-cucumbers lay like monstrous slugs on the snow-white sand. The long, blue sea-grass swayed under his feet, as, stooping, he swiftly plucked some unseen objects from the floor of the lagoon.

"What about sharks?" muttered Dick, as he watched.

"They don't come inside much," answered Barry. "It's precious seldom they venture inside a lagoon."

"Then what's that?" demanded Dick sharply, as he pointed to a long dark shadow that had suddenly appeared no more than the schooner's length away from the spot where Chang was moving.

The change that came over Barry's face was startling.

"A barramunda!" he gasped. "It's all up with the poor beggar!"

He spun round.

"Here, you chaps, barramunda!" he yelled. "The brute's after Chang. Any of you game to tackle it?"

Not one of the men moved. You might have said that they had not even heard. Yet Dick, who by this time knew their faces, saw the terror in their eyes.

"Darn it all," snapped Barry. "I can't see the poor beggar scuppered without making a shy at helping him! Give me a knife, Dick!"

Dick snatched a sheath-knife from the belt of the nearest Chinaman. Before he could give it into Barry's hands someone came dashing through the group, scattering them to right and left, and snatching the knife from Dick, made one wild leap over the side.

"The loony!" cried Barry. "The loony! By crumbs, but he's got a nerve!"

Dick did not hear. He was leaning far out over the side, watching with fascinated eyes the extraordinary scene which was being enacted in the transparent depths of the lagoon.

The Skipper's Story.

The huge fish which Barry had called the barramunda, and which divers dread worse than the tiger shark itself, had been moving slowly nearer and nearer to Chang, winnowing its way forward with almost imperceptible movements of its long fins.

So far as Dick could see, the brute made its dash at the very same second that the man from the island plunged downwards.

For an instant the splash of his dive, shattering the mirror-like surface, blurred the scene. When it cleared, Chang, who had evidently seen his peril, had dodged behind a projecting spike of coral. It was the wisest thing he could have done, for if he had attempted to rise the brute would have caught him midway, and shorn him in two with its razorlike fangs. There he clung, with his yellow face turned upwards. It was clear that he would sooner drown than risk facing the monster.

The barramunda swerved, and turned, evidently meaning to come at Chang from the other side. It was at this moment that the man from the island reached it.

Dick held his breath. Distinctly he saw the blue steel gleam.

"Got him!" roared Barry, as a red cloud rose through the water and hid everything from the eyes of the watchers. "Got him!"

It was blood—blood from the wounded barramunda that made a crimson fog, and next instant Chang's sleek head shot into view. Barry sprang out on the ladder and hauled him in.

"Where's the other?" he demanded. "Where's the old man?"

"Him velly brave man," spluttered Chang, spitting the salt water from his lips.

"I know that, you fool! But where is he?"

"I see the barramunda," sang out Dick. "He's flopping about like anything."

"Hang the barramunda!" retorted Barry fiercely. "Where's the old boy?"

"I—I can't see him yet. Yes, I believe I do. He's on the bottom."

Barry hesitated for perhaps two seconds.

"He's too good a man to drown," he growled, and, flinging up his arms, took one long breath and dived off the ladder.

The water was clearing. The tide or current was carrying the blood mist away. Dick saw Barry swimming strongly

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downwards towards the dim object on the bottom. He himself was almost choking with suspense. Suppose the barramunda recovered! Suppose another came up! Even the stolid Chinese crowded along the rail, hanging over and peering down into the depths.

Barry reached the still figure at the bottom. Dick saw him grasp him, and kick off with all his might. He himself sprang down on to the ladder, and as Barry's head appeared above the surface, caught hold of him and dragged him in.

"Take the old chap," panted Barry. "I'm all right."

"Help Mr. Freeland," said Dick to the nearest Chinaman, as he lifted the old man aboard, and, staggering under the weight, laid him on the white deck planks.

"Not on his back!" snapped Barry, as he followed.

"Is he dead?" asked Dick, in an awed voice.

"Can't tell yet," answered Barry shortly. "Here, let me get to work on him."

Barry seemed none the worse for his big dive, but the appearance of the old man frightened Dick. His eyes were closed; his face was the colour of lead; he was not breathing.

"Get his clothes off," ordered Barry. "Fetch a roll of blankets. Sharp, now. We don't want him to go out."

He began by laying his patient on his face, with the roll of blankets under his chest and stomach. Then he pressed down with the palms of his hands on the other's back three or four times in succession.

This got the water out of his lungs.

Then he started artificial respiration, and he and Dick, relieving one another, kept this up for nearly ten minutes.

"Afraid it's no use," growled Barry at last. "The old chap's gone under. Rotten luck!"

"Let's keep on a bit longer," begged Dick. "I've read of chaps coming round after an hour."

"Bah! You and your reading!" sneered Barry. "Stick to it if you like, but it's no use. He's as dead as a herring."

"He isn't," retorted Dick sharply. "I saw his eyelids move."

He went on pumping away steadily. Barry, his lips tight set, watched keenly.

"Gosh! I believe you're right, after all," he said presently. "Yes; he's starting to breathe. Here, you, Chang, go and get some hot coffee. You hurry one-time."

There was no doubt about it now. The old man's chest was beginning to heave. His lungs had started work once more.

Barry and Dick, between them, carried him down to his bunk, rubbed him well, rolled him in blankets, and soon he was well enough to sip the hot coffee which Chang brought.

"You watch him," said Barry. "I'll get along and change."

Dick, sitting by the berth, saw, to his delight, that his patient was steadily improving. He was breathing regularly, and his face was a better colour.

In a few minutes Barry was back. He had a glass in his hand.

"A drop of brandy won't hurt him," he said. And, lifting the patient's head, poured a spoonful or two down his throat.

The effect was magical. The old man's eyes opened, and he stared vaguely up at the boys.

"Who are you?" he asked, and, to Dick's amazement, his voice had changed as completely as his expression.

"I'm Dick Damer. You are aboard the schooner Rainbow. This is her skipper, Barry Freeland."

The other looked at Dick and Barry for some seconds. There was a puzzled expression on his brown face.

"I don't understand," he said. "Where's the Stella?"

"Was that your ship?" broke in Barry sharply.

"Of course. Where is she?"

Barry was going to speak again, but Dick nudged him.

"Let me do the talking," he whispered.

Barry frowned, but nodded.

"The Stella is not here now," said Dick soothingly.

"You have had a bad accident, and have been unconscious a long time. Don't you remember being left on the island?"

The old man's brows knitted.

"Left on the island?" he repeated. "Why—why, yes."

He passed one hand across his forehead in a puzzled fashion. "Yes," he muttered. "Burke—it was Burke. Let me think."

The boys listened breathlessly.

"Burke—that swine Burke!" The other's voice rose sharply. "It was he who robbed me. He and his crew of murderers in the Brant! It's coming back—it's all coming back. He, and Redstall, and Pyke, and Wigram."

He dropped back, panting. Dick hastily snatched up the glass of brandy, and gave him another sip.

"Go steady," he said. "Don't get excited. You're not well enough to stand that sort of thing."

"Tell him we'll put it straight for him," said Barry, in



The barramunda swerved and turned, evidently meaning to come at Chang from the other side. It was at this moment the man from the island reached it. Dick held his breath. Distinctly he saw the blue steel gleam. "Got him!" roared Barry as a red cloud rose through the water. (See Page 24.)

a low voice. "Tell him we'll hunt the beggars down, and get back the loot."

Dick nodded briefly, but, instead of giving Barry's message at once, made a remark that startled the other.

"You are Captain Kempster, aren't you?" he asked of the white-haired man.

"Yes; I'm Kempster. How did you know?"

"I told you I was Dick Damer. I am Nicholas Damer's nephew."

"Nicholas Damer's nephew! Did he send you after me?"

"No. My uncle is dead. It was Wesley Crane who fitted out the Rainbow. Captain Cripps was in command, and I was shanghaied aboard her by Crane. We got rid of Cripps—never mind how, now—and picked Freeland off a derelict. We found a chart aboard, showing the position of this island, so Freeland said we'd better come on and see what there was here."

Kempster was listening with the keenest attention. Crazy as he had been when they first found him, he was sane enough now. There was no doubt about that.

"So Damer's dead?" he said. "And Wesley Crane got the duplicate chart? The low-down scoundrel! I'd have laid anything he'd have been up to some such trick. He and Cripps are a pair. I tell you, youngster, you were lucky to get out of Crane's clutches alive."

"So the chart was a duplicate?" put in Barry. "Then I suppose you went off on the quiet, without Crane knowing anything about it?"

"Just so. It was this way. Damer and I were pals. He was a straight man, and it was no fault of his that he got tied up with Crane. I happened on this island nigh on two years ago. The lagoon was full of shell, but I had no capital to work it, so I went to Nicholas Damer, and he offered to put up the cash. I left the duplicate chart with him, in case anything happened to me and the Stella, and I got off without Crane knowing a thing about it."

"And you got the pearls?" asked Barry eagerly.

"Ay, I'm telling you!" returned Kempster. "We were here three months, and though we hadn't cleared the lagoon, I reckoned we'd got the cream of it. They were the finest pearls I ever saw, and I've been in these seas, man and boy, for thirty years."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 385.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"MAULY'S FLIRTATION!"

He paused, and Dick gave him another sip of brandy. "It was on the seventh of September that Burke arrived. I knew there'd be trouble as soon as I saw the topmasts of the Brant over the palms. Cripps used to be Burke's first mate in the Brant, but Burke was a bit too hot even for him, and Cripps don't stick at much. Still, I didn't reckon that Burke had turned pirate."

"I've heard of him," put in Barry. "He's the chap that looted the Starlight when she was aground off San Cristobal."

"That's him," said Kempster. "As soon as I saw who was coming I started to get the Stella ready for sea. I never had a chance. Burke had a gun, and he attacked me without warning. The Stella was sinking before we could do anything. Latimer, my mate, Morshead, and the three other white men in the crew got ashore, and I with them. I had the pearls, and I hid them. We threw up a stockade, and held out a while. Then our ammunition began to run out, and they rushed us."

He stopped, panting. His two listeners stood by the berth, breathless with suspense.

"That's all I know," he said feebly. "At least, I have a sort of memory of Burke hitting at me with an axe."

"That's the scar on your head," Dick said quickly. "It knocked you out, and no doubt they left you for dead. But somehow you pulled round, and it was the shock of your big dive just now, when you saved Chang from the barramunda, that has brought your memory back."

"Barramunda—dive?" repeated Captain Kempster vaguely. "I don't remember."

"Can you remember where you put the pearls?" asked Barry eagerly.

The other looked him full in the face.

"Ay!" he said slowly. "I know where I put them. And if this lad is Nicholas Damer's nephew, I reckon half are his."

"I don't want half," exclaimed Dick impulsively. "After what you've gone through, you ought to have them all."

Kempster smiled.

"I guess my third share is all I need," he said. "The lot would be cheap at a hundred thousand pounds."

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

The Empty Cache.

Barry drew a long breath.

"That's some money," he said. "Well, captain, we won't do no quarrelling over the loot. The job for us is to get the pearls. Do you reckon they're still where you put them?"

"That I can't say," answered Kempster gravely. "It all depends on whether all our fellows were killed outright."

Dick looked puzzled, but Barry understood.

"You mean Burke would have made 'em tell?"

"I mean just that," was Kempster's answer. And Dick felt his very skin crawl as the full meaning of Kempster's words came home to him.

"I hid 'em on the island," continued Kempster. "We may as well go ashore at once, and have a look."

Dick cut in:

"Not yet, captain. You're not fit to move. Have a sleep first, and if you're fit we can go in the evening."

"Maybe you're right," said Kempster wearily.

Dick took Barry by the arm, and drew him out of the cabin. As soon as they were outside Barry turned on him angrily.

"Why didn't you let him come along? Maybe you think it's a funny game to wait all day before we know whether the pearls are there or not?"

"Much better wait a few hours and be sure of finding out, than let the old chap go wandering around in this sun," returned Dick stoutly. "The chances are that he'd get a sunstroke or a fit, and then where should we be?"

Barry looked oddly at Dick. Then he burst into a laugh.

"You're coming on, kid!" he said. "You certainly are coming on!"

In spite of his resolution not to let Captain Kempster go out into the sun, Dick, like Barry, found the day very long. There was nothing to do. Barry said it was not worth while putting on the diving-dress since Kempster had told them that all the best of the shell had already been raised.

Kempster himself slept nearly all day, and when he came on deck about four in the afternoon, Dick was delighted to see how much better he was looking. As for the change in his expression, that was simply amazing. No one would ever have taken him for the same creature as the poor, laughing lunatic they had found in the bush the previous day.

"Don't let him see those skeletons," whispered Dick to Barry, as they got into the boat.

"You mean it might send him off his chump again. All right!"

As it happened, there was no risk of visiting the death glade again. Kempster steered right round to the far side of the island. As soon as they had passed the little promontory, he pointed to two masts rising from the blue lagoon.

"There's my Stella!" he said bitterly. "That's all the brutes have left of her."

Dick stared with wide eyes. He had read pirate tales by the dozen, but they had all been about times that had passed a hundred years and more.

"That's where we landed that night," went on Kempster, turning in towards a little bay. "It seems like yesterday. What's the date?"

"November the twentieth," Dick answered.

Kempster shook his head.

"Ten weeks," he muttered. "It doesn't seem possible."

The boat's keel grated on the hard coral sand. They got out, and Kempster led the way up into the bush. He did not hesitate for a moment, but went straight on until he reached a swampy bit of open ground.

"There ought to be a spring here somewhere," he said.

"Ah, here it is! I buried the pearls in the tunnel, two paces down from the spring itself. You see, I knew the run of the water would hide the marks."

"This will be the spot, then," said Barry eagerly, as he drove the spade he carried into the wet ground.

For five minutes he dug hard. By that time he had made a hole a yard square. But there was nothing there.

Kempster shook his head.

"They're gone," he said quietly. "Burke got them after all!"

"You're sure of the spot?" demanded Barry.

"Absolutely. You've got to remember that to me it's like yesterday. These last ten weeks are clean gone."

Barry would not give up. He went on digging until he was dripping with perspiration.

"You may just as well give it up," said Kempster, in his quiet way. "It is quite clear to me that Burke found them."

Barry flung down his spade with an angry exclamation.

"And is he to keep them?" he growled. "Is this murdering thief going to get fat on other folks' property? If you chaps will back me I'll hunt him down—ay, if it takes ten years!"

Dick stared in amazement. It was Kempster who answered:

"The chances are he'll have gone back to the Solomons," he said thoughtfully.

"Ay, I've heard that his gang keeps there!" answered Barry. "But the Solomons are a big lot of islands. Long as England and Scotland together. D'ye know where he haunts?"

"San Cristobal, I believe," said Kempster. His lips tightened, and his shaggy eyebrows drew down over his deep-set eyes.

"All right, Freeland, I'm with you," he said shortly.

Barry wheeled round on Dick.

"What about you?"

"I'm ready to go anywhere with you two," Dick said simply. "B-but oughtn't we to have guns?"

"Bless you, we've more'n we can use. Cripps saw to that. There's a whole case of rifles in the hold."

He shouldered his spade.

"Come on," he said. "We'll weigh to-night."

Weigh they did, and Dick for once was not sorry to see the last of the nameless island. He felt that, so long as he lived, he would never forget the horror of those skeletons with their crowns of flowers.

Next morning Barry went below and got up the rifles and ammunition. He handed the first rifle to Dick.

"Ever used one, kid?"

"I—I've shot with an air-gun, that's all!" stammered Dick. Barry gave his great laugh.

"Take more than an air-gun to settle Rolf Burke," he said. "First thing you've got to do is to learn to shoot. Take hold. You're going to begin right off."

The schooner was moving lazily before a light breeze. Barry sent Chang for some empty bottles. He threw one into the sea, and it was hardly in the water before his bullet caught it with a ringing crack, and shattered it to splinters.

Unknown to himself, Dick had naturally a most remarkably straight eye, and inside three days he had become a fair shot. Within a week he was Barry's equal, and long before the mountains of San Cristobal began to climb into the sky he could knock the head off a bobbing bottle at a hundred yards, and do it three times out of four shots.

Meantime all went comfortably aboard the Rainbow. Barry and Captain Kempster stood watch and watch, and the crew made no difficulty about obeying either. Indeed, since Kempster's rescue of Chang from the barramunda they were as devoted to him as to Barry.

"I've a notion they'll stay by us if it comes to a scrap," said Barry to Dick. "If their hides are yellow, I don't believe their hearts are."

"You think there'll be fighting?" asked Dick.

"Think! D'ye reckon Burke's the sort o' chap to hand over a hundred thousand pounds' worth of pearls to the first chap that asks him?"

"N-no. But, I say, do you think we shall ever find him? Remember it's three months now since he left the island."

"Ay, that's the rub! I'd have thought that, once he'd got the pearls, he'd have gone to Albany, or one of those wild places on the Bight to divvy up and turn the pearls into cash. But Kempster says he daren't—that he's too well known to show his nose anywhere in Australia. He thinks that Burke will hang about the Solomons till he can get hold of some Dutch trader who'll give him cash for the pearls. So we may reckon we've a fair chance of running him down."

"But the Solomons are British, aren't they?"

"Oh, bless you, they're anybody's! Why, they've never even been mapped. They're about the wildest place on earth. Big mountains, buckets of rain, bush that you can't cut with a hatchet, and natives that would as soon eat you as look at you."

"Cheery sort of country," observed Dick, with a shrug.

"You bet!" answered Barry.

Dick was on deck early next morning. It was Barry's watch. The weather was dark and heavy with a puffy, uncertain wind.

"Glass is falling," said Dick.

Barry nodded.

"Ay, and the wind's pulling south. There's weather brewing."

There came a shout from forward.



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A British sniper suddenly stumbled upon one of the enemy, who, having been engaged at the same game, had received a mortal wound. The German's dying wish was that a letter in the breast of his tunic should be forwarded to his mother at Hanover; and the British Tommy faithfully undertook the task, remaining at the spot to console his adversary's last hours.

"What is it?" cried Barry.

"Me tinkum boat," was the answer.

Barry put the glasses to his eyes.

"Gosh, so there is! Native canoe it looks like. Have a squint, kid."

A long, low craft carrying a mat sail leaped into the focus of the binoculars. She was heading straight for the schooner. A figure rose and waved something white.

"They're signalling to us," said Dick.

"That's rum. And anyway what's a native canoe doing this far from land?"

A moment later Dick spoke again:

"They're not natives. They are white men."

"Port your helm," Barry told the man at the wheel. "We'd better see what's up," he said to Dick.

The two craft rapidly approached one another, and soon Dick was able to count three white men in the canoe. Another quarter of an hour, and the canoe was within a couple of hundred yards. Barry threw the schooner up into the wind, and she lay-to with sails slatting. The canoe, a long, narrow crank-looking craft, ran alongside, and a bull-headed, thick-shouldered man, who was steering with a paddle, looked up at Barry.

"Can ye take us aboard?" he asked. "There's weather coming, and this here craft ain't calculated to stand a breeze."

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"MAULY'S FLIRTATION!"

Dick stared hard at the speaker and his companions. He thought he had never seen three harder faces. But Barry did not hesitate.

"Ay, come aboard!" he said, and next minute the three were over the rail.

"She ain't worth saving," said the bull-headed man, as he deliberately cast off the canoe and let her drift astern.

"Are you mate?" he asked of Barry.

"Skipper," answered Barry shortly.

"Sorry," said the other. "I'm obliged to you for picking us up. We lost our ship on a reef off Cristobal. The rest of our crowd are ashore there. Where might you be bound?"

Before Barry could answer there were steps close behind. Dick, glancing round, saw Captain Kempster coming up out of the companion.

The moment his eyes fell on the strangers, his expression changed like magic. Something of the mad, fierce look he had worn when they had first found him flashed into his face.

"Redstall!" he roared, and made a dash straight at the bull-headed man.

(Another magnificent instalment of this thrilling yarn next Monday. Make quite sure of getting your "MAGNET" by placing a regular weekly order to-day.)

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.



YOUR EDITOR.

MY READERS' PAGE

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

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allow their notions of fair play to fade into dim obscurity beneath the weight of their patriotism.

"I hope this letter has not bored you, but I thought you could not fail to be interested in the fact that your splendid papers are so much appreciated at the front. When I have finished this letter I shall post a parcel of books to my brother; and when you read this you will have the satisfaction of knowing that your publications are speeding their way to the danger zone, to bring sweet thoughts of home to our dear boys in the trenches.

"I am happy to say that our own boy has escaped injury up to the present; but at the time of writing I am aware that his regiment, the 5th West Yorkshires, is in the thick of the fighting, so I am anxiously waiting for news of him.

"I will conclude now, with best wishes for your success.

"I am, your sincere reader,

"ETHEL K."

It is my earnest hope that "Ethel K's" soldier-brother will win through in this gigantic crusade against German barbarism, and that he will wile away many a lonely hour with the aid of the "Magnet" and its companion papers.

A "MAGNET" READER'S APOLOGY.

H. Evans, whose letter was among those I published on this page some weeks ago, demanding to know why the Editor of the "Magnet" Library was not with the Colours, has now sent me the following expression of regret for the attitude which he took up:

"Dear Sir,—I hope you will accept my apology for writing to you in the way I did, but of course I did not know the circumstances in which you were placed.

"Please let me know if my apology has been accepted through the weekly Chat.

"(Signed) H. EVANS."

In thanking my reader for the note he has been good enough to send me, I would also say that his apology is cheerfully accepted. In future he would be wise to hear both sides of a case before resorting to criticism and petty slander.

H. Evans may depend upon it that if there were another man sufficiently capable to take complete control of the companion papers, I should—in spite of the adverse circumstances mentioned in my personal explanation—follow the advice of sundry recruiting posters and "join the Army to-day."

A SPECIAL WORD FROM YOUR EDITOR!

In view of the abnormally increased circulation of "The Magnet" Library, I have been receiving many more letters and postcards from my readers than heretofore, and in order that they may all be replied to with as little delay as possible, I am devoting an extra page in this issue to the popular feature of "Replies in Brief." Correspondents will find a perusal of these answers very interesting, since they impart a good deal of useful information on the subject of characters, etc.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

Maurice Cooper (Stamford Hill).—Your suggestion is a good one, but I am afraid too much expense would be incurred in carrying it out. Best wishes.

A. Taylor (Manor Park).—The Christian names of Wingate and Vernon-Smith are George and Herbert, and their ages seventeen and fifteen respectively. You are correct in your surmise.

A. Thomas (London, E.).—I will ask Mr. Frank Richards to do as you suggest.

(Continued on page lii of cover.)

FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"MAULY'S FLIRTATION!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

A delightfully humorous touch is imparted to next week's splendid, long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars. Lord Mauleverer, the slacker and dandy of the Remove, fairly astonishes the natives by his sudden strange behaviour. By exerting himself to the extent of writing love poems, and paying frequent visits to one of the fair sex at the local bunshop, Mauly gives his schoolfellows the impression that he has "gone off his rocker." And when the facts pertaining to

"MAULY'S FLIRTATION"

come to light, the laughter is loud and long against the schoolboy earl.

LOYALTY FROM A YORKSHIRE LASS.

I make no apology for devoting the greater part of this page to a letter received from one of my many girl chums, and I am sure I appreciate to the full the kind sentiments of "Ethel K.," who has my sincere thanks for a very sound and sensible communication.

"1, South Cottages,
"Skelton Road,
"York.

"Dear Editor,—Though I have been a regular reader of the 'Magnet' and the 'Gem' for many years, I have never written to you before; but when I read the attack made on you as regards joining the Army I felt I must write to express my indignation. People are always ready to throw stones, and will not allow that it is possible for a man to do his duty at home as well as abroad. I have three brothers, the eldest of whom is at present in the trenches, and I am pleased to tell you that when I sent him a parcel of your papers he wrote and told me nothing could have been more acceptable, and asked me to send more as soon as possible. When at home he was a regular reader of your papers, and I knew that he would prefer his old favourites to the newspapers my father wished to send him. I am an only girl, and have no mother. I am housekeeper to my father and the boys, and the one in question being my favourite brother, I am naturally immensely proud of him, and glad to think I have hit on the thing that will please him most.

"Having been brought up with boys, I am rather boyish in my tastes, and have a great many boy chums. Most of them are now serving their King and country; but my favourite chum has stayed at home for very much the same reason as you, and I know he has been made uncomfortable by several unfeeling remarks made by so-called patriots. On these occasions I am generally the one called upon to act as sympathiser; and so, you see, I felt quite indignant when I saw the letters published in the 'Magnet.' I often wonder when I read these sort of letters how it is that the writers don't imbibe some of the notions of fair play as set forth in the best of boys' papers. It is not playing the game to condemn a chap before he has had a chance to defend himself; but the sort of people who do things like that are so loyal and patriotic that they

D. S. Adams (Cape Town).—Thank you for your thoughtfulness in sending me an account of the interesting cricket-match in which you played. I note all your remarks, which shall receive due attention.

A. S. (Long Eaton).—Very many thanks for your letter.

C. E. I. (Coleraine).—The unfortunate habit to which you have become a victim is only to be shaken off by persistent will-power. You must say "No," and stick to it!

W. H. R. (Devon).—Thanks for suggestion, which I will bear in mind.

Edwin H. Smith (Portsmouth).—You will hear more of the character you mention in due course.

"Bob" (Cape Province).—I have despatched you the book in question.

Reginald Rose, 18, Rupert Street, Norwich, is desirous of forming a "Magnet" Club in his town. Intending members should write to him for full particulars.

S. R. T. (Liverpool).—I don't altogether approve of letters being written in school hours; but your enthusiasm for the "Magnet" was probably responsible, and you may consider yourself let off with a caution.

A. H. and L. Ede (Doncaster).—I cannot say whether Harold Skinner will use his powers as a ventriloquist again. There is little to choose between Wharton and Peter Todd as far as boxing is concerned.

"A Well-Wisher" (Nottingham).—Many thanks for your suggestion, which I will bear in mind.

"Interested" (South Devon).—Loder, being a prefect, had little difficulty in getting out of the scrape in question.

Muriel Glover (Birmingham).—Thanks very much for your nice letter.

A. H. Coffin (West Cowes).—The exact age of Gosling the porter is unavailable. Trotter, the page, is fourteen.

Victor Cogan, 8, Richmond Hill, Rathmines, Dublin, would like to hear from any readers of the "Magnet" who are interested in story-writing.

Kathleen O'Donoghue.—Your wish shall be complied with.

T. Steel (Birmingham).—It is not the popular desire of my readers that Harry Wharton and his chums should advance into the Sixth Form, as you suggest.

Jack Howard (Highgate).—Thank you very much for your loyal little note.

Cecil Hoar (Park Lane).—Much obliged to you for your fine letter of appreciation. Sorry I know of no remedy for the ailment you name. You had better consult a medical man.

C. M. Duncan (Greenock).—Many thanks for your support and for kindly obtaining new readers.

"Yankee" (Sutton).—Send your spare copies to Miss Doris E. Frodin, Red Cross Hospital, Hampton-in-Arden. They will then be distributed to wounded British soldiers.

Edward Jackson (Old Kent Road).—I am not in a position to say exactly how much "tuck" Billy Bunter disposes of in a day. It is naturally supposed to be sufficient to provision the entire British Forces for a month!

C. E. David (Chatham).—I read your cheering letter with considerable interest. Good luck to you!

"Eagle Feather" (Birmingham).—You need not have been shy about writing to me. The idea you suggest is a very sensible one, and I will see what can be done in the matter.

Frank C. (Sunderland).—Glad to hear you acted on the advice I gave to all the Franks, and bought an extra copy of your favourite paper at the time. Very best wishes.

"A Loyal Devonport Chum."—Thank you very much for your loyal remarks, and for pointing out what was an obvious error.

A. W. Motts (Paignton).—Very pleased indeed to hear from you. I will try and do as you suggest, but can make no definite assurance.

"Hard Up."—Your letter amused me very much. With regard to your query, I am afraid it would entail too much time and space to tell you the names and ages of every character in "The Magnet."

I. D. V. (Kendal).—Thanks for your splendid letter, with which I was very pleased. Don't forget to write to me again.

"A Briton" (Streatham).—Bob Cherry's closest chum is Mark Linley. Bob was at Greyfriars before Wharton came.

"Eight Welsh Boys" (Carnarvon).—I will try and adopt your suggestion later on.

Harry Kirkby (South Devon).—Your enthusiasm for the companion papers does you credit. It is certainly jolly good of you to purchase the lot each week, and you have my sincerest thanks.

Charles Durley (Brockley).—Squiff is not a member of the Famous Five.

Geoffrey Willcox (East Sheen).—I am sorry I cannot exactly go into raptures over your poem on Fisher T. Fish. The metre is faulty in many places, and the verses lack "finish." Persevere!

K. K. K. (Rhyl).—Sorry I cannot help you in the matter of back numbers.

"Three Prominent Readers" (Clapton).—Let me again observe, as I have observed many times before, that I do not deem it good policy for Harry Wharton & Co. to advance into higher Forms, as you suggest. Such a step would obviously spoil the interest in the stories.

T. W. Gandy and Chum (Liverpool).—I will bear your remarks in mind.

W. R. Taylor (Stockwell).—"The Penny Popular," published every Friday, will answer your requirements in every detail.

Eddie Ryan (Montreal) and others.—"The Greyfriars Herald" and "Tom Merry's Weekly" enjoyed such a great measure of popularity that further copies may appear at some future date. I cannot see my way clear, however, to make a weekly feature of these journals, as you suggest.

Mrs. Lillian Carlton (Glasgow).—My very best thanks to you for the good work you are doing in the interests of the Companion Papers. Your valuable suggestions shall be borne in mind.

H. Smith (Sheffield).—The Christian names of Hazeldene and Russell are Peter and Dick respectively.

"Sunflower" (Glasgow).—Very many thanks for your letter and loyal sentiments.

"X" (Oldham).—For legal reasons, I cannot do as you suggest, the characters in the stories you mention being fictitious.

"A Loyal Reader" (London, W.C.).—You are quite correct. Coker has been captain of Greyfriars—for one week only!

E. J. Hill (Eastcheap).—Lord Mauleveror, the slacker and dandy of the Remove, will be in the limelight again shortly.

G. E. M. L. (near Manchester).—I was very pleased to hear from you again. "The Caterpillar" is fifteen years of age, and Frank Nugent has a father.

A. Ashley (Lower Edmonton).—It is not the easiest thing in the world to illustrate a story successfully, and the artist was hardly to blame in the instance you quote.

"A Friend in Need" (Glasgow).—If you will let me know the qualifications of your sons, I shall be happy to advise you for which profession they are best fitted.

Private Arthur Nash (2nd Worcester Regiment, British Expeditionary Force).—Many thanks for your ripping letter, written under such trying circumstances. Here's luck to you!

Philip Stanfield (Yorks).—I will bear your suggestions in mind. Best wishes.

"Nemesis" (Bradford).—Sidney Drew, the popular boys' author, has no connection with the film-actor of that name.

J. M. (Montreal).—The surname of Miss Clara at Cliff House is Trevelyn. I will bear your suggestion in mind. You are incorrect in mentioning "Coker of the Shell" in your letter. The mighty Horace is in the Fifth.

J. Edson (Islington).—The character you mention is still at Greyfriars, but as his doings are not so important as those of Harry Wharton & Co., he naturally does not come into the limelight very often.

"Two Canadian Magnetites" (Alberta).—Coker is seventeen years of age, and I agree with you that he is "some ass." Thanks for your cheery comments.

"Only Two Girls" (Croydon).—Harry Wharton is an orphan.

C. J. Driscoll (Clonakilty).—Books on the subjects you mention may be obtained from Messrs. Glazier & Co., Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.

"A Marylebone Chum."—Apply to the nearest fire-station.

Frank K. (Redditch).—I will bear your suggestion in mind.

"A Scout Reader."—Your sketch of Billy Bunter in the tuckshop does you credit. But surely Bunter could negotiate a far greater quantity of tuck than you portray?

"Loyal Reader" (Dublin).—Taking all things into consideration, I should say that you would do quite as well to join the ranks as to take a commission.

"One With More Sense Than 'Insistent.'"—Thanks for your cheery note of encouragement.

T. Howe and Chums (Peterborough).—Your best plan would be to advertise locally for the back numbers in question.

"Firefly" (Hull).—Many thanks for the good work you are doing on behalf of the companion papers.

"An Essex Reader."—A boy should not smoke without his parents' consent. I have no desire to be priggish, but fellows should always study their parents' wishes.

Master Alwyne Brown, 14, Penbury Street, Worcester, has formed a "Magnet" and "Gem" Club in his town, and extends a cordial invitation to new members.

John Harvey (East Sheen).—There is no readers' club in your district, so far as I am aware.

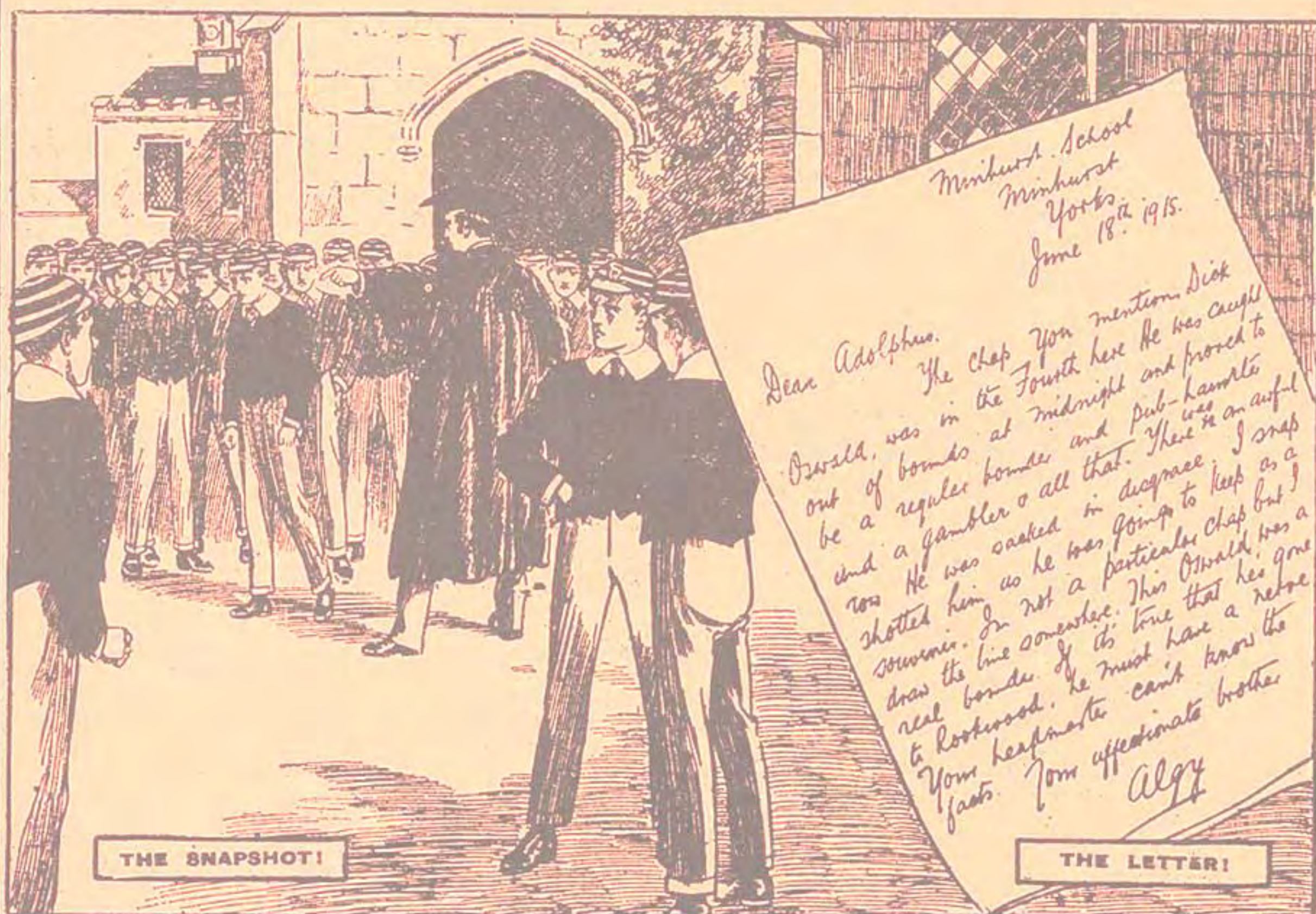
W. J. Hurle (Southwark).—Very many thanks for your letter.





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