

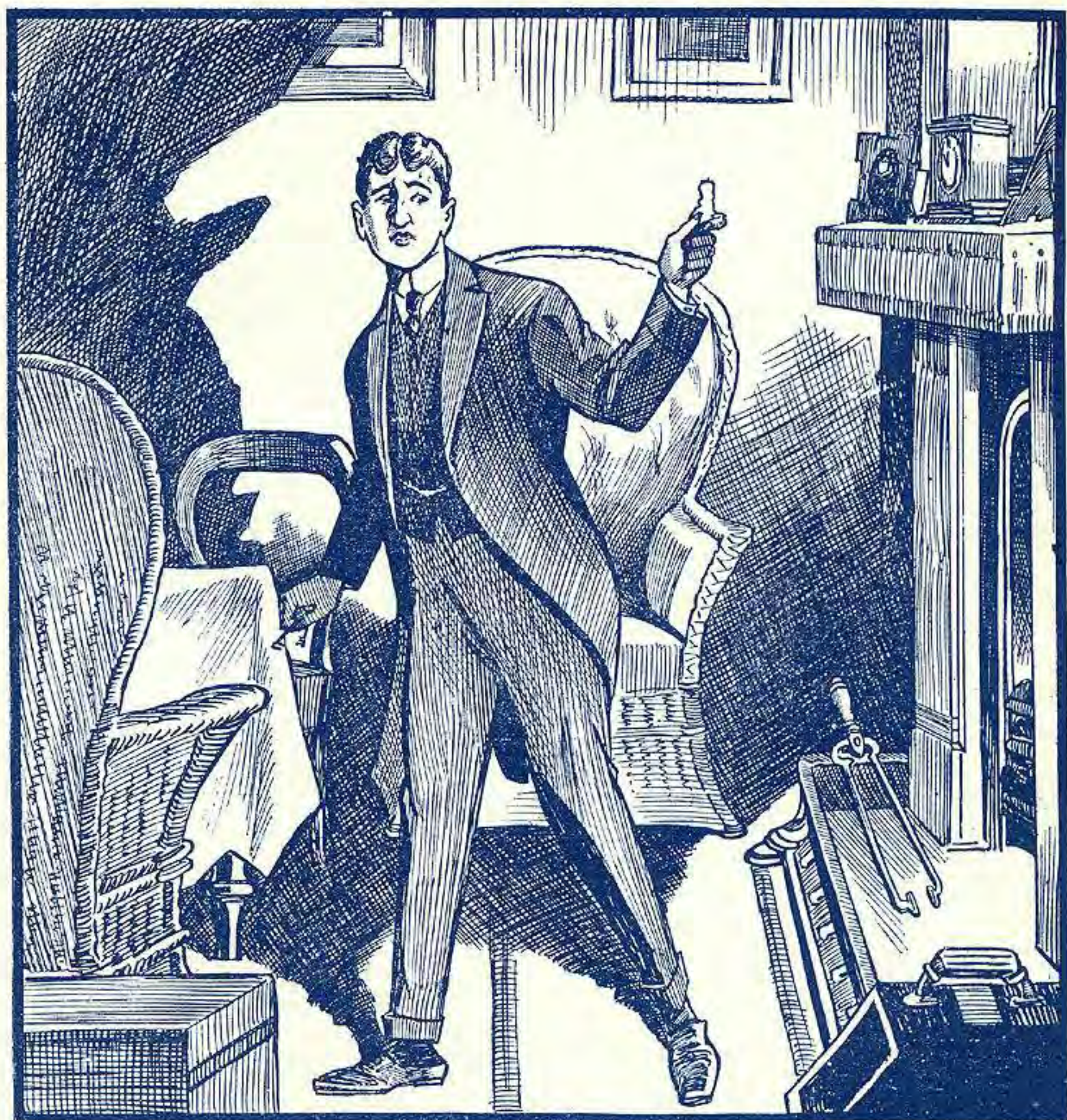


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LODER'S LUCK!



LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT!

[A Dramatic Scene in the Grand Long Complete School Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars in this Number.]

12-4-19

Loder's



Luck!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete
School Story of Harry Wharton
Co., at Greyfriars.

By
**FRANK
RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Back Up!

"SNOOPEY!"

Clink, clink!

Harry Wharton looked into Snoop's study in the Remove passage at Greyfriars, and started a little, and then smiled.

Snoop's occupation was rather a curious one.

He was alone in the study, seated at the table counting money.

There were two little heaps of currency notes before him, pound notes, and "ten-bobbers" respectively; and he was making a pile of half-crowns and two-shilling pieces.

He looked up quickly, and coloured as he met Wharton's gaze.

"Oh! Come in, Wharton!" he ejaculated.

The captain of the Remove stepped into the study.

Sidney James Snoop rose to his feet, with two or three half-crowns still in his hand.

"Rolling in it—what?" asked Wharton, smiling.

"Well, not quite," said Snoop. "I—I'm not a blessed miser, you know. You know what this money is—you've heard about it. I—I've just put five bob to it, and I was counting it over just to see how much there was, you know."

Harry Wharton nodded, with a very cordial expression.

"My father's been demobbed, you know," went on Snoop. "I'm expecting to see him this week. He can't very well come to Greyfriars. You know what happened to him before he went into the Army." Snoop flushed deeply. "But—but I'm looking forward to seeing him."

"Never mind what happened before he was in the Army," said Harry. "That's all wiped out by what he's done since."

"Well, I really think it ought to be looked at that way," said Snoop, more brightly. "He stood up to the Huns with the best of them. And—and at that time, when things went wrong, and he went to—to prison, there were others more to blame than he was, and they got off. He's leaving the Army with precious little money in his pockets, and he hasn't much prospect before him, and—and I've been saving up for whole terms to get this tin together for him."

"It's jolly decent of you," said Harry.

"It isn't much—only twelve pounds now," said Snoop. "Still, it's something, and it will help."

He placed the money in a tin box, and

locked it carefully, Wharton watching him in silence.

Snoop stowed the tin box in a locker, and then turned to the captain of the Remove.

"You came in to speak to me?" he asked.

"Yes; Loder told me he wants you."

"Loder?"

"Yes—Loder of the Sixth. It's not a licking," said Harry, as a deep cloud settled on Snoop's face. "He looked quite good-tempered for once."

But Snoop's face did not clear.

"I didn't think it was a licking," he muttered. "I expect it will turn out to be one, though. I'm not going to have anything more to do with Loder of the Sixth."

"I don't quite follow."

Snoop made an impatient gesture.

"Oh, I know what he wants—a message taken to the Cross Keys, or smokes smuggled in, or something of the kind. I used to do that kind of thing for him, but I'm not going to any more."

"Good for you!" said Wharton. "You certainly shouldn't. You'd get landed in trouble if it came out, and Loder wouldn't stand by you."

"Well, a Sixth Form prefect couldn't very well own up to that kind of game," said Snoop, with a grin. "I refused last time he asked me to take a message to Jerry Hawke, and he licked me."

"He'd no right to lick you, then. You'd be justified in asking Wingate to interfere."

"You don't know Loder. He didn't lick me for refusing to go to the Cross Keys—he licked me for sliding down the banisters. He would deny the Cross Keys bizney if I told Wingate."

Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

He sympathised a good deal with the black sheep of the Remove in his effort to throw behind him his somewhat shady manners and customs, more especially as he knew that Snoop's reform was due to a desire to make himself more worthy of his soldier father.

But, though the way of the transgressor was hard, the path of the repentant was not easy. In his shady days he had been very useful to the sportsman of the Sixth, and Gerald Loder, who was a pretty thorough black-guard in many ways, was not likely to be very patient with a reforming fag.

Harry Wharton was silent for a minute or two, his brows knitted in thought, while Snoop moved restlessly about the study.

"I've done with all that," said Snoop abruptly. "I made up my mind I

would when my father went out to Flanders. Loder can find somebody else. I'm not going to do anything I might be sacked for if it came out. My father's got enough to worry over without that. I sha'n't go to Loder now."

"Well, you have to go if a prefect tells you," said Harry Wharton. "But if it's as you say, Snoop, and Loder wants you to do anything shady, you ought to refuse."

"And get a thrashing?"

"No!" said Harry. "If Loder plays that game, we'll all stand by you—and we can make things warm for Loder. We've had our rows with him before, and he didn't come off best."

Snoop shrugged his shoulders.

"What can Lower Fourth fellows do against a Sixth Form prefect?" he muttered.

"Lots!" said the captain of the Remove. "If you mean business, Snoop, and you don't want to play the goat any more, we'll stand in with you, and see you through. And we'll down Loder."

"You couldn't."

"We'll try. Look here, I'll speak to my pals, and we'll come with you to Loder's study," said Wharton. "We'll wait in the corridor, and if Loder goes for you, you give a yell, and we'll come in."

"My hat! You—you couldn't!"

"We could, and would," answered Wharton. "And we'll jolly well see that Loder doesn't touch you. If there's a row, let it come. I'm pretty certain that Loder wouldn't let it go before the Head, under the circle."

Snoop was silent for some minutes, evidently thinking it out.

"Anyway, you can't dodge Loder for long," said Harry. "If you don't go to him, you're disobeying a prefect, and that gives him a chance. Go, and we'll come with you."

"Blessed if I don't!" said Sidney James Snoop, making up his mind at last. "If—if the fellows will back me up—"

"I'll see to that. I'll call them now," said Harry. "Come along!"

"I—I'll come, then."

The two juniors quitted the study together. Harry Wharton's face was very determined, but his companion had an uncertain and troubled look. Snoop did not possess Wharton's strength of character, and the coming trouble with Loder of the Sixth scared him. But Wharton's support nerved him for the effort.

In a few minutes Wharton had called

together the members of the famous Co.—Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. Snoop stood with a downcast face as the captain of the Remove explained the matter to his chums.

"We're on!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "After all, it's a long time since we've had a row with Loder."

"There's one about due now!" grinned Johnny Bull. "All serene, Snoopey. We'll back you up. Better take some stumps with us."

"My hat! Fancy stumping a prefect!" said Nugent. "Still, there's no doubt that a stumping will do Loder good."

"He's really asking for it," said Bob. "Of course, Snoop ought never to have done as he's done, and then Loder wouldn't expect it of him. But if Snoop wants to be decent, we're the chaps to see him through."

"You're awfully good!" muttered Snoop.

"Not at all," said Bob. "If Loder touches you, you give a whoop, and you'll see us come jazzing into the study."

"The jazzfulness will be terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous Snoopey," said Hurree Singh.

And the Famous Five, having thoughtfully provided themselves with cricket-stumps, in case of need, accompanied Sidney James Snoop to the Sixth Form passage to call on Loder.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

What Loder Wanted!

SNOOP'S hand shook a little as he tapped at Gerald Loder's door.

He was far from sharing the cheery carelessness of the Famous Five.

"Come in!"

It was Gerald Loder's voice within the study.

Snoop cast an almost beseeching glance at Harry Wharton & Co.

"You—you'll wait here?" he muttered.

"You bet!"

"Rely on us," said Wharton. "Go it, Snoopey!"

And Sidney James entered the lion's den.

Loder of the Sixth was seated at his study table, and he looked up with quite a genial expression as Snoop came in.

"Shut the door, kid!" he said.

Snoop had left the door ajar, feeling safer with it so; but he closed it at Loder's direction. The Sixth-Former had no suspicion of the fact that five Removites, armed with cricket-stumps, were waiting in the passage, ready to rush in at a call from Sidney James.

Gerald Loder pointed to a chair.

"Sit down, kid!"

Snoop sat down on the edge of the chair. Loder's geniality was far from reassuring him. That geniality only made it more certain that Loder wanted something. He did not waste geniality on fags for nothing.

The prefect took a box of cigarettes from a drawer in the table, selected one, and handed the box to Snoop.

"Help yourself," he said graciously.

"I—I'd rather not, Loder, thanks," faltered Snoop.

"What?"

"I—I mean—thanks, I will!" gasped Snoop weakly.

He took a cigarette but did not light up.

"Make yourself at home, Snoop," said Loder. "I want a little chat with you."

"Yes, Loder."

"I dare say you can find time to go down to Friardale for me."

"Ye-es."

"I want a note taken to Jerry Hawke, in fact."

Snoop drew a deep breath. The tug-of-war was coming. He was determined to have done with this kind of thing, and the presence of Harry Wharton & Co., within call of his voice, gave him courage.

A refusal trembled on his lips; but Loder went on before he could speak.

"But never mind that—yet. There's another matter, Snoop!"

"Yes, Loder?"

The Sixth-Former blew out a little cloud of smoke. Smoking was one of Loder's pleasant little habits, which he was very careful to keep concealed from the school authorities. The Head would have had no sympathy whatever with the sporting proclivities of Loder.

"There's been some talk about you lately in the school, Snoop," he remarked. "It appears that your father's in the Army—"

"He's out now, Loder!"

"Demobbed—what?"

"Yes."

"And you've been saving up money to lend him?" said Loder, with a smile.

"Ye-es. I—I didn't know you knew."

Loder laughed.

"It's been the talk of the place," he said. "The money was found in your study when a missing banknote was being looked for; and you were suspected of having pinched the banknote and changed it. Luckily for you, the banknote turned up."

Snoop was silent.

"You had to explain that you'd saved the money, and what it was for," continued Loder. "By the way, did you really save it?"

"Of course!"

"You don't have a very large allowance, I believe?" said Loder, looking at the junior very sharply.

"No. I've been very careful. My uncle in Canada pays my fees here, and he sends me an allowance, and something extra sometimes," said Snoop. "I've saved all I can."

"For your father?"

"Yes."

"Very dutiful, and all that," said Loder with a yawn. "Your pater will be no end pleased, I should think. Ten pounds, isn't it?"

"More than that now."

"My hat! You're a regular miser, Snoop. From what I've seen of you, I should rather expect you to blue the cash on backing geo-gees."

Snoop winced.

"I wouldn't!" he said. "It's for my father. Besides, I've given up that kind of thing, Loder."

"Turned over a new leaf—what?"

"Yes," said Snoop, wincing at the Sixth-Former's sneer.

"Very creditable, I must say. It's about time you did, too, isn't it? And you've actually got ten quids, and more?"

"Yes."

"Good man! Who'd have thought it?" said Loder. "Now, Snoop, old chap, I want you to do me a little favour."

"Yes, Loder?"

"I happen to be rather short of money at the present moment," said Loder, fixing his eyes upon Snoop's startled face. "Merely temporary, of course—a spell of dashed bad luck on the geo-gees. I haven't been so sensible as you, you see. As the matter stands, I'm next door to stony, and I don't expect anything till next week."

"Oh!" said Snoop, with a longing glance at the door. He had a glim-

mering now of what Gerald Loder's geniality meant.

"You wouldn't mind lending me ten pounds till next week, Snoop?"

Snoop caught his breath.

That demand was utterly unexpected. It was dismaying, too. For Snoop knew well enough that Loder must be in very low water indeed to put his pride in his pocket to the extent of borrowing money of a junior in the Lower Fourth.

It must mean that he was not only "stony," but that he had exhausted every other means of raising the wind; that there was nobody in the Sixth he could borrow more money of, and that he had drawn from home all that could be drawn from that quarter.

It showed, in fact, that Loder was in such straits for money that if Snoop lent him his savings he would probably never see them again.

The junior clenched his hands at the thought.

He was afraid of Loder; but he was more angry than afraid now.

The mere thought of being robbed of the money he had saved made him furious.

He rose hastily from the chair and made a step towards the door. Loder's eyes followed him in surprise.

"Where are you going, Snoop?" he rapped out.

"I—I'm going out."

"Stop where you are!"

Snoop stopped, panting for breath. Loder had risen to his feet now, with a very ugly expression on his face.

"I've asked you a favour, Snoop," he said. "I'm not accustomed to asking favours of fags, and I don't expect to be refused. I suppose you know your money will be safe! It's simply a temporary embarrassment—"

"You can borrow it of your pal Carne, then," stammered Snoop.

"Carne's short of money, too."

"Try Walker, then."

"I'm not asking you for advice, Snoop. I'm asking you for a loan. You ought to be glad to oblige me."

"So I—I—I would," stammered Snoop, his courage failing again, as the prefect came nearer to him, "but—but it's for my father."

"When are you going to see your father?"

"On Saturday."

"And hand him the money?"

"Yes."

Loder appeared to reflect.

"Very well," he said. "I'll engage to return the money by Friday, Snoop."

"You—you said you don't expect anything until next week."

"I can manage by Friday, though, by making an effort. I'll write specially to my father. You can rely on it, Snoop."

"I—I—"

Loder's hand strayed towards a cane.

"Will you give me a written promise to pay the money on Friday?" gasped Snoop.

"You know very well, Snoop, that a transaction of this kind can't be put into writing. You can take my word, I suppose?"

Snoop did not dare to express, verbally, his opinion of the value of Loder's word. But his face was expressive enough.

"To cut the matter short," said Loder, his look growing grimmer, "I expect you to oblige me. I can make it up to you in many ways, Snoop—a prefect can do a lot for a junior, and he can make things jolly uncomfy for a junior, too, if he likes. But I don't want to threaten you—not at all. I'm sure you'll oblige me," said Loder smoothly.

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"I—I can't!"
 "I'll come up to your study now, if you like," said Loder, unheeding.
 Snoop panted for breath.
 "It's no good coming up to my study!" he gasped.
 "You don't mean that you refuse, Snoop?"
 "Yes, I do!" said Snoop, encouraged by the knowledge that five heroes of the Remove were just outside. "I—I won't!"

Loder looked at him fixedly. Snoop was scared and almost shaking, but there was desperate obstinacy in his face. It was pretty clear that words would not move him.

Loder picked up his cane.
 This kind of proceeding was rather past the limit, even for Loder; but his need of money was great—greater even than Snoop guessed. He simply had to have it—if he could get it. He meant to leave no stone unturned, at all events.

"Have you done your lines, Snoop?" he asked in a grinding voice.

Snoop started.
 "My lines? I haven't any lines."
 "Hold out your hand, then!"
 "I won't!" yelled Snoop.
 "Won't you, by gad!"

The next moment Loder's grasp was on Snoop's collar and the cane was lashing on the junior's shoulders.

"Help!" yelled Snoop.
 And at that call the door of the study flew open with a crash, and the Famous Five of the Remove rushed in.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Too Much for Snoop!

LODER of the Sixth jumped up in angry amazement at that sudden invasion of his study.

His cane was raised for a second lash, but he had no time to deliver it.

"Down him!" roared Bob Cherry.
 Almost before Loder knew what was happening the charge of the juniors swept him off his feet.

Crash!
 Loder went down on his carpet, roaring.

Snoop staggered away from him, gasping. The rescue had been prompt enough. Loder sprawled on the floor, and one of Bob Cherry's heavy boots was planted on his chest to pin him there. Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh stood on his legs. Harry Wharton grasped both his wrists; and Nugent, not to be left out, seized his ears, which were fortunately large and gave a good hold.

"Got him!" chuckled Bob.
 "Hurrah!"
 "Let go!" raved Loder, struggling furiously, but quite in vain. "I'll smash you—I'll—I'll report you—I'll—I'll—Yarooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, my hat!" gasped Snoop, staring at the scene in terror.

It was rather a new sight at Greyfriars, a prefect of the Sixth Form "downed" in his own study by fags of the Lower Fourth.

Loder, in his rage, forgot all about Snoop and the loan he had intended to raise from that unfortunate youth. He struggled savagely and shouted for help.

"Give him some of his own cane!" said Bob.

"And let it be terrific, my worthy chums!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The terrific canefulness is the proper caper!"

"Help!" roared Loder.
 "Better dry up, Loder," said Harry Wharton. "If you bring the masters
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here they'll want to know all about it. Will that suit you?"

But Loder was too enraged to heed. He roared again for help. As a matter of fact, the uproar had already been heard. There were foot-steps in the passage, and Wingate and Gwynne looked into the study together, with astonishment in their faces.

The two prefects stared blankly at the scene.

"What the thump——" ejaculated Wingate.

"Oh, bedad!" gasped Gwynne.

"Loder, ye——"

"Drag them off!" roared Loder.

"Wharton—Cherry, let Loder go at once!" exclaimed Wingate angrily.

The juniors obeyed. The word of the Greyfriars captain was law. Loder sat up on the carpet, crimson and furious, and gasping for breath.

"I—I—I'll smash them!" he panted.
 "I'll—I'll——"

"This is where we put in a strategic retreat, I think," murmured Bob Cherry.

But there was no retreat for the heroes of the Remove. Wingate and Gwynne blocked the doorway.

"Stop!" said the captain of Greyfriars grimly. "I want to know what this means, Wharton. How dare you lay hands on a prefect of the Sixth Form in his own study!"

"He was bullying Snoop!" answered Wharton.

Loder staggered to his feet and grasped his cane. The Famous Five drew together and gripped their stumps. They had not had time to use the stumps yet, but they were ready to use them, as their looks showed.

"Hold on, Loder!" said Wingate quietly. "I'm inquiring into this matter. You seem to have interfered on Snoop's account, Wharton?"

"Yes, certainly!"

"You take it on yourself to interfere between a prefect and a fag?"

"Yes, when the prefect happens to be Loder," answered Wharton. "He was bullying Snoop for a cause he dare not tell you, Wingate."

"Indeed! You were caning Snoop, I suppose, Loder?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"For not having done his lines."

Wharton's lip curled.

"I expected him to tell lies," he said.

Loder made a furious movement, but the captain of Greyfriars waved him back.

"Leave this to me," he said. "Wharton, you are accusing a prefect of the Sixth Form of punishing a fag without cause, and telling falsehoods about it?"

"Yes!" said Harry fearlessly.

"Well, if you can prove that it's all right; if you can't you'll get a lesson you won't forget. We shall see. What have you to say, Snoop?"

"I—I——"

"You can speak out."

But the unfortunate Snoop found it difficult to speak out. The furious look on Loder's face dismayed him too much. He knew what he had to expect from Loder if he revealed the facts.

Harry Wharton spoke again as Snoop stammered helplessly.

"We came here with Snoop," he said.

"We waited outside. Loder wanted him to do something against the rules—or, at least, we thought so—and we weren't going to let a Remove chap be bullied into doing wrong. That's how the matter stands."

"What did Loder want you to do, Snoop?" asked Wingate quickly.

"To—to—to——" gasped Snoop.

"Well!"

"I—I thought he—he wanted me to

fetch in smokes, or something!" gasped Snoop. "That was what I told Wharton. I thought it. But—but——"

"But he did not?" asked the Greyfriars captain.

"N-n-no."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Have we put our little feet into it?"

The Famous Five looked rather dismayed now. They had taken it for granted, when Snoop yelled for help, that his anticipations had been realised. Snoop gave them a haggard look. He feared Loder's vengeance if he revealed the facts, but he could not leave his rescuers in the lurch.

"Loder wanted—wanted something else, Wingate!" he stammered.

"Well, what?"

"He—he wanted me to lend him money!" gasped Snoop. "He'd heard of the money I've saved up for my father, and he wanted it."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Wharton.

Loder had recovered his calmness by this time. He met the glances that were turned upon him with a sneering smile.

"I suppose you are not thinking of taking any notice of a statement like that, Wingate?" he said. "If you do, I shall go straight to the Head!"

"Phew!" murmured Johnny Bull.

Wingate fixed his eyes on Snoop.

"Loder wanted to borrow your money?" he repeated.

"Ye-es."

"And was thrashing you because you refused?"

"Yes."

"And you want me to believe a yarn like that?" exclaimed the captain of Greyfriars contemptuously.

Snoop's knees knocked together.

"It—it's true!" he faltered.

"Don't talk nonsense!"

"It's true that Snoop had money saved," said Harry Wharton. "All the school heard of it, owing to its being found in his study."

"I've heard of it," answered Wingate roughly. "But it's rather a new custom here for Sixth Form prefects to borrow money of fags, I believe. Have you any proof of that, Snoop?"

"What proof could I have?" faltered Snoop. "It's true."

Loder shrugged his shoulders.

The statement was so improbable, although it happened to be true, that Loder had little fear of the head prefect believing it. Even Harry Wharton & Co. were looking very dubious. They knew a good deal about Loder, and suspected more, but this was beyond their imagining.

"I caned Snoop because his lines were not done, and he answered me cheekily, Wingate," said Loder. "Then these young ruffians rushed in."

"We—we thought——" stammered Bob.

"Do you believe Snoop's statement yourself?" asked Wingate.

Wharton paused a moment.

"Yes," he said at last. "I don't see why he should say so if it wasn't true. It sounds rather thick, I know."

"It sounds a little too thick for me!" said Wingate grimly. "I'm going to cane you young rascals for interfering with a prefect. As for Snoop, Loder can take him to the Head, and he can repeat his statement to Dr. Locke if he likes."

"You—you don't believe me?" stammered Snoop.

"Not a word!"

"Then—then, very likely the Head won't——"

"Of course he won't!" answered Wingate contemptuously.

"Oh!" gasped Snoop.

"I'll take him to the Head fast

enough," said Loder. "It means a flogging. But if the young rascal chooses to admit that he's spoken falsely, and apologises on the spot—"

He looked meaningfully at Snoop.

The wretched junior licked his dry lips. What courage he possessed had oozed out at his finger-tips long since. He thought of the Head, and his brow growing sterner as he listened to a story he would regard as preposterous, and his nerve failed him.

"If you've told the truth, Snoop, stick to it," said Harry Wharton quietly.

Snoop mumbled.

"Speak out!" snapped Wingate.

"I—I apologise!" gasped Snoop.

"You young rascal!" growled the captain of Greyfriars. "You own up that what you said isn't true?"

"Yes!" gasped Snoop, through his pale lips.

Loder laughed lightly.

"I think that settles it!" he remarked.

"It does!" said Wingate grimly.

"There's your cane, Loder. I'll see these young rascals go through it!"

What followed was painful enough for the Famous Five. After what Snoop had admitted, they realised that there was nothing more to be said. Under Wingate's grim eyes they went through their caning. And Loder did not spare the rod.

Then came Snoop's turn; but in his case Loder laid the cane on more lightly. But it was hard enough for Snoop.

"Now get out!" grunted Wingate.

The half-dozen juniors left the study, and Wingate and Gwynne followed them out. Loder closed his door, and threw himself into his armchair with a gloomy brow. He had come through the affair well enough; but Snoop's savings were out of his reach, and that was what troubled him.

Harry Wharton & Co. did not look at Snoop as they went down the passage. Their anger and disgust were past words.

Snoop stopped at the foot of the staircase and touched Wharton timidly on the arm.

"I—I say, Wharton—"

"Let me alone!" said Harry.

And Snoop turned away without another word.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Fed Up!

"WOW!"

"Wow-wow!"

"Woocoo!"

In Study No. 1 in the Remove passage Harry Wharton & Co. were getting tea—not in a happy mood.

The ejaculations they uttered were "frequent and painful and free."

Loder had used the cane not wisely, but too well; and almost worse than the aching of their palms was the consciousness that they had—as it appeared, at least—deserved it, and fairly asked for it.

"All through backing up Snoop!" groaned Bob Cherry. "As if we haven't known for donkey's years that Snoop ain't worth backing up!"

"Yea, rather!" mumbled Nugent.

"The ratherfulness is—"

"Terrific!" grunted Bob. "And so is this merry ache in my palms! I shall slaughter Loder some day! But this wasn't really Loder's fault. Under the circumstances, he couldn't be blamed for waxing wrathful. That chump Snoop—"

"The lying toad!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Never mind. Let us eat, drink, and be merry, and to-morrow we'll rag Snoop."

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

It really was not a merry tea-party. A

fat junior, coming along from the stairs, paused to look in at the study, attracted by the sounds of woe. There was a slight grin on his fat face, which had an exasperating effect upon the Famous Five. They were not feeling in the mood to be grinned at by Bunter of the Remove.

"Scat!" snapped Bob Cherry.

"Been in the wars?" grinned the fat junior.

Whiz!

A cushion flew across the study and landed on Bunter's ample waistcoat. There was a loud yell as the fat junior disappeared.

"Well bowled, Johnny!"

"Down and out!"

"Yooop!" came from the passage.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A fat, crimson, and furious face appeared in the doorway, and a podgy fist was shaken at the chums of the Remove.

"You silly chumps!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Do you want another cush?" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"No. Here's yours!"

Whiz!

had long vanished, and the wrathful junior returned unappeased.

"After all, Bunter hadn't done anything," remarked Frank Nugent. "He only looked in to ask what was the matter."

"Well, he shouldn't!" growled Bob, rather unreasonably. "He's always putting in his fat nose somewhere!"

"Let not your esteemed wrathfulness rise, my worthy chum, like the dogs that delight in the barkful bitefulness!" murmured Hurree Singh.

Bob Cherry grinned. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's English was enough to restore the smiles to the gloomiest countenance.

"Well, I suppose it wasn't Bunter's fault we got licked," he remarked. "It's Snoop who ought to have had the cushion. Never mind; let's have tea."

And the Famous Five sat down to tea as cheerfully as they could.

Occasional ejaculations were uttered during the progress of the meal, but the pain was wearing off at last.

Tea was nearly over when there was a timid tap at the door, and the pale,



Swoosh! The whitewash came over Loder in a flood, covering him as with a garment. "Gurrrrrh!"

The cushion came back from the passage with terrific vim, and it caught Bob Cherry under the chin. He gave a wild howl, and staggered back, throwing out his hands, one of which landed on Johnny Bull's nose and the other in Hurree Singh's eye.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the fat junior, and he promptly fled.

Bob Cherry sat down with a bump.

"Oh!" he roared. "Oh! Ah! Ow! My hat! I'll—"

"You silly ass!" yelled Johnny Bull, rubbing his nose.

"Ow! Oh! Ow!" came in mumbling tones from the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"What's the matter with you?" growled Bob, as he scrambled up. "I'm hurt. I knocked my hands on something—"

"It was my nose, you howling ass!"

"It was my esteemed eye!" groaned Hurree Singh.

"Bother your eye! Blow your nose! Why didn't you collar Bunter? I'll scalp him! I'll squash him!"

Bob Cherry rushed wrathfully into the passage. But Bunter of the Remove

troubled face of Snoop looked in. Harry Wharton knitted his brows, and pointed to the passage.

"Outside!" he said curtly.

"I—I must speak to you fellows," muttered Snoop. "I—I must, really. I'm sorry—awfully sorry!"

"I should think you are!" said Wharton scornfully. "How could you be such a mean cad? Loder's bad enough, but only an awful rotter would have told such lies about him. And I believed you for a moment, too!"

"I almost did," said Bob.

Snoop winced.

"What I said was true!" he answered in a low voice.

"What? You admitted to Wingate that it wasn't true!" exclaimed Wharton.

"I—I know I did," said Snoop, hanging his head. "But it was true, all the same. Loder got me to his study to get my money out of me, and he pitched into me because I wouldn't lend it to him."

"Gammon!" growled Bob.

"It's true—every word."

"Then why did you take it back, after saying it, if it's true?" demanded Harry.

"You—you heard what Wingate said. I had to go before Dr. Locke," muttered Snoop. "He wouldn't have believed it about a prefect. Loder would have denied it. He'd have believed Loder. I should have been flogged. It was no use."

"You preferred us to be caned?" said Nugent, with a curl of the lip.

"That would have happened, anyway, as Wingate didn't believe me."

Wharton looked sharply at the wretched junior. Snoop's face was pale and harassed; but whether he was speaking the truth now it was impossible for Wharton to guess. Either he had spoken falsely in Loder's study, or he was speaking falsely now, and Wharton could not undertake to say which of the two was the case.

Neither did he feel much inclined to inquire. He was fed up with Sidney James Snoop and his tortuous ways.

"Don't you believe me?" muttered Snoop.

"No!" answered Harry.

"It—it's all true!"

"What you're telling us, or what you told Wingate?" asked the captain of the Remove sarcastically.

"What I'm telling you," said Snoop, wincing.

"Well, it may be. I don't know, and don't much care. I know I've had enough of you and your lying!"

"Hear, hear!" came in a deep growl from Johnny Bull.

"I couldn't go before the Head and tell him. I dared not. He wouldn't have believed it, and then—"

"It it was the truth you ought to have stood by it, and you know you ought," said Harry Wharton curtly. "The Head's no fool, either. He can tell whether a fellow's speaking the truth or not. You only had to tell the facts. But I can't swallow it, anyway. It's too thick even of Loder."

"The thickfulness is too great, my esteemed Snoop."

"Then you won't believe me?" mumbled Snoop.

Wharton made an impatient gesture.

"How can we believe you when you own up to lying to Wingate? If you'd lie to him out of sheer funk, you'd lie to us to get out of a ragging. Not that we're going to rag you. You can clear off, and keep your distance. That's all we want."

"He ought to be jolly well punched!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, let him crawl off!"

The unfortunate Snoop crawled off, so to speak; and, indeed, he looked as if he were crawling. The scorn in Study No. 1 cut him more deeply than a ragging could have done.

He did not go to his study. Skinner and Stott were there, and he did not care to face their curious eyes. He moved slowly along the passage, and stood staring out of the end window into the dusky quadrangle.

Two or three juniors coming in to their studies, passed him, and glanced at him rather curiously. Vernon-Smith tapped him on the shoulder.

"Anything up?" he asked.

Snoop gave the Bounder a gloomy look.

"Yes," he muttered.

"Been blueing your celebrated savings on a gee-gee, and has he come in cleveth?" grinned the Bounder.

"No, hang you!"

Snoop turned savagely away, and the Bounder, shrugging his shoulders, went on to his study. Squiff and Tom Brown

spoke to Snoop as they passed him, but he did not answer or turn his head.

He remained plunged in deep and gloomy thought, staring from the darkening window, till a fat hand dropped on his arm, and a fat voice spoke cheerily:

"What's the trouble, old scout? Tell your Uncle Bunter!"

Then Snoop turned, and his clouded face cleared a little as he met the cheerful grin of Bunter of the Remove.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Friend in Need!

WALLY BUNTER eyed Snoop curiously in quite a friendly way. The fat junior was about the only fellow in the Remove who was on friendly terms with Snoop, who had quarrelled with his old friends when he set his feet upon the path of reform.

Snoop was the only fellow at Greyfriars who knew Bunter's secret—that the fat junior was Wally Bunter, and that he had changed places with his cousin, Billy Bunter, who had gone to St. Jim's in his stead. To all the Remove but Snoop Bunter was Bunter, so to speak, though they all admitted that at the present time he never acted like Bunter.

Snoop's thoughts in his lonely trouble had turned to Bunter, and he was glad to see Wally's fat face grinning cheerily at him in the dusky window. He was feeling badly in need just then of someone to stand by him and believe in him.

"Get it off your chest, old trump!" said Wally encouragingly. "Got bottled up in maths?"

"No," answered Snoop, with a faint smile. "It's not maths."

"You're in the dumps?"

"Yes."

"Nothing wrong with the pater, I hope?"

"Oh, no. I'm seeing him on Saturday. He's all right."

"And the old folks at home?" smiled Wally.

"They're all right at home."

"Then everything in the garden is lovely, my infant. A fellow can always face his own troubles and grin at them," said Wally. "It's when trouble lands on somebody you're fond of that you get knocked over. Now, two heads are thicker than one, so spin me the yarn, and I'll help you bear the merry trouble. Is it cash? I've had a remittance—"

"It's not that!"

"Good! The remittance isn't a big one, so perhaps that's just as well. Are you in love?"

"Ass!"

"Not in love!" commented Wally. "Good! Even your Uncle Bunter couldn't help you if it was that. Have you been backing gee-gees again with Ponsonby of Highcliffe?"

"No, fathead!"

"Well, I've run through the list of all I can think of. Suppose you tell me, instead of making it a guessing competition?"

"Would you believe me?" muttered Snoop.

"Certainly, if you tell me the facts."

"Wharton wouldn't."

"Wharton hasn't my amazing mental powers, old top. Get it off your chest, and rely on me to see whether you're pulling my leg."

Then Snoop told his story in a low voice.

Wally Bunter listened to him with hardly an interruption, but he was watching Snoop's face very intently over Billy Bunter's spectacles.

"You silly ass!" was his comment at the finish.

"You don't believe me?"

"I don't blame Wharton for not believing you. Dash it all," exclaimed Wally warmly, "you landed them all into trouble by going back on your own word, after they'd backed you up!"

"I—I know. It—it was cowardly!" groaned Snoop. "I—I haven't so much pluck as those chaps have; I own up. But it wasn't only that I was afraid of a flogging. I'm sure the Head wouldn't have believed it about Loder—a prefect of the Sixth. And—and I don't know what would have happened. Suppose it was—the sack? Then my father—"

He broke off.

Wally's severe face softened.

"You did wrong," he said. "You ought to have stood by it. Your father's a soldier, and he would expect you to do the right thing, and be a man. But I think I understand. It would hit your pater hard if anything happened to you here. But you were an ass, Snoop, and more than a bit of a rotter! Excuse my speaking plainly."

"So you're turning on me, too!" said Snoop bitterly.

"Not at all—not a bit! You stood by me when Billy's sister Bessie nearly bowled me out, and saved me from a show-up," said Wally. "I believe all you've told me, but I'm blessed if I think you can expect Wharton and the other chaps to believe you after what you've said."

"But that isn't all," said Snoop miserably. "I sha'n't see my father till Saturday. I'm to meet him then near Friardale. Loder hasn't finished with me yet. I know he's after my money. He must be awfully hard up; owes money to bookmakers, most likely. He must be nearly desperate to think of trying to squeeze money out of a junior."

"No doubt about that," agreed Wally.

"He won't let me off," said Snoop. "He's after the money, and—I told you so. Here he comes!"

Loder of the Sixth came up the Remove staircase, and he glanced at the two juniors in the dusky window, and came towards them. He took no notice of Bunter—who was simply the fat Owl of the Remove, in Loder's eyes. His glance fixed on Snoop.

"Have you done your lines, Snoop?" he asked.

"I haven't any lines," said Snoop doggedly.

"Two hundred, to hand in by tea-time," said Loder. "As you haven't brought them in, Snoop, I'm afraid I shall have to cane you."

Snoop's eyes glittered, as the prefect let his ashplant slide into his hand. Wally Bunter looked on in silence.

He believed Snoop's story—at least, he was trying to believe it. But it was difficult to credit that a prefect of the Sixth Form could be acting with such baseness.

Loder's manner was perfectly natural. He simply looked like a prefect calling a junior to order for negligence.

"So you're going to cane me, Loder?" said Snoop, between his teeth.

"Certainly."

"I won't do what you want, all the same," said the junior desperately.

Loder raised his eyebrows.

"I don't understand you, Snoop. Hold out your hand!"

Snoop hesitated a moment, and then obeyed.

Swish, swish!

Loder walked back to the stairs, tucking his stick under his arm. Sidney James Snoop rubbed his hands, and watched him with glittering eyes.

"You see that, Bunter?" he muttered.

"That's how the beast is going to keep it up if I don't lend him my money."

Wally was silent.

"Don't you believe it now? Can't you see it?" hissed Snoop savagely.

"It's too thick," said Wally, at last. "Dash it all—I'm trying to believe you, Snoop, but it wants some swallowing—it does really! If it was true, you ought to have stuck to it, and gone before the Head."

"Would you advise me to now?" asked Snoop sullenly.

Wally hesitated.

"Well, it's rather too late now—after denying your own words to Wingate. Still, the Head's a downy old bird, and I believe he would be able to sift out the truth."

"If I were sure of that—" muttered Snoop.

"I think you can be sure of it," said Wally Bunter. "The Head's no fool—and it's a headmaster's business to be able to judge things rightly. I believe you can depend on him; only, for goodness' sake—for your own sake—don't tell him any whoppers!"

Snoop stood for some minutes in reflection, Wally watching him with doubt and hesitation in his fat face. Snoop nodded at last, and went towards the stairs. Wally Bunter rolled along to his study, where he was late for tea with Peter Todd and Dutton—a lack of punctuality he was very seldom guilty of.

Snoop went downstairs to the Sixth Form quarters. He knocked at Loder's door, and opened it.

Loder smiled at the sight of the junior. He concluded that the measures he had taken had brought the fag to his senses, as he would have regarded it.

"Come in, Snoop!" he said, quite genially.

"I won't come in, thanks," answered Snoop, eyeing him like a cat. "I've come to say something to you, Loder. I've decided to go to the Head."

"Really?" said Loder carelessly; but with a very sharp glitter in his eyes.

"Really!" answered Snoop. "The Head mayn't believe me—but he may, and I'm going to chance it. Anyhow, I can tell him a good many things about you, Loder, that will make him a bit inquiring. You've got some things in this study, I fancy, that you wouldn't care for the Head to see. Now pitch into me, if you like, you bully, and I'll yell for Wingate, and make him take both of us to the Head and have it out."

Snoop had screwed up his courage to the sticking-point; but his heart almost failed him as he saw Loder grasp his ashplant.

But Loder released it again. He read a savage earnestness in Snoop's pale face; and Loder had his own reasons—excellent reasons—for not wanting a scene before the headmaster.

Snoop waited; and his confidence strengthened as he saw that the bully of the Sixth did not move. His manner grew quite vaunting as he realised that Loder was accepting defeat.

"Well?" he said, with a sneer. "What are you going to do?"

Gerald Loder breathed hard.

"You young cad!" he said. "Get out!"

Snoop laughed. He felt that he could laugh now.

"I'll get out fast enough," he answered. "I sha'n't come here again. You can fetch in your own smokes, and carry your own messages to Jerry Hawke. And if you lay a finger on me again, I'll go to the Head and chance it."

And Snoop retired, closing the door with a bang.

The echoing of that bang made his heart leap as he went down the passage rather hastily. But the banged door did not reopen—Gerald Loder was taking even that quietly. Sidney James Snoop went into Hall to tea in quite a merry mood.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Planning a Good Deed!

SKINNER of the Remove came into the junior Common-room that evening with a grin on his face. And that cheery grin on Skinner's face was a sufficient indication that somebody was not enjoying life. The cynical philosopher who observed that there is something gratifying in the misfortune of one's friends would have been confirmed in his opinion if he had had the honour of Harold Skinner's acquaintance.

"Who's been caned?" asked Bob Cherry, glancing at Skinner's cheery visage.

"Eh? Nobody that I know of," answered Skinner.

"Somebody booked for a flogging?"

"I don't know."

"Then what are you looking so amused about?"

Skinner laughed.

"It's poor old Loder," he said.

Snoop looked round quickly. Skinner did not notice him, however.

"I came back rather late from Friar-dale," he explained. "And there, under the trees near the stile, was Loder of the Sixth. And who do you think was with him?"

"Don't know—and don't care much!"

"Jerry Hawke!" said Skinner.

"My hat! That sharper at the Cross Keys!" said Hazeldene. "Loder must be potty to meet him so near the school."

"I fancy he hadn't any choice, from what Hawke was saying," chuckled Skinner. "He was waxy. Loder owes him money."

"How do you know?" demanded Wharton.

"Ha, ha! Because Hawke was asking him for it—and jolly loud, too!" chuckled Skinner. "It was dusk, and they didn't see me coming. Of course, I wouldn't have listened—"

"You're not capable of it, old top!" remarked the Bounder, with deep sarcasm. "No need to mention that."

"Oh, rats! I couldn't help hearing what old Hawke was fairly bellowing at Loder," said Skinner sulkily. "It seems that Loder had promised him a tenner on account—he must owe a thumpin' big sum if the tenner was only on account—and the tenner failed to materialise."

"Oh!" exclaimed Snoop.

Harry Wharton glanced at Snoop involuntarily. Skinner's story was an unexpected confirmation of Snoop's surprising tale.

"Loder was looking quite sick," went on Skinner cheerfully. "He's rather a friend of mine, old Loder, and I'm sorry for him. They must have heard me coming, then, for they dodged back into the trees. I heard Loder say 'Half-past ten to-night,' and he cleared off at a run."

"Half-past ten to-night!" repeated Bob Cherry. "Is the awful blackguard going to break bounds to meet that rascal to-night?"

"You've got it! Charming conduct for a prefect of the Sixth, ain't it?" yawned Skinner. "Settin' us kids a good example, and all that—what? You're not looking as shocked as I expected, Wharton. I thought this tale of horror would make your topknot stand on end."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Wharton sharply.

"It's shocking enough, if true," said Tom Redwing quietly. "But I'd rather have better evidence than what you say about a fellow, Skinner—even about Loder of the Sixth."

"I guess I was going to make that same remark," observed Fisher T. Fish, with a shake of the head.

And several fellows nodded. Skinner shrugged his shoulders. He did not feel very much insulted if his word was

doubted; his word was not always of great value.

"Please yourself, old beans!" he said lightly. "That's just as it happened. It's a chance for the Remove to have a whip-round for poor old Loder, as he's so popular."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner lounged away, probably to relate his interesting story to other listeners. He had stated that he was sorry for Loder; but he seemed to derive some satisfaction from the incident, all the same.

Bob Cherry had a very thoughtful expression upon his rugged brow for some time afterwards. He came out of a deep reverie when Harry Wharton offered him a penny for his thoughts.

"Worth more than that," said Bob, with a grin. "You heard what that scrabby bounder Skinner was saying about—"

"True, I think," said Harry.

"I think so, too. It bears out what Snoop said, though I'm blessed if there's any believing Snoop. It looks as if it was Snoop's tenner Loder meant to take to that sharper. Anyhow, Loder's a beast!"

"Agreed."

"He caned us—hard!"

"He did," assented Wharton, rubbing his hands reminiscently.

"And it's wrong for a prefect to break bounds at night," continued Bob in a low voice.

"Wrong enough. But I suppose you're not thinking of teaching Loder better manners and morals?" said Harry.

"Offside! That's just what I am thinking of," said Bob coolly. "Of course, it wouldn't be any good speaking to Loder, and telling him what a shocking cad he is. Instead of thanking us, he might go for us with his ashplant."

"He might," said Wharton, laughing. "I think it's jolly likely."

"But there are other ways of bringing back a naughty Sixth-Former into the merry strait and narrow path. It isn't exactly the business of the Lower Fourth to look after the Sixth; but we're good chaps, and we can do Loder a good turn occasionally. Now, Loder won't leave the house at half-past ten by the door, will he?"

"Not unless he's potty."

"He will drop from his study window."

"Sure to. But what—"

"Well," said Bob Cherry, "suppose some nice boys—chaps like us, for example—happened to be under his window waiting for him?"

"Eh?"

"We could get down from the dorm for once to do Loder a good turn, and save him from the downward path," urged Bob. "It would be a good deed, you know; and we don't do such a thumping lot of good deeds that we can afford to miss this chance of doing one. My impression is that if Loder was smothered with whitewash he wouldn't keep that appointment with Jerry Hawke. What do you think?"

"I think he wouldn't. But—"

"Goslin has been whitewashing the wood-shed. He's left a bucket of wash there. I noticed it to-day, and was wondering what use it could be put to," said Bob. "I was thinking out a scheme for getting Mauleverer to sit in it, somehow."

"You ass!" exclaimed Wharton, laughing.

"Well, it oughtn't to be wasted. We'll give Mauleverer a rest, and keep the whitewash for Loder. Mr. Hawke can jazz around in the lane and sing 'He Cometh Not.' And Loder—"

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Harry Wharton chuckled.

"You like the idea?"

"Topping!" said Harry. "Loder had his turn this afternoon, and we'll have ours this evening. We can manage it easily enough; and in the dark there's not much danger of being spotted."

"Not much danger, anyhow. Loder wouldn't care to mention to the Head that he was getting out of his window after ten at night."

"Ha, ha! No."

"I say, you fellows, what's the joke?" asked Wally Bunter, looking round at the two chums as he heard the sound of merriment.

"You are, my fat infant," answered Bob. "Your face is one joke, and your elegant figure is another; your manners are another, and your customs another still. In fact, you're a regular scream!"

"Fathead!" was Wally's reply to that.

Neither of the chums felt inclined to confide in the Owl of the Remove. Stopping a sportive prefect from breaking bounds at night might be a good deed, as Bob declared, but it was not the kind of good deed that could be proclaimed far and wide. On this occasion, it was wise for the good youths of the Remove to hide their light under a bushel.

In a quiet corner Nugent and Johnny Bull and Inky were taken into the little scheme, in which they concurred heartily.

And when Wingate of the Sixth saw lights out for the Remove that night there were five juniors in the dormitory who did not intend to go to sleep.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Loder's Catch!

"TEN!" murmured Bob Cherry. The last stroke of ten had died away in the quiet spring night. Bob Cherry sat up in bed in the Remove dormitory and blinked round in the gloom.

"You fellows awake?" he murmured.

"I am, for one!" answered Wharton.

"Same here!" from Nugent.

"The sameness is terrific!"—a reply that could only have come from the dusky Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Johnny! Wake up, Johnny!" whispered Bob Cherry, as he turned out of bed.

"I am awake, fathead!"

"Then turn out."

"The fact is, it's rather too early——"

"Rats! Loder will leave at a quarter-past at the latest."

"It's jolly cold——"

"Not so cold as the sponge I'm going to squeeze over your neck, old chap!"

There was a gasp and a hurried movement from Johnny Bull.

"Keep off, you fathead!"

"Johnny Bull turned out quickly, and the five juniors dressed in the dark. A sleepy voice came from Bolsover major's bed.

"Hallo! Who's that?"

"Little us," answered Bob Cherry.

"Don't make a row, Bolsover."

"What on earth are you up to?" asked Bolsover major, blinking at them in the shadows.

"We're going to do a good deed to a dear prefect, like Good Little Georgie who loved his kind teachers."

"Oh, rot!" grunted Bolsover; and he turned over to go to sleep again.

The Famous Five were soon dressed, and they put on the rubber shoes they had thoughtfully placed in readiness. There was hardly a sound as they quitted the dormitory.

The corridor outside was quite dark, though there were lights downstairs.

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But the Removites did not intend to go downstairs. They moved along softly to the box-room.

From the box-room window it was easy to reach the leads, and to climb thence to the ground. It was not the first time that the heroes of the Remove had left the School House by that route.

In a few minutes they were on the ground, with the cool wind from the sea blowing on their faces.

"You fellows get round to Loder's window," whispered Bob Cherry. "I'll join you with our little present for Loder."

"Right-ho!"

A light was burning in Loder's study when the juniors arrived under the window, showing that the prefect was there. It was pretty certain that Loder would put the light out before he left, and lock his door, so that it would be supposed that he had gone to bed. He would naturally not want anyone to drop into his study during his absence.

Outside all was dark, save for the glimmer from the blinds of the windows. Keeping close to the wall, the juniors were deep in shadow.

There was a sound of deep breathing as Bob Cherry came long laden with a bucket half-full of whitewash. He joined his chums, and set down the bucket.

"All serene!" he murmured. "The giddy bird's still in the cage! Wait till he flies out!"

And then there was a soft chuckle.

It was turned a quarter-past ten when a shadow moved on Loder's blind. The light in the study suddenly went out.

The juniors remained still as mice. In a few minutes now they were to see whether Skinner's information was to be relied upon. If Loder had gone to bed, they had their trouble for nothing, and in that case Skinner's nose was likely to suffer in the morning.

But Skinner's nose was soon out of danger. The prefect's window opened softly and cautiously. Loder could have only one possible motive for opening the lower sash of his window after putting out his light. He was going out surreptitiously.

The juniors lay low in the darkness, hardly breathing. There was no sound for a full minute, and they knew that Loder was staring into the dark quad from his dark window and listening.

Then there came the soft sound of someone cautiously climbing out of window. Bob Cherry's grasp closed on the whitewash bucket.

Loder crouched on the sill, to close down the sash within an inch. Then he dropped lightly to the ground.

It was not a long drop, and the prefect landed lightly and almost noiselessly.

And then——

Swoooooosh!

For an instant Gerald Loder saw a shadowy figure and a whirling bucket. Then he saw nothing more—but whitewash. It came over him in a flood, swamping his head, his face, and his coat, covering him with emollient fluid as with a garment.

Swoooooosh! Splash! Swish!

"Gurrrrrrrgh!"

Loder's spluttering yell awoke the echoes of the quadrangle. He staggered against the wall, gouging frantically at his eyes and nose.

"Groooch! Yooooooogh! Gurrrr!"

A chuckle floated back to Loder as five shadowy figures fled. He did not hear or heed it—he was too busy.

"Groooch! Gurrrgh! Mmmmmmm!"

Wild, inarticulate sounds came spluttering through the whitewash. The window of Wingate's study was flung up. George Wingate put an astonished head out into the night air.

"What's the row?"

"Gurrrrrrrggg!"

"Sure, it's a ghost intichy!" exclaimed Gwynne, joining the captain of Greyfriars at the window.

"Yurrrrrgggh!"

Wingate jumped lightly out. Five fleeing juniors were well round the School House by that time. Bob Cherry pitched the empty bucket into the woodshed, and the Famous Five ran for home. They clambered quickly on to the leads, and scuttled back to their dormitory.

"Remember, we're fast asleep if anybody comes along!" gasped Bob Cherry as he plunged into bed. "We've got to prove a jolly strong alibi for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But nobody came along. In the quadrangle Gerald Loder was spluttering and spluttering, and uttering remarks that were certainly not suitable for a prefect of Greyfriars to utter. Wingate recognised his voice—and perhaps his flow of language.

"Loder!" he exclaimed.

"Groogh! Hoooh! Yooooooogh!"

"What on earth's happened?"

"Groogh! Whitewash—young fiends—some fags—groooch—I'll skin them—Yow-ow-ow! I'll—I'll—Whitewash! Yow-ow! I'm choking! Wooop!"

Wingate stared at him.

"You must have got out of your window, Loder," he said very quietly. "Will you explain what you were doing?"

Read

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"Faith, and it wants some explaining!" murmured Gwynne.

Loder gouged his eyes clear, and blinked at Wingate. He looked like a grisly ghost.

"I—I—I've been smothered!" he spluttered. "Look at me! Some fag, of course—waiting for me! Oh, I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"How could a fag know you were going to get out of your window at this time of night? And why did you do it, anyway?"

"Oh!" gasped Loder.

"You'd better report this to the Head," said Wingate drily. "You can tell him at the same time how you came to be out of your window."

"I—I—I—" Loder stammered. "I—I heard someone—someone in the quad. I came out to—to—to see who it was, and—and—"

"You had better tell the Head that!" said Wingate, with a curling lip. "Shall I come with you to Dr. Locke?"

"I—I can't go to the Head in this state—"

"No; perhaps you'd better leave it till the morning. I'll come with you, as a witness, if you like."

"I'm not going to the Head at all!" snarled Loder.

"Why not?"

"Because I don't choose!"

And with that Loder clambered back into his window, an example that was followed by George Wingate. The white-washed prefect closed his window and his blind and lighted the gas. He ground his teeth as he surveyed himself in the glass.

"I—I can't go out like this, and—and that fool Wingate is suspicious!" He brandished his fists furiously. "I'll—I'll—I'll— But I don't know even who it was. Snoop—he wouldn't have the nerve. Wharton—Cherry! They couldn't have known! Oh, crumbs! What—what a state I'm in!"

For the next hour Gerald Loder was cleaning himself—a laborious process, but a very necessary one; what time a beery and smoky gentleman was kicking his heels in Friardale Lane, and making remarks that were not loud, but deep. But Loder simply couldn't keep his appointment that night, and Mr. Hawke had to kick his heels in vain, and go home to the Cross Keys in a decidedly ratty temper.

And in the Remove dormitory five merry young rascals chuckled themselves to sleep in a state of great satisfaction—no doubt because they had done a good deed!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Tarts for Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. looked round for Loder when the Greyfriars fellows gathered for breakfast the next morning. The prefect had a harassed look, and he looked tired. They wondered until what hour he had been engaged in cleaning off the whitewash. They could not venture to make the inquiry of Loder.

After breakfast Loder went out into the quadrangle with a moody brow. The chums of the Remove smiled at one another.

"He doesn't know how kind we've been!" murmured Bob Cherry. "We won't mention it to him. We don't want his thanks!"

"Ha, ha! No fear!"

Loder slipped quietly out of gates before classes that morning. As a prefect, he could come and go very much as he liked; but certainly the Head would have been startled if he had known Loder's errand that morning. Harry

Wharton & Co. saw him depart, and they guessed easily enough.

Loder was going to make his excuses to Jerry Hawke for having failed to keep his appointment.

Bob Cherry's good deed had only postponed it, after all. It really seemed a waste of whitewash, as Bob remarked.

They did not see Loder again till dinner-time, and then other fellows, besides the Famous Five, noticed that the prefect was moody and troubled. It was necessary for the sportsman of the Sixth to keep up appearances in public; but he could not wholly conceal the worry that gnawed him within. Skinner of the Remove observed him, and confided to the other fellows that it was pretty clear that Mr. Hawke was dunning him for money. What Loder would have thought, said, and done if he had known that his affairs were thus chatted of in the Lower Fourth could not be guessed.

Loder went to his study after dinner, and Snoop half-expected to be summoned there. But the summons did not come. Desperate as his need of money was, Loder seemed to have given up his de-

He had had what he called cruel luck. His dead certs had turned out to be anything but certain—after the manner of dead certs. What was certain was that he was out of money, and owed more than he could pay in several directions, and that the most undesirable of his creditors was pressing him for payment. Mr. Hawke, in fact, was getting quite ratty, and hinting darkly at "trouble" if his money was not forthcoming.

"Trouble" with a public-house sharper meant the sudden end of Loder's sportive career at Greyfriars, and it was no wonder that the sportsman of the Sixth was in a savage, apprehensive mood.

He stood staring from his window for some time, and scowled as he saw Wingate walking with Gwynne—deep in talk, probably about cricket. Cricket! Loder had no thought for cricket just then; it did not even occur to him that he would not have been in his present scrape if he had devoted a little more attention to cricket and a little less to shady blackguardism.

His teeth clicked together, and his eyes glittered as he noticed Sidney James



"Have some more cake, Filly?" said Loder. "Thanks, Gerald, old top, I will!" replied Bunter affably. (See Chapter 9.)

signs on Snoop's savings. Sidney James wondered whether he had found some other resource. Yet, if there was any other resource to be found, it was surprising that Loder had given a thought to Snoop's money at all.

If he was sent for or sought, Snoop was determined to take Wally Bunter's advice and appeal to the Head. Bunter's support encouraged him, and he had realised, too, that he had made a false and foolish step in denying the truth. Loder's surrender on the subject was a proof that there was a good chance of the headmaster sifting out the truth if the matter came before him. Snoop was so much encouraged that he was prepared to defy Loder to any extent; and it was probably because the prefect knew so much that he allowed the matter to drop.

Loder was not in a happy mood as he paced to and fro in his study. His brows were wrinkled in deep lines.

The life of a "blade" was not all roses, by any means. Loder was finding it anything but rosy at present.

Snoop in the quad, with quite a bright face, chatting with Bunter. He had counted on Snoop's tenner to tide him over; but that was another "dead cert" that had failed him.

His eyes lingered on Bunter's fat face and glimmering glasses, and his brow grew more thoughtful, a strange expression coming over his face. He turned from the window and threw himself into a chair, his hands driven deep into his pockets, the line deepening in his knitted brow.

Whatever were the thoughts passing in his mind, they made the colour waver in his cheeks. But his face set with a grim, obstinate, surly expression. He had made up his mind. He rose from the chair, stepped back to the window, and threw up the sash.

Bunter and Snoop were still in sight, chatting amicably. Loder called out to the fat junior.

"Bunter!"

Wally looked round, blinking up at Loder over Billy Bunter's glasses.

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"Hallo, Loder?"

"Cut off to the tuckshop, Bunter, and get half a dozen tarts, and bring them to my study!"

The fat junior paused. The Remove were not bound to tag for the seniors, but Wally was a good-natured fellow, and Loder had addressed him very politely.

"All right, Loder!" he answered. "Where's the tin?"

"Mrs. Mimble will put them to my account. Mention my name!"

Bunter grinned.

"Mrs. Mimble is rather a suspicious old lady, Loder. She may think I'm after her tarts. You see—"

"I see. I'll give you a note."

Loder scribbled a pencil note and tossed it out to Bunter. The fat junior dutifully rolled away to the school shop.

Gerald Loder's credit was still good at the school shop, if nowhere else, and Bunter was soon coming along with the bag of tarts. He came up to Loder's study, and tapped at the door.

"Come in, Bunter!" said the prefect cheerily.

Wally Bunter entered, and laid the bag on the table. Had he been Billy Bunter, the full half-dozen tarts would certainly not have arrived safely in Loder's study; but, as it was, they were all there. Wally could not help wondering what the prefect wanted with tarts, less than half an hour after dinner.

"Thank you, Bunter!" said Loder.

"Not at all!" answered Wally politely.

"Sit down, kid, and take one," said the prefect. "That's only fair, after giving you the trouble of fetching them."

"Oh, my hat!"

"What did you say, Bunter?"

"I—I said—ahem!—thank you!" stammered Wally.

He sat down, quite willing to sample the tarts. He resembled Billy Bunter in his love of good things, as well as in his looks. Loder's geniality was astonishing, especially as he couldn't possibly suppose that Bunter had a tanner to lend.

Loder watched him operate on the tart. It was a rapid operation.

"Like them, Bunter?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Take another."

"Thanks!"

Wally took another, his astonishment growing. It looked as if Loder had sent for the tarts for the pleasure of seeing Bunter eat them in his study—which was very remarkable.

But the tarts were good, and Wally was prepared to oblige Loder, if required, to the extent of disposing of the whole bag.

"You seem to be rather friendly with Snoop, Bunter," remarked Loder in a casual way, while the fat junior was busy with the second tart.

"Yes, we're rather chummy, Loder."

"It's very kind of you, Bunter, to take him up in this way."

Bunter gave the prefect a quick look over his spectacles.

The process of "buttering" was quite easy with Billy Bunter. The more his fat leg was pulled the more he would purr with satisfaction. It was quite different with Wally Bunter, who was as sharp as a needle. Loder, in beginning the buttering process, was, unfortunately, dealing with the wrong Bunter, though he was not aware of it.

Wally Bunter, with the cheery idea of letting the prefect run on as long as he liked, assumed a fatuous smile, quite worthy of his cousin William George.

"The fact is, Loder, I'm a kind-hearted chap," he answered.

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"I think you are, Bunter. I've had my eyes on you for some time," said Loder, with a smile. "I've rather wondered that the fags did not pick you out as captain of the Remove."

"Oh! They—they don't know a good thing when they see it, you know!" murmured Wally.

"That's it, I suppose. Have another tart, Bunter."

"Thanks!"

Wally continued his frontal attack on the bag of tarts. It was pretty clear that they had been intended for him all along. Loder had brought him to his study to feed and to flatter him—which was the way to make a devoted slave of Billy Bunter. It was not likely to have that effect on Wally, but he was prepared to let Loder run on. He was rather curious, too, as to the prefect's motive.

It was quite certain that Loder had some motive—and a strong one—for the trouble he was taking.

"In fact, you can finish them," continued Loder. "It's a pleasure to have a little talk with you, Bunter. The fact is, we don't see enough of one another. I've often wished that there wasn't such a gulf between the Sixth and the Remove. Your advice would be useful to me sometimes."

Wally almost gasped at the idea of a Sixth Form prefect asking advice of a Removeite—especially Billy Bunter.

"I'm always at your service, Loder," he said meekly. "The fact is, I could give you advice. Do you want any tips about cricket?"

That was quite worthy of William George Bunter at his best.

Loder smiled genially.

"I'd be glad, Bunter, if you could come on Big Side sometimes when I'm at the nets and give me some tips about cricket!" he answered.

"Oh!" gasped Wally. "I say, these tarts are jolly good!"

"Finish them, kid!"

"Thanks, I will!"

And the fat junior proceeded to do so.

Loder chatted on pleasantly, piling on flattery in the way Billy Bunter liked it—in chunks. Wally listened to it with a fatuous smile, waiting for the prefect to come to the point. But Loder did not come to any point. He was still chatting agreeably when the bell rang for classes.

"Hallo! How quickly the time passes when a chap is really enjoying a conversation!" said Loder regretfully.

"Yes, doesn't it, old chap?" said Wally.

Loder winced at the "old chap," but he smiled.

"I must have another chat with you, Billy," he said. "Come in to tea after lessons, will you?"

"With pleasure!"

Wally Bunter left the study in a state of wonder. He almost wondered whether he was dreaming. The bully of the Sixth had been flattering him without limit; and, so far as transpired, Loder had adopted these agreeable manners and customs without any ulterior object. But perhaps that ulterior object was to come into view at tea-time. Without being unduly suspicious, Wally could not help suspecting as much.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Tea in Loder's Study!

HARRY WHARTON tapped Bunter on a fat shoulder after lessons.

"Tea at half-past five!" he said.

"Eh?"

"The feast will be spread in the halls of Study No. 1," explained Bob Cherry solemnly. "There will be haddocks;

there will be jam; there will even be batter. And, as Inky would remark, the delightfulness of your esteemed company will be terrific, my worthy and ludicrous Bunter!"

Wally laughed.

"I'd be jolly glad to come," he answered, "but—"

"Come, then!" said Harry.

"Can't be did!"

Bob Cherry staggered.

"Am I dreaming, or is Bunter declining an invitation to a spread?" he asked faintly.

"Fathead!" answered Wally. "I'd like to come, only I've promised Loder."

"Loder!" yelled Bob.

"Yes, I'm going to tea with Loder of the Sixth."

"My only hat! Have you been saving up money?"

"Ha, ha! No! But I'm going to give Loder some tips about cricket."

"You're going to give a First Eleven man tips about cricket?" said Harry Wharton.

"Yes; Loder's asked me to!" said Bunter with an air of great simplicity.

"What the merry thunder is Loder pulling Bunter's leg for?" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

Harry Wharton looked curiously at the fat junior.

"Blessed if I can make it out," he said. "Why on earth should Loder take the trouble to butter you, Bunter?"

"Perhapsfully Bunter's esteemed postal-order has come at lastfully," suggested Hurree Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove roared at the idea of the hard-up prefect relying on Billy Bunter's celebrated postal-order. It really was not probable.

"Has it come, Bunter?" grinned Nugent.

"Not a bit of it!"

"Then why is Loder pulling your leg?"

"Perhaps he admires me, and likes my company," said Wally. "He thinks I ought to be captain of the Remove."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He was quite annoyed when the bell went for classes to-day, he was enjoying my conversation so much. He said so."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Famous Five.

"What are you fellows laughing at?" inquired Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally Bunter rolled away, leaving the juniors roaring. Wally was grinning himself. Loder's "soft sawder" had not really had the effect on him that it certainly would have had upon his cousin Billy.

His fat face was smiling and fatuous as he presented himself in Gerald Loder's study at tea-time. There was quite a nice spread on the table—Loder's credit being still good at the tuckshop. Tubb of the Third had prepared the spread with great care—assisted to carefulness by a cuff or two from the genial Loder.

Loder's manner was all graciousness as he received his distinguished visitor. He addressed him as "Billy"—and when Wally, by way of seeing how much the Sixth-Former would stand, addressed him in return as "Gerald," Loder only smiled.

"Billy" and "Gerald" were on the pleasantest terms over tea. It was Billy and Gerald all the time.

"Have some more cake, Billy."

"Thanks, Gerald, old top, I will!"

"I'll fill your cup again, shall I, Billy?"

"Do, Jerry!"

Even "Jerry" did not cause the smile to fade from Loder's face.

When tea was over, Loder stretched himself in an armchair, and signed to Bunter to take the other. Wally settled down comfortably. He was quite enjoying himself.

"It's very good of you, Billy, to give me your time like this—a popular fellow like you, and so much sought after," remarked Loder.

"My dear chap, don't mrench!" answered Wally.

"You're a good deal in Snoop's study, I believe?"

"Yes, rather a lot."

"I'm rather concerned about Snoop," said Loder.

"Oh, are you really?" Wally did not add that he thought Loder was more concerned about Snoop's tenner than about Snoop himself.

"Yes. As a prefect, you know, I'm supposed to keep an eye on junior kids. I'm afraid that Snoop is a little reckless."

"Oh!"

"Smoking, and that kind of thing," said Loder, with a shake of the head. "Now, as Snoop is a friend of yours, Bunter, I intend to go very easy with him. My idea is to speak to him quietly, and point out to him that he can't go on in such a reckless way."

"That's a—a—a good idea!" said Wally, wondering what on earth Loder was driving at.

"Of course, I don't want to drop on the kid if I've made a mistake," continued Loder. "I want to make sure, and then speak to him quietly and kindly. You approve of that, Billy?"

"Jolly good idea, Jerry!"

"If he has smokes, and such things, I suppose he keeps them locked up somewhere in his study. I dare say you've noticed whether he has a desk, or anything, that he keeps locked?"

"Oh, yes!" A startled look came into Wally Bunter's eyes for a moment. "He has a locker in the study, and a tin box in it, that he keeps locked."

"Ah! I'm afraid that that tin box contains things that would get him into trouble if they were found," said Loder seriously. "Cigarettes, playing-cards, and so on. It's very sad, Billy!"

"Awfully!" assented Wally Bunter.

"Now, I want to make sure before I say anything to Snoop—a prefect is bound to be just," said Loder. "I should like to look into that locker of his. You can take my word for it, Bunter—I mean Billy—that there's no question of Snoop being punished. If matters are as I fear, I shall only speak to him, and give him a friendly and serious warning."

"That—that's awfully good of you, Loder!"

"Well, then, you can help me if you like, Bunter, and I'll take it as a favour. I dare say you could get hold of the key of that locker—a clever fellow like you?"

Wally drew a deep breath.

"Easily," he answered.

"And the key of the tin box—I think you said there was a tin box—"

"Yes."

"Then the thing could be done without any fuss, and without getting Snoop into any trouble, you see. I'll just glance into the locker."

"I—I see."

Loder was eyeing Bunter rather anxiously now. He knew the obtuseness of Billy Bunter; but he realised that he was putting that obtuseness to a severe strain. It was quite possible that Billy Bunter's obtuseness would have proved equal to the strain.

But it was rather a different matter with Wally Bunter. It was all the fat

junior could do to keep the fatuous smile upon his face now. But he succeeded.

"Well, if you could get me the keys, Bunter—"

"Oh, I could do that, all right, if I liked!"

"It would really be a favour to Snoop."

"Q-q-quite so!"

"Then I can rely on you, old chap?"

Bunter rose to his feet.

"If I don't come back to this study in an hour, at most, with a couple of keys, you can use my head for a footer!" he answered.

Loder drew a deep, deep breath. His "soft sawder" had not been wasted, after all!

"Of course, it won't do to mention this to anybody, old son," he remarked casually. "I'm taking you into my confidence, you know."

The smile faded from Wally Bunter's face as soon as he was outside the study. He was almost scared by what he had discovered. Loder's flimsy story might have imposed on Billy Bunter; but Wally knew what the sportsman of the Sixth wanted in Snoop's locker—and he knew upon whom suspicion would fall when the money was missed—upon the fellow who had abstracted Snoop's keys!

At that moment Wally was deeply thankful that Billy Bunter was at St. Jim's, and that there was a fellow at Greyfriars in his name who was quite equal to dealing with the unscrupulous Sixth-Former.

Loder's smiling geniality dropped from his face like a mask when the door had closed on the fat junior.

He rose, and paced the study with restless steps.

Mr. Hawke's bullying voice was still ringing in his ears, and the wretched fellow had nerved himself to this desperate expedient.

But even in a state of desperation as he was, there was bitter shame in his breast, though he did not think of abandoning his base scheme.

A quarter of an hour later there came a tap at the door.

"Come in!" said Loder, almost huskily.

Bunter rolled in, and, with a fat wink at the moody prefect, laid a couple of keys on the study-table.

"Mum's the word, you know!" he grinned.

And he rolled out again; and Loder, with a beating heart, clutched the keys.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Wally on the War-path!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Penny for 'em!" said Bob Cherry, bestowing a hearty slap on Bunter's fat shoulder.

"Yow-ow!" howled Wally, awaking from a deep reverie.

Bob Cherry chuckled. He had come upon Bunter in the window-seat in the Remove passage after tea, buried in thought. Wally rubbed his shoulder.

"You silly owl!" he said. "Why don't you remember you've got a paw like a steam-hammer? Ow!"

"What's the trouble, my fat pippin?" said Bob. "Tell your Uncle Robert. Didn't you get a good tea in Loder's study?"

"Oh, topping!"

"Then wherefore this worried brow?" "I was thinking, aas! Not a thing in your line, I know!"

"Well, I've been thinking, too," said Bob. "I learn that you've been buying a couple of old keys from our merry merchant Fisher T. Fish. Bunt, old man, if you're up to your old games,

drop it. You've grown so honest lately we hardly know you—"

"Fathead!"

"Don't begin your old tricks again," said Bob. "Don't find anything by accident in another fellow's locker. Be warned in time, my young friend. That way lies a Form ragging!"

Wally grunted. It seemed as if he would never learn the complete list of Billy Bunter's sins.

"If you think—" he began.

"Well, what did you want Fishy's old keys for, then?"

"To make a present," answered Wally.

"A present of a couple of keys?" ejaculated Bob.

"Yes; and a most acceptable present," answered Wally, with a grin. "Perhaps they wouldn't have been so welcome if the chap had known they were old keys bought for twopence each from Fishy. But he doesn't know that."

"What on earth are you burbling about?" demanded Bob Cherry, in astonishment. "Is it a jape?"

"Yes; a jape of sorts. No good you thinking it over, old chap—your brain isn't up to it!"

And Wally Bunter rolled away, leaving Bob staring.

The fat junior had, as a matter of fact, plenty of food for thought that evening.

It was clear enough to him that Loder disappointed in his attempt to get hold of Snoop's tenner by fair means, was resorting to another method. In plain words, Loder intended to pilfer Snoop's savings, and if anyone had to suffer for the theft it would be, as he supposed, Billy Bunter. Wally did not feel inclined to show much mercy to the fellow who had planned that unscrupulous scheme, and he was thinking out how to deal with Gerald Loder in the most drastic manner possible.

After Skinner and Stott had slacked through their prep in their usual style, Wally Bunter dropped into Study No. 11, where he found Sidney James Snoop getting through his work in the painstaking way he had developed of late. Snoop gave him a nod and a smile.

"Done in ten minutes or so," he said.

"I'll wait," said Wally.

He waited till Sidney James finished, and rose from the table.

"Anything up?" asked Snoop, noting his serious look.

"You keep your merry savings in that locker, I believe?" said Wally.

"Yes."

"Will you take a tip from me?"

"Certainly."

"You're not seeing your father till Saturday. Take your tin box to Mr. Quelch and ask him to lock it up for you."

"What on earth for?"

"Because it will be safer there," answered Wally quietly.

Snoop gave him a startled look.

"Safer!" he repeated. "Isn't it safe here—locked up? What do you mean? You don't think Skinner—"

"Never mind what I mean. Take your money to Mr. Quelch and ask him to lock it up. He'll do it like a shot."

"I know he will. But—"

"You know I don't talk out of my hat, Snoop, like my esteemed cousin. Do as I tell you, there's a good chap."

"You mean that Loder— Good heavens, it's not possible—"

"Enough said! Put your money where it's safe."

"I'll do it, of course," said Snoop.

"I—I really think you're alarmed about nothing, Bunt; but I'll do it. You've made me feel quite uneasy."

"Don't mention to anybody what you're doing. If any chap wants to drop into this room to-night when we're in the dorm, no need to prevent him."

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"Oh!" gasped Snoop.

His hands were trembling as he took out his money-box. The bare thought of losing it made him tremble. With the little box under his jacket he hurried to the Remove-master's study.

Wally met him in the passage as he returned.

"All right?" he asked.

"Yes. Mr. Quelch has looked it up in his desk," breathed Snoop. "But—but I can't think—What's that in your hand, Bunter?"

"The key of your study door," answered Wally, with a grin.

"What on earth are you going to do with that?"

"Oil it."

"What for?"

"So that it won't make a sound when I put it in on the outside and turn it," answered Wally. "Don't you worry; I know what I'm about."

"You—you think—"

"You'll know in the morning what I think."

Wally Bunter said no more, and Snoop was left in a very dubious frame of mind; but when the Remove fellows went up to their dormitory that night Sidney James was greatly comforted by the reflection that his savings were safely locked up in his Form-master's desk.

It was some time after lights-out before Snoop fell asleep. He woke from a doze at a sound in the dormitory.

He thought of Wally at once.

"Is that you, Bunter?" he whispered.

"Hush!"

Snoop stared into the darkness of the dormitory. Wally Bunter was dressing himself quietly and swiftly.

"You're going down?" breathed Snoop.

"Yes—quite! It's all serene!"

With scarcely a sound the fat junior glided from the sleeping dormitory. It was long before Snoop's eyes closed again.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Thief in the Night!

BOOM!

The stroke of one boomed faintly through the night.

Silence and darkness lay upon Greyfriars School. At that hour the last light had been extinguished.

A few minutes after the stroke of one had died away there was a faint sound on the staircase. It might have been made by a rat scuttling behind the old wall. But a fat junior, concealed in deep shadow in the Remove passage, knew that it was not a rat—or, at least, that it was a rat of the human species.

Faintly the sound came into the Remove passage—the sound, to a keen ear, of someone who crept along cautiously, feeling his way in the dark, in soft slippers.

It stopped outside Study No. 11.

Silently the door of that study opened, a shadow passed in, and the door closed again.

And the fat junior, emerging from the shadowy recess where he had kept watch and ward, approached the door cautiously, and listened.

There were faint sounds within—the sound of the blind being carefully drawn, to prevent a speck of light escaping from the window, then of the careful scratching of a match.

Then there was a faint glimmer of light under the study door.

Within the study Gerald Loder applied the match to a candle-end, and the flickering light gleamed on his haggard face.

Loder was white as chalk, and there were beads of perspiration on his brow.

There was little to fear—nothing to

fear—but the baseness of his action filled Loder with uneasiness and dread.

He put the candle on the table at last, and turned to Snoop's locker.

Then he started, his heart thrilling. Had he heard a faint sound at the door? With thumping heart, and breath that came thick and fast, Loder listened, his head bent.

Silence.

He was reassured at last. After all, who could possibly be stirring at that hour?

He turned to the locker again. There were two keys in his hand—one for the locker, and the other for the tin box within. He had learned all that he wanted to know from Bunter.

A muttered, savage exclamation fell from his lips as he tried first one key and then the other on the locker.

Neither seemed to fit.

He tried them again, breathing hard and fast, a sullen fury growing within his breast as it was forced upon his mind that neither key fitted the lock, and that he was helpless.

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He clenched his hands till the nails dug into the palms. What did it mean? Had that fat fool Bunter blundered? Had he found the wrong keys? It was almost impossible for even Bunter to make such a blunder. Had he—Loder ground his teeth at the thought—had he deliberately given him keys that he knew would not fit the locker?

Utterly baffled, when all had seemed plain sailing, Loder stood staring at the locker with sullen fury in his face.

What was to be done now?

To break open the locker was an expedient too desperate even for Loder, though he thought of it. He took the poker from the grate—and stopped. It was possible that the noise would not be heard at such a distance from the bedrooms; but—it was too risky. And the broken locker—how was that to be explained?

Opened with the key, suspicion would fall upon the fat junior who had taken Snoop's keys, if upon anybody. Broken open, suspicion might fall upon anybody—it might fall in the right quarter. He dared not. And yet—As he stood staring savagely at the locker, the poker

still in his hand, there was a sound in the Remove passage outside.

It was the sound of a soft, subdued chuckle.

Loder started violently.

In an instant he had blown out the candle and was at the door, ready to dodge in the dark if it opened. But it did not open.

He waited, his heart beating wildly, as minute followed minute. But there was no sound.

Was the passage clear?

Softly, quietly, he turned the handle of the door. He was defeated; his designs upon Snoop's savings had to be given up now. Someone else was out of bed, that was clear, and that fat chuckle had sounded like Bunter. Loder was only anxious now to get back to his own quarters unseen.

But the door did not open to his hand. He pulled, but he pulled in vain.

The door was fast.

He felt over the lock for the key, as a terrible suspicion dawned upon him. The key was not there. And then he knew that it had been put into the outside of the lock and turned upon him. Someone had waited there—someone who had already taken the key of the study—and that someone had locked him in.

Bunter, of course! It could only be Bunter—nobody else knew! Loder staggered away from the door, the sweat thick on his brow.

Locked in!

For some minutes he was not master of himself; he could only stand there, with shaking hands, a prey to terror. He pulled himself together at last. There was one ray of comfort, even in his present position—that he had not forced Snoop's locker. If he could not escape from the study! And if he had been found there in the morning with the locker forced! He turned almost giddy at the thought.

He pulled himself together at last, and tried the door again. It was fast, and there was no sound without.

"Bunter!" he whispered through the keyhole. "Bunter, let me out!"

No answer.

"Bunter! Billy Bunter! I—I'll give you anything you like! Let me out!" breathed Loder.

But there was only silence. The fat junior had gone back to his dormitory, and Loder realised it at last. He was locked in the study till morning!

For some minutes Loder raged in the study like a wild animal in a cage. He was feeling like a wild animal—trapped. But raging brought no help. He was a prisoner in Snoop's study, and he had to wait, with what patience he could muster—till morning.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Nice for Loder!

CLANG, clang!

Harry Wharton & Co. turned out as the rising-bell rang out over Greyfriars in the cheery spring morning.

There was a grin on Wally Bunter's fat face as he turned out of bed. Snoop glanced at him questioningly, and Wally held up a well-oiled key, and smiled. He joined the Famous Five as they left the dormitory, among the first as usual.

"You fellows going out?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Harry Wharton. "Where should we be going, fathead?"

"Will you come along to the Remove passage with me first?"

"What on earth for?"

"I've caught a rat in a trap."

"Where?" asked Bob Cherry.

"In Snoop's study. I'm going to let it out now."

"What are you driving at, Bunter?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"Come and see!" answered Wally.

The Famous Five, considerably puzzled, followed the fat junior to the Remove passage, Sidney James Snoop joining them. Wally inserted the key in the lock of No. 11.

"What's it locked on the outside for?" asked Johnny Bull, puzzled.

"It's the trap I've caught my rat in."

"Loder!" breathed Snoop. "Loder's there, Bunter?"

"You've hit it."

"Loder!" gasped Wharton.

"His very self."

"But—but what—"

Wally turned the key, and threw open the study door. A pale, harassed face looked at the juniors from the study, as Gerald Loder rose from Skinner's armchair, where he had passed an exceedingly uncomfortable night.

The Famous Five stared at him dumb-founded. The sight of the Kaiser locked in Snoop's study could not have surprised them much more.

"Loder!" stuttered Nugent.

"What are you doing here?" exclaimed Snoop.

Loder did not speak. There was nothing he could say. He strode towards the juniors with a savage face.

Wharton's look was very grim. He could not help drawing the only possible conclusion from the fact that Loder had entered Snoop's study during the night, and had been locked in there.

"And you're a prefect!" he said, in a tone of such scorn that it brought a flush to Loder's face.

Loder did not answer.

He strode through the juniors, and paused, his eyes fixed on Bunter. Wally Bunter gave him a cheery smile.

"Top of the morning to you, Jerry, old top!" he said. "When shall I come to tea again? I've got some more tips to give you about cricket. And if you want any more old keys, I'm your man! I can get them from Fishy at twopence a time, but I shall have to charge you for them, you know. I can't afford to throw away twopences on Sixth-Formers."

Loder clenched his hands almost convulsively; but he did not touch the fat junior. He was only too anxious to let the matter end where it was. With a white and furious face he strode away down the Remove passage, and disappeared.

"He was after my quids!" said Snoop, his lip curling.

"I—I suppose he must have been!" said Harry Wharton. "And he's a Sixth Form prefect! My hat!"

"Well, he hasn't got them—they're locked up in Mr. Quelch's desk, till I see my father!" grinned Snoop. "It would serve Loder right to go to the Head and tell him the whole story."

Harry Wharton shook his head.

"I think he's had a lesson," he said. "He must be next door to potty. I should think, to play a game like this."

"You believe me now—what I told you the other day?" said Snoop.

"Yes, it's plain enough. I don't think you've got anything more to fear from Loder, though. He won't want this talked about, and the less said the better, anyway. If he doesn't mind disgracing the school, we do."

"And he's still got to settle with his dear old pal Hawke!" grinned Wally Bunter. "That's an enjoyment he's got in store. I really don't think Loder is enjoying life just now. I shall think of merry old Loder if I'm ever tempted to start as a gay dog and a plunging blade!"

And the fat junior chortled.

Loder of the Sixth did not make any further reference to the affair, though he lived for days in terror of the juniors making reference to it. During those anxious days he also had a series of painful interviews with his friend Mr. Hawke of the Cross Keys, and Wally Bunter was certainly right in his opinion that the sportsman of the Sixth was not enjoying life just then. Probably, however, he was enjoying it as much as he deserved.

He never quite understood how it was that he had been so deceived in Bunter. The change of places of the two Bunters had made a very considerable difference to Loder's Luck!

THE END.

(Don't miss "THE TERRIBLE UNCLE!"—next Monday's grand complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)



Goggs, Grammarian

By Richard Randolph

SYNOPSIS.

Four new boys—Goggs, Blount, Trickett, and Waters—come to Rylcombe Grammar School from Franklingham, which has been burnt down. Goggs, the real leader of the four, ventriloquist, ju-jitsu expert, and all-round sportsman, looks particularly simple, and intends, with the help of his chums, to hoodwink the Rylcombe fellows into thinking him simple. Goggs & Co. fall foul of Larking, Carpenter, and Snipe, three of the "smart set" at Rylcombe, and Goggs uses his ventriloquism to mystify them.

The Franklingham four share Study No. 8, and are assigned to Dormitory No. 29, which they share with Tadpole, who fancies himself an artist, Weird, who talks in rhyme, and Larking & Co. There is a fight between Larking and Frank Monk, in which Larking fouls, but is hopelessly beaten.

Goggs again uses his ventriloquism, and Larking & Co. suspect that a ventriloquist is at work, though they suspect Blount or Trickett, thinking Goggs too simple.

Tom Merry, of St. Jim's, arrives to see Gordon Gay, and Goggs, who is in Gay's study at the time, disguised as Granny, promptly bolts through the window, not wishing, for reasons of his own, to meet Tom Merry.

(Now read on.)

Pleasant News.

"CAN'T you fellows have a tea-party without squabbling and doing in all the crocks?" Tom asked, grinning at the smash-up brought about by Wootton minor's downfall.

"Never mind about that," replied Gay. "Really polite persons don't ask questions about such things. I have heard of their happening in your show, too. But tell us your yarn!"

"Oh, it's not much of a yarn, really!" said Tom. "It all came about without any fireworks. We put our heads together—"

"Made quite a wood, didn't it?" chipped in Gay.

"Well, most of 'em are hard, certainly. We bend here when we want anything soft in the napper way. We put our heads together, and then we drew up a petition to the Head. We pointed out to him that it was inconvenient only to be allowed to go down to the village three days a week—that the battle wasn't a real battle—and, anyway, if it was, St. Jim's won, so he needn't—"

"St. Jim's jolly well didn't!" hooted half a dozen voices.

"Well, that statement was only in the original draft of the petition. We left it out when we revised, because we didn't want the Head to think we were putting on side about a little thing like a victory over you cripples."

"Look here, Merry—"

"Oh, dry up, Carboy! The boulder's only trying to pull our legs. Go on Sir Thomas!"

"We all said what we thought would go down nicely with the dear old man. We even said complimentary things about you chaps for which our consciences had bad aches afterwards. Then a deputation of four waited upon him with the screed."

"Who went?" asked Wootton major.

"Kangaroo and I from the Shell, Blake and D'Arcy from the Fourth."

"Why didn't you send Talbot?" asked Gay, grinning. "He was hardly marked. I do believe he was the only one of all your crew who didn't get rolled in the mud."

"Well, old top, there wasn't one of your lot who escaped that, so we score there," answered Tom. "I suggested Talbot, as a matter of fact, but Kungy was keener on it than he was."

"Of course, Gussy did all the talking?" said Gay.

"No, he didn't, then! Blake hid his monocle before we started, and when the dear old ass wanted to wade in and be eloquent he felt for that, as he always does, and, not finding it, was dumb."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Matter of fact, I played the orator, as far as any oratory was needed. Having reproved the old man for the error of his ways—"

"Yes, I bet you did!"

"And pointed out to him what wrongful views he and your own revered Head took of things in general, owing, I suppose, to their misfortune in being such back numbers—"

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"My hat! I fancy I can hear you saying that!"

"Well, Monkey, to tell the honest truth, there wasn't much said at all. The Head read the petition, and sat and thought for a minute or two. Then he said, 'I am sure, now that I have had time to think it over, that there is no real bad blood between you and the Ryloombe boys. But the affair really was rather discreditable to both schools, and nothing of the sort must happen again.' And we politely murmured that it shouldn't if we know it. Then he did a bit more thinking, and told me that I might come over here and see Dr. Monk about it. He gave me a note to your Head—about three lines in it—but told me that I should have to explain things."

"Oh, good!" cried Gordon Gay. "And now you're going to see him?"

"No, I'm not!" said Tom, smiling.

"What! You don't funk it, do you?" asked Wootton major.

"Bless you for a silly ass! Don't you see that I was bound to see him before I came up here? He was jolly decent to me—more than decent, in fact. I had tea with him and the rest of your people, Monkey; and I must say that if I'd a pater of my own I shouldn't ask for a better one than you've got."

"He is quite a nice old cove when you know him off the stilts," admitted Frank Monk.

"So it's all right?" asked Carboy eagerly.

"Oh, you'll hear a word or two more about it first, no doubt; but—Yes, you may say it's all right. I don't suppose he'll jump on you too hard for letting us lick you—that wasn't your fault. You tried your best, I know, but—"

"Go easy, Tommy!"

"Oh, you can't teach me! I'm a kind of giddy herald, with all a herald's privileges. Besides, I've smoked the pipe of peace—well, eaten the cake and drunk the tea of peace, anyway, with your Head. The hatchet's buried—"

"Likewise the cake," said Monk. "Ha, ha!"

"Very good cake, too—first chop! Though I'd as soon have shared your inferior fodder up here, where a chap doesn't have to behave pretty—mustn't do it, in fact, for fear of putting you rude bounders out of countenance. It may surprise you to hear that there wasn't a single teapot—no, not so much as a giddy saucer—broken in the Head's drawing-room. I won't say that there were no crumbs left on the floor, for I'm better used to grubbing at a table. But I squashed them well into the carpet with my boot, and I don't think your mater twigged me at it, Monkey."

"Bet you she did!" said Frank Monk. "I shall be told not to associate with you, Tommy, owing to your shocking bad manners!"

"Then that will be because she doesn't know

how bad yours are, Monkey. But never mind that. What do you chaps think of my news?"

"Ripping!"

"Jolly good!"

"Topping!"

There could be no possible doubt that Gordon Gay & Co. were delighted to know that the old friendly feud might now be resumed.

"I suppose you couldn't do with any more tea, Tommy?" asked Gay.

"Well, I could. I don't mind owning that I can't stoke up properly when I have to balance a cup and saucer in one hand."

"Sorry for you, then, because we haven't any grub, we haven't any tea, and we haven't any teapot," replied Gay, grinning. "Young Wootton here has done them all in."

"It wasn't me, ass!" roared Harry Wootton. "It was that chap Go—Whose shin are you hacking, Monkey, you frabjous idiot? Yooop!"

But Tom Merry, fortunately, had missed Wootton minor's half-revelation of the secret. He was at the window.

"My hat!" he said. "Who in the world's that?"

Three or four of the rest looked out.

Granny was just crossing the quad, at that moment almost empty.

Lacy was, indeed, the only fellow visible; and Lacy boited at the sight of Granny. He had found favour in her eyes, it seemed; but doing so had failed to gratify him.

"Some fellow's grandmother or aunt, or some old thing," answered Gay negligently.

"Doesn't belong to anyone here, I hope?" queried Tom, with a quick glance around him.

"I don't want to tread on anyone's corns."

"No, she doesn't belong to anyone here," replied Bags, with a twinkle in his eyes that rather puzzled Tom.

"Merry, old top, what about meeting you duffers at cricket on the first Saturday of the season?" asked Gordon Gay.

"Done with you! And won't we jolly well give you a whacking!"

"And what about a feed for, say, a score, down at Mrs. Murphy's, to be stood by either your crowd or by us, according to which first wipes the eye of the other by a really first-class wheeze?" inquired Monk.

"Good enough! May want some settling. Our notions about a really first-class wheeze don't always agree, old bean. But I'll book that feed to your account, and tell the rest as soon as I get back."

"Right-ho! Shouldn't trouble about booking the feed, though. You'll find Mrs. Murphy won't do that," Gordon Gay said.

"And now I must be toddling, or I shall be late for prep," said Tom.

And he departed, escorted to the gates by the whole crowd.

A Narrow Squeak!

"WHAT'S the notion, Monkey?" asked Wootton major, as soon as Tom Merry had gone.

"Ring in Goggles on them, of course! What with the bounder's ventriloquism and his innocent old mug I'm jolly sure he can put them in the cart some way or another. I haven't thought it out yet, but—"

"You can leave our Goggs-bird to do that," said Tricks. "Don't you worry about thinking things out, Monk, or fancy you can take our Johnny in charge and make the figure work by pulling the string! That's not his line. He may not even be willing to tell you beforehand what he's going to do."

"Do you fellows take him on trust like that?" asked Gordon Gay.

"Of course we do!" replied Tricks.

"Rather!" said Bags.

"We have to," added Wagtail, somewhat sadly.

It often hurt Wagtail's self-conceit to be obliged to do that.

"There's one difficulty," remarked Carboy. "The Bounder says Merry knows him."

"My hat!" gasped Bags.

"What's the matter?" snapped Wootton minor.

"I know beam!" cried Mont Blanc. "Goggs, he have gone to address—no, undress—wiz beam, ees eet not? In ze barn, zere he undress beam! And ze good Merry—"

"Oh crumbs! If you mean the barn along the road there, he's likely enough to run right into Tommy's arms!" exclaimed Gordon Gay.

"That's just what I thought!" said Bags dolefully. "I say, you fellows, isn't there any

short cut to the barn, so that we can get at him and warn him?"

Gay shook his head.

"No short cut," he said. "The road's dead straight so far, and you can't go by a shorter way than a straight line. And it won't do to pass Tommy on the road—he would smell a rat at once."

"Can't we get to the barn without passing him?" demanded Bags. "There must be some way across the fields."

"Yes, of course; but you'll have to cut. It's lucky Tommy's walking—no, it isn't, for it he had his bike he'd be past the barn before Goggs could have finished, of course. Monkey, you go with two of these chaps across the fields; they might not get there in time alone—you can't see the barn from here. I and one or two more will cut along the road, and jump on Tommy if the painful necessity arises."

"You go with Monk, Tricks, and you, Wagtail!" said Bags. "If Merry is to be jumped upon, I want to be there to see that it's done properly."

Frank Monk, Trickett, and Waters bounded off at once. Their mission was to reach the barn as soon as might be, and warn Goggs of the risk he was running.

A few seconds later Gordon Gay, the two Woottons, and Bags cut off along the road. Their chance of doing anything effective seemed but a small one, for if Tom Merry got only a momentary glimpse of Goggs he could hardly fail to recognise him. But, such as the chance was, it seemed to them worth taking.

They soon had Tom in sight. He was swinging along at a good pace; but it was easy enough for them, running along the grassy edge of the road, to gain upon him unheeded.

"Might almost be as well to jump on him anyway, to give those other chaps a chance to get there in time," said Bags.

"No! Seems like playing it rather low down, unless we're obliged to," answered Gordon Gay. "He doesn't even suspect that the bounders are on his trail, poor, innocent old Tommy!"

Gay was right. Tom had no suspicion that he was followed. There seemed to him no reason why he should be. He had forgotten all about Granny, and was certainly not thinking about Johnny Goggs. In fact, his mind was busy with the first vague beginnings of a scheme to take down the Grammarians and win that feed.

Then something happened!

Over the gate near the barn vaulted the lithe, lean figure of Goggs.

Monk and his companions had evidently not arrived in time to warn him.

He landed with his back to Tom Merry, and Tom did not recognise him, although he was not more than twenty yards away.

"Hi, Merry!" yelled Gordon Gay.

It was the only thing he could think of that could be done.

Tom swung round on the instant.

Goggs heard also, and he plainly understood.

That was good enough for Bags. He knew how quick his chum was to grasp the meaning of things. He was sure that before Tom could turn again Goggs would be over the gate and out of sight.

But the Three Wallabies did not know so well as he Goggs' quickness in emergencies.

"At him!" roared Gordon Gay.

He flung his arms around Tom's neck and bore him to earth.

Tom had no chance. The odds were three to one. Bags, seeing no need of this, stood by; but Jack and Harry Wootton followed their leader without the slightest hesitation.

"Yooop! You bounders!" cried Tom. "What's this for? You don't call jumping on a fellow from behind a wheeze, do you?"

"No, Tommy, no! But sitting on his waistcoat is a bit of a wheeze when you want to keep him down!" answered Gordon Gay.

Tom struggled hard.

"It's a beastly trick!" he cried angrily. "I wouldn't have thought you fellows would—Yooop! Gerroff me, you sweeps! You're grinding my back on these stones!"

Gordon Gay looked towards the gate. He saw that Goggs had disappeared.

"I think we might get off him now," he said. "We've shown him how easily he can be stalked and collared when we take the war-trail, and—"

"St. Jim's to the rescue!"

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ON THE RHINE!

"My hat! There's Lowther and Manners!" yelled Harry Wootton.

Tom's chums appeared round the bend of the road beyond the barn. They had come out to meet him, anxious to know the result of his interview with Dr. Monk.

They quickened their pace. They came with a rush and a shout.

"Rescue! St. Jim's! Rescue!"

And down the road behind them rose the shouts of others.

"Rescue! St. Jim's! We're coming!"

"Yas, dear boys! We are comin'!"

"That's Blake and his crew!" said Jack Wootton.

Tom grinned as he dusted his jacket. They had let him get up.

"We've the odds now," he said. "Why don't you bunk? I say, who was that chap who came over the gate? He was wearing your colours; but he seems to have nizzled."

"He may cut—we're not going to!" resolutely. "Pity this should have happened. Tommy! It may mean that all your good work to-day will go for nothing."

"That's your silly fault!" snapped Tom. "Come on, you fellows!"

Manners and Lowther rushed up, and they and Tom buried themselves upon the Three Wallabies.

Bags stood aloof for a minute. It was three to three, and he was not sure yet whether odds were held justifiable in these skirmishes. Besides, he knew his chance would come very soon, for the cries of Blake & Co. could still be heard, though they were not yet visible.

But now they came on at a gallop—four of them. Bags saw one burly fellow, taller than any of his comrades; one athletic, broad-shouldered fellow, looking all over the fighting-man; a slim, graceful, and dandified figure; and a fourth junior, shorter than any of the rest, but distinctly hefty in appearance.

He knew their names, from Goggs' tales about St. Jim's. That burly fellow must be Herries, and the other three were Blake, D'Arcy, and Digby.

In a moment he would know whether odds were allowed; and, whether they were or not, in a moment he would be in the fray, for one of the quartet would be sure to tackle him.

And Bags was nothing loth.

But he did not solve that question of odds then and there. For over the gate came tumbling, just in the rear of the four, Frank Monk, Tricks, and Wagtail.

"St. Jim's bounders! At them!" roared Monk.

And Tricks and Wagtail obeyed without a second's hesitation.

Bags rushed to their aid.

Granny the Peacemaker.

BLAKE & CO. had faced round at once. They saw Frank Monk and two fellows in the Rylcombe caps who were strangers to them. But the fact of their being strangers was of no consequence. They were plainly a part of the enemy forces.

"Silly asses!" growled Blake. "After Tommy had done all he could to put things right, too! Sock them!"

"Four to three—Gussy had better fall out!" panted Digby.

"Weally, Dig, don't be widic! If anyone is to fall out—Yaroooh!"

All question of Gussy's standing aside was settled. He had taken Wagtail's hat upon his chin, and the fighting blood of the D'Arcies was up.

"Here's another of 'em!" roared Blake. "It's all right! Pile in, you fellows!"

Blake had engaged with Frank Monk. Bags found himself opposed by the burly Herries, considerably superior in weight and height, but neither so clever nor quite so active as he. Digby and Trickett were by no means badly matched.

Twenty yards or so away Gordon Gay and Tom Merry, Lowther and Jack Wootton, Manners and Harry Wootton, were hard at it. Fists were being used, but there was little punching at faces. The St. Jim's fellows remembered that fresh trouble might arise if there were new crops of thick ears and black eyes at both schools; and the hearts of the Rylcombe seven were hardly in the fight.

Tom could not know it, of course, but the apparent treachery practised upon him had been dictated by what the enemy regarded as sheer necessity.

(Continued on page 16.)

The Editor's Chat.

The Companion Papers are:

THE MAGNET. THE GEM. THE BOYS' FRIEND. CHUCKLES. THE PENNY POPULAR.
Every Monday. Every Wed. Every Monday. Every Friday. Every Friday.

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS GLAD TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS.

For Next Monday:

"THE TERRIBLE UNCLE!"

By Frank Richards.

In our next grand long complete story of Greyfriars School Sidney James Snoop of the Remove shows up distinctly well. It so happens that Snoop's father, demobilised, but no longer a man of means and position, turns up in the neighbourhood on the same afternoon that Snoop's wealthy Canadian uncle is due to arrive. Snoop is therefore faced with a "poser." Whom shall he meet? But his father's claims come first, and Snoop decides to see him and hand over the little nest-egg he has saved up to help the now impoverished man. Meanwhile, the Canadian uncle comes to Greyfriars and makes several discoveries concerning Snoop—discoveries which are all to his nephew's advantage; and Snoop eventually realises that

"THE TERRIBLE UNCLE"

is not such a terrible person after all; in fact, he proves a real pal both to Snoop and to Snoop's father.

A SUGGESTION FOR A BOYS' NEWSPAPER.

The following letter has been received from one of my Manchester readers:

"Levenshulme, Manchester.

"Dear Editor,—In one of the Companion Papers a few weeks ago you were speaking of boys' papers in past days, and you mentioned a boys' newspaper which was issued daily, containing all the news of the day, together with interesting articles. Just now, I admit, there is not much space in the MAGNET, but what I propose, and should like to see carried out, is this: That the back cover of the MAGNET should be reserved for a boys' newspaper. This, I am sure, would prove quite an attraction. The news contained therein would not be the news of the day, as in the 'Times,' or other daily papers, but singular facts noticed by readers.

"A staff of reporters could be organised amongst your readers, and I am sure this would not be tame or dry, as the boys' papers of past days were, but very interesting.

"Please do not think I want you to begin another Companion Paper, but just a page—say, the cover of the MAGNET or 'Gem'—where you now have the serial or the Extracts from the 'Greyfriars Herald' and 'Tom Merry's Weekly'.

"Of course, owing to the shortage of paper, this could not be managed at present, but I think it might be introduced when everything is normal as before.

"You may think me very ambitious; but kindly give this your consideration, and if you would give me an answer in the MAGNET I should be greatly obliged.

"I have read the MAGNET from 'The Mysterious Mr. Mobbs,' and the 'Gem' from the earlier Talbot stories.

"I am, yours sincerely,

"REPORTER."

I have considered my chum's scheme in all its bearings, and have come to the conclusion that it would not be practicable to introduce such a feature as he suggests. The greatest drawback to the scheme is, of course, that we go to press several weeks in advance, and therefore the "news," when it appeared, would not be topical.

Another point is that I doubt if a "newspaper supplement" would appeal to the majority of my readers, whose tastes incline towards other and brighter features.

However, before definitely "turning down" my Manchester chum's very kind suggestion, I will leave it to my readers to say. "Yea"

or "Nay," and, should the idea be backed up to any great extent, I shall most certainly take steps to bring it into operation.

WHEN BUNTER COMES ROLLING HOME!

Hundreds of my reader-chums have been bombarding me with letters of late asking when Billy Bunter will return to the familiar haunts of Greyfriars.

The reply is—very soon!

Such a daring scheme as the change of identity between the two Bunters could not, of course, be carried on successfully for long; and we shall shortly see Billy Bunter back again at Greyfriars as fat and flourishing as ever!

Watch the MAGNET!

A ROUSING SPORTS STORY!

"Clodhopper," of Bedford, thinks the MAGNET and "Gem" stories are getting—to use his own words—"a bit too Bunterish." He wants a change from Bunter—just for one week, at any rate—and a rattling good sports story substituted.

Well, I will endeavour to drown the lamentations of my clodhopping friend by telling him that in next week's "Gem" story he shall have his heart's desire, for it contains a magnificent story of stirring tussles on playing-field and river and running-track, entitled

"HEROES OF SPORT!"

By Martin Clifford.

If "Clodhopper" fails to enjoy this story, then he will indeed be hard to please!

"BUNTER THE PIRATE!"

C. E. J., of Millwall, sends me a short story, entitled as above, and says that if I'm a very good Editor, and behave myself, I may use it for publication in the MAGNET. This very kind offer is declined, with thanks. I am sure C. E. J. means well, but I really can't introduce a story starting something like this:

"The red blood flowed in a shimmering pool over the deck. Nothing could be heard save the dying shrieks of the pirate's victims as they chucked in their msk."

C. E. J. wishes to know if I consider he will ever become a great author. Well, there's no knowing what will happen in this uncertain world; but if C. E. J. takes my advice, he will give up story-writing and start keeping rabbits!

NOTICES.

Correspondence Wanted by—

Robert W. Bayley, Glenlyn, Villiers Road, Beckenham, Kent, wants to hear from readers willing to join London branch of correspondence club.

H. Goldstone, 54, Blucher Street, Holloway Head, Birmingham—with Jewish readers anywhere.

Frederick W. Archer, 53, Victoria Avenue, East Ham, E. 6—with readers interested in stamp collecting, in the United States.

Jack Turncock, jun., 15, Smith Street, off High Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire—with readers anywhere.

Back Numbers Wanted by—

Cedric F. F. Rickard, 172A, Hollingdean Terrace, Ditchling Road, Brighton—"Gems," 421, 436, 437, 451, 464, 466, 468, 476, 476, 477, 480, 486, 494, 496; MAGNETS, 493, 496, 497.

G. T. Don, 87, Queen's Road, Reading—"Viscount Bunter," and Christmas Number, 1913. 6d. offered.

H. A. H. (YOUR EDITOR.)

They counted so much upon what Goggs might do in the way of spotting St. Jim's; and if Goggs were once recognised by any of their rivals those hopes of theirs were at an end.

But Manners and Lowther had seen their chum down, with the three Grammarians on top of him; and Blake & Co. knew that Tom must have been assailed by odds. So the hearts of the St. Jim's juniors were hot within them, and, though they avoided the marking of faces, they punched hard at the bodies of their opponents.

"Here, pax!" cried Gordon Gay, at length, ceasing to punch, but protecting his body as he retreated before Tom Merry. "What on earth are we scrapping for, like silly asses?"

"Well, I like that, blessed if I don't!" snorted Tom, tossing his fair head and letting drive at Gay's chest as he spoke. "Didn't you bounders sneak up behind and pile in on me when I never thought—Ouch!"

Gay had relinquished his defensive tactics, and had got home hard on Tom's neck.

The two fighting groups had now drawn closer together, owing to the gradual retreat of the three Wallabies towards the gate, near which the rest battled.

Gussy was down on his back in the road, panting hard. Monk was down; pressed back by Blake, he had stumbled over a heap of stones. Now Lowther staggered and fell, and Herries bore down Bags, clutching him in a grizzly-bear grip and carrying him to grass.

Thus three of the St. Jim's contingent and two Grammarians were down when the fight came suddenly to an end.

"Really, what a very disgraceful scene! This must be stopped at once!"

Blake and Digby, Manners and Lowther and Arthur Augustus, saw only a stranger—and a very queer stranger at that, an elderly lady, gaily bedizened, and showing quite a lot of openwork stocking as she held up her skirts, as if to keep them from the contamination of touching any of these iniquitous squabblers.

But Tom Merry saw the weird lady whom he had watched crossing the quad at the Grammar School.

And the Grammarians saw Goggs—or, rather, Granny!

Bags and Tricks tumbled to it at once. It was just like Goggs. Wagtail understood after a moment's thought. But the Three Wallabies and Frank Monk fairly gasped. To them it seemed that Goggs was running far too big a risk.

"At once!" repeated Granny, with rising indignation. "You very naughty little boys! Have you never heard the beautiful words of the poet:

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
For 'tis their nature to?"

And—I really forget the rest; but there is no possible excuse for your forgetting it at your age, or for neglecting its application."

"We were not exactly fighting, madam,"

said Monty Lowther, the first among the St. Jim's juniors to find his voice. As for the Grammarians, they saw no need to answer.

Now Gay and the other three understood what Goggs was bent upon.

He meant to stop the battle. He had guessed that the visit of Tom Merry was a foreshadowing of the resumption of friendly relations between the juniors of the two schools; and he saw that if this fray went on friendly relations were unlikely in the near future. Gay had also seen that; for that reason only had he proposed "Pax."

"Not exactly fighting? Do not prevaricate, child! What else could you call this disgusting and brutal exhibition? Why, I declare one poor little boy's nose is bleeding! Let me stanch the flow, my dear!"

And Granny knelt by the side of Arthur Augustus, and applied her own handkerchief to the nasal organ of that injured hero.

"Gwooooh! It's nothin', madam, weally an' twuly! It—it relieves the congestion of the brain, don'tcherknow! What are you silly—er—beg pardon, madam—but weally I cannot understand in the least why those silly—er—why those fellows should cackle like hyenas!"

"There, there!" said Granny, tweaking the nose of Gussy somewhat violently in her zeal. "I think it has stopped now. How very glad I am that my dear grandson is not involved in this extremely disgraceful affair! It must be stopped at once—understand that!"

"Oh, of course, Mrs. Strongitharm," said Gay meekly. "We should not think of fight—I mean, of course, playing at—"

"There is too much 'of course' and too little veracity about your protestations, Master Gay!" said Granny sternly. "Oh, I declare, if there is not another little boy badly hurt! Let me, my dear—pray let me!"

And she made a rush at Herries. The burly Herries dodged her, with a face that, as Lowther declared afterwards, was worth a guinea a box. To be called "little boy" and "my dear" by this extraordinary female was almost more than Herries could bear. When it came to having his bruises attended to by her it was really beyond the limit.

"We'll make it 'Pax,' Gay," said Tom. "There's nothing else for it. And I won't say anything about the way it began, except that I think you really owe me an apology for it. I can't make it out even yet. It would have been all right at an ordinary time, perhaps; but it was right off the rails as things were, in my opinion."

"I'll apologise—and explain, too—a little later on, Merry," replied Gay, quite good-temperedly. It was easier for him to be good-tempered than for Tom, perhaps.

"You will apologise at once, Master Gay!" rapped out Granny. "I am sure that this curly-haired, blue-eyed cherub—"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Tom.

The rest tittered behind their hands, and Lowther made a mental note of that epithet for future use.

"Is in the right; and that you are in

the wrong!" went on Granny, with great severity. "I am sorry now that my dear grandson was not sent to St. Jim's, so that he could have played his little games of marbles and I spy and butterscotch—dear me, I mean Scotch hop—and yet that does not sound correct, either. Never mind! My dear—er—James would have been delighted to have such a nice little friend as—What is your name, my sweet little dear?"

"Merry." Tom's teeth fairly gritted as he answered. But he had to be civil. If the elderly lady was mad, she was still a lady. He caught the eye of Blake, and found some comfort in the thought of punching Blake's head later on for the imbecile grin upon his face.

"And your Christian name?" went on his tormentor.

"Thomas," mumbled Tom.

"Ah! I shall not forget you, Thomas. You would be such a nice companion for dear Joh—for dear James, that is. But if I ask you to come and stay with us next holidays you must promise not to fight!"

"I—I—I'm booked up for the holidays for years and years, ma'am!" replied Tom desperately.

He turned to the rest of the St. Jim's juniors.

"Come along, you fellows!" he growled. "There's nothing to wait for, is there? See you again some day, Gay! Good-bye, ma'am!"

They raised their caps and bolted.

"My word!" gasped Wootton minor. "If you aren't the biggest spoofer I ever saw. Goggles! Didn't Tommy squirm! And Gussy, too! And old Herries doing the double-shuffle to get out of your way!"

"It was great!" said Gordon Gay, wiping tears from his eyes. "But you'd better bunk off and change again, Goggles. I think it's safe this time."

The Rylcombe juniors had not long to wait for Goggs.

He reappeared from the barn looking quite his usual meek and mild self, and beamed upon them through his big glasses.

"Oh, take those wretched things off!" said Gay. "You needn't keep that up now we know all about you."

"But do you know all about me, my dear Joyful?" inquired Goggs, in his blindest tones.

"Not by a hundred giddy miles, I should say!" growled Frank Monk.

"And if I remove my glasses at your request, Gayful, what of my poor eyes?" Goggs asked, quite pathetically.

"Oh, keep 'em on if it suits you, chump!"

"I thank you, Joyful! I am glad to have your gracious permission, though I proposed to keep them on in any case, with or without it."

"Is there anything the matter with the bounder's eyes?" asked Jack Wootton of Bags.

"You're not inquiring at the right address," Bags replied. "Ask him!"

"Is there anything the matter with your eyes, Goggles?"

"Should I wear glasses if there were not, my dear Wooden?"

"Yes, I rather fancy you would. I say, do you like looking such a silly ass?"

"Upon the whole, taking all things into consideration, and weighing the advantages against the disadvantages, I may say that I do, Wooden."

"I say, we shall have to hurry up, or we shall be late for prep and have Adams down on us!" Harry Wootton warned them, after a glance at his watch.

"We'll have a yarn to-morrow about a scheme to take down the number of the St. Jim's chaps," said Gordon Gay, as the party split up in the study passage.

"Right-ho!" answered Bags.

"Did you hear, Goggles?" snapped Gay.

"I heard, Joyful."

"Then why didn't you answer?"

"I left that to my dear Bagsaw, Gayful."

"Look here, you fatheads, who is head man among you?"

"Bags," replied Goggs.

"Goggles!" said Bags and Tricks and Wagtail all in a breath.

"Thus," sighed Goggs, "is honour thrust upon one!"

"Rats!" remarked Wootton minor, as he passed into the study which Goggs had saved from wrecking.

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