

SKINNER THE SKIPPER!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



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SKINNER THE SKIPPER!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Naughty, naughty!" said Phyllis reprovingly. And she gave the fellovorn Coker a playful poke in the ribs with her hockey-stick, while the crowd on the touch-line roared with unrestrained laughter. "Ha, ha, ha!"
(See Chapter 5.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Whacked to the Wile!

"O N the ball!"
"Play up, 'Friars!"
"Wake up, Wharton!"
The crowd which bordered on the touch-
line of the junior football ground at Greyfriars were

exasperated. And there was good reason for their
exasperation.

Harry Wharton & Co. were playing against their re-
doubtable and time-honoured rivals of St. Jim's. Duno
Fortune had condescended to smile upon the sturdy
Saints, and in the first half Tom Merry and his fellow-
Trojans had monopolised the play. Talbot had netted

March 4th, 1916.

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in the first minute, and just before the interval the celebrated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had strengthened the position.

It was not often that the Greyfriars Remove found themselves a couple of goals to the bad at half-time, even against St. Jim's. Indeed, their meetings with Tom Merry & Co. were usually productive of keen, hard games, and ended in a draw, a narrow victory, or a narrow reverse. Very seldom indeed was there anything in the nature of a walk-over.

But the present game was proving an exception to the rule. The visitors could do nothing wrong. Their passing was perfect and their footwork beyond reproach. They swung the ball about in splendid style, and snapped up their opportunities. It was one of those days when they touched the top of their form.

The "Friars, on the other hand, were off-colour—woefully so. Many hard games recently had made them stale and leg-weary, and they were not the same dashing, virile, go-ahead band the spectators on Little Sida were accustomed to see. Even Vernon-Smith, usually a dashing, dazzling winger, was quite at sea, and seemed to be mooning aimlessly about the field.

"And this," said Bolsover major derisively—"this is the Remove First! Carry me home to die, somebody!"

"It's sickening!" agreed Skinner. "If I couldn't put up a better show than Wharton I'd eat my Sunday topper! St. Jim's are all over 'em!"

It was always a sore point with Skinner and Bolsover, and especially the latter, that they were repeatedly left out of the eleven. Harry Wharton had no use for fellows who allowed continual smoking to undermine their constitution, and he made no secret of the fact. The cads of the Remove were compelled to take a back seat, much to their chagrin, and they never tired of causing a commotion when the Remove eleven fared badly, as the best of teams must do on occasion.

"Buck up, you chaps!" urged Harry Wharton. "Mustn't be licked on our native heath, you know!"

The "Friars made a desperate effort to retrieve their position, but they were no match for the Remove, who played back for St. Jim's, put up a stout and stubborn defence; and Fatty Wynne, in goal, was ready for anything.

Harry Wharton & Co. pressed hard for a brief period; then the ball travelled back to the other end, and was pounced upon by the ever-watchful Tom Merry.

Then Johnny Bull, at back, was unfortunate enough to miskick. This gave Tom Merry the opening he wanted. He drove the sphere in with all his force, and Bulstrode rolled over and over in a frantic yet futile endeavour to save.

"Goal!"

"Three up!"

"Oh, jimmie!" gasped Bob Cherry. "This is putrid! I shall want the giddy earth to open and swallow me up in a minute!"

Misfortune followed misfortune, so far as the "Friars were concerned. Hurree Singh, the lucky junior, was hurt in a collision with Kerr; and had to retire from the ground. St. Jim's, making hay while the sun shone, proceeded to further deeds of valour, and Jack Blake scored twice in quick succession.

"Glorious, ain't it?" grinned Bolsover. "Reminds you of a score in a cricket match—what?"

"They'll have to make some changes in the eleven after this," said Skinner. "We'll force 'em to, by Jove!"

The next moment Dick Penfold, forcing his way through a host of players, netted for the "Friars. The goal was greeted with an ironical cheer from the crowd of dissatisfied Removites on the touch-line. Five more were needed by the "Friars in order to win, and they might just as soon have tried to perform a miracle.

Tom Merry drove the last nail into the coffin of the home team by beating Bulstrode at close range, and then the whistle sounded for hostilities to cease.

As Harry Wharton & Co. came off the field someone started to groan. The sound was taken up right along the line, and Wharton flushed as he heard it.

"Hard cheese, old chap!" said Tom Merry, clapping him on the back. "I'm sorry you lost, honestly, if

this is the sort of reception they're giving you after it! You did your best!"

"I don't seem to be exactly popular, do I?" said Harry, bitterly. "Some of the fellows expect a team to win every single match of the season, and if defeat comes along, as it's bound to, sooner or later, they never let you hear the end of it."

"Take no notice of them," said Monty Lowther. "They'll calm down in time, poor dears!"

The St. Jim's players clambered into their brake, and drove off in great spirits. The occasions on which they left Greyfriars with a victory to their credit were very few and far between.

The Famous Five fought their way through the threatening crowd of Removites, and proceeded into the building for a bath. Then, feeling somewhat refreshed by the immersion, they went along to No. 1 Study for tea.

Bob Cherry gave a roar of rage as he scanned a huge poster which had been pasted on the door.

"What the merry dickens—" began Nugent.

"Look what some rotter's been and stuck up!" yelled Bob, brandishing his big fist and fairly executing a war-dance in the passage. "Read it!"

The offensive notice was in the form of an obituary, and ran as follows:

"IN AFFECTIONATE MEMORY OF REMOVE FOOTER,

which died at Greyfriars on February 12th, 1916.

Its death was brought about by Frigg Wharton and his goody-goody pals, who excel only at hop-scotch, marbles and leapfrog.

"The interment takes place to-day. No flowers, by request."

"What cheek!" said Harry Wharton, clenching his hands hard. "Somebody's going to be made to sit up for this!"

"The sit-upfulness shall be terrific!" murmured Hurree Singh.

"I expect it's Skinner's doing," growled Johnny Bull.

"Not much good taxing the cad with it, though. He'll only deny it."

"That's so; let's come and drown our sorrows in a cup of tea," said Nugent.

Within the study all was merry and bright, and in strange contrast to the feelings of the discomfited juniors. A cheerful fire sparkled and crackled in the grate, and the table was laid for tea.

Hurree Singh, who had ricked his ankle through coming in violent contact with Kerr, limped about and prepared to fry sausages. Wharton brought forth a huge cake, and Bob Cherry commenced making toast.

But in spite of all the good things and the cheery atmosphere, the chums of the Remove felt dismal and depressed. Like Rachel of old, they mourned, and would not be comforted. Tom Merry & Co. had beaten them to the tune of 6-1, and they had incurred the acute displeasure of their Form-fellows. It was plain to each of them that a storm was brewing, and that, to use Bob Cherry's expressive remark, there would be serious trouble in the family!

THE SECOND CHAPTER. The Madness of Wharton!

KNOCK, knock, knock!

A thunderous banging sounded on the door of No. 1 Study.

"Come in, fathhead!" roared Bob Cherry, in his stentorian tones.

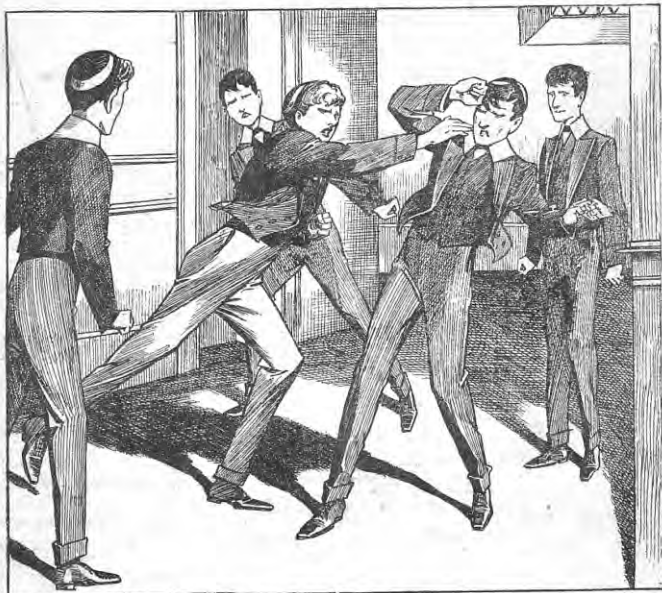
The next moment a host of invaders swarmed into the study, headed by Harold Skinner. Bolsover and Snop and Stott, Elliott and Trevor and Trulues, marched in, and several others lurked in the doorway.

Harry Wharton sprang to his feet. His hand went instinctively to a cricket-stump.

"It's all right," sneered Skinner. "We're not come to scrag you, dearly though you deserve it! Chuck that silly stump away, and lend me your ears!"

Wharton paused.

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"What were you saying about Miss Howell, Skinner?" demanded Bob Cherry. "I said she's a mix and a saucy cat, and so she is!" said Skinner defiantly. "I reckon—Yooop!" The cad of the Remove staggered back with a yell of pain as Bob Cherry's open palm smote him across the cheek. (See Chapter 4.)

"Did you stick that notice up on the door, Skinner?" he asked, with deadly directness.

"I did!" said Skinner defiantly. He could afford to be defiant, backed up as he was by a dozen fellows.

"Then I'll jolly well wipe up the floor with you!" exclaimed Harry, darting forward.

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull caught their chief by each arm, and swung him back.

"Steady on, old scout!" said Bob. "No good scrapping when we're outnumbered by three to one. They'd strew the hungry churchyard with our bones, as Shakespeare says."

"Blow Shakespeare! D'you think I'm going to let that cad insult us like this?"

"You can settle his old hash in the gym, afterwards," said Johnny Bull. "We don't want the happy home broken up. What do you fellows want?"

"We want to know what your tinpot team meant by its disgusting exhibition this afternoon!" roared Bolsover major. "Licked by six to one, indeed! You've dragged the fair name of the Greyfriars Remove in the dust, and made us the laughing-stock of the whole giddy school! Coker & Co. are chuckling no end, and the Fourth-Formers are smirking up their sleeves!"

"We played our level best," said Nugent simply.

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"Level best? Bah! An eleven from a blind school or a home for incurables would have put up ten times as good a show! You ought to be downright ashamed of yourselves!"

"Thanks!" said Wharton drily.

"The fact is," said Skinner, "we badly want a change. This rank, rotten favouritism of putting your pals in the team has jolly well got to stop, Wharton! We've stuck it up to now, but this is the last straw. The Remove's going to the dogs—absolutely! It's high time we had a new captain."

"Whom do you suggest, then, to take my place?"

"Myself!" said Skinner, with delightful modesty. "I'd set the fellows a jolly sight better example than you, and chance it!"

"By teaching 'em how to smoke Flor de Turup cigars and play nap for ha'penny points, I suppose?" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, come off! I'm in dead earnest, this time!" said Skinner. "And all these fellows are backing me up!"

"Rather!" came in a unanimous roar from the members of the deputation.

"You want me to resign?" queried Harry Wharton.

"That's it!"

"And supposing I don't choose to?"

"Then you'll get it where the chicken got the chopper!"

"In the neck!" snorted Bolsover expressively.

Harry Wharton reflected for a moment. His next words came as a thunderbolt to his four chums.

"Very well, then, Skinner. I resign in your favour."

"W-w-what!"

The cad of the Remove could scarcely believe his ears. He had little thought on entering the study with his band of malcontents that Wharton would take him seriously. Yet the captain of the Remove was calmly offering to relinquish his position!

"Great Scott!" gasped Bob Cherry, in open-eyed amazement. "You must be mad, Harry!"

"Mad as a hatter or a March hare!" said Nugent.

"The madfulness is indeed terrific!"

"You—you're not joking?" stammered Skinner.

"Not a bit of it," was the reply. "Look here, Skinner. Suppose you take over the captaincy for a week from to-day? Then at the end of that time we'll put it to the vote whether you're to remain skipper or whether I resume the post."

"That sounds fair enough," said Bolsover major. "Jump at it, Skimney!"

And Skinner did. He welcomed Wharton's offer with open arms.

"Right you are!" he exclaimed. "Then it's agreed that from now I'm captain of the Remove?"

"Certainly!"

"Good! I'll jolly soon bring about a revival in this sleepy old Form. You chaps are going to toe the line! Slacking and favouritism are going to be things of the past."

"M-m-my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Mind, I'm on the warpath!" said Skinner. "The Remove's wanted a strong, impartial fellow to rule the roost for a long, long time, and now it's got one, so look out for squalls! Come on, you fellows!"

And the deputation, hugely delighted at the turn events had taken, quitted the study.

Harry Wharton's chums swung round upon him with fury in their faces.

"You fathead!" howled Nugent.

"You burbling jabberwock!" howled Johnny Bull.

"You demented sop of a half-stuffed scarecrow!" roared Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton merely smiled.

"Don't get excited," he said complacently. "There's nothing to go into hysterics about."

"Isn't there, by jingo?" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Why, what in thunder d'you mean by handing over the captaincy to a freak like Skinner? Oh, you clump!"

Wharton burst into a laugh.

"Don't you cotton on to the little game?" he said. "There's method in my madness. I don't do things like that unless there's a jolly good reason for it. You trust your uncle?"

"But what—" gasped Nugent.

"It's like this, my sons. Skinner, as captain, isn't an imposing picture. He'll make a beastly muck-up of everything. He'll lose footer matches, and organise raids that won't come off, and make a silly ass of himself generally. The fellows will get so fed-up that at the end of the week they'll be dead against his remaining skipper. Twigg?"

"By Jove, I can see it now!" said Johnny Bull. "Wharton's quite right, you fellows. I didn't look at it in that light before."

"Nor I," said Nugent. "What an awfully deep wheeze!"

"The deepfulness of the esteemed wheeze is terrific! The unworthy Skinner will come a ludicrous cropper!"

"Hear, hear!"

"He'll be sorry he ever took the job on, you bet!" grinned Bob Cherry. "We're playing Claremont on Saturday, and he's bound to select his own team, and leave us out. That means a frightful licking for him."

"Not half!"

And the Famous Five resumed their interrupted meal with many chuckles. Harold Skinner's star was in the ascendant, but only for the moment. His career as

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captain of the Remove was likely to prove an exceedingly painful and unpleasant one; and he would bitterly rue the day when he had bitten off far more than he could chew!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Fight That Failed!

"IT'S up to me!"
Harold Skinner, of the Remove, made that remark in the dormitory that evening. His cronies gathered respectfully round his bed, to catch any words of wisdom which might fall from the lips of their leader.

"What's up to you, old man?" inquired Bolsover.

"Why, to wipe up the floor with the Fourth! Now that I'm captain of the Remove—the right man in the right place—I'm going to bring about a jolly big revival, and I want you fellows to rally round."

"Rely on us!" said Bolsover and Snoop and Stott together.

"That's good! First of all, we'll go and beard Temple & Co. in their den, and give 'em a jolly good licking! They came in here one night last week and knocked us out of time in a pillow-fight, owing to Wharton's bad leadership, and now we'll exact a terrible revenge!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Why, you fatheads—" began Bob Cherry sulphurously.

"Dry up, Cherry!" said Skinner. "You're a back number, now that I've got supreme command of the allied Remove forces!"

"My only aunt!" gasped Bob helplessly.

"I s'pose we'd better back the silly ass up," growled Vernon-Smith. "He'll only go getting it in the neck if we don't!"

"Fiddlesticks!" said Skinner. "With a few trusty warriors, I guarantee to make the Fourth sing small! Lemme see! Who are the finest fighting-men in the Remove? Bolsover, Snoop, Stott, Morgan, Trevor, Treluce, Elliott. They're O.K!"

"About as well known in Fish and Bunter!" chuckled Squiff.

"He, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" snarled Skinner. "I'm going to keep order in this blessed Form, or know the reason why! The fellows I've named will hold themselves in readiness for a raid on Temple's dormitory after lights out!"

"The Fourth will stand no earthly whatever!" said Morgan. "We'll simply pulverise them, look you!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Good old Skinner!"

"We're backing you up, old man!"

"Through thick and thin!" said Bolsover.

Courtney of the Sixth came in to see lights out. The Sixth-Former was ignorant of the sweeping change which had taken place in the Remove, and he suspected no trouble.

"Good-night, kids!"

"Good-night, Courtney!"

Silence followed the prefect's departure. Several minutes passed, and then Billy Bunter made night hideous with his sonorous snores.

Then, when ten o'clock boomed out from the clock-tower, Skinner slipped out of bed.

"Are you chaps ready?" he asked.

"Ready, ay, ready!" responded Bolsover major.

"Kim on, then!"

"Look here!" said Bob Cherry, from his bed. "You can't wallop the Fourth with a handful of freaks like that, Skimney! Let Wharton and Smyth and myself come!"

"Rats!" was Skinner's rejoinder.

"Let him go his own way, Bob!" said Harry Wharton.

"He's putting a halter round his neck, but that's his own bizney. I shall be very much surprised if they come back victorious."

"So shall I!" said Nugent and Johnny Bull together.

Skinner merely chuckled, and quitted the dormitory with his comrades. They were each armed to the teeth

with pillows and bolsters and slippers, and meant to give the Fourth-Formers the licking of their lives. "Follow your leader!" said Skinner. "Don't make a row!"

Noiselessly the invaders passed into the sleeping-quarters of the Fourth. Once inside the dormitory Skinner rapped out his orders.

"All together!" he exclaimed. "Soak it into 'em!" And the next moment the unconscious Fourth-Formers were rudely awakened. Nothing was heard for some seconds save the relentless thudding of pillows.

Presently Temple of the Fourth started up in bed with a wild yell, as Bolsover major's bolster smote him across the chest.

"A raid!" he shouted. "Rally round, you chaps!"

In next to no time the Fourth-Formers were out of bed, and plunged into the fray in their pyjamas. They were in overwhelming numbers, and the tide of battle soon turned in their favour.

Big! Bang! Thud!

"Yaroooooh!" roared Skinner, as he recoiled before a fierce onslaught from Fry, and rolled over on the floor of the dormitory. "Oh, crumbs! Back up, you chaps!"

But the Removites found themselves at a deadlock. Temple & Co., warning to their work, came on again and again, piling in like Trojans.

"Where's Wharton?" panted Dabney, as he caught Sidney Snoop a violent blow on the side of the head with his weapon. "I don't see any sign of him."

"The others aren't here, either—Cherry and those," said Temple. "My hat! Looks as if we've got a soft job on, my sons!"

"Yes, rather!"

Snoop and Stott, taking sudden fright, fled from the improvised battlefield. Bolsover roared to them to come back and face the music; but they were deaf to the voice of the charmer.

Luch by luch, the intrepid invaders were driven back to the doorway. Here they rallied for a brief instant, and Bolsover and Morgan put up a desperate resistance; but once again superiority of numbers told, and the Removites were scattered before the Fourth-Formers' sweeping rush like chaff before a cyclone.

"Follow up!" roared Temple. "Drive 'em right back to their own dorm!"

"Good egg!"

Out on to the landing, and down the stairs, Skinner & Co. were forced to beat a hasty and undignified retreat, and Temple and his warriors followed in their wake, wreaking considerable havoc with their pillows and bolsters.

Then panic broke out among the luckless victims, and they stampeded into the Remove dormitory as if for their lives. A roar of laughter greeted them within.

"Here come the conquering heroes!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you squash Temple & Co. to a jelly?" inquired Johnny Bull.

"Ow-ow-ow!" moaned Skinner. "Grooh! My backbone's broken! Yaw!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Temple & Co. kept up the fierce attack until every member of the ill-fated expedition was inside. Then, not wishing to come to loggerheads with Harry Wharton and his chums, they withdrew, for once in a way masters of the situation.

But Skinner's party had not yet concluded their chapter of accidents. The door of the dormitory was suddenly thrown open, and an electric torch flashed out through the gloom.

"Boys!" exclaimed a familiar voice. "I demand to know the meaning of this disturbance!"

Skinner's knees almost knocked together. The intruder was Mr. Quelch.

"I—[—]" he began.

"So you, Skinner, have been keeping high revel at this disgraceful hour!" snapped the Form-master. "You, and all these juniors who are at present out of bed, armed with articles of bed-clothing!"

Skinner said nothing. He and his cronies were caught red-handed, and he realised that nothing could save him.

"Every boy concerned in this outrageous affair will take two hundred lines!" rumbled Mr. Quelch. "I will not tolerate this nocturnal hooliganism! Skinner! If THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 421.

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ONE
PENNY.

I hear another sound in this dormitory to-night, I shall take you before the Headmaster in the morning!"

And Mr. Quelch rustled away.

When he had gone the discomfited pillow-fighters turned in, breathing threatenings and slaughter. Skinner had made a bad bungle on the very first day of his appointment to the captaincy, and he realised, as he tossed for hours in bed sleeplessly, that he would need to do many great things during the days that followed if he wished to successfully erase the stigma attaching to his inglorious escapade against the mighty men of the Fourth.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. A Cliff House Challenge!

BILLY BUNTER came scuttling along the Remove passage, his little round eyes gleaming behind his glasses. He had just raided the post-rack, and had a letter clutched tightly in his fat fist.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Young man in a hurry—what?"

"Seen Skinner?" asked Bunter breathlessly.

"Yes; he's in his study. Who's that letter for, porpoise?"

"You mind your own bizney!" retorted Bunter. "I'm not going to be interfered with by an inquisitive bounder like you!"

"Why, you fat rotter——" began Bob wrathfully. "I'll jolly well slaughter you!"

But Billy Bunter had made himself scarce. He burst into Skinner's study like a tornado.

"Letter for you, Skinnery!" he panted.

"Hand it over!" said Skinner. "Why, you fat fabricator, this isn't for me! It's addressed to the captain of the Remove!"

"Well, you're captain, ain't you?"

"Yes, but—but this is meant for Wharton."

"Oh, rot!" said Bunter. "Just you open it, Skinnery, old man, and if there's a remittance hang on to it with both hands!"

Skinner's eyes gleamed. In a way, he was within his rights in opening the letter, since it was addressed, in neat, clear handwriting, to the "Captain, Remove Form, Greyfriars School, Friardale." The envelope bore a local postmark.

Skinner hesitated a moment, then took the plunge. Billy Bunter watched him as attentively as a cat watches a mouse.

"Any remittance?" he asked eagerly.

"Of course not, you burbling great bladder of lard!" Billy Bunter almost fell down.

"There's no postal-order?" he yelled. "My hat! What a beastly sell! Blessed if I'd have fagged here with the beastly thing if I'd known that!"

"That's your bizney," said Skinner. "Now get out!"

And Billy Bunter drifted away disconsolately down the passage.

Skinner read the letter with gleaming eyes. It was obviously intended for Harry Wharton, for it was worded as follows:

"Cliff House School,
Friardale.

"Dear Harry,—As you are captain of the Greyfriars Remove, we have decided to challenge you to a hockey-match, to take place on Wednesday afternoon at three, on your ground.

"We wish to demonstrate the fact that girls are every bit as good as boys, so far as athletics are concerned, and we hope to be amply successful in lowering your colours.

"With kind regards,—

"Yours sincerely,

"PHYLLIS HOWELL (Captain),

"MARJORIE HAZELDEN,

"CLARA TREVELYN."

Skinner drew a deep breath. Strange thoughts were passing through his mind at that moment. The letter was intended for Wharton, true, but then, he—Skinner—was captain of the Remove, and was therefore empowered with the rights of accepting or declining the challenge.

NEXT
MONDAY—

"HIS HIGHNESS!"

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

And on due consideration Skinner decided to accept it, and to select his own team for the occasion.

He at once went out into the Close to round up his supporters.

"What's on now?" grunted Bolsover. The bully of the Remove was beginning to feel more than a little fed-up with Skinner's captaincy already.

"The Cliff House girls have sent us a challenge," explained Skinner. "They want us to play 'em at hockey to-morrow afternoon."

Bolsover looked incredulous.

"Why, we should simply wipe up the ground with them!" he exclaimed.

Skinner grinned.

"That's precisely what we want to do, my pippin!" he chuckled. "Saucy cats, I call 'em, to think they can ride the high horse like this! That minx Phyllis Howell wants taking down several pegs!"

"Hallo!" said Bob Cherry, who had been punting a footer about with the rest of the Famous Five, and who overheard the name of his girl chum. "What were you saying about Miss Howell, Skinner?"

"I said she's a minx and a saucy cat, and so she is!" said Skinner defiantly. "I reckon— Yoop!"

The cad of the Remove staggered back with a yell of pain as Bob Cherry's open palm smote him across the cheek.

"Take that, you rotter!" roared the incensed Bob. "And if you so much as breathe a word against Miss Howell again I'll jolly well pulverise you!"

"Bravo!" said Nugent. "We're fed-up with Skinner's beastly insults! What's that letter you've got in your fist, you cad?"

"Mind your own bizney!" snarled Skinner.

"I reckon it is my bizney!" retorted Nugent calmly. "Let's have a look!"

And he wrenched the missive from Skinner's hand.

"My hat!" he muttered, glancing at the address. "This letter's for you, Harry, and that rotter's boned it!"

Harry Wharton came forward and took the letter. He read it through with a grim expression on his face, and then handed it to his chums.

"Talk about nerve!" gasped Johnny Bull. "Why, the beauty outside's been opening your private correspondence!"

"It's addressed to the captain of the Remove," said Skinner. "so how was I to know?"

"The challenge is meant for us, of course," said Bob Cherry. "And yet that skinny boulder's trying to get a hockey team together!"

"Oh, let him go ahead!" said Wharton. "There's no harm done."

"What do you mean, you ass?"

Harry Wharton drew his chums aside.

"The Cliff House girls will lick 'em into a cocked hat!" he murmured. "They're no good at footer, we know, but they jolly well know how to play hockey. Let 'em come over here and play Skinner's team. It'll be a sight for gods and men and little fishes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton's chums understood now, and willingly gave their assent. Harry handed the letter back to Skinner.

"I suppose you're at liberty to do as you like," he said, "now you're captain of the Remove."

Skinner chuckled.

"So you've come to your senses at last?" he said. "I thought you would! If you continue to be a good little boy, and knuckle under to my authority, I might give you a show in the footer team later on."

"That's very kind of you!"

"Don't mention it. I'm a generous chap, I am," said Skinner, modestly. "As for these girls, they're going through the hoop to-morrow. I don't know much about hockey, but if we can't lick a parcel of girls, then I'm a Dutchman!"

And Skinner, with the aid of his chief cronies, com-

menced to draw up the team. The Famous Five, laughing hugely among themselves, linked arms and marched off to the tuckshop, to drink to the success of Miss Phyllis Howell and her fair champions.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Not According to Programme!

"SISTER ANNE—Sister Anne, do you see anybody coming?"

Bob Cherry, who was sunning himself in the old gateway of Greyfriars with the rest of the Famous Five, asked that cheerful question after dinner next day.

"The girls!" said Nugent. "My hat! They look pretty businesslike, too!"

The Cliff House hockey team was coming along the country road, headed by Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevelyn, and Phyllis Howell, their vivacious leaders. They were armed with hockey-sticks, and, as Frank Nugent remarked, they looked decidedly businesslike.

"Good-afternoon!" said Miss Howell, as the juniors politely whipped off their caps. "You received our letter?"

"Yes, Miss Phyllis," said Harry Wharton.

"Then why have you not changed?"

"We're not playing, Miss Phyllis," said Bob Cherry, with a smile.

"What!"

"Great changes have come about in the Remove since you last saw us. Wharton is no longer in command."

The Cliff House girls looked surprised, and Miss Howell showed instant concern.

"I am sorry to hear that," she said softly. "Have you been getting into a scrape, Harry?"

"Not exactly," said Wharton. "We got licked by St. Jim's the other day at footer, and some of the fellows kicked up the dickens of a shindy. The result is that Skinner's taken on the captaincy—for a week, at any rate."

"Skinner!" ejaculated Miss Clara. "You mean to say that awful upstart is ruling the roost?"

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Marjorie Hazeldene.

Marjorie was always shocked—or pretended to be—at her girl chum's slangy expressions.

"But—but do you mean to say that we've got to play against Skinner and his set?" said Miss Howell.

"That's it! And we shall be awfully bucked up if you give them a jolly good licking! It's a thing they badly need."

Miss Howell's dark eyes sparkled. Although practically a new pupil at Cliff House, she had had a good many skirmishes with Harold Skinner in the past, and was not at all averse to playing against him in a hockey match.

"Very well," she said. "It doesn't really matter whom we play. We should win in any case."

"Ahem!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Girls aren't at all the fops some boys take them to be," continued Miss Howell. "Some of you think we spend all our time over silly lace-work and embroidery, and all that sort of thing. We'll show you this afternoon that we can be athletic when we choose."

"Yes, rather!" said Miss Clara heartily. "Let's go ahead with the licking!"

"The lickfulness," murmured Hurree Singh, "will be—"

"Terrific!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Kim on!"

There was a record crowd on Little Sids when the girls made their appearance. Skinner & Co. were already there. They had scornfully repudiated any suggestion of changing into footer garb for the occasion. As Bolsover major remarked, they could lick the Cliff House girls even if they were on crutches.

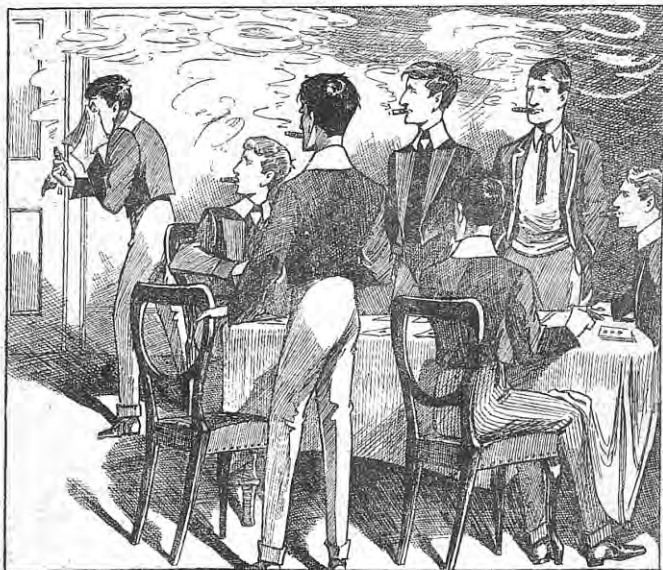
Coker of the Fifth had kindly consented to referee. He was rather glad of the job, really, since he had developed a most decided infatuation for the fair Phyllis; and during a lull in the game he congratulated himself that he might have an opportunity of chatting with her.

The game opened in spirited fashion, and not at all as Skinner & Co. had gleefully anticipated. However hopeless the Cliff House girls might have been at footer, their

ANSWERS

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MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FREE TO READERS OF THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD," 1/2D. OUT TO-DAY.



"Ugh! Yah! Groo!" spluttered Trevor, whose complexion had undergone a startling change in colour. "I'm ill! Hang you, Skinner! My head's spinning round and round, and there's lights and things dancing in front of my eyes! Grooooooogh!" (See Chapter 7.)

hockey was a sight to see and wonder at. Down the field they swept like an avalanche, and Hazeldene, who kept goal for Skinner's team, was beaten by his sister before the game was two minutes old.

"Buck up, for goodness' sake!" snarled Skinner. "This is too awful for words!"

And the juniors set to work in grim earnest. But all their wiles and all their tricks proved woefully unavailing. They knew nothing about hockey, whereas the girls of Cliff House simply revelled in it. It was their national game, and was very dear to their hearts. When Phyllis Howell came to the school she transformed the team into a really marvellous affair, and of these facts Skinner and his cronies were in complete ignorance.

Phyllis Howell encountered Bolsover in a fierce duel, and emerged a moment later flushed and triumphant. She sent the ball skitting across to Miss Clara, who drove it in with fierce frenzy. Hazeldene was thus beaten for the second time, and the experience was not pleasant.

"I say," said Horace Coker, lumbering up to Phyllis Howell, "you're a gem, Phyllis! The way you're bottling these chaps up is simply divine!"

"You're too flattering!" murmured Phyllis.

"Not at all!" said Coker, gaining courage at what he considered to be the girl's coyness. "I think you're a real peach. I do, really!"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"HIS HIGHNESS!"

"Naughty, naughty!" said Phyllis reprovingly. And she gave the love-lorn Coker a playful poke in the ribs with her hockey-stick, while the crowd on the touch-line roared with unrestrained laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The great Coker gave a gasp of pain.

"Here, I say," he expostulated. "Don't be so frivolous, Phyllis, there's a good sport! I—"

But Coker's words were wasted on the desert air, for Phyllis Howell had plunged into the fray once more.

Hammer-and-tongs the two teams went at the ball; but there was no denying the immeasurable superiority of the Cliff House girls. They simply dominated the game, and Hazeldene was beaten thrice again before the interval.

Skinner's face was a study as he came off the field.

"This—is this too awful for anything!" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "When are you going to begin wiping the ground with the girls, Skinny?"

"Wait till next half!" snorted Bolsover major. "We'll jolly well chuck our weight about then, and see how they like it!"

Harry Wharton confronted the bully of the Remore with blazing eyes.

"Don't you start any of your back-alley games," he said hotly, "or we'll make you pay for it afterwards!"

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"Rats! We're not going to be shown up by a set of silly flappers!"

"Why, you rotter!" roared Bob Cherry wrathfully. And he was about to proceed to assault and battery, but his chums held him back. They realised that it would be bad form to make a scene in the presence of the young ladies of Cliff House.

When the game was set in motion once more, Bolsover adhered to his plan of campaign, and swung his hockey-stick about in the most brutal manner, committing many fouls, which Coker, being engrossed in watching Phyllis Howell, quite failed to notice.

"The cat!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "I shouldn't have thought even Bolsover would stoop so low. Time we took a hand."

But the Famous Five soon saw that there was no need for them to intervene. The Cliff House girls speedily showed that they were well able to look after themselves.

Every time Bolsover fouled, Phyllis or Marjorie or Clara gave him a sharp rap across the shin with their sticks. On each occasion the rap grew harder, until Bolsover, a-tingle with pain, decided that he had better drop his unsavoury tactics. Accordingly, he did so.

Phyllis Howell and her girl chums continued to attack with a greater measure of success than ever. Snoop and Stott, cowards both, quailed before their determined rushes, with the result that points became plentiful as blackberries. Indeed, there was a danger of the spectators losing count.

Skinner was almost gnashing his teeth with rage. He saw now that it was hopeless to attempt to pull the game out of the fire. His team was whacked, hopelessly and completely; and, like the monarch in the poem, he felt that he could never smile again.

At last the sorry spectacle was over. The girls had triumphed to the tune of fifteen points to nil, and the cheering which rang out on their behalf was, as Hurree Singh justly remarked, terrific. What the score would have been had the girls played Harry Wharton & Co. was an open question; but it certainly would have been nothing like this.

Cliff House players and spectators alike were and bide their diminished heads. For nearly three days now Skinner had held office as captain, with direful results! The fellows on the touch-line were weeping with laughter; and even the high-and-mighty stalwarts of the Sixth, when they learned what had transpired, shared in the general merriment.

Truly, Harold Skinner was finding the position of Form-captain anything but a bed of roses!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Coker the Poet!

"BUZZ about there, Bob!"

"Back up and lay the cloth, Franky!"

"Pile in and make some toast, Johnny!"

Harry Wharton rapped out the foregoing instructions in No. 1 Study, where Phyllis, Marjorie, and Clara were the guests of honour. The rest of the triumphant hockey team had returned to Cliff House, to delight the hearts of their girl chums with news of the overwhelming defeat of Skinner & Co.

The Famous Five were in funds, and did things in great style. Hurree Singh was busily engaged in frying the festive sausages, and Johnny Bull was piling up toast on a plate. Frank Nugent, as soon as he had laid the cloth, wended his way to the tuckshop, to return a few minutes later with one of Mrs. Mimble's far-famed iced-cakes.

"Skinner seems to be going through the mill!" laughed Phyllis Howell, as she poured out the tea. "I don't think he'll make an altogether successful captain."

"I'm jolly certain he won't!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "And his troubles aren't over yet, not by long chalks! Teddy Baxter & Co., of Claremont, are coming over on Saturday to play footer, and they're jolly hot stuff. Strictly speaking, they're supposed to play against the Third; but Skinner & Co. are such awful duffers that it'll be a positive treat to see 'em get another licking!"

"I should say so!" ejaculated Miss Clara.

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"Skinner's simply hopeless!" said Johnny Bull, depositing his plate of toast on the table. "He was in the beginning, is now, and ever will be! He's got no more idea of the duties of a captain than the man in the moon! I'd just as soon see Billy Bunter at the head of affairs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How are the sausages going, Inky?" inquired Harry Wharton.

"They are done to the esteemed turnfulness!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur, with a smile of satisfaction on his dusky face.

"That's good! Serve 'em up, old scout!"

The feasters started on the spread in high good-humour. They had barely begun when the door was thrown open without a preliminary knock, and Coker of the Fifth entered.

The Famous Five looked annoyed. Coker had an exasperating habit of turning up when he was least wanted.

"Here we are again!" said the great Horace genially. "Glad to see you girls in such fine form this afternoon! You were stunning, Phyllis!"

"Was I?" said Miss Phyllis demurely.

"Rather! I didn't altogether appreciate the way you poked me with your beastly hockey-stick; but girls will be flighty, you know! They must have their little joke, bless 'em!"

"Indeed!"

Bob Cherry looked daggers at Coker, and, if looks could have killed, the Fifth-Former would have straightway expired on the study carpet. But Coker was too dense to observe the frantic signs made to him by the Famous Five to get out.

"You might make room for a fellow!" he said reproachfully. "Surely you don't mind handing over your chair, young Nugent, and perching on the window-sill?"

But "young Nugent" had no intention of obeying. Instead, he slipped on the study carpet as if he meant to eat him.

"I must say the manners in this study are pretty awful!" said Coker. "Never mind! I'll squat on the coal-scuttle. Shy over some toast, you lump of Inky blackness!"

Hurree Singh complied with a cheerful grin. He hurled a round of toast with all his force at the unspeakable Horace. There was plenty of greasy butter on that toast, and it squelched all over Coker's face.

"Yarooooooh!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A ripple of laughter went up from the Cliff House girls as the Fifth-Former gouged frantically at his face and hair.

"Does the esteemed Coker desirefully want morefulness?" purred Hurree Singh.

"No, I don't, you Indian image!" snarled Coker. "Keep off the grass!"

Coker then helped himself liberally to the iced-cake, and resumed his seat. Dearly would the Famous Five have loved to kick him out on his neck; but with the girls present such a course was impossible.

"By the way, Phyllis," said Coker suddenly, when the cake had been stowed away, "in case you don't know it, I'm an awfully clever poet!"

"Go on!" said Phyllis, unmoved.

"Yes, rather! One of these days I hope to bag the Laureateship, you know!"

"One of these days!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is your latest perpetration?" asked Phyllis Howell.

Coker beamed, and drew out a roll of paper from his inside coat-pocket.

"It's about this afternoon's match," he explained. "I felt that your fine display was a fitting subject for my lyre. Listen!"

And Coker began to declaim, in deep, impressive tones, the following:

"I sing the praise of Cliff House School,
With all its sweet princesses;
So rich and rare their eyes and hair,
So dainty are their treasures.
They dwell in hockey fields all day,
And play, and play, and play, and play."

"Ditto repeat, ad lib!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker ignored the interruption, and turned to the girls.

"What do you think of the first verse?" he asked.

"It's killing!" said Miss Clara. "You ought to be on the staff of 'Chuckles,' Croker!"

The great Horace frowned a little at this doubtful compliment, and, hoping that the poem would be better admired as he went along, proceeded as follows:

"To Greyfriars School the damsels came,
And met the snobbish Skinner.
Who soon found out, to his dismay,
He hadn't backed a winner!
The points came fast—oh, what a scene!
One, two, three, four, five, six, fifteen!"

"What about the numbers between six and fifteen?" asked Johnny Bull. "Pity to leave 'em out in the cold!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Phyllis Howell was wiping her eyes with a cambric handkerchief; Marjorie and Clara were smiling broadly; and Bob Cherry had fallen back in his chair, and was kicking up his heels in a paroxysm of merriment.

"Oh, how touching!" she sobbed. "Proceed, my dear Horace!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Very red in the face, Coker continued to recite his doggerel:

"The girls played very well indeed,
And made poor Skinner growl;
But best of all with stick and ball
Was charming Phyllis Howell.
Oh, Phyllis, Phyllis, Phyllis, dear,
Your doughty deeds I love to cheer!"

"Help!" moaned Bob Cherry, clutching at the table for support. "What have we done, that you should inflict all this on us at once, Coker?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The repetition part amuses me," laughed Harry Wharton. "It's like Tenyson's brook—goes on for ever!"

It began slowly to dawn upon Coker's dull brain that he was being made a fool of. He endeavoured to rise to his feet, but slipped at an unfortunate moment, and went hurtling back with a terrific thud into the coal-seuttle.

"This is better than a pantomime!" said Nugent, weeping with laughter. "Coker, old man, go on the halls at once, there's a good fellow! You'll take the world by storm! George Robey and Harry Tate will be 'also ran'!"

Coker picked himself up ruefully, and glared at the hilarious juniors.

"You chaps can't appreciate good poetry when you hear it!" he snorted. "All you think about is gorging till you're bilious!"

"No need to gorge to produce that effect," said Johnny Bull. "Your poetry does that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Phyllis!" roared Coker, almost foaming at the mouth, "have I your permission to turn these grinning hyenas out of the study?"

"What's that?" said Phyllis, looking up suddenly from her place. "Can these boys throw you out of the study? Oh, of course, if they want to! Anything to oblige!"

The Famous Five, amid the delighted giggles of the girls, laid violent hands on the unfortunate Horace, and sent him whirling into the passage. Then five boots clumped all together on his retreating figure, and with a bull-like roar the potty poet of the Fifth landed on the hard floor with a crash second only to that caused by a high-explosive bomb. Then, laughing heartily, Harry Wharton & Co. returned to the interrupted feed.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"HIS HIGHNESS!"

EVERY
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ONE
PENNY.

"Thanks awfully!" said Phyllis Howell. "He badly wanted kicking! This is not the first time he has tried to make overtures of affection to me. He did so when we were skating the other week, and at the match to-day he kept on mumbling words of endearment. I don't think he'll worry us any more to-night."

And Miss Phyllis was right. Even Coker knew where to draw the line; and he spent the next hour or so in his study, brooding over his wrongs, and over the unaccountable lack of appreciation on the part of the modern girl.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner's Pupils!

"W HITHER bound?" Bolsover major asked that question of Skinner, in the Remove passage. The new captain had a mysterious box tucked under his arm, and he was looking unusually affable, despite the recent reverses he had sustained.

"Gather up the clans!" he said. "We're going to have a little flutter in the study."

"But Smithy—"

"Smithy's spending the evening with Rake, in the common-room. There's a chess tournament on, or something of that sort. Go and rout out the rest of the fellows, and we'll have a high old time!"

"What the merry thunder have you got in that box?" inquired Bolsover.

"Shush, my son! I've just been on an excursion to the village."

"To the Cross Keys?"

"Yes."

"Pshaw! And you've brought back some fags?"

"Fags!" snorted Skinner. "We don't deal in fags! They're only for infants of tender age. I've got a box of Flor de Turnip cigars, a pack of cards, and something else."

"What's the something else?"

"Wait, and see, as some long-winded Johnny put it," said Skinner. "First I'll take the fellows up, and we'll have a top-hole evening. I've got stacks of grub in from Mrs. Minnie, to set the ball rolling."

"Good man!"

And Bolsover dashed off to bid Skinner's favourites to the feast.

Quite a crowd of fellows accepted the new captain's generous invitation. Skinner was doing his level best to win popularity in the Remove, and he seemed to be succeeding, too. That his success was a mere flash in the pan he would not bring himself to believe for an instant.

Snoop and Stott and Hazeldene were the first arrivals at the study which Skinner shared with Vernon-Smith; then came Morgan, Elliott, Trevor, Trulove, and Fisher T. Fish. The Yankee junior was never averse to getting something for nothing, and he threw in his lot with Skinner right willingly.

"I guess this is great!" he said. "Our pal Skinner's some skipper!"

"Rather!"

"Make yourselves at home, you chaps!" beamed Skinner. "Lay the cloth, Snoopey, there's a good fellow! Out with the grub, there! All hands to the giddy pumps!"

"What-ho!"

And the cads of the Remove bustled round with a will.

"I say, you fellows—"

William George Bunter, the Peeping Tom of Greyfriars, peered into the study, his little round eyes gleaming at the sight of the tempting tuck, set out in rich array.

"Get out!" said Skinner shortly.

"Scout!"

"Vamoose the ranch!"

"Absquatulate!"

But Billy Bunter showed no intention of carrying out all or any of these injunctions. Instead, he advanced further into the study.

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Bolsover major reached out for a loaf, and poised it in the air threateningly.

"Getting dead in your old age?" he asked. "Bazz off! We've no use for a barrel!"

"Oh, really, Bolsover! Skinner's invited me to the spread—"

"Lies!" rapped out Skinner. "I wonder you've got the nerve to come in here with such whoppers! How will you go out—by the door or the window? Take your choice."

"I've come to stay—"

"We'll jolly soon see about that!" said Skinner grimly. "All together, you chaps!"

Half a dozen juniors made a sudden sweeping movement towards the Owl of the Remove, and he was precipitated into the passage without with considerable force.

"Owl! Yaroo! Beasts! Rotters! Chuckit!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter came to earth with a thud which shook every bone in his fat body.

"Serves you jolly well right!" roared Bolsover. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter struggled into a sitting posture, and shook his fat fist menacingly at the grinning juniors in the doorway.

"Just you wait!" he yelled. "I'll make you sit up for this!"

"Bow-wow!"

And the door closed with a slam which resounded the whole length of the Remove passage.

"So much for Bunter!" said Skinner. "Now we'll get on with the washing!"

It was indeed a bumper repeat, and one which was seldom excelled even in No. 1 Study. Skinner was stingy with his money, as a rule, but he never scrupled to pose as a Good Samaritan when it suited his purpose to do so.

On this particular evening he was liberal in the extreme.

"Now, you fellows," he began, when the merry clash of knife on fork had died away. "I'm going to introduce a new order of things in the Remove. Up till now, the fellows have followed Wharton's lead, and become too goody-goody for words! What is life without a little flutter now and then?"

"A wash-out!" said Stott emphatically. "Friend Stott has spoken truly! After this, I shall expect you all to be blades and dogs and goers—in short, to see life! What's wrong with smoking, anyway? Old Prout's everlastingly puffing at a fat cigar."

"There's a slight difference in Prout's age and our own," Elliott pointed out.

"Rate! We came out of long clothes years ago! Then there's cards. What's wrong with cards?"

"Nothing—nothing at all!" said Elliott hastily.

"Then let's pile in! We'll start off with banker. There's no skill required, but it's jolly exciting. Lock the door, Bolsover, old man!"

Bolsover locked the door, the table was cleared for action, and the cards were produced. Morgan and Elliott looked on rather shamefacedly. Their ways were not Skinner's ways. Both had considerable pretensions to decency, and did not care about playing cards for money; but to retract now would be to brand themselves as funks; and that was not to be thought of.

"Hand round the smokes, Snooty!" said Skinner.

"I—I say, I can't manage one of those beastly things!" said Trevor, looking askance at the Flor de Turnips. "I shall be bilious, after the feed I've just had!"

"Rats! Don't be a funk, Trevor, old fellow. Pile in!"

And Trevor piled in—very gingerly. He lighted the cigar and puffed at it, going almost green in the face as he did so.

"Like it?" asked Skinner.

"Grooooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The other fellows, too, tackled their cigars with veritable misgivings. They were not hardened to this sort of thing as Harold Skinner was, and in several cases it was the first cigar they had ever negotiated.

"Waal, I sww!" groaned Fisher T. Fish, blowing out a sickly-looking cloud of smoke. "I sorter calculate this'll interfere with my internals, just a few!"

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"Oh, puff up, for goodness' sake!" said Skinner. "You're like a lot of two-year-olds! These cigars are prime! I'm half-way through mine already!"

"Ugh! Yuh! Groo!" spluttered Trevor, whose complexion had undergone a startling change in colour. "I'm ill! Hang you, Skinner! My head's spinning round and round, and there's lights and things dancing in front of my eyes! Groooooogh!"

"Oh, turn off that beastly row!" said Skinner caustically.

"Better go to the window for a breath of fresh air," said Bolsover major. "This way!"

And he led the spluttering Trevor to the window, opening it wide. The wretched junior drank in great gulps of the cool night air.

He came away after a time, and tottered unsteadily to the door.

"Where are you going?" demanded Skinner.

"Anywhere, so long as I get out of this!" returned Trevor. "The atmosphere's simply stifling!"

"Come back, you silly duffer! I say—"

But Trevor had unlocked the door and vanished. He had had enough; and enough, so the proverb tells us, is as good as a feast.

"So much for that funk!" said Skinner, snapping his fingers derisively. "Now we'll get on with our game."

Banker is a game of sheer luck. At any rate, that was how Skinner found it. The pennies piled up on the table in front of him, and when he failed to win, the honours usually fell to Bolsover major.

Fisher T. Fish staggered to his feet at length. He, like Trevor, was green of countenance, and was evidently not in a position to appreciate the fragrant aroma of a Flor de Turnip.

"I—I guess I'm cleaned out!" he stammered.

"Don't be an ass, Fishy!" said Skinner. "We'll take your T.O.U.s."

"Nope! I guess I know when I've had enough!"

And the Yankee junior, his face distorted with suffering, followed the example Trevor had set some minutes previously.

"Party seems to be diminishing," observed Bolsover.

Skinner snorted.

"They can't help it, I s'pose. Here, I say, Treluce! Surely you're not going to leave us in the lurch!"

"I—I must!" almost wailed Treluce. "That cigar! It—it was awful! I feel like I did on the Dover steam-packet once! Lemme get out!"

"Go, then!" snarled Skinner viciously. "And don't trouble to show your face in this study again!"

"Thanks! I won't!" said Treluce.

And he went, slamming the door behind him.

Skinner returned to the game with a fierce frown. His precious society of gamblers was growing smaller by degrees and beautifully less. The Flor de Turnip cigars, and the loss of a considerable amount of pocket-money, had driven several of the players away, and the "little flutter," which was to have set Skinner's popularity upon a rock, was not proving exactly a howling success, after all!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter's Ruse!

"B-EASTS!" growled Billy Bunter.

The fat junior was feeling decidedly sore, both mentally and physically—mentally because he had not been one of the guests at Skinner's spread, and physically because of the rough handling he had received from the cads of the Remove.

For over an hour Bunter's brain had been at work, devising ways and means of getting even with Skinner & Co. Bunter's brain was a weird and wonderful affair. It was never active in the Form-room, under the gimlet eye of Mr. Quelch; but on certain occasions it was capable of evolving deep, dark plots, and this was one of them.

"I'll try the ventriloquism dodge," mused Bunter. "It's an old stunt, but it usually works. If only I can clear the rotters out of the study, I shall have a chance of getting at the grab. There's bound to be tons left, for



The bogus professional ripped off his wig and his blonde moustache, and smiled serenely. There was a startled gasp from Skinner & Co. "WIBLEY!" "My only hat!" "He's spooled us, the rotter!" (See Chapter 14.)

the beasts almost bought up Mother Mimble's shop—lock, stock, and barrel."

Chuckling softly to himself, the Owl of the Remove rolled along the passage in the direction of Skinner's study. Within, the game of banker was going strong, and Skinner's pile of winnings had put on flesh, so to speak.

"I'm cleaned out!" groaned Morgan, at last. "I wish to goodness I'd never played!"

"Hard cheese!" said Skinner condescendingly. "Don't look so down in the mouth about it, though. We'll take your I O U's, won't we, you fellows?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Might as well have an interval of a few minutes," said Bolsorver. "What is that mysterious stuff I saw you bringing in, Skinner?"

Skinner chuckled.

"Whisky!" he said.

"W-w-what?"

"We shall need a little refreshment after our exertions."

And Skinner produced the flask, and opened it. A strong smell of spirits pervaded the study.

Morgan jumped to his feet. The sight of the whisky was the red rag to a bull. Morgan had smoked and

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gambled that evening for the first time in his school career. Farther than that he refused to go.

"That's too thick, look you!" he exclaimed. "I'll cut off my right hand sooner than drink any of that stuff!"

"Hark at him," sneered Skinner—"hark at the ardent disciple of Good Little Georgie and Sinless Samuel! You'd better go and tie yourself to Priggy Wharton's apron-strings, Morgan!"

"Wharton's worth ten of you!" said Morgan, with emphasis. "It's a pity I didn't realise it before. No more of this gay dog bizney for me. I'm fed-up!"

And Morgan strode to the door and passed out into the passage. Billy Bunter, lurking without, just had time to dodge out of the way unobserved. Then he heard someone lock the door again on the inside, and prepared to put his little scheme into effect.

Clearing his throat, the Owl of the Remove rapped sharply on the door of the study.

"Who's there?" called Skinner, in alarm.

"It is I—Mr. Quelch, your Form-master!"

The voice resembled that of Mr. Quelch in detail. Skinner and his cronies turned pale. Thoughts of expulsion, with its attendant horrors, crept instantly into their minds.

"I have reason to believe," the voice went on, "that you are holding a beastial orgy in this study, Skinner.

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and that gambling and similar vices are being indulged in!"

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Skinner, in dismay.

"It's all up!" gasped Bolsover major. "We could clear the cards and things away, but the stench of the whisky would remain. We're done for, as sure as fate!"

"Will you not answer me?" went on the intruder, in a rasping voice. "I demand that this door be unlocked at once! You hear, Skinner?"

"It—it's all right, sir!" stuttered Skinner, with chattering teeth. "I'll open it right away!"

"That is the wisest decision you could make to," said the bogus Mr. Quelch. "You will proceed at once to my study, every one of you! I know exactly how many are within!"

Billy Bunter dodged at once into an adjacent doorway. After a brief delay, the door of Skinner's study was thrown open, and a procession of scared juniors streamed out into the passage.

"Quelch's gone!" said Stott. "He's waiting for us in his study, I suppose. How on earth did he manage to spot us? We shall be clucked out of Greyfriars on our neck for this!"

"And all Skinner's fault!" whined Snoop. "He organised everything!"

"Pile it on!" said Skinner bitterly. "Precious lot of supporters you are—I don't think! Why can't you face the music, you beastly worms?"

And, with much grumbling and groaning, the wretched gamblers wended their way to the Form-master's study.

When their retreating footsteps had died away, Billy Bunter came out of his hiding-place and entered Skinner's study. His fat face beamed like a full moon as he overhauled the contents of the cupboard. There was tucked in plenty, left over from the banquet of a few hours previously.

Bunter speedily made himself at home. He pitched into a giganitic rabbit-pie with feverish frenzy, and was at the top of his form. A cormorant or an ostrich would not have stood an "earthly" against Billy Bunter just then.

Followers had reached Mr. Quelch's study. The clucking of a typewriter could be heard within.

"Keep a stiff upper lip," urged Skinner, "and lie like Old Nick himself, if need be!"

"And that's the captain of the Remove!" muttered Bolsover. "What a shining example!"

Skinner rapped on the door of the study, and the deep tones of Mr. Quelch bade him enter. The Remove-master gave an exclamation of astonishment as the pale-faced procession swarmed into the room.

"Skinner! Bolsover! Snoop! What is the meaning of this?"

"We—weren't doing what you suspected us of, sir!" said Skinner.

"Boy! To what are you referring? Explain yourself instantly!"

"We—we were only having a bit of a feed, sir," stammered Skinner. "We weren't gambling, or smoking, or anything like that. We're above that sort of thing, sir!"

"Miles above it, sir!" added Bolsover.

Mr. Quelch looked flabbergasted.

"Are you mad, Skinner?" he thundered.

"Mum-mum-mad, sir?"

"Yes, mad, that you should come to me with such an extraordinary jargon of statements!"

"You told us to come, sir!"

"What? I did nothing of the kind!"

Skinner almost fell down.

"You didn't tell us to follow you to your study, sir?" he gasped.

"Decidedly not!"

"Then I—I'm blessed if I know what to make of it!" exclaimed Skinner.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"From your recent remarks," he said, "I gather that you have been holding high revel in your study, and that there has been a suggestion of gambling and smoking?"

"Nunno, sir!" said Skinner hastily.

"Then, why did you make mention of such degrading vices?"

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MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FREE TO READERS OF THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD," 2D. OUT TO-DAY.

"It was a—a sort of joke, sir," said Skinner feebly.

"What?"

Mr. Quelch looked simply murderous.

"You come here to disturb me in my work by playing a practical joke?" he rapped out. "I am astounded at such a piece of unparalleled impertinence! You will each receive a severe thrashing. You first, Skinner. Hold out your hand!"

Like a fellow in a dream Harold Skinner obeyed. Mr. Quelch took a tight grip of his cane and laid it on with tremendous energy.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Now the other hand!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

"Yaroooooh!"

"You next, Bolsover!"

The bully of the Remove roared with anguish as Mr. Quelch gave him a stinging half-dozen. Stott came next, and then Snoop, and their yells awoke the echoes. The rest of the party were dealt with in similar manner, and they retired, with direful groans, from the study.

"Yo-ow-ow!" moaned Skinner, who seemed to be trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife. "What a beast!"

"It couldn't have been Quelch who spoke through the keyhole, after all," said Bolsover. "It must have been that worm Bunter, with his rotten ventriloquism!"

"Great Scott! Then we'll jolly well slaughter him!" yelled Skinner. "Come on!"

But by the time the infuriated juniors reached Skinner's study Billy Bunter had discreetly made himself scarce, with as much rabbit pie inside him as he had been able to despatch at one sitting. Skinner & Co. at once set out to find him, but the search proved futile. Billy Bunter was too downy a bird to fall into the hands of the Amalekites at such a vital moment as that!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, as Harold Skinner came into the Remove dormitory that evening. "How's the captaincy going, Skinny?"

Skinner scowled.

"Dry up!" he said. "I haven't had half a chance to show what I can do yet."

"I don't know so much," said Bob. "You've shown us how to play hockey, and chance it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've also shown us how to wallop the Fourth in a pillow-fight," said Johnny Bull. "What's the next item on the programme?"

Skinner kicked off one of his boots with a vicious bang.

"Our luck's been out, so far," he said, "but we're not going to cave in yet, are we, you fellows?"

"No giddy feat!"

"We're backing up Skinny through thick and thin," averred Bolsover solemnly.

"More fools you!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Look here!" exclaimed Skinner suddenly. "I've got a wheeze. What about a raid on those Highlife boudoirs? We've wanted to get even with 'em for ages, but somehow or other they always seem to slip through our fingers. Suppose we go over to Highlife to-night, after lights out, and inflict on Ponsouby & Co. the greatest and most sensational raid of modern times?"

"My hat!"

"We'll smash up the studies, and goodness knows what!" continued Skinner, fired by the magnitude of the task. "What a score it'll be for the Remove!"

"Fathead!" interposed Johnny Bull. "You'll get smashed to a jelly. How d'you think a mere handful of fellows are going to get the upper hand of the entire Fourth Form at Highlife? You came a cropper against Temple & Co., and you'll come a much bigger one if you try this little game!"

"Rats!"

"Better take the whole of the Remove over," said Harry Wharton. "There would be some sense in that."

And we'll back you up, too. Ponsonby & Co. dearly want a good lesson."

"I can do without your help," said Skinner loftily. "You'd only make an awful muck-up of things. Cherry's elegant boots clumping about would give the show away before we started."

"Why, you—!" spluttered Bob. "This thing's going to be done off our bat, and without outside help. 'Nuff said!'"

The proposed raiders allowed a full hour to elapse after Wingate saw lights out, and then they dressed noiselessly in the darkness.

There were eight of them in all—a good number in itself, but quite inefficient against Ponsonby and his pals. Raids on Highcliffe were things to be wary of, unless the raiders were strongly represented—and even then they seldom came away very successful. Woe betide the juniors who allowed themselves to be caught within the confines of Highcliffe School at night-time!

"I say, you fellows—!" began Bunter, sitting up in bed.

"Hallo, the porpoise is awake!" said Bolsover, in great surprise. "Wonders will never cease!"

"Look here," said Bunter firmly, "I'm jolly well coming with you!"

"Not at any price!" answered Skinner. He had not yet exacted revenge for Bunter's ventriloquist trick, and did not feel at all amicably disposed towards the fat junior.

"Don't be mean to an old pal," said Bunter. "I'm coming along, and chance it. I bet there's plenty of good grub knocking about the junior studies at Highcliffe."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Harry Wharton & Co.

Billy Bunter began rapidly to dress. Bunter could be very determined on occasions, and this was one of them. This prospect of a delightful feed at Highcliffe was as balm of Gilead to him at that moment.

"Get back, you—your unsophisticated barrel!" roared Skinner.

Bunter merely chuckled, and fastened his necktie.

"Run for it!" muttered Bolsover. "Get outside and lock the door, and then the fat sponger can't follow us."

"No, you won't!" said Bunter, overhearing the remark. "If you dare go without me, I'll go and wake up Quelch, and tell him your plans for the night!"

"You rotten blackmailer!" roared Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha! He's got you in a cleft stick this time, Skinner," roared Bob Cherry.

In vain the cad of the Remove stormed and threatened and entreated. Bunter could not be brought to understand that his room was preferred to his company, and he persisted in having his own way.

"Come on, then, hang you!" said Skinner, at length. "We'll try and muddle through somehow."

And the members of the expedition left the dormitory. They descended the stairs, and got out via the box-room window.

Bunter kept up an animated conversation in the Close, and it became necessary for Bolsover to forcibly place his hand over the fat junior's mouth. It would have been fatal for Mr. Quelch or one of the other masters to discover what was afoot.

The school wall was scented, Bunter being hauled over with difficulty. Then the juniors started on the mile tramp to Highcliffe. The moon was high in the heavens, and it was a glorious night. Not a soul was encountered as the raiders traversed the long stretch of road.

"Can't we put Bunter out of the way?" murmured Stott.

"N.G.," said Skinner glumly. "He's sticking to us like a limpet, and there's nothing for it but to tolerate the fat beast."

"I say, you fellows, we'll go to Courtenay's study first," said the Owl of the Remove. "He usually keeps a first-rate supply of tuck."

"We've got no quarrel with Courtenay," said Skinner. "It's Ponsonby & Co. who are going through the mill. Here we are! Over you go, porpoise!"

And Skinner, with Bolsover's aid, heaved Billy Bunter up on to the wall which skirted the sacred precincts of Highcliffe.

One by one the juniors mounted, and dropped beneath the elms on the other side. Then Skinner mustered them together.

"Are we all here?" he asked. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 421.

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"Yes," said Bolsover. "All serene!"

And the party stole noiselessly towards the building. "I—I say! I don't feel like—ahem!—amazing things up to-night!" shivered Snoot. "There'll be the dickens to pay if we get caught."

Skinner swung round sharply.

"Any chap who's got no stomach for the bizney can go back," he said, in measured tones, "and he'll get jolly well scragged on our return."

That settled it. No one was anxious to be pumelled with Bolsover's heavy fists.

At the same time, the idea of raiding the rival school had lost much of its former glamour. It was easy enough to sit in the Remove dormitory and discuss a plan of campaign, but it was quite another thing to carry that plan of campaign into successful effect. Raids of this sort worked out very well—in theory; in practice they invariably came a cropper.

But Skinner and Bolsover, the prime movers of the escapade, were determined to see the thing through, and the other fellows had no option but to follow their lead, how ever distasteful the business seemed to them.

"How shall we start?" asked Bolsover.

"We'll wreck Pon's study first," was Skinner's reply.

The cad of the Remove had seldom betrayed the blackness of his character so completely as at that moment. He was supposed to be on terms of the closest intimacy with Cecil Ponsonby, and yet he did not scruple to turn his hand against a friend, so long as he could win honour and glory at Greyfriars by so doing.

"But—we'll make an awful row!" expostulated Hazeldene.

"Rats! We can smash up furniture without exactly waking the dead. Kim on!"

The study was reached without mishap, and Skinner switched on the electric light.

Pon's study was sumptuously furnished, as was only to be expected of a fellow lavishly supplied with pocket-money; and even Skinner felt just a twinge of regret at the idea of such wanton destruction. But his compunctions were only momentary.

Skinner started with the clock on the mantelpiece. He placed it on the floor, and methodically smashed it to atoms. The bookcase was treated in like manner; and during the process Bolsover and the others were engaged in sawing through the legs of the chairs.

The invaders would have experienced a very thin time of it if they had been caught just then. But not a soul came near the study, and the work of destruction proceeded unimpeded.

In a few moments the study was a complete wreck. Fragments of chairs and chunks of glass bestrewn the floor, and the table had been sawn into several parts. Even the volumes of Scott and Liddell were wrenched asunder, and the leaves disported themselves in all directions.

Then Skinner, with many chuckles, wrote out several inscriptions in blue ink, and stuck them up on the walls of the study. Such statements as "GREYFRIARS IS TOP DOG," "DOWN WITH HIGHCLIFFE!" and "WHAT PRICE THE REMOVE?" were posted up, pending Ponsonby's appearance in the morning.

"Now we'll deal with a few more studies," said Skinner, in tones of profound satisfaction.

"It's up to you to stop while there's time," hinted Hazeldene.

"Fiddlesticks! Come on!"

"Where's Bunter?" asked Bolsover suddenly.

"Goodness knows!" said Skinner, turning pale.

"Wonder where the silly idiot can have got to! Supposing he's gone to warn Pon that we're here, in order to get a reward?"

Bolsover looked simply murderous.

"I'll break every bone in his body, if he has!" he avowed.

But Skinner's surmise was incorrect. Bunter had other and more important things to do than give warnings. He had found his way to Frank Courtenay's study, and had discovered a horn of plenty therein. He was busily engaged in demolishing a huge cake which the Caterpillar had bought only that afternoon.

Bunter ate about a quarter of the cake, and it began

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to get monotonous to his palate. Not that Bunter was at all fastidious, but he sought, like Alexander of old, for fresh fields to conquer.

The fat junior went once more to the cupboard, and scanned the interior with greedy eyes. His fat face fairly beamed when he espied, on the top shelf, weighed down by many more good things, a box of preserved fruits.

Bunter dislodged a huge quantity of provisions which stood in the vicinity. Tins of pineapple and hefty jars of jam came hurtling down, crashing to fragments on the floor with a noise which resounded over half Highcliffe. Such a terrific hullabaloo would have been guaranteed to arouse even the celebrated Seven Sleepers.

Crash!

The sound was followed by a strange silence, during which Billy Bunter mopped at his perspiring brow with his handkerchief, his knees fairly knocking together with fright.

What if the noise had awakened the occupants of the Fourth-Form dormitory, which was comparatively close at hand?

Bunter strained his ears for a moment to listen; then his worst fears were confirmed. There was a hurried stampede down the stairs, and half a dozen pyjama-clad figures dashed into the study.

The Owl of the Remove was caught red-handed!

THE TENTH CHAPTER. Nemesis!

BUNTER!" The Highcliffians, headed by Ponsonby himself, almost fell down. What was the Owl of the Remove doing in an alien school in the watches of the night? The whole thing was astounding—

incredible!

"What the merry dickens—" gasped Pon.

Then he paused, at a loss for further speech.

"I—I say, you fellows," stammered Bunter feebly, his

face a sickly yellow. "I came over to—to warn you that some rotters in the Remove have come to smash up your study!"

Ponsonby stared at the speaker, then at the chaotic heap of provisions on the floor.

"You young liar!" he roared, finding his voice at last. "Do you think you can take us in with a tale like that? We've caught you in the very act of stealing grub!"

"I wasn't! I didn't!" howled Bunter, quaking in his shoes with abject terror. "I looked in to see if you were here!"

"Yes, you're likely to find us in Courtenay's study in the middle of the night—I don't think!" sneered Gadsby. "This is a clear case of theft, you fellows! We're justified in sending this podgy beast back to Greyfriars—more dead than alive!"

"Ow!"

"Collar him!" roared Pon.

And he and Gadsby and Vavasour, with Monson and Merton and Drury, made a sudden rush at the unfortunate raider.

"Stop!" gasped Bunter, in alarm. "I tell you I came over here with the best of intentions! Lemme alone, you beasts, or I sha'n't tell you where you'll find Skinner and the others!"

"He must be romancing!" said Ponsonby incredulously. "It ain't possible that my pal Skinner would come over here to work off a jape on us! Still, we'll make certain. Just run round to my study, Gaddy, and see that everything's all right."

Gadsby hastily quitted Courtenay's study, and sped along the passage. He returned a moment later, his face livid with passion.

"They've smashed up the study, Pon!" he exclaimed. "Every giddy thing! The place is a perfect wreck! Quick! Let's nail 'em before they have a chance to get away!"

Leaving Merton and Drury to look after Bunter, the rest of the Highcliffians dashed out into the quadrangle. They were only just in time.

Skinner & Co. were fleeing for their lives towards the

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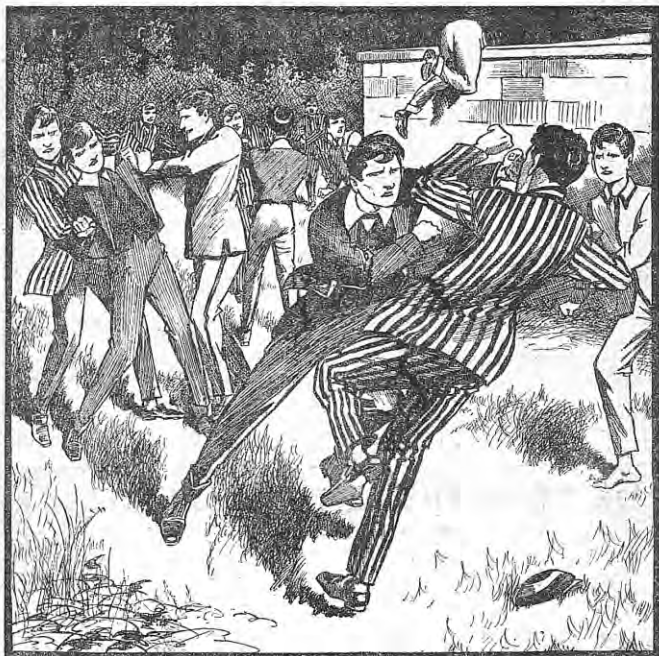
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With the exception of Bolsover, the Greyfriars fellows were not fighting men; but fear lent zest to their blows on this occasion. "Yaroooh!" roared Pon, as Skinner's bony knuckles crashed into his face. "Give 'em socks, you fellows!" *(See Chapter 10.)*

school wall. The Highcliffians gave hot chase, and came up to them just as they were about to clamber over into the roadway—and safely!

A fierce fight followed. With the exception of Bolsover, the Greyfriars fellows present were not fighting-men; but fear lent zest to their blows on this occasion, and they had the advantage numerically.

"Yaroooh!" roared Pon, as Skinner's bony knuckles crashed into his face. "Give 'em socks, you fellows!"

The Highcliffians were in a parlous state. Bolsover's big fists were wreaking great havoc, and it looked as if the invaders would escape scot free, after all.

But reinforcements were at hand. Courtenay and De Courcy and Smithson and Shelley came rushing to the rescue, and the tide of battle turned with a vengeance!

Luckily, the combat was being enacted too far away from the main building to attract any masters to the scene; and, presently, to their intense satisfaction, the Highcliffians found they had gained the upper hand.

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"Pax!" howled Skinner, recoiling from a smashing right-hander of the Caterpillar's. "We give in!"

"About time, my dear fellow!" said De Courcy. "Not much good renewin' the slaughter, begad!"

"Yank 'em along!" commanded Pon. "If anybody attempts to break loose, dot him on the boko!"

"Where shall we take 'em?" asked Vavasour.

"To the study they've seen fit to smash up!" said Pon. "We'll make 'em feel that life's not worth living!"

"You'll bring some of the masters to the spot if you kick up a row!" warned Skinner.

"Serve you jolly well right! If Mobby comes along he'll approve of our action, and you'll get reported to your headmaster, and sacked from Greyfriars!"

"Grooh!"

"We're quite indifferent whether anybody comes along or not. If you make a commotion while we're giving you your deserts you'll only have yourselves to blame!"

"Absolutely!" said Vavasour.

The strange procession reached the wrecked study, and the Highcliffians fairly danced with rage as they gazed on that scene of wholesale destruction. It could not have been worse if the Crown Prince had paid a recent visit to the spot.

Even Frank Courtenay and the Caterpillar, though they were on the worst of terms with Ponsonby, could not help thinking that Skinner's raid was too thick. Several pounds' worth of damage had been done, and it would take weeks to restore the study to anything approaching order again.

"String the rotters up, first of all!" ordered Pon, in concentrated tones of anger. "They shall pay dearly for this!"

Whilst the luckless juniors were being individually trussed up, Merton and Drury appeared on the scene with Billy Bunter, who shared a similar fate.

"Now, then," said Ponsonby, "up the chimney with 'em!"

The Caterpillar chuckled.

"We're openin' the innings in fine style!" he observed. "Pon seems just a trifle put out this evenin', an' I can quite understand it. Who's the first victim, begad?"

"Skinner!" snarled Pon savagely.

And the captain of the Remove was seized by many hands and thrust bodily up the chimney. A perfect avalanche of soot descended upon him, and he spluttered and choked as if in the throes of asphyxiation.

When at last he was lowered into the firegrate, he was perfectly unrecognisable. His hair and clothes were clotted with soot, and his face was as black as the ace of spades. Even the incensed Highcliffians could scarce forbear to grin.

Bolsover's turn came next. It was rather a tight squeeze to get his burly frame up the chimney, and he suffered considerably in the process, his arms and shoulders being severely bruised.

Then the rest of the raiders were submitted to the same ordeal, and they looked like a collection of Christy Minstrels when the avengers had finished.

But that was only the first stage of the proceedings. Ponsonby proceeded to the cupboard, and took therefrom a miscellaneous assortment, comprising jam, ink, honey, eggs, and treacle. Despite the wild expostulations of Skinner & Co., the fearful mass of compounds was plastered about their faces and hair until they could scarcely breathe or see.

Then, just as the victims were beginning to congratulate themselves that they had survived the worst part of the punishment, Ponsonby armed himself with a cricket-stump.

"Put 'em across the table!" he said tersely. "Skinner first!"

The leader of the ill-fated expedition was roughly seized and placed in a horizontal position across the table. Then Ponsonby proceeded to castigate him without mercy.

Skinner was in a terrible predicament. He well knew that if he shrieked or yelled Mr. Mobbs might come on the scene—a state of affairs which would probably mean his expulsion from Greyfriars; yet he felt an overwhelming desire, as the heavy blows descended with relentless vigour, to yell at the top of his lungs.

Ponsonby gave him a dozen strokes in all, and was

panting and perspiring by the time he had finished. Then he extended the cricket-stump to De Courcy.

"Give Bolsover a good round dozen!" he gasped.

The Caterpillar shook his head, and declined the proffered stump.

"I should make a poor executioner, Pon," he said. "I prefer to take a seat in the dress-circle an' watch the performance. It's an interestin' scene, very!"

Pon granted, and handed the stump to Gadsby, who subjected Bolsover to the same merciless flogging as Harold Skinner had undergone.

It was a terrible punishment, inflicted with all the strength of Gadsby's right arm; but Courtenay and the Caterpillar did not intervene.

Snoop and Stott and a few others would have bolted, but their bonds prevented them; and they looked on with palpitating hearts as the groaning Bolsover was hurled into a corner.

"Snoop next!" said Ponsonby. "Your turn with the stump, Vav!" Lay 'em on hot and strong!"

"Oh, absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

And he belaboured the wretched Snoop until his arm ached.

The hapless victim could not refrain from yelling, but the closed door was his salvation. The sleeping quarters of Mr. Mobbs were some distance away, and the sounds did not—fortunately for Sidney James Snoop—penetrate as far as his room.

Stott yelled, too, and so did Hazeldene, while Fisher T. Fish fairly screeched. But Billy Bunter beat the three of them out of time. Merton was the executioner in his case, and he found it difficult to miss. The stump descended on Bunter's portly person with sickening thuds, and even the Caterpillar, cool and urbane as he was, shivered a little as he witnessed that terrible chastisement.

The painful scene was over at last, and the Greyfriars juniors lay groaning and gasping on the floor. Bitterly they rued themselves of having undertaken the raid. It was the most terrific punishment that had ever been meted out in the history of Highcliff School.

"Ow-ow-ow-ow!" moaned Billy Bunter.

"Oh! Yah! Groo!" gasped Bolsover.

"Sounds charmin', don't it?" grinned the Caterpillar. "It's a cut between a pigsty an' a farmyard! I think that about closes the entertainment, Pon, dear boy! Let the brutes go!"

Ponsonby surveyed the blackened and discomfited gang with a grim expression on his face.

"I don't think you'll pay us another visit of this sort," he said. "If you do, you'll go through tortures which'll make to-night's seem trifling by comparison! Now get out!"

"How can we," snarled Bolsover, "when we're trussed up like a lot of fowls?"

Ponsonby severed the bonds with his penknife, and the unhappy raiders tottered out into the quad. In their bruised and agitated condition they found it an almost superhuman task to scale the school wall; but the operation was successfully manoeuvred at last, and they staggered away from the scene of their undoing, feeling, in very truth, that life was not worth living.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. A Riff in the Lute!

BOLSOVER MAJOR was the first to find his voice after the unpleasant exit from Highcliff. He turned viciously upon Harold Skinner.

"This was all your doing!" he growled, "Blessed fine captain you are, to lead us into a hornet's nest like that!"

"How was I to know the ends would spot us?" retorted Skinner. "Bunter was to blame. The fat boulder made enough row for fifty, and woke the Highcliff beats up!"

"I didn't!" growled Bunter. "I was as quiet as a mouse all the time! It was you claps smashing up Ponsonby's study that caused us to be howled out!"

"Anyway, we got it in the neck!" snorted Bolsover. "Blessed if I feel like backing you up after this, Skinner!"

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"Nor I," added Snoop and Stott and Trevor together. "I guess the whole thing was a howling wash-out!" moaned Fisher T. Fish, caressing his injured parts. "You on Wharton's side after this! Just a few! I reckon you're a slab-sided galoot, Skinner, some!"

Skinner made no reply. His popularity was considerably on the wane, and he knew it. The precious schemes he had so dearly cherished for permanently ruling the roost in the Remove came tumbling about his ears. He had proved everything the captain of a Form should not have been. First the pillow-fight had been an ignominious failure, then the hockey match, and now the raid on Highecliffe. He could never hope to live down such a crushing series of reverses.

But he had one road to lean upon. On Saturday the Claremont team was coming over, and if only he could lead his followers to victory on the football-field against Teddy Baxter & Co., it would undoubtedly be a big feather in his cap. The fact that he would be leading a team of freaks never dawned upon him.

"Blessed if I don't feel like rolling you in that ditch yonder!" growled Bolsover. "Come on, you chaps! Lead a hand!"

"Cave!" hissed Skinner suddenly.

And the startled juniors, looking round, beheld the portly figure of Police-constable Tozer waddling along the road in their wake.

"Run for it!" muttered Bolsover. "Run for your giddy lives!"

"I—I can't run!" muttered Bunter.

Without waiting time in words, Bolsover and Stott each gripped one of the fat junior's hands, and yanked him along. It would have been fatal for them all for the constable to have caught Bunter just then.

"Hi! Young rips! Come back!" raved Tozer. "My heye! Wot's a lot o' black boys doin' 'ere at this 'our o' night, I should like to know?"

But the black boys certainly had no intention of encountering the arm of the law. They raced on with all speed, and by the time they came abreast of the Greyfriars School wall the worthy constable was puffing and panting nearly a quarter of a mile behind.

One o'clock boomed out from behind the old clock-tower as the Removites clambered over into the Close. Every light at Greyfriars had long since been extinguished. Even Dr. Locke, who was alleged to burn midnight oil in gallons, had retired to rest.

Cautionously the juniors made their way to the box-room window. They clambered through, and ascended the stairs to the Remove dormitory.

"Keep as quiet as mice!" warned Skinner. "If the bouncers wake up and find us in this state they'll never let us hear the end of it!"

Fortune favoured the party for some little time. Not a soul stirred as they entered the dormitory. But they yet had to scrub their blackened, soot-begrimed faces, and it was quite possible that somebody would wake up during the process.

All went well until Bunter took a hand. The fat junior poised a jug brimful of water in the air, preparatory to pouring it into the basin, when suddenly a fellow cried out in his sleep.

That did it. Thoroughly unnerved, Bunter relaxed his grip of the handle of the jug, and it went crashing to the floor with a terrific report, while water flowed freely in all directions.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came in sleepy tones from Bob Cherry. "What's the little game?"

"You clumsy barrel!" hissed Skinner in Bunter's ear. The mischief was done now. A dozen fellows, started from their slumbers by the crashing of earthenware, inquired what was the matter. Candles were lighted in different parts of the dormitory, and a murmur of amazement arose as the fellows sighted Skinner & Co.

"What the merry dickens—" gasped Wharton. "Looks as if we've been invaded by niggers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Johnny Bull. "It's Skinner's gang, come back from Highecliffe!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"What disgusting wooks!"

"They look as if they'd just come out of a mangle!" chuckled Squiff. "What in thunder's happened?"

"Find out!" snarled Skinner.

"Did you work the giddy oracle?" inquired Bob Cherry. "Where's the scalps of Pomonby & Co.?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"HIS HIGHNESS!"

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"That unspeakable ass Bunter gave us away!" growled Bolsover. "He nearly pulled a cupboard down, and woke up half Highecliffe!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And now we'll jolly well bump the fat idiot!" said Bolsover.

"I—I say! Lemme off!" gasped Bunter. "No giddy fear! All together, you fellows!"

Bump!

Bunter came to earth with a crash that shook the dormitory.

"Yarooooooh!" he roared.

"Guess we'll give him another!" said Fisher T. Fish.

And Bunter descended on the hard floor a second time, yelling like a dervish.

"Once more for luck!" sang out Skinner.

Bump!

The Owl of the Remove was already severely bruised, for the fall on the floor had done great damage to his fat person. His present punishment therefore seemed doubly acute.

"Blessed if I'm ever going to join hands with Skinner in any more of his precious schemes!" said Hazeldene, as Bunter crawled into bed with dire groans of anguish.

"Nuff's as good as a feast!"

"But you'll play goal on Saturday against Claremont?" asked Skinner, anxiously.

Hazel brightened up.

"I'll do that all right!" he said. "But don't ask me to go through another night like this again!"

"It looks as though Pon nailed you," said Wharton.

"I should think he did! We were licked, and scotched, and treacheed, and goodness knows what. The sooner you come back to the captaincy, Wharton, the better!"

Skinner scowled. It is not a nice experience to find one's supporters gradually slipping away. Unless Claremont was defeated, the fellows were pretty certain to vote against Skinner's retaining the captaincy; and in that case there would be much weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Just you wait!" said Skinner impressively. "When we've sent Claremont home with their tails between their legs, you chaps will realise that I'm the right man in the right place. I've had a little bad luck so far, but I shall make no mistake over the footer match. There's going to be no 6-1 reverse this time, like you chaps had last Saturday!"

"No; Claremont will probably go well into double figures!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner said no more. He was very busily occupied during the next half-hour, in company with his followers, in violent rubbing and scrubbing. Even at the end of that time the black was not altogether eradicated from the faces of the unfortunate raiders; but they had at least succeeded in making themselves look passably respectable, and were not sorry to rest their aching limbs between the sheets and to sink into the peaceful arms of Morpheus.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Skinner's Last Chance!

"WHILE there's life, there's hope!"

Harold Skinner addressed that encouraging remark to his cronies next day. A bumper repast had been prepared in Skinner's study—with no Flor de Turnip cigars to follow this time. Bolsover major saw to that.

They were discussing the forthcoming match with Teddy Baxter & Co., and no one, save Skinner, was optimistic. The Claremont heroes were only small fellows, who should by rights have been playing Dicky Nugent & Co. rather than the Greyfriars Remove; yet they were sound footballers, every one of them, and even Skinner's closest pals were not exactly entranced with the prospect that lay before them.

"Blessed if I see how we're going to avoid a licking!" said Bolsover. "If a team of girls can lick us at hockey, we don't stand an earthly against a full-blown side like Claremont!"

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

"But hockey ain't footer, is it?" said Skinner witheringly. "I tell you we shall simply romp home. Just you leave it to your Uncle Harold!"

"What sort of a wheeze have you got in your noddle now?" inquired Stott.

Skinner gave a low chuckle.

"It's not at all a bad stunt," he said. "We only stand a moderate chance with our present eleven, I know; but suppose we had a professional player in the side?"

Bolsover gave a jump.

"What on earth are you driving at?" he exclaimed.

"Listen, my son! I happen to know that Sammy Steer, the boy professional, is staying at the Blackbird—that pub down by the river, you know. He's a jolly decent chap, and up till the war was a prominent player in a well-known League team. If I could persuade him to play for us, we'd win hands down!"

Bolsover drew a deep breath.

"My hat!" he murmured. "What a wheeze, if only it can be worked!"

"You leave it to me," said Skinner, with a knowing grin. "I'll fix things up with Steer all right."

"But I—I say! Isn't that playing it rather low?" said Haseldene uneasily. "We're supposed to be strictly a Remove side, and not to solicit outside help."

"Stuff and nonsense! The Claremont fellows have never played against the Remove before, and they're not to know who Steer is. They'll naturally jump to the conclusion that he's a Removeite, like ourselves!"

"But Wharton and his set will know!" expostulated Snop.

"And they'd make things jolly warm for us!"

"Rats! We'll spring him on them at the last minute, and they won't dare to make a scene in front of the Claremont fellows. Then, with Sammy Steer's help, we shall win handsomely, and it'll strengthen my position as skipper. We simply must pull off the match, at all hazards! If we fail, then I shall be chucked out of the captaincy on my neck!"

"You say this chap Steer's a boy?" inquired Stott.

Skinner nodded.

"He's only as big as ourselves," he said. "Claremont will never tumble to it. And Wharton & Co. will forgive us for playing him, if we happen to win."

That was where Skinner made a grievous mistake. He had yet to learn that the Famous Five, though not prigs, could not tolerate any action that wasn't playing the game.

"It was Banks, at the Cross Keys, who put me on to this chap," said Skinner. "I haven't seen Steer myself, but he's been described to me. I'll go over to the Blackbird on my jigger in the morning, and make all arrangements. I'll mean whacking out a quid or so to get him to play; but what's a quid in a crisis like this? You'll all keep this affair awfully dark, of course?"

"Awfully, fearfully dark!" said Bolsover solemnly.

But there was one person who hadn't the remotest idea of keeping it dark, and that person was William George Bunter. For the past twenty minutes the fat junior had occupied himself at the keyhole, and had been listening with all his ears.

Bunter had many wrongs to avenge. He had been severely bumped in the dorm the previous night, and Skinner had refused to allow him to participate in the feed that was now under way. All this made Bunter feel decidedly sore, and he resolved to get even with the scheming Skinner without delay.

"So they're going to bag a pro, are they?" said Bunter, with a grim chuckle. "Wharton & Co. will be interested to hear this. He, he, he!"

And the Owl of the Remove scuttled away to No. 1 Study.

Harry Wharton & Co. were roasting chestnuts before a blazing fire when Bunter entered. They had had a slack time since Skinner took over the reins of office, for the cad of the Remove had not invited them to share in anything that was going.

"Scat!" said Bob Cherry, poising a pat of butter threateningly as Bunter entered.

Billy Bunter blinked at the speaker through his big spectacles.

"I say, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "Don't be a set

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of beasts. I've got news—jolly important news—which I think it's only right you should know!"

"Trot it out!" said Nugent.

Bunter hesitated.

"Can I have a—ahem!—a little snack first?" he inquired cautiously.

"You'll find some jam-tarts in the cupboard," said Wharton, "and if you're spooning us, look out for squalls!"

"I'm not spooning," said Bunter, helping himself liberally to the tarts. "I happened to be passing Skinner's study."

"And you spied through the keyhole, I suppose?" grinned Johnny Bull.

"The spyness was terrific!"

"I wasn't spying!" said Bunter indignantly. "How could a chap help hearing what was said, when Skinner was bawling at the top of his voice?"

"Go on! What did he say?" asked Wharton.

"He was talking about the Claremont match. He knew his fifth-rate team didn't stand an earthly as it stood, so he's decided to bring in a professional."

"What!"

"It's a fact," said Bunter. "Honest Injun! The chap they're going to bribe to play is staying at the Blackbird. His name's Steer—Sammy Steer. Skinner's going over to-morrow morning to try and get him to play, so that they can kick Claremont."

"My hat!"

The juniors stared at each other in blank astonishment. Their first thoughts were that the fat junior was ruminating. But it was highly improbable that the Owl of the Remove would invent such a story without any apparent reason.

"That's the limit!" said Bob Cherry. "The absolute giddy limit! They're going to try and win the match by a foul trick!"

"And they're relying on us not to give the game away to Teddy Baxter & Co.!" said Wharton, frowning. "What a set of rotters!"

"We must nip their little plot in the bud, that's all," said Johnny Bull. "Thanks for the tip, Bunter. You can wolf the whole of the tarts, if you like!"

And Bunter, with a self-satisfied smirk, whipped up the bag and quitted the study, his fat face radiant.

The Famous Five were silent for some moments. They were thinking hard.

Presently Bob Cherry gave a low chuckle. The chuckle became gradually louder, working up to a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tell us where the funny part comes in," said Nugent, "and we'll laugh too."

"It's a wheeze!" said Bob, his eyes sparkling. "I'll tell you how we can score over our friend Skinner."

"How?" asked the juniors eagerly.

"This is the idea," said Bob. "Wibley's a rattling good impersonator. No one can touch him in that particular line. Well, supposing he dresses up as this chap Steer—who I don't suppose Skinner's ever seen—and plays in the match? He can put up a putrid game, and Skinner will find himself let down properly. How does that strike you?"

"Topping!" said Wharton. "There's only one drawback that I can see. What's going to be done about the genuine Sammy Steer?"

"We shall have to forestall Skinner, and see him to-night," said Bob. "Then we can explain everything to him, and give him a quid, or however much he demands. We can soon raise the cash, with a whip-round."

"Good egg!"

"You and I will go over, Harry. There's just time to get to the Blackbird and back before locking-up."

And the two chums hastened to the cycle-shed for their machines. Gossiping let them out of gates, and they sped away down the deserted road, chuckling softly to themselves. Harold Skinner was destined to receive, on the morrow, one of the worst shocks he had ever experienced in the course of his school career.

BOB CHERRY'S wheeze worked like a charm. The juniors found Sammy Steer to be quite a decent fellow, and he readily entered into the scheme. He was certainly not a boy, as Skinner had been informed, for he sported quite a mature moustache.

"I don't think I should have played for Master Skinner, if he'd asked me," he said. "I'm not a believer in unfair tactics of that sort. Just send Master Wibley along fairly early to-morrow, and I'll give him some togs. He'll bring make-up, of course?"

Wharton nodded.

"He's just about your height," he said, "so there won't be much trouble. How much do you want for the job?"

"Nix!" said the professional promptly.

"Oh, come off! We can't expect you to put yourself out for nothing. Wouldn't a quid be acceptable?"

Sammy Steer flushed.

"Well, to tell the truth, it wouldn't come amiss," he said frankly. "Professional football's fallen on bad times. They won't have me in the Army, because of a varicose vein in my leg, so I'm obliged to work in the

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The landlord departed, and reappeared a moment later, requesting Skinner to enter the little parlour.

A young, athletic-looking fellow rose to meet the Greyfriars junior. He extended his hand cordially.

"What can I do for you, young shaver?" he asked genially.

Skinner glanced round to make sure that no one was within earshot, and then plunged into his subject.

"Will you play for a junior team this afternoon, Mr. Steer, if I make it worth your while?" he asked.

"Certainly!" said the professional, at once.

"I understand from Banks that you're a star player?"

"Pretty much so. I did yeoman service for Bluecastle United prior to the war."

"But I was told you were attached to a London club!" said Skinner, in astonishment.

The footballer flushed, and shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

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munition factory at Wapshot. The pay's not princely, but I can just manage to keep my head above water."

"In that case, I must insist upon your taking this sovereign," said Harry, pressing it into the pro's hand.

Sammy Steer thanked the Famous Five profusely, and they went back to Greyfriars feeling very satisfied.

They had no compunctions whatever in working off such a jape on the rascally Skinner. Wibley's wilfully bad play might mean a crushing reverse for the freaks; but Skinner would only have himself to blame for his rascality. It would have been most unfair to expect Teddy Baxter and his Claremont chums to face a team in whose ranks was a skilled professional.

Skinner slept soundly that night, and dreamed of a gigantic victory on the morrow. Bolsover major, and the rest of the fellows who were in the know, also felt hugely elated.

The cad of the Remove cycled over to the Blackbird the following morning in a state of high good-humour.

"Is Mr. Steer in?" he inquired of the landlord.

"Yessir. Wet name shall I give 'im, sir?"

"Skinner, of Greyfriars School."

"Werry good, sir!"

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NEXT MONDAY—

"HIS HIGHNESS!"

"I—er—that is to say, I was transferred!" he stammered.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter! One team's as good as another, I suppose. The fact is, we're playing rather a hot team of schoolboys this afternoon, and could never hope to beat 'em off our own bat. With your help, however, we ought to pull the game off all right. You'll come?"

"Like a shot!"

"That's good. Here's a quid for your trouble."

"I'd prefer to take it after the match," said Mr. Steer.

"Just as you like. Have you any togs at hand?"

The footballer nodded.

"I'll run upstairs and change at once, if you'll wait a minute," he said.

Skinner nodded, and picking up a sporting paper, he started to read.

The cad of the Remove would have been greatly surprised had he been able to follow the movements of his recent companion, who, mounting the stairs three at a time, came face to face with a fellow of exactly his own size and appearance.

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

"How did it go?" asked the genuine Sammy Steer.

"Like a charm!" said Wibley. "I nearly let myself in for it once by saying I'd played for Bluecastle United, but he hasn't twigged anything."

Sammy Steer chuckled.

"Good biz!" he said. "Come on, and I'll give you some centre tops!"

Wibley speedily discarded the check suit he was wearing, and donned the knickers and jersey which the professional took from a drawer.

"You'll do!" said Sammy Steer admiringly. "Good-bye, and good luck!"

The couple shook hands, and then the bogus professional borrowed Steer's bicycle and rode with Skinner to Greysfriars.

Skinner had been careful to fix their arrival at the time the match was due to commence. He would then be safe from any interference on the part of Harry Wharton & Co. But the latter did not seem to want to interfere. They professed to look greatly surprised on seeing the stranger Skinner had brought with him, and that was all.

Teddy Baxter & Co. had arrived by brake from Claremont, and they looked wonderfully fit and ruddy. Teddy Baxter himself was an orphan boy, who had been installed at a public school by Ferrers Locke, the famous detective. He had gone first of all to St. Jim's, but finding himself unpopular, had proceeded to Claremont, where he had literally taken the school by storm. Within a few months of his arrival he had gained the captaincy of his Form; and Dick Merivale, Jack Marsh, and Aubrey St. Clair, his chief chums, were immensely fond of the former street-arab, who had not yet thrown off his Cockney dialect.

George Wingate, who was referee, came up to Skinner.

"Who's that chap?" he asked, indicating the disguised Wibley.

"A—a cousin of mine, Wingate!" stammered Skinner.

"He has no right to be playing for the Remove, has he?"

"I thought it would be all right in this case, as it's an unimportant match."

Wingate frowned.

"I scarcely like to turn the chap away, now he's here," he said; "but in future please confine your selection to Greysfriars fellows."

"Very well, Wingate."

Teddy Baxter won the toss, and the game opened in vigorous fashion. For a time the Friars fully held their own. They possessed the twofold advantage of height and weight, besides being on their native heath.

Skinner watched Sammy Steer with anxious eyes. Sammy was centre-forward, and, having heard his praises chanted so often by Banks, the bookie, Skinner fully expected to see him dash through and score quite early in the proceedings. Minute after minute passed, however, and Sammy Steer never once looked like scoring. He seemed to be strangely preoccupied, and scarcely kicked the ball at all.

The first goal came from the foot of Dick Merivale twenty minutes from the start. The Claremont forwards combined in excellent fashion, and swooped down upon their opponents' goal. Bolsover major, at back, sent Teddy Baxter spinning, but not before the junior had touched the ball to Merivale. The latter sent in a scorching shot at point-blank range, and Hazel was bent all the way.

"Goal!"

Skinner's face was a study as the ball was returned to the centre of the field. He swung round savagely upon Sammy Steer.

"Play up, for goodness' sake!" he exclaimed. "You're giving as miserable an exhibition as possible! You can't pass, shoot, rush, or tackle, and yet you call yourself a giddy professional!"

"I may be a little off-colour," was the calm reply. "A chap can't always touch the top of his form, and I haven't played in League football since—well, as far back as I can remember!"

Skinner gave a start.

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"But you told me you played up to the outbreak of war!" he exclaimed.

"Did I? Then I must have been drinking, or something, at the time."

"Drinking!" echoed Skinner, aghast. "You've been taking spirits and stuff just before a footer match? Bl-m-m-m-y hat!"

Sammy Steer merely smiled, and the game was set in motion once more.

Claremont played up strongly, spurred on by their early success. They were a splendid side, with a brisk, bustling half-back line and a pair of speedy wingers.

The Friars, on the other hand, played poor football. Snoop and Stott repeatedly showed the white feather, and Skinner himself had no more idea of the game than a lawyer has of controlling an army. The opposing forwards found the net twice again before the interval, and Skinner looked almost blue as he limped off the field.

"Stick it, Skinner!" said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "You only want four goals to pull the game out of the fire! That new chap'll get 'em for you, if you ask him nicely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The cad of the Remove was in a royal rage. He confronted Sammy Steer with blazing eyes.

"Why don't you do something?" he demanded harshly.

"Can't you see we're getting licked?"

"There's plenty of time yet for things to happen," was the rejoinder. "You leave it to me. I'll make things lively in the second half!"

And Wibley did! He played with tremendous energy, but, unfortunately, his efforts were not rightly directed. He charged his own men off the ball on countless occasions, and frequently took a mighty kick in the wrong direction. Skinner was almost weeping with rage.

On one occasion Trevor had an open goal, and would have undoubtedly scored had not Sammy Steer sent him spinning to the ground, thus allowing the Claremont right-back to clear.

"Hang him!" muttered Skinner savagely.

Time and again Sammy Steer had opportunities of doing good. Time and again he ignored them. His play would have moved angels to tears. Charging blindly at his own men, sending the ball with a flying kick towards his own goal, he was about the most ludicrous object ever seen on the Greysfriars football ground. As Bob Cherry remarked, one touch of Sammy made the whole crowd grin!

The chums of Claremont, warming to their work, fired in shot after shot with deadly effect. The score presently stood at six to nil, and Skinner was tearing his hair. He had commissioned a professional footballer, thinking to pave a permanent way to the captaincy by so doing, and the professional had played him false.

And Skinner's thoughts, as Teddy Baxter & Co. rained in their ceaseless avalanche of shots, were black as midnight.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Ring Out the False, Ring In the True!

"TEN to nil!" sobbed Bob Cherry when the players came off the field a few moments later. "What a game!"

Skinner & Co., mud-begrimed and furious, looked daggers at Sammy Steer, who trotted along to the dressing-room in a state of delightful unconcern.

"Come back!" roared Bolsover major angrily. "What d'ye mean by putting up such a dud show? Explain yourself, you rotter!"

The professional inclined his head, and made a mocking bow to the infuriated juniors.

"That's too thick!" said Skinner fiercely. "Rush-the cad!"

"But the Claremont chaps—"

"Can go to Jericho! Come on!"

And the incensed footballers made a dash at the man who let them down.

Another moment and Sammy Steer would have experienced a decidedly warm time of it; but Harry Wharton & Co., scenting trouble, came dashing to the spot.

"Stand back!" roared Bolsover. "We want to deal

with this chap! Professional footballer, indeed! He knows no more about the game than a new-born pup!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The bogus professional ripped off his wig and blonde moustache, and smiled serenely.

There was a startled gasp from Skinner & Co.

"WIBLEY!"

"My only hat!"

"He's spoofed us, the rotter!"

"Waal, I swear!" gasped Fisher T. Fish. "This beats the band, some!"

With a roar of rage, Bolsover major hurled himself upon the clever impersonator of the Remove. Skinner and the rest followed. They were out for blood with a vengeance!

But the Famous Five intervened. They lined up in front of Wibley and hit out straight from the shoulder. Bolsover major rolled in the mud, and Skinner and Snoop and Stolt joined him.

The rest of the Removites simply shrieked with laughter when they were acquainted with details of the hoax. It was the last nail in Skinner's coffin. Since his appointment to the captaincy he had tried his hand at several things, only to come an undignified cropper each time. The pillow-fight against Temple & Co., the hockey match with Cliff House, the raid on Highlife, and, lastly, the match with Claremont had all proved ignominious failures, and even Skinner's closest cronies were not likely to rally round the banner and support his claims to the captaincy after that!

The Famous Five, with many chuckles, turned away, leaving the cads of the Remove to sort themselves out, and make themselves presentable once more.

"When we come 'ere agen," said Teddy Baxter, with a grin, "we 'ope as 'ow we can play the proper team—not a set of duds wot knows nothink about the game."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We shall be happy to play you any time you like," he said. "It was your day out to-day; but you'll find the genuine Remove eleven a different proposition."

"Bather!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

"But—but why didn't you field a decent side to-day?" asked Dick Merivale, in astonishment.

"We wanted our amiable friend Skinner taken down several pegs," explained Wharton. And he went on to describe how Wibley had successfully impersonated Sammy Steer.

The Claremont juniors roared with laughter.

"And now we'll go along to the study and get some grub," said Frank Nugent. "After the exhibition you fellows have just given, you deserve the jolliest spread in the kingdom!"

The Claremont champions were entertained right royally by the cluums of the Remove, and they parted on excellent terms in the dusky winter evening.

Meanwhile, Harold Skinner, furious and fuming, had scroched over to the Blackbird on his bicycle, with the avowed object of calling the genuine Sammy Steer over the coals; but Sammy Steer was discreetly absent, and the cad of the Remove was compelled to retire, baffled and beaten on every side.

That evening there was a huge muster of Removites in the Rag, to decide whether the captaincy of the Form should be retained by Harold Skinner or whether Harry Wharton should resume the reins of office. Forty fellows were present, besides Skinner; and when the vote was taken it was found that thirty-nine juniors were unanimously in favour of Harry Wharton's reinstatement. The fortieth voter was Billy Bunter, who hoped to extort a feed from Skinner by acting in his favour.

Even Skinner's familiar friends, whom he trusted, had voted against him. It was the last straw. Broken in spirit and crushed like a worm beyond the power of turning, he crawled wretchedly out of the commonroom and sought solace in the solitude of his study. Like Lucifer, son of the Morning, he had fallen from his high estate, and for many weeks afterwards one of the chief topics of conversation in the Remove centred round the brief but exciting reign of Skinner the Skipper!

THE END.

(Do not miss "HIS HIGHNESS!" next Monday's Grand Story of the Chums of Greyfriars, by FRANK RICHARDS.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 42L

NEXT
MONDAY—

"HIS HIGHNESS!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

The "Magnet"
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ONE
PENNY.

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

THE OPENING CHAPTERS OF OUR GREAT NEW
ADVENTURE SERIAL STORY. START TO-DAY!



The First Instalment Told How:

DICK DAUNT and DUDLEY DREW, two chums, discover a letter in a bottle which they have extracted from the body of a shark.

They are informed by its contents that a certain Matthew Snell is marooned on an unnamed island in the Keys, and he offers a substantial reward to any persons effecting his rescue.

On going to the island, however, they are unable to find Mr. Snell.

EZRA CRAY, a moonshiner, and his scoundrelly colleagues then visit the island, and, finding that it contains gold, attempt to kill the two chums.

Having previously hidden the boat, Dick and Dudley seek refuge in a cave.

Suddenly Dick, who is on the look-out, sees Cray and his confederates making towards the place where the boat is hidden.

"Surely they haven't got the track of our boat already?" he asks.

(Now go on with the story.)

The White Flag.

"Guess we'll have to fight for it, if that's their lay," said Dudley, as he slipped a clip of cartridges into the breech of his rifle. "We can't afford to lose our boat, whatever happens."

Lying flat on the bare rock behind a low breastwork of stone which they had erected behind the narrow mouth of the cave, they waited to see what their assailants would do.

"No, they haven't spotted the mouth of the bay," muttered Dick Daunt presently. "See, they're passing it."

"Then what in the name of all that's queer are they after? Another minute and they'll be in range, and we can plug the whole outfit without a chance of their touching us."

As he spoke, Dudley raised his rifle softly and poked the muzzle through a chink in the breastwork.

"I don't believe they know where we are," said Dick.

"They're not such blame fools as all that," returned Dudley. "Old Ezra is about as cute as they make them. You can just bet he's got a very fair notion of our whereabouts."

Another minute dragged by, while the big boat, with the soft breeze filling her mainsail, came steadily towards them. It was deep water very nearly up to the shore, and the reefs

which covered the entrance to the cove were a good way off to the right.

Dick raised himself a little.

"Great Scott, look at that!" he gasped.

"What's biting you?" demanded Dudley.

"A white flag! They're waving a towel, or something of the sort."

"Steady, Dudley!" he added quickly, as Dudley raised his head rather rashly. "It may be only a trick."

"I guess not. Looks to me like they want to come to terms with us."

"Hi, yew, Daunt, be yew there?" came a high-pitched hail from the boat.

"You bet I am," returned Dick, poking his gun-barrel into view. "And ready to give you what's coming to you, too."

"None o' that!" came another voice, gruff as a foghorn. "This here's a flag o' truce as we're flying. Don't ye know enough fer that?"

"I know you're a pack of cowardly murderers!" retorted Dick uncompromisingly. "You tried to plug us without any sort of warning, and you've about as much right to fly the white flag as a Venezuelan nigger. Haul your wind at once, or you'll get a dose of lead double quick!"

"That's the way to talk to 'em, Dick," said Dudley approvingly. "Ah, they're putting about in a hurry."

"Not so sure of that. Watch out for squalls, old man."

Ezra Cray, who was at the tiller, had certainly put the helm over; but instead of putting his craft on the other tack, he had merely thrown her up into the wind, so that she lay almost motionless, with her leechees quivering.

"You ain't got no call to talk to us like that," he shouted.

"No one asked you to come butting in here, and if you'd both been shot, it wouldn't hev been no more'n you deserved."

"I like your cheek," answered Dick. "We got the message to come to the old man's help."

"The mischief, you did!" snarled Cray. "I guess we 'uns all had it fast, and of the old feller wuz loony enough to set another bottle adrift, that ain't nothing to do with us."

"Now, see here," he continued, "you've hed back in getting where you be, and I'm not saying you ain't safe so long as you stays there. But that's only fer just so long as your grub lasts out. Then you've got ter starve or put your hands up."

"That's what you think," put in Dick defiantly.

"Oh, you may bluff all you've a mind to, but we knows! We knows as it's only a matter o' time and o' watching

you. Now, see here. I ain't a hard man, and no more is Bent here."

Dick chuckled, but Cray went on unmoved.

"You've shot up one of our fellows, but we don't bear no malice, and we'll make you a free offer. You kin get to your boat, load her up with the grub as you've brought along, and then git out. Give us your word you won't come back or won't go shooting off your mouth to any of the folk at Lemon Bay, and we won't interfere with you no more one way or 't'other. There, ef that ain't fair, I don't know what is."

Again Dick gave vent to a hearty chuckle.

"Pon my word, you are the bold limit! So we're to slope off with our tails between our legs, and leave you to mop up all the gold and generally raid everything worth having on the island."

"That's precisely the notion, young feller," answered Ezra. "And think yourselves mighty lucky as we've got such good, kind hearts."

"Something between an alligator and a shark, eh, Cray?" put in Dudley. "No, my dear, kind-hearted friend, it won't work. I tell you straight, it won't."

"I shouldn't think it would," said Dick, in an undertone. "Even if we accepted their terms, they'd fill us with lead before we'd more than shown ourselves. They're just about as trustworthy as a pack of rascal wolves."

"Then you means to say ez you won't take these here terms?" shouted Cray, falling into a sudden rage.

"You can take that as you wish," answered Dick. "Then, by gosh, you're just as good as dead!" yelled Cray, in a rage. "You needn't to look for a second chance, even if you comes a-begging on your bended knees."

"But you you'll do the praying first," was Dick's final jeer, as Cray let the boat fall off, and she began to move again on the other tack.

The boys watched her as she sailed away.

"Why's he holding her so close to the wind?" muttered Dudley. "She's got hardly any way on her. There's no risk from those rocks."

"There's some dirty business on," answered Dick. "Jove, I've a mind to let 'em have it before they're out of range!"

The words were hardly out of his mouth when, as if at a given signal, all five of Cray's motley crew suddenly ducked down under the high gunwale, and five rifle barrels appeared instead.

The ragged volley sent the echoes crashing along the face of the crooked cliff, and the bullets shrieked overhead or platted harmlessly against the breastwork of rocks.

"Just what I was expecting," growled Dick. "Let 'em have it, Dudley! They're out of range of my scatter-gun."

Dudley had not waited for Dick's orders. He was already firing. His rifle, a sound if rather old-fashioned Winchester, was of 44 calibre, and a bullet of this size is not only a man-stopper, but will penetrate a considerable thickness of wood and make a very nasty hole in a plank.

And Dudley, instead of snap shooting at the heads which just bobbed up above the gunwale, was firing deliberately at the boat itself, aiming as near the water-line as possible.

The first shot was short, and striking the water, ricocheted over the boat; but the second bulled her, and at the third again splinters flew white, and there came a howl of dismay or pain from one of the crew.

In a hurry, Cray let her drop off, and she darted ahead at greatly increased speed, while her crew fired as fast as they could pull trigger. But apart from the difficulty of accurate shooting from a moving boat, the boys were safe enough behind their breastwork, and so long as the boat was within range Dudley, caring nothing for the bullets that sang and whizzed overhead, continued to fire carefully-aimed shots at the hull of the fleeing craft.

At last she was out of range, and, not wishing to waste ammunition, he ceased firing.

"Five hits, I reckon, Dick," he said quietly, as he turned to his partner.

"No, six," said Dick. "I counted. One was a bit high, but the rest got her right where she needed it. And I'll lay that more'n one of 'em went through both sides of her."

"Ah, watch 'em!" he continued, with a chuckle. "Bailing like billy-ho! Dudley, I'll bet that it will 'ake 'em the best part of a week to make that old tub seaworthy again."

"Just about that," I guess," answered Dudley, chuckling softly. "Say, Dick, I kind of think that Cray's wishing he hadn't tried that trick—eh?"

"I wish I'd had a nile, too," said Dick regretfully. "If there'd been two of us to shoot, we'd likely have sunk the whole outfit, and got rid of the whole crew of skunks."

Dudley nodded.

"Yes, we ought to have helped ourselves to Wilding's rifle. Only I guess we were both so rattled just then we never thought of it."

"Good notion! We'll go out and fetch it. What do you say?"

"You mean before those fellows can land again?"

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NEXT MONDAY—

"HIS HIGHNESS!"

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

"That's the idea. I fancy they'll have to go round to the other bay, and, anyhow, they'll have to go pretty slow. The water must be fairly equiting into the boat, and they'll have to handle her mighty easy."

Dudley glanced again at the big boat, which was now just disappearing around the point of land to their left.

"Right you are, Dick! This is our chance while they are out of sight. Let's only hope that none of their crew have been left ashore."

He paused.

"Say, you better let me go alone, and you stay here on guard," he suggested.

But Dick shook his head.

"No, Dudley. We'll stick together, whatever happens. And, anyway, that gorge is no place for one chap to go straggling alone. There's that big boulder to cross, and that's more than a one-man job."

"We'll take a rope to help us over that," said Dudley, and, picking up a coil which lay by the cave mouth, they started.

They wasted no time, but as they were not in such a tearing hurry as before. So the difficulties did not seem so great as they had previously, and, barring a meeting with a rock rattlesnake, a small, dark-coloured, evil-looking brute, which Dick killed by smashing a heavy stone upon it, they had no special adventures on the way.

Wilding's body lay where it had fallen, and Dick shuddered again as he noticed two great, dusky buzzards perched on the ledge overhead, their bare, wrinkled heads almost buried between their hunched-up wing-tips.

"He was a brute, but we can't leave him to those," he said. "We must bury him, Dudley."

"There's a deep crack between those two rocks," replied Dudley. "We can slip his body down there. I don't reckon that buzzards or anything else will get him there."

Dick nodded, and after taking the dead man's rifle and his cartridge-belt, they rolled the body into the cleft, and it dropped out of sight into unknown depths below. This dreadful business finished, they hurried back. The sun was already getting low, and there was still a good deal to be done in the way of making their position impregnable to attack.

"It's a good thing we have this way up inland," observed Dick as they reached the lower end of the gorge again.

"You don't reckon it will be much use to us," replied Dudley, shaking his head. "Ezra knows we've got Wilding, so I guess he knows how we escaped. Most like he'll put a guard somewhere up there ready to drill as if we do go out that way."

"I hadn't thought of that," said Dick slowly. "I expect you're right, old chap. Then in that case he may try to attack us from that side."

"That's so. We'll have to strengthen the breastwork that side."

Reaching the ledge, they stopped and took a cautious survey of the surroundings. But there was no sign of the enemy, and they reached the cave without seeing any.

By this time they were both pretty well done.

"What'd I say to a mouthful of supper, Dick?" suggested Dudley. "Then we can fix up things."

"Better do it now," said Dick. "Won't be light enough after."

"Just as you say; but I guess I've got to have a drink first. My throat's like sandpaper."

He got up wearily from the rock on which he was sitting, took up the cup, and turned to the five-gallon keg in which they had brought up their drinking-water.

His cry of dismay brought Dick to his feet.

"The water—it's gone! There's not a pint left!"

Dick gazed, horrified, at the bullet-hole which a chance shot had made in the keg.

The Mud Pit.

Dudley was the first to pull himself together.

"Spit luck, Dick! But I guess it's no use crying over spilt milk, or spit water either!"

"I suppose not. But unless one of us had been potted, they could hardly have hit us harder. There's not a drop of water anywhere up in these rocks, and it's precious unlikely to rain at this time of year. Cray knows that as well as we do, and he'll not run any chances of letting us get to the creek."

"That's so; but, for all that, he can't guard the whole length of the creek with half a dozen men. And the nights are dark now. Seems to me we ought to be able to hit off some place where the creek's not guarded, and fill the keg."

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"We've got to do it, or die of thirst," he answered quietly.

"Well, the first thing is to mend the keg, and the next to

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get a bit of sleep. We have to be fresh for this business. When do you reckon we'd better go?"

"Soon after midnight. That's the time that Cray's outfit are liable to be most sleepy."

"Right! We'll try it. Meantime, we may as well divey up the remains of the water, and have some food. We'll have to leave those walls till to-morrow. I'm not expecting any attack for the present. Cray's policy will be to starve us out."

They boiled the remains of the water on their oil-stove, and it gave them just one cup of tea each. Then Dudley had the happy thought of digging out and opening a tin of peaches. These were floating in rich juice, which did as much to quench their thirst almost as the tea. They did not stint themselves, for they knew they would need all their strength and energy before morning, and although neither put the thought into words, yet both knew that if they failed to get the keg filled they would neither of them come back alive.

Dick took first nap, and Dudley, while he watched, carefully plugged the holes in the keg. By dint of beating out a piece of tin flat, and tacking it over the holes, he made a very good job of it.

No one disturbed the quiet of their haunt in Crooked Cliff, and not a sound betrayed the fact that there was a soul beside themselves on the island.

A little before one o'clock they started out. It was a warm, still night, and though there was no moon, it was lighter than they liked. The stars were brilliant, and down in these latitudes they give far more light than even on the brightest summer nights in England.

The creek led, into the sea about three-quarters of a mile from Crooked Cliff. It came down in a series of rapids from the higher ground, and reached the sea in a little cove beyond the rocky one in which they had originally come ashore.

They had talked the job over between them, and had decided that it would be foolish to risk attempting to fill their keg at or near the beach. One of Cray's men would almost certainly be on guard there. Their idea was to strike a little way inland, where they would have the scrub to shelter them, then to chance finding a place where they could get to the stream under cover of the brush.

The worst of it was that in order to get to the top of the cliff it was absolutely necessary to cross a part of the beach—the same beach where they had first come ashore. Barring the ravine, this was their only way up on to the higher ground. Still, there was not much likelihood of this being guarded, for, as Dudley said, "Cray won't be reckoning on our waiting water-to-night, nor for a couple of days yet."

However, there was the off-chance that someone might be watching, so they resolved to act exactly as though there was, and not run any risk that could be avoided. Dick carried the keg. They had rigged a sort of harness of rope, so that he could carry it on his back. Dudley, who was the better shot of the two, carried his rifle, and went on a little way ahead. It was arranged that if he saw or heard anything suspicious he was to drop at once, and Dick would follow the same example.

Clambering softly over their bareheads, they reached the strip of sand at the foot of the cliffs. It was now half-tide, and the beach would be passable for about the next two hours.

They kept close in under the rocks, and moved slowly and carefully until they reached the break in the cliffs, where the ground ran up at a steep slope towards the scrub. Here they went down on hands and knees, and crawled the whole distance until they gained the shelter of the palmetto, where they paused a moment to rest and look about.

"All right, so far," said Dick. "What bothers me is the row we shall make getting through this beastly stiff scrub!"

"That's so," allowed Dudley. "And it's a still night, too. Some will run like the miller. I guess we'd best keep back along under the rim of the scrub, and chance finding an opening of some sort. So long as we're close to the sea, the waves on the beach will cover any small noises."

"Yes, and cover the sound of anyone hunting us, too!" growled Dick. "Still, we've got to take our chances!"

A couple of hundred yards further on they found what they were looking for—namely, a break in the dense line of scrub. A belt of rocky ground seemed to run inland from this point, so hard and barren that scarcely anything grew on it.

Bending double, and taking all the cover they could find, they pressed steadily on. The opening took them right through the palmetto belt, and they found themselves among the stunted live-oak and blackjacks, which formed the main woods of the island.

Now they bore away to the left. By this time they were out of all sound of the sea, and as there was not a breath of air stirring, the silence was intense. Each time that either happened to tread on a dead stick or dry leaves the sound seemed to carry like a pistol-shot. And here, in these thick

trees it was so dark that it was impossible to tell exactly where they were treading.

Every now and then Dudley, who was still leading, would stop and listen, and it was during one of these pauses that he distinctly caught the faint tinkle of running water. He dropped back to Dick, and told him that they were nearing the brook.

Another hundred paces, and the trees broke away, showing an open space about fifty yards wide, carpeted with tall grass. By the sound, the brook ran down through the centre of this open space.

The two stood together under the shelter of the trees, listening hard.

"It's not the sort o' place we were looking for," muttered Dick, "but I suppose it will have to do."

"Yes; that tall grass will give us some sort of cover," answered Dudley. "I guess we'll manage all right. So far I've heard nothing suspicious. Have you?"

Dick hesitated.

"Can't say I have; and yet I've had the oddest feeling that someone's been dogging us all the way."

"Feeling!" repeated Dudley, in a surprised whisper. "How do you mean?"

"Hanged if I know!" Dick answered, almost sulkily. "As I tell you, I didn't hear anything. I suppose this creepy, crawly game has got on my nerves or something!"

Dudley did not answer at once. He was puzzled and uneasy. This was something quite new. Dick Daunt was so hard-headed and practical that what he had said was distinctly upsetting.

"Shall we try a bit higher up?" he asked at last.

"No; we've wasted time enough already. This is good enough. I'll go ahead, and fill the keg. And, see here, Dudley, you stick where you are! You'll be able to see plainly enough if anyone comes out into the open. On the other hand, if I'm right, and someone is really following us, you'll be hidden, and able to cut him off!"

Dudley hated to stay behind, but had to agree that Dick's plan was the best. Rifle in hand, he took his stand under a thick, low-spreading tree just at the edge of the glade, and watched Dick slip out and go creeping snake-like through the tall grass.

The startle was enough to show his movements, and Dudley's heart was beating a good deal faster than usual. If he could see Dick, so could anyone else who happened to be prowling about, and what Dick had said about being followed had upset Dudley considerably. Dick was not given to fancying things.

Dick was quite near the stream, when suddenly he seemed to stop. Dudley, peering forward anxiously, saw him apparently struggling. The horrible thought came to him that Dick had stepped on a water viper, and been bitten.

Up went one of Dick's arms, waving wildly, and Dudley, with a deadly fear at his heart, darted forward, and, screaming all concealment, tore across the open towards his chum.

"Stop!" cried Dick hoarsely, as Dudley came within twenty paces. "Stop! Don't come too near! I'm bogged!"

Dudley's gasp was one of relief. Anything was better than snake-bite. But as he cautiously advanced he saw that the matter was serious enough. Dick was up to his waist in a horrible compound of evil-smelling, dark-coloured mire. What was worse, in spite of all his efforts, he was rapidly sinking deeper.

"Steady, Dick!" said Dudley sharply. "Get that rope loose, if you can—the one he kee's tied with. If you can do that, and throw me one end, I'll soon have you out."

Dick lost no time in following this advice. But there were many knots, and he sank fast. Luckily, he got it loose in time, and then pulled the keg round in front of him, so that it held him up like a lifebuoy.

Dudley came as near as he dared, and at much risk managed to get hold of the loose end of the rope. Then he scrambled back as far as he could, but the ground was so rotten that he had to wait and cut some armfuls of reeds with his knife before he could get foothold.

All this took time, and they both knew that in this bright starlight their movements could be seen from quite a distance.

Dudley put his weight on the rope and hauled. The mud was like so much glue, and at first he feared that he could never get Dick out unaided. Indeed, if it had not been for the keg he never would, for there was no bottom under Dick's feet.

But Dick was able to lift himself a little with the help of the keg, and at last he began to rise. Dudley put all his remaining strength into a tremendous pull, and Dick's body came out like a tight cork from a bottle, and was hauled to firmer ground.



Dudley put all his remaining strength into a tremendous pull. Dick's body then came out like a tight cork from a bottle, and he was hauled to firmer ground. (See page 24.)

Then both dropped down side by side, and lay panting and breathless, absolutely unable to stir.

At last Dick sat up.

"I ought to be kicked!" he growled. "Walking right into the beastly place like a fool!"

He looked all round.

"Thanks be, there don't seem to be anyone about! Wait here, Dudley. I'll get the keg filled, and then we'll have to scout. This tide'll be up if we don't hurry!"

"Gee, I'd forgotten all about the tide!" answered Dudley, in dismay. "But let me get the water, Dick. You must be done in!"

"No, I'm all right," answered Dick, in a tone there was no disputing.

And, staggering to his feet, he circled widely round the bog-hole, and went cautiously across to the brook.

In a very few minutes he was back, carrying the keg filled to the top. Then there was further delay while the rope was fitted up again into the harness. It was later than either of them liked before they started back again.

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NEXT
MONDAY—

"HIS HIGHNESS!"

Still, there was no sign of Cray's crowd, and they reached the wood unmolested.

"Guess they didn't keep much watch to-night," whispered Dudley.

The two were walking together now, for the barrel was heavy, and they had to change it from one to the other every now and then.

"It's a bit previous to do any halloaing just yet," replied Dick. "We've got the beach to tackle yet!"

They came out of the trees on to the rock strip, and now the sound of the waves breaking softly on the shingle was again in their ears.

"Half-way back," muttered Dick.

And as he spoke Dudley grabbed him by the arm and dragged him down.

"Watch out!" he hissed in his ear. "There's one of them!"

Dick, glancing up, saw the figure of a man looming through the night. He was coming up from the direction of the beach, and had just topped the rise. He was so clearly visible that they could even see the rifle which he carried over

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his shoulder, and he was so near that they could plainly hear the rustle of his booted legs as they brushed against the saw-toothed stems of the cabbage palmetto.

"He's coming straight for us," said Dick, in a quick whisper. "Get your rifle ready, Dudley!"

The Bogey Man.

"It's Rufe," whispered Dudley in Dick's ear. "It won't be Rufe much longer if he keeps on coming," was Dudley's grim reply. "But don't shoot till the last minute, old chap. It will certainly bring the whole bunch down on us."

Thump! Thump! The negro's heavy brogans came clumping leisurely across the rock. He was looking from one side to another, but had not seen them yet. Yet if he kept on in the same direction for another few steps he was bound to walk right on top of them.

Slowly Dudley shifted his rifle until the muzzle covered the body of the black scoundrel.

All of a sudden the silence was broken by a cry, a cry as weird and wild and horrible that it seemed to freeze the blood in their veins. As for Rufe, he stopped in his tracks, and glared round.

Then he, too, gave an unearthly yell, and, dropping his rifle, started running like a lunatic, or, rather, like a man scared almost out of his senses.

In his blind panic he ran right past the two boys, passing them so near that he almost trod upon them, yet without even seeing them. His nailed soles struck sparks from the rocks as he tore by, racing for the thick woods at the head of the gap.

No sooner was he past than Dudley popped up his head to see what had scared the man. He dropped again quicker than he had risen.

"Duppy!" he gasped. "Duppy, himself!" "What are you talking about? What's the matter?" growled Dick, and he, too, raised his head.

"I don't see anything!" he declared, half-angrily.

"But I did," returned Dudley, in an oddly shaken voice. "I saw it as plain as I see you—plainer, for he was all lit up with blue fire."

"Lit up with blue fire! Tell me, what was it you saw?" demanded Dick, in an angry undertone.

"Duppy—Old Nick himself, if you like, or something uncommon like him. He, or it, was right across the edge of the thick scrub opposite. I caught just one glimpse of it, and when I looked again, it was gone."

Dick was silent. He was a very matter-of-fact person, and Dudley's story annoyed him oddly. Yet he could not doubt the truth of it. For one thing, Dudley was not given to romancing; for another, the nigger's terror was plain proof that he, too, had seen something which had given him a real bad scare.

He glanced round. Rufe was out of sight—out of hearing, too. He got up, and adjusted the water-keg on his back.

"Come on, Dudley," he said shortly. "The coast seems to be clear enough."

It was. There was not a sign of any of Cray's ruffians, and the ghost, demon, or whatever it was that had so terrified Rufe, appeared to have vanished into thin air. At any rate, they saw no more of it.

Reaching the beach, they found that the tide had just covered the narrow strip of shingle at the turn of the cliff. They had to wade in the creaming edges of the waves. But the sea was calm, the night was warm, and both were badly in need of clean water to wash off the stinging slime which clung thickly to their clothes. They took their time, and presently arrived safely at Crooked Cliff, and climbed up the steep ascent to their cave.

"Five gallons," said Dick, as he carefully lowered the keg into a safe corner of the cave, where no hostile bullet could possibly find it. "Five gallons. That ought to see us through for the best part of a week."

"Quite a week, if we're careful," answered Dudley, who was pulling off his sopping boots. "All the same, I hope you don't mean to stick here in this little rock-hole for a week."

"No," said Dick thoughtfully. "Not if I can help it."

He yawned as he spoke.

"Let's have a snooze, Dudley. I'm dead-beat. We'll talk over plans in the morning."

"Not a bad notion, I guess we're safe enough for the rest of the night," Dudley answered. "It'll be light in less than two hours."

He rolled himself in his blanket, and stretched out. Dick did the same, and in a very few minutes they were both in the land of dreams.

It may have been risky, but for nights past they had both 'The Magnet Library,'—No. 421.

been terribly short of sleep. In any case, the risk was justified, for when they were at last awakened by the increasing heat of the day, they found that nothing had been disturbed, and that there was no sign anywhere of the enemy.

"A nice hour to get up," chuckled Dudley, glancing out at the sky. "I guess it's close on ten."

"Just on," answered Dick, glancing at the old silver watch, which was a relic of his school days, and which he kept in a solid leather wristlet. "Being on the west side of the island, we don't get the morning sun. Well, I feel a heap better, anyhow."

"And so do I," agreed Dudley. "Hungry as sin, too. I guess we'll have a right good, leisurely breakfast while we're about it. There's no gold to be dug to-day."

"No—worse luck!" answered Dick savagely. "Then he pulled himself up. 'It's no use growling, but I fancy we'll be doing something before long. Well, go ahead and spread yourself Dudley. Let's have flapjacks and coffee. Meantime, I'll slip out and have a squint around.'"

It was a perfectly gorgeous morning, with the sun shining brilliantly on miles of azure-blue sea. Barring an occasional heavy storm, autumn is the finest season of the year in the Gulf of Mexico, and you get days on end of hot sun and gentle breezes.

But, though Nature was so pleasing, Dick did not forget that man was vile, and that this lovely island was at present inhabited by some of the vilest of the whole bunch.

Cray, too, was not only a conscienceless scoundrel, but a very cunning one into the bargain, and he was taking no risks that could be avoided. Dick crept out on hands and knees, and carried Wilding's rifle, which was a .38 bore of modern pattern, and sighted up to 1,200 yards.

He peered first over the right-hand barricade, from which he could catch a glimpse of the beach. There was nothing there, and he turned to the other side. Here no beach was visible, for the tide, now falling, still washed the foot of the cliff. All was quiet, and he went back into the cave, where Dudley was busy over the oilstone.

"All serene, Dudley!" he said. "Let's have our food, and then we must strengthen those brawny arms."

"Right you are! But, say, you don't reckon Cray's going to try any frontal attack, do you?"

"I don't think he will, but you never can tell. They might try to rush us at night."

"That's so. Anyway, we'd best be on the safe side. The coffee's boiling. Help yourself, and open a tin of that beef."

They took their time over breakfast. It was their first leisurely meal for two days, and they made the most of it.

Then they went out, and set to work on the loose stone walls which barred the approaches on either side.

There was any amount of loose stuff lying about, and they kept at it until the place was turned into a regular fortress. They finished by raising a wall in front of the cave-mouth high enough to protect it from any shooting from the sea.

"Guess they'll think twice before they tackle that," remarked Dudley, piling a last stone on top of the coping.

Dudley thought for a while.

"How would it be if we took our boat out to-night and went back to Lemon Bay and got reinforcements? Sheriff Anderson would be pleased as Punch to help us."

"He would, and the notion's not a bad one, Dudley. But the worst of it is that if we do that we lose our gold. The place will be proclaimed as a goldfield. Uncle Sam will take hold, and I don't suppose we shall get a dollar out of it."

Dudley nodded.

"I say what you mean. All right, Dick, we'll play a lone hand, if you say so. We'll hit on some way of getting the better of Cray and his gang yet."

"We will. And the first thing to do, if you ask me, is to try and find some other way up on to the top. So long as we have to cross the beach, or go up that gorge, we're absolutely at their mercy."

"Right-ho! May as well start in at once, I guess," replied Dudley. "If we're careful we needn't expose ourselves."

Dick agreed; and, taking their rifles, they started out.

They had reached a point near the foot of the big gully, when Dudley touched Dick's arm.

"There's a clump coming along the beach. He's just rounded the point beyond the entrance to Hidden Bay."

Dick raised his head slowly and peered out, then drew his breath sharply.

"It's Bent," he muttered—"Ambrose Bent! And I'll lay money he's looking for our boat!"

(Another long instalment of this splendid new serial story next Monday. To avoid disappointment order your copy early.)

MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FREE TO READERS OF THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD," 1/2D. OUT TO-DAY.

THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD" (continued).

regular readers—boys and girls who would no more think of missing their "Herald" than "dad" would of missing his daily paper.

If you only value the little paper at the halfpenny you pay for it, this may seem too much trouble to take. But I do not believe that the vast majority of you value it so lightly as that; in fact, if my correspondence is any sort of a guide, there is proof that you rate it far higher.

So, once more, huck up! Boy or girl, each of you can help.

A LETTER FROM KENSINGTON.

It is a real pleasure to read some of the letters received from my readers. For the matter of that, it is a pleasure to read most of them; though when eager inquirers want to know what tooth-powder Bob Cherry uses, or exactly how the bars and studs on Vernon Smith's footer boots are placed, I do sometimes feel that it is possible to have too much of a good thing. Praise does not affect me like that! I suppose I have got hardened to it. Anyway, it's quite nice to get such a letter as this:

"Oxford Gardens, North Kensington, London."

"Dear Editor.—We think your papers are simply ripping! This is not only my opinion, but that of countless thousands of our dearest fellow-Britishers.

"You and your papers are simply rr! That is the long and short of it. We think it splendid the way you give us all a chance. Your announcement in this week's 'Magnet' about the 'Greyfriars Herald' gave us quite a shock; but we are all going to make a great effort to send the circulation rocketing up again. Will you please put this letter in the Chat-pagot? We shall think it very sporting of you if you do.—Yours sincerely, F. K. and K. W."

"P.S.—We are chairman and secretary of a new pro-'Magnet' League which we are getting up. Three cheers for the 'Magnet'!"

"Thanks, my friends! I should like to express personally to you my appreciation of your letter, but that is impossible.

NOTICES!

Will Cadman, 62, Twyford Avenue, Portsmouth, wishes to form a football club of boys about fourteen living in the town, and asks those who would like to join to write to him, or call any evening after five o'clock.

A lonely soldier would like letters from girl readers of the "Magnet" in the Bournemouth district. Will any who are willing to write to him drop the Editor a line, when his name and address will be forwarded?

Basil Stephenson, 33, Plessey Road, Blyth, desires to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League in that town. One of the objects of the league will be to send back numbers of the companion papers to men at the Front. An amateur magazine is also in contemplation. Will any readers in Blyth who care to join-write to him?

Waterloo Rovers (average age 14) will be glad to play any Liverpool district Association team of about the same age. Apply, Austin Harrop, 1, Walmer Road, Waterloo, Liverpool (captain).

Driver H. E. Lear, 61562, R.F.A. Headquarters, 6th Division, R.H.F., France, a reader of this paper from the start, would be glad to correspond with either boy or girl Magnetites.

To H. Grayrich.—If you are still in London, your old pal and school chum Jack asks that you will let bygones be bygones, and communicate with him at 63, Old Montague Street, Whitechapel.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

J. M. (Dundee).—Sorry; no photos available.

J. K. (Mile End Road) is another enthusiastic admirer of "The Pride of the Ring." Linley ought to be pleased no end.

"Loyal Magnetite" (Clapton).—Not sure whether the "Magnet" will ever return to its old colour. We shall see after the war. Sorry I can't advise you about bird-training. I don't think there will be any difficulty in getting the greenfinch out of the cage; getting him back may be harder.

"A Loyal Chum" (Ystrand, Rhonda).—Mauly is not so keen on the limelight. It makes him beastly tired, bogad! "S. and S." the best yard of Greyfriars you have read, you say. And Mr. Richards a genius. Hear, hear!

W. F. S. (Old Kent Road).—You must be patient for a bit, and wait for the results in the "Herald." I am not at the office on Saturday at all, and am too busy for visitors on Friday; but at any time up to six o'clock on other days I shall be pleased to see you.

"A Reader from St. John's."—The difficulty is that we have plenty of straight and decent characters on the stage now, and you wouldn't like the proposed Newfoundland boy to be another Bunter or Skinner, I am sure.

G. B. (Sydenham).—There ought to be plenty of humour in the "Greyfriars Herald" for anyone without the jokes you want, I consider.

H. W. P. (Small Heath).—Thirteen and five, 10in! You will have to stop it before long. Your friend will find Skinner a better light in "School and Sport," which you don't seem to have read.

L. L. (Birmingham).—The drawback to your suggestion is that to send H. W. & Co. touring the country would spoil the stories as school yarns.

Frankie Jones (Coventry).—Very pleased to hear from you, though you are only seven. You will get older very soon. Some of the words in your letter were quite properly spelled. Sorry I could not do what you wished. Next Christmas, perhaps.

"Dorothy" (King's Cross).—If you had given your full name and address I would have written to allow you a little more time to complete your story. But any reply in this column must have been too late. The competition is now over. Why not try something for the "Greyfriars Herald."

"A Loyal Reader" (Bathgate).—You will no doubt have seen the "Herald" before now, and the Christmas Supplement to the "Magnet" will have answered your queries.

"A Glasgow Chum."—Your notion that the slanderers and grumblers are for the most part merely trying to get cheap notoriety is a shrewd one.

"A Claptonian."—The slip you point out is of very small importance, but your noticing it shows that you make good use of your powers of observation.

W. McNab.—You say that I may use the poem you send, if I like, but I have my doubts as to whether it is really yours to dispose of. Did you not copy it from some paper? Except in the Storytelling Competition we have no use for anything but original matter. Before this you will have had some more of the footer stories, which are evidently your favourites; but everybody is not so keen on footer, you know.

"Maryhill Star."—The League suggestion does not appeal to me at all. Our readers are not all so keen on footer that they want the answer full of it.

M. S. (Tottenham).—All readers of the "Greyfriars Herald" can help to hasten the publication of "Tom Mory" Weekly. But there is only one way. Get more readers for the "Herald." When that is a real thumping success you may expect to be able to welcome its rival, but not till then. We give tremendous value for the money, and no halfpenny paper can pay its way unless it has a really big circulation. The "Herald" is doing quite well, but we want to see it doing still better before we take a fresh risk, and the starting of a new paper always means taking a risk.

A. V. H. (Hull).—"S. and S." was splendid," you say. Only one mistake. "Was" should be "is." The book is still going great guns.

"A True Reader" (London, W.).—You are not the only reader who is rather unreasonably impatient for the Tuck Hammer Competition results. Just remember these things: When the competition entries are received we are already a number or two ahead with the printing of the paper. Journals of this type are not issued hot from the press, like daily papers. Then the entries have to be judged, and that takes time. Altogether, fully six weeks are necessary for getting out the result. As for answering individual queries as to the winning of prizes or the number of mistakes made, we cannot do it, and should not if we could, as it would not be fair to the readers who manage to exercise a proper patience. This will answer a good many correspondents besides yourself, and if they will only take it to heart we shall be spared quite a lot of needless trouble.

J. H. (Nelson).—You see, what an editor has to consider is the sort of thing that appeals to a majority of his readers. If he introduces features that appeal to a comparative few, however keenly they appeal to those few, he is in danger of doing his paper harm. Now, I have learned that most of my readers don't care for articles, and I must be guided by this knowledge.

C. E. J. (Chester).—You will have seen more than one list of prizewinners before now. Many thanks for the good work you have been doing for the "Herald," and the very judicious way in which you have gone about it.

J. W. (Poplar).—Thanks for photo. The Greyfriars poet is not Jimmy R. (Repton). Guess again!

(Continued on page iv of Cover.)



HAROLD LEE,
Weston-super-Mare.



PTE. J. GEAL,
1st Hants Regt. (wounded).



J. PRIVLICE,
Belfast.



J. E. ESSEEN,
Lisard.



A. DAVIS,
Sunderland.



"A SINCERE READER."



MISS CLARA STRAIGHT and MRS. CLARKE,
Camberley, Surrey.



CLEMENT SMITH,
Stockbridge.



"A LOYAL
HAMPSHIRE READER."



MISS ELSIE WOAKES,
Leicester.



F. J. COOPER,
Aston, Birmingham.



JACK MANSON.



D. INGMAN,
Wimbledon.



F. DAVIES,
Southport.



O. E. CLARKE,
Carborough, Rotts.



SID SCOTTFORD,
Smethwick.



A. HATLEY,
Bradford.

REPLIES IN BRIEF—continued.

Emma D.—No, the "Penny Popular" will not be made exclusively a school story paper—unless we find that our readers really want this. Sexton Blake and Jack, Sam, and Pete have many admirers. Is it not rather too much to expect us to know the precise state of Bob Cherry's feelings? Bob does not go about telling everybody.

"Swanseaite."—Looks a queer word! Why not try it in Welsh? (1) Bunter went home, no doubt. (2) Don't libel Devon like that! You think Bob Cherry comes from that county because he has such big feet. Well, well! Do you think all the policemen also hail from Devon? (3) You say Ponsenby & Co. are fine, but I don't think you mean quite that. If you do, you are scarcely in agreement with your fellow-readers. But I know what you mean.

L. D. (Sheffield).—You are not the only one who wants a Win Lung yard. I don't think Mr. Richards has time to read this page, so I shall have to talk to him about it.

L. J. (Birmingham).—The fellow you mention has not written, as far as I know. Thanks for your loyal championship.

"A Loyal Reader" (Peecham).—I wonder what you think of the Australian correspondent who wants Bunter given the sack?

A. V. A. (Bradford).—Afraid there is not much chance of your getting the first number of the "Magnet." We cannot supply it.

W. G. Bunter, Esq., Timbuckthou, New South Africa.—I really don't believe that this is your correct name and address, but as there is nothing in your letter to object to it does not matter. Christmas numbers in Christmas week! Who ever heard of such a thing? Just you be thankful they don't come out in August! Ventriloquism can be learned, but not easily, and not by everybody who tries. Afraid Skinner will never reform except by fits and starts. There is a heap of difference between having some good in you and being a really good fellow.

"Loyal Hereford Reader."—Phyllis Howell has already been introduced to "Magnet" readers. Your friend M. is evidently a different sort altogether from the other M.

"Two Constant Readers."—You don't need Sir Robert Baden-Powell's address. He does not personally form scout troops. If you will drop me a line with your names, I will tell you where to write for some help in the matter.

R. S., jun.—Thanks! Shall be glad to hear from you, and am always pleased to hear from grown-up readers.

get advice? After your experience of buying the appliances you mention, I should not suggest your buying another without some such step as this. I am very glad to hear that you like the companion papers so much.

W. K. (Newcastle-on-Tyne).—Perhaps Maxwell stepped in through the window. There is nothing at all improbable in Nugent's attack of calf-love, as you may find out some day.

Tim and Squilly.—Very glad to hear you like the companion papers so much. Another threepenny story of Greyfriars will come along some day.

Jack P. (Gurston).—Mr. Twigg is the Third Form-master at Greyfriars. Your other questions—how much Wharton's pocket-money is, and how much tuck Bunter could eat—are of the sort that I really cannot pretend to answer. No answers to correspondents in "G. H.," but probably you will look for it here.

J. B. (Hedford).—Other readers have suggested a Highcliffe series in a new paper. But it won't come along just yet—and that's all I can tell you at present.

W. H. (Liverpool) is thanked hereby for his good work for the "Herald."

L. E. H. (Winton).—If we invited suggestions for competitions from readers we should disappoint all but those who win prizes and those whose idea was used. It is not so easy as you might think to put such a matter to the vote. If you have any original notions, send them along. If we use them we will pay for them. But—between you and me and Tom Dutton—originality is not a striking feature of readers' attempts so far.

"Ten Loyal Americans" (Clifton).—I repeat that I am quite sure Mr. Richards is not out to libel the whole American nation. I can quite understand your disliking Fish. But he is no more meant to be typical of America—except of the section that worships dollars above all else—than Bunter is meant to be typically British. His trading schemes afford our readers endless amusement, and do no one harm. The "too good to fight" business may have called a few of your countrymen; but you need not imagine that we consider Mr. Woodrow Wilson as a typical American—any more than we do Fish!

N. W. F. L. (Liverpool) wants to see Fish behaving heroically for once. Nope, sir! I kinder guess and calculate there's no dollars in it—not a red cent. The heroic stunt don't pay, sir, and Fisher Tarleton Fish has therefore no use for it. The numbering Vol. 9 was continued in error. Sorry, but this is war-time, and little mistakes will happen.

"Two Advisers."—Only two! Never mind—there are hundreds more! Nearly everybody who reads the papers knows more about how to edit them than I do. A page of jokes instead of "Bubble and Squeak"? Why? The change does not appeal to me.

R. G. (Southampton).—So you are the spokesman for a number of schoolfellows who want a Bunter, Ventriloquist, story? All right! When I next catch Mr. Richards in quite a good temper I'll mention it to him.

J. S. A. (Birmingham).—Stick to the "Magnet" and the "Herald," and you won't go far wrong.

L. C. (Leigh, Dorset).—So the whole of your family circle, down to a girl kiddie of nine, are keen on my papers? Very pleased to hear it. Bunter's father is a stockbroker, and Vernon-Smith's a wealthy merchant. No, I don't think Bunter will reform.

A. F. C. and A. F. C. (Barnsbury).—You will find Phyllis Howell with the other Cliff House girls in future "Magnet" stories, but at present we cannot run a serial about them.

C. E. C. W. (Oakley, Dorset).—Many thanks for your loyal support.

A. McL. (Granton).—Grundy was quite rightly disqualified. Of course it was hard on him, in a sense, but he could not have reached the tape unaided. Very sorry to hear that one of your soldier brothers is missing and the other in hospital.

"A Patrol Leader."—I never doubted that your criticisms were made in all good-nature. See reply to "Ten Loyal Americans" as to Fish. Yarns for the "Herald" should have a Greyfriars interest.

Migs (Knutsford).—The Christmas Supplement will have answered your questions.

D. B. (Cork).—This is an answer to your letter, after a long delay. The pencil-writing did not matter; it was quite clear and readable. Very glad you and your chums are, like so many other girls, keen on my papers. Thanks very much for your efforts to get new readers; you must have worked hard to get twenty-two. The competition was 30,000 words, not 50,000; and there were good reasons for the number fixed.

"The Secret Society of the Scarlet Crown" is hereby informed that it should change its title to "The Associated Leg-Pullers"—only they are not pulling my leg, thank you!

"Bill."—If the story is accepted, what you suggest can be done.

"A Manchester Reader."—I cannot publish your letter. What you say is quite right, and I do not doubt your earnestness; but your appeal could be out of place in my paper. By the way, I cannot understand your objection to such Jehovah, as you seem to think; it refers to a heathen god. And surely a reference to one of the best-known parables is not offensive!

G. A. (North Ormesby).—Send along your application to join Chumley Club, and say you cannot get two chums' names. It will be all right. If your eyes are strong, reading will not hurt them, and our papers are all printed in clear type. You cannot learn swimming from a book; it must be learned in the water.

"Rox" (Southampton).—Painting of Italian flag quite fair, but both red and green a little too dark.

F. Byrd, 79, St. John Street, Bridgwater, would be glad of spare back numbers from readers, to send to friends and relatives at the front.

"Three Indignant Scots."—What's wrong with you? Nothing to wax wrathily about, that I can see. But I will tell Mr. Richards how indignant you feel. If he could be got over the Border you might be able to capture him and hold him until he promised to promote Ogilvy, or, again, you might not!

M. W. (Hornchurch).—We never give replies by post as to whether stories are good enough. To do so would entail too much work. The story-tell competition is run for our readers' benefit, but they really must not expect quite so much.

"A Faithful Magnetite" (London, N.).—Sorry the answer is so long delayed. The place you name is imaginary.

H. C. H. N.—Any bookbinder would bind your numbers. There are two Sidney Dews.

"A Loyal Follower" (Northampton).—Twenty-five new readers recruited in a week. Pro-dig-i-tus!

Bob Cherry (Sunderland).—Wharton is the best cricketer of the F. F.

W. Miller (Lincolnshire) hopes that the "Magnet" will follow the same course as the "Dreadnought." He says that the "Magnet" is an insult to the public and its companion papers. Well, the companion papers don't seem to suffer from the insult, and the public stands it with very fair grace. We have heard of "Linchousing" before!

Your Editor