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Back to the Fold!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Story Dealing with the Adventures of
Harry Wharton & Co. and Dick Penfold at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

An Unwelcome Announcement!

"THE whole school will repair to Big Hall immediately after chapel!"

That was the announcement that George Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, made several times in a loud, penetrating voice. The order reached the ears of seniors and juniors alike. And, upon its third repetition, it was borne to the Remove dormitory.

But whereas that in the other dormitories the announcement merely caused a general lifting of eyebrows, it fell upon the ears of the Remove like a bomb explosion. The truth was that the Removites had been expecting the bomb to burst, and now that it had done so they were none the less dazed.

"My giddy aunt!" said Frank Nugent. "There's going to be a thumping row!" "The thumpfulness of the esteemed row will be terrific!" muttered Horrie Ramsett Jam Singh, the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Frank Nugent and the Indian junior were members of the Famous Five of Greyfriars, the others being Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove, Bob Cherry, and Johnny Bull.

"Look here, Harry!" said Johnny Bull. "How is all this wretched business going to end?"

Harry Wharton's brow was puckered in thought as he proceeded to complete his roving operations without deigning a reply to the question. Bob Cherry, too, looked as though his pet white mice had met with an untimely end at the teeth of Mrs. Minnie's mouster. He also remained silent.

Then, from a number of juniors who had grouped themselves near the centre of the dormitory, there stepped forward Percy Bolsover.

"Look here, Wharton!" he said. "I

and the rest of the chaps want to know what you are going to do about it!"

Wharton, who was by no means in his usual good humour, looked up at the bully of the Remove.

"About what?" he snapped irritably. "You know jolly well what I mean!"

growled Bolsover. "About owing up, of course! You and Cherry went sneaking out of the dormitory window last night, and the Head has already warned the Lower School about bounds-breaking! By some means or other he must have found out that there were Greyfriars chaps skulking down in the village after lights-out!"

Harry Wharton remained silent; but he cast a sidelong glance at a figure sitting on a bed near the dormitory window. It was Richard Penfold, the scholarship boy, who was calmly lacing his boots, and apparently taking no heed of the conversation of his Form-mates.

Johnny Bull, however, at once took up the cudgels on behalf of his two particular chums.

"Oh, dry up, Bolsover!" he said. "You and the other fellows know well enough that Harry and Bob only broke bounds with the object of doing Penfold a good turn! It's their code of honour to help a Form-mate out of a scrape, even if it isn't yours!"

"Gee! That talk makes me tired!" broke in Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. "I guess if Dick Penfold liked to go on the razle and get caught that was his own funeral! Besides, they'd no right to go associating with him for any purpose! The school had been sent to Coventry for already getting the Lower School a bad name with his rotten tricks!"

"Hear, hear!" cried a dozen voices. "It's a rotten shame!" exclaimed William George Bunter, the fattest boy at Greyfriars. "The Head threatened to gate the whole Lower School of a half-

holiday over that last bounds-breaking affair if the culprit didn't confess! Now there'll be a lunt up over last night's stunt, I've no doubt, and—"

"And I've no doubt you'll get your ear in a sling if you don't dry up, you fat worm!" growled Bob Cherry. "We acted as we thought right, and that's all there is to it!"

"But it isn't all, Cherry!" pointed out Bunter pathetically. "I don't want my halves gated just because you and Wharton are such blind bats and silly goats as to— Yooop! Yow-wow!"

Those last strange remarks from the Owl of the Remove were caused by Bob Cherry reaching out his hand and grasping Bunter's fat nose.

"Now dry up, Billy," advised Bob. "or I shall give your nose another tweak—like this!"

"Poooff! Garrogh!" roared the porpoise. "Leggo my dose!"

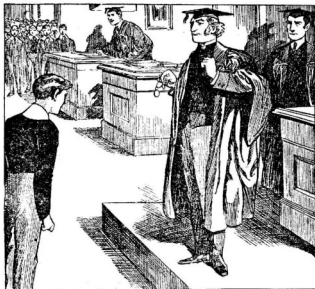
Bob, who was the best fighter in the Remove Form, and therefore greatly respected by the others, pushed Billy Bunter's fat face violently away from him. Like Harry Wharton, he was not in the humour for being cross-examined by the Owl, and his sort.

"You're a beast!" stuttered Bunter, backing to a safe distance. "If there's any trouble about last night's affair, I—I shall seriously think of telling the Head what I know! It's only fair to the decent chaps, like myself, you know!"

Having delivered himself of those sentiments, Billy Bunter rolled out of the dormitory. Others quickly followed suit, for it was now nearly time for chapel. Among the number was Harold Skinner, the cad of the Remove, who had not opened his mouth since he had wriggled his lean form from between the blankets.

Skinner, truth to tell, was more than a trifle scared. Of late he had been

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"Step forward, Penfold!" thundered the Head. With his head high, Penfold walked up to the platform. "Why did you not stand up when I called upon the culprits to confess?" asked Dr. Locke. There was a tense silence in Hall. (See Chapter 4.)

professing a strong friendship for Dick Penfold, who, owing to his own strange behaviour, had forfeited the regard of all the decent fellows at Greyfriars. Penfold had become a "blade," and Skinner had made it his business to egg him on along the downward path. On the previous day Skinner had arranged to pay a visit to a gambling-parlour run by a shady Courtfield character known as Hookey Walker. This gambling-den was situated over a tobacconist's shop in the little village of Friardale, near the school. But when the midnight hour arrived for the adventure Harold Skinner had feigned illness, and allowed Penfold to go alone. No sooner, however, had Penfold climbed from the dormitory window and disappeared into the night, than the end had gone down and informed George Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, of the escapee of the scholarship boy.

The result of this sneaking action was that Wingate had set off in pursuit of Penfold. Skinner had returned to the dormitory, but, falling over a box, he had awakened his Form-mates, who had asked him pertinent questions about his nocturnal prowling. Having wrong from the end what had occurred, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, although far from friendly with Penfold, had set off to try to save the foolish lad from his own folly. They had succeeded up to a point; but they were not out of the wood yet, by any means.

Skinner, who had accompanied Penfold on a previous visit to Friardale, dived the coming assembly in Big Hall more, perhaps, than anyone else. He was a born coward, and he feared

also that Penfold might learn of his double-dealing of the previous night. Like one or two others in the Remove Form, he had a wholesome respect for Dick Penfold's fists.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Cause of the Trouble!

FOR some minutes after Harold Skinner and most of the other juniors had left the dormitory Harry Wharton & Co. remained behind. In low voices they discussed the all-absorbing topic of the moment, headless of being late for chapel. Neither did Dick Penfold seem to care what time he attended for prayers. He remained seated on his bed, his mind occupied with his own thoughts. Not once did he speak to anyone. On his return from Friardale, in the hours of darkness, he had thanked Wharton and Bob Cherry for their sporting action. Then he voluntarily placed himself in Coventry again.

"How do you think the Head came to find out about some chaps being out of the school last night, Harry?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Through Wingate, of course!" replied Wharton. "But I'm jolly well sure they don't know that Bob, Penfold, and myself were the culprits."

"Did you see Wingate at all while you were out?"

"Yes, worse luck," replied the Remove captain. "We met him all right. But you'll hear all about it after chapel, I've no doubt. Now you, Frank, and Inky, toddle away to chapel like good boys. Bob and I want to have a few words

on the quiet with that silly chump, Penfold."

When Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and the Indian junior had taken their departure, Wharton and Bob Cherry walked down the dormitory to the scholarship boy. Penfold was adjusting his tie in leisurely fashion, and only when the captain of the Remove touched him on the shoulder did he appear to notice the presence of his rescuers of the previous night.

"We want to have a word with you, Penfold, old man," said Wharton, in a serious tone. "You have heard that the whole school has been summoned to Big Hall this morning, and you can easily guess what for."

"Oh, why can't you leave me alone?" said Penfold irritably. "Hang it all, I thanked you last night for coming to warn me that Wingate was on the war-path. I know the opinion both of you have of me, and I'm not in the mood for another lecture!"

Wharton looked at the other reproachfully. He knew well enough what was rankling in Penfold's mind. Some short time before Penfold had overheard a voice that had sounded like Wharton's make a caddish remark about his being "only a cobbler's son." Actually, the remark had been made by Skinner with the object of causing enmity between Wharton and Penfold. But neither Wharton, Bob Cherry, nor Penfold knew this fact. In consequence, there was still a good deal of bitterness against Wharton & Co. on Penfold's part.

"I dare say you are fed up with lectures, as you call 'em, Pen," said Harry Wharton. "On the other hand, so are most of us chaps with the way you've been acting lately."

"That's my bizney, isn't it?" "And it's ours, too," said the Remove captain sternly. "This rotten affair of last night has put us in another nasty hole. Personally, I'm not inclined to stand by and see the whole school suffer, as will undoubtedly happen if no one confesses."

A sudden fear sprang into Penfold's eyes.

"You—don't mean you're going to spit?" he muttered hoarsely.

"The question is," put in Bob Cherry, "what are you going to do? You've had your giddy fun on the razzle. Now it's up to you to pay for it, not let the whole school down."

A spasm of pain crossed Penfold's face. Deep down in his heart he was one of the best fellows in the school. But the illness of his father, for whose sake he had been endeavouring to raise money—unfortunately, by gambling—combined with other circumstances, had caused him to cut loose from his former friends. Now he was a sort of social outcast—a cry of Harold Skinner, and ends of his type.

For a few moments Harry and Bob waited for Penfold to reply, but the cobbler's son stood with bowed head, mute before them.

"Why not do the square thing, Pen?" insisted Harry Wharton. "Make a clean breast to the Head that you broke bounds. We'll do the same, without mentioning that we found you gambling, and risk the consequences. After all, it will save the whole school from further trouble."

"No, no, I can't!" cried Dick Penfold passionately. "If I owned up I was out of the dormitory last night, the Head would soon get hold of the rest of the facts. Then it would mean expulsion.

For me to be expelled from the school would—would kill my father!"

In the agony of his mind, the scholarship boy threw himself on his bed and buried his face in his hands. His shoulders heaved convulsively.

"Hang it all, Bob," muttered Harry Wharton, greatly distressed, "it's no good talking to him. Let's beat it, old man!"

The two chums stole quietly away. "Of course, it's right what Penfold says," said Bob Cherry, as they stepped out of the dormitory; "he'd get expelled for a sort."

"I'm afraid so," returned Wharton. "And that's what makes it so jolly difficult for us. He deserves to be kicked out of the school for the way he's been acting lately. But then there's his old father to think of. It would break the old man's heart if Dick were expelled."

"After all," said Bob, "if we don't confess the whole school will only suffer for a time. That's better than giving the poor old shoemaker an absolute knock-out."

"So it seems to me," agreed Wharton. "Then mum's the word."

"Right! We'll lie low about last night's affair. But what about Skinner's part in it? Shall we put Penfold wise to the fact that his precious crony sneaked to Wingate?"

"I think, Bob," said Wharton, "that it would be better for the silly juggins to find out from someone else. Penfold doesn't trust us, and would only misunderstand our intentions. He'll find out soon enough."

The two were very late for chapel, a fact for which they were rewarded with a hundred lines apiece. But Dick Penfold never showed up at all for prayers. He remained seated on his bed in the dormitory.

Tired after an almost sleepless night, and with throbbing head, he endeavored to think things out for himself. He was clearly determined not to own up to his misdeeds, but he was far from easy about the position. So far he had kept clear of trouble without resorting to lies which he abhorred. But it looked as though he would shortly have to add lying to his other recently acquired accomplishments.

His hand wandered furtively ever and anon to his right breast-pocket. In that pocket he had no less than fifty pounds in Treasury notes—more money than he had ever seen in his life before. He had obtained most of it by the final lucky flutter at Hooley Walker's roulette wheel on the previous night.

The possession of the money was distinctly cheering in one sense. But somehow even fifty pounds did not seem quite sufficient for the purpose of sending his father on the long sea-voyage which was so necessary to the old man's health. But Hooley Walker had given up the room he had occupied over the little tobacconist's shop in Friscliffe. Therefore there would be no further opportunity of making money at the roulette wheel. There were other ways of gambling, however, and the forthcoming races at Courtfield Park suggested one means.

Penfold knew nothing of horse-racing, but he had heard Skinner narrate how the latter had got twenty to one for "spotting a winner." Skinner, though, had omitted to mention the dozens of times when he had backed losers.

When finally Penfold moved sluggishly from the Remove dormitory he had arrived at one other decision. That was to study the form of the horses engaged to run at Courtfield Park, and have one last final flutter on what appeared to be

a cert. If he could double his stakes, he would then be in a position to send his ailing father on a health-giving sea voyage. He could lead the old man to believe that the money came from his scholarship funds if necessary. Anyway, according to his idea the end justified the means.

Having skipped chapel previously that week, Dick Penfold knew that a caning would be his portion for this second offence. But the thought did not worry him. He had become callous to lines and fellings since he had become a blade. So late was he that he found his school-fellows had left chapel and were making their way from the quad into Big Hall. And in a listless, mechanical sort of way he drifted in with the throng.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

In Big Hall!

"AHEM!" Dick Penfold heard a slight cough as he dropped into a seat in Big Hall. Glancing to his right hand, he beheld the fat form of Billy Bunter occupying the next three seats to his own. The scholarship boy scowled, and, folding his arms, sat back and stared straight before him at the ruled desks at the end of the room.

"Ahem!" The cough was louder this time. "What's the matter with you, you fat chump?" demanded Penfold angrily. "Got a fish-bone in your gullet?" "No," remarked Bunter, by way of opening the conversation; "I haven't had brekker yet. It's a beastly shame that we're got to come here before brekker, don't you think? I'm jolly nearly starving, and—"

"Gr-r-rh!" grunted Penfold. "What did you say, old fellow?" asked Billy Bunter politely.

"Gr-r-r-rh!" "Quite so?" went on the Owl calmly. "That's how I should feel if I were in your shoes, old chap. Of course, you're bound to be expelled, but it's the public flogging that will be so jolly painful!"

"If you don't stow your cackle," hissed Penfold, "I'll slaughter you, you fat toad!"

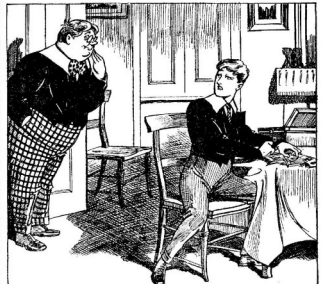
Hardly had he spoken than the general buzz of conversation in the room died away. A few excited whispers among the assembly announced the cause. "The Head!"

Then an almost eerie silence followed as into Big Hall swept the majestic figure of Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars School. Behind him strode George Wingate, the school captain. The latter halted and stood to attention at the foot of the dais, which the Head mounted.

A venerable, awe-inspiring figure, Dr. Locke stood erect on the platform, his hands clasping his robes in front of him, much in the attitude of a man holding the lapels of his coat. Masters and scholars alike maintained what was almost a painful silence. There was an austere, serious expression on the Head's calm, intellectual face that brought a foreboding of ill to all.

When at last the Head spoke his voice cut like a knife through the oppressive stillness.

"It has been my painful duty," he said, "to assemble the school this morning in connection with an outrage of a nature almost unparalleled in my experience. Last night the head prefect



Penfold sprang up as Billy Bunter came into the study. Dick's hands clutched over his pile of money, and there was a wild look in his eyes. "What do you mean by sneaking in here, you fat toad?" he cried. (See Chapter 5.)

received information to the effect that a certain junior had left his dormitory and gone to a gambling parlour in the village of Friardale. Acting on this, Wingate dressed and sallied forth, with the intention of bringing the culprit back to the school. On his way he saw a rope suspended from the window of the Remove dormitory.

At this point the Head was interrupted in his discourse by a loud roar of consternation on the part of the Removites.

Dr. Locke held up his hand.

"Silence!" he commanded sternly. "Ample opportunity will be given for you to speak when I have finished. To proceed:

"Having seen this evidence of guilt with his own eyes, the head prefect proceeded to the shop in Friardale, the address which had been given him as being the gambling resort. While he was standing outside examining the place the door was thrown open suddenly, and three juniors dashed out. Taken by surprise, Wingate was bowled over by the young ruffians before he had time to defend himself."

The Head waited a moment or two for dramatic stillness, and continued:

"But now I come to the most outrageous phase of last night's disgraceful escapade. Unable to stop the headlong flight of the three culprits as they left the gambling premises, Wingate set off in hot pursuit up the Friardale Road. His intention was to race them to the school, give the alarm, and discover their identity on their return. Apparently the cunning truants foresaw this danger that threatened them. Accordingly, they cut across some fields and hid behind a cowshed. As Wingate came abreast, the young desperados, who wore handkerchiefs over the lower parts of their faces, threw themselves upon him. Next moment he was hurled into the shed, and the door slammed and bolted. By the time he effected his release the culprits had made their escape back to the school."

This time as Dr. Locke paused there was not a murmur among the large audience. None of the Removites, with the exception of Wharton, Cherry and Penfold, knew the full details of the escapade. Now they did know, the Remove sat like the rest of the school—too flabbergasted for comment.

"Well may you look serious," resumed Dr. Locke. "I am sure that, like myself, you can scarcely find it in your hearts to credit that any Greyfriars fellows should have been guilty of such bootlegging. Having made the facts public, I now demand that the three juniors responsible for last night's disgraceful escapade shall stand up!"

Those last words of the headmaster rang clear and insistent through Big Hall. And a rain cloud had been heard to drop in the silence that followed them.

Dick Penfold sat with flushed face and bowed head, but immovable as the Sphinx. His mind suffered agonies, for the Head's remarks suggested that someone had sneaked on him personally.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Dick Penfold's Ordeal!

FOR the space of nearly two minutes the Head waited motionless, as if the room were empty. But not a soul stirred. Then, with a dramatic gesture, Dr. Locke pointed a finger direct towards the back of the Hall. Again his voice boomed out:

"Step forward, Penfold!"

The scholarship boy sprang up as

though shot. Every eye in Big Hall turned in his direction, most in surprise, some in malice, and a few in sympathy.

Stiffly and erectly, the junior walked down the Hall, and came to a halt at the foot of the dais, beneath the austere gaze of the headmaster.

"Penfold," said Dr. Locke sternly, "why did you not stand up when I called upon the culprits to confess?"

Beneath this pertinent question the cobbler's son went as white as a sheet. He appeared dazed, and his tongue stuttered his parched lips. But, in the face of this desperate situation his brain worked like lightning. For his father's sake more than his own he had no intention of confessing. On the other hand, he shrank from telling a deliberate lie. Perhaps, after all, the Head had no convincing proof against him, and the thought put him very much on his guard.

He looked the Head straight in the eyes.

"Why have you dropped upon me, sir?" he asked. By his tone he deliberately emphasized the impertinence of the question.

The whole school sat open-mouthed at this example of colossal cheek. Even the ingenuously Head was taken aback for a moment.

"My giddy aunt!" whispered Johnny Ball. "The crazy young idiot will be eaten alive!"

"He'll be sacked on the spot!" gasped Frank Nugent.

"The schoolfulness will be terrific!" murmured Liveroe Singh.

But strange to say, none of the gloomy forebodings of the school were realised. Trained by years and years of experience to control himself, even as he controlled others, Dr. Locke choked back the natural anger that welled within him at the defiance of the junior. Penfold he had always regarded as a clever, straight, and sensible young lad. He wished to be absolutely just and fair, and neither to say nor do anything to injure the reputation of any scholar without the fullest cause. But he had received information that necessitated the sternest inquiry into Penfold's character.

"I have dropped on you, Penfold," he said, without a trace of bitterness in his tone, "because the head prefect was deliberately informed that you were one of the boys who left the Remove dormitory during the night."

"By whom was Wingate informed of that, sir?"

Again the school gasped. Never in the experience of the oldest master present had any junior ever stood cross-examination, and the august headmaster in this brazen fashion.

"That is a question that I cannot answer, Penfold," said Dr. Locke sternly. "Wingate's informant desired to remain anonymous, lest he should be branded a sneak in connection with this affair. In refusing to give me the lad's name, I think that Wingate is acting wrongly. But the very fact that the head prefect was told you were absent from the dormitory is reason enough to my mind why I should ask you to reply personally to the question—did you break bounds last night?"

"I think, sir," said Penfold, "that I should be confronted with my accuser. That would be but ordinary justice. At this rate, any fellow can go behind the back of another and accuse him of any crime."

"I fully sympathise with that view-point, Penfold," said the headmaster. "Nevertheless, I want you to give a straight answer to my question. Your

word of honour that you did not leave the Remove dormitory last night will satisfy me. Then I shall take steps to bring your accuser to book."

"That question?" said Dick Penfold firmly, "I shall only answer in the face of my accuser."

Dr. Locke pressed the matter no more. "Resume your seat, Penfold!" he said sily.

Dick Penfold lost no time in returning to his place. By his own astuteness and the immediate danger that had threatened him, but he had actually placed the headmaster on the defensive. Even the Removites who knew the facts of Penfold's exploits of the previous night forgot their antagonism momentarily in admiration for his superb cheek. As for the Third Form lads, they regarded the scholarship lad more in the light of a hero than a suspect. But, pleased though he was at having got out of one tight corner with credit, Penfold knew well enough he wasn't out of the wood yet by a long chalk.

As Penfold took his seat, the Head again addressed the school.

"It is clear to me," he said, "that three juniors of the Remove Form were responsible for last night's disgraceful breach of the school rules. That others besides the three principals are fully aware of the facts of the escapade, I also have no doubt. Therefore, the Remove Form will be gated of every half-holiday for the rest of the term, and until such time as the culprits are brought to book. The school is dismissed."

The Head stepped down from the dais and swept majestically from the room. No sooner had he departed than pandemonium broke loose. With but a few choice exceptions the Remove were boiling with righteous indignation and anger. To lose their halves on account of a misguided sneak like Penfold, Wharton, and Cherry, was a bit too thick! At least they had expected the last-named couple to own up.

There were some even who thought that the Head should be informed of the facts; but there was no one, even among the few sneaks, who was bold enough to openly go to the Head with the information.

But while groups of the injured Removites discussed the situation among themselves, Dick Penfold, the real culprit, hastened away to Hall for breakfast. The Famous Five followed suit, and then the others, whose appetites—with the exception of Wharton—had been severely injured, strolled along.

The Remove breakfast was held beneath the stern eye of Mr. Quelch, the Form-master. And as morning school followed immediately after the meal, there was little further opportunity of discussing the bombshell that had been hurled by the Head. The matter, however, held a prominent place in the minds of all, and many were the lines and canings that Mr. Quelch handed out for inattention and general incompetency during lessons that morning.

When, at twelve o'clock, the class was dismissed, Dick Penfold retired to his study and closed the door. The Famous Five adjourned to Study No. 1, which Wharton and Nugent shared, there to hold a council of war. The remainder of the juniors trooped off to the Common-room to hold an "indignation meeting."

Had Dick Penfold been an eye-witness of that meeting he would have received a rude shock. Of all the "indignant" speakers none was more scathing in his remarks than Harold Skinner, the

CHRISTMAS CANDLES!"

A SPLENDID CHRISTMAS TALE OF THE JUNIORS OF GREYFRIARS. BY FRANK RICHARDS.

professed friend of the scholarship boy But, with his usual cunning, Skinner did not slate Penfold directly in his remarks. He confined his abuse to the action of Wharton and Cherry, knowing well that if these could be induced to even up, Penfold would assuredly explain to the Head that his Form-mates had merely broken bounds to save him and not to gamble.

Finally, after a heated meeting, about twenty fellows, led by Percy Bolsover, the bully of the Remove, made their way as a deputation to Study No. 1. Without troubling to observe the formality of knocking, Bolsover threw open the door and entered. Immediately behind him came Billy Bunter, Fisher, F. Fish, and George Bulstrode, while Harold Skinner and his two cronies, William Stott and James Sidney Senop, loitered behind the crowd in the passage-way.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked up in surprise as the leaders of the deputation entered the room.

"Well, what the thump do you chaps want?" he demanded. "It's customary to knock before blowing into another fellow's study. Haven't you any manners?"

"We haven't come here to discuss our manners!" growled Percy Bolsover. "We've come to talk about your rotten actions. We want to know when you and Cherry are going to tell the Head that you went on the razzle last night."

"But we didn't, old top."

"Well, Penfold did, and you two silly chumps went out after him. It's the same thing."

"Sorry, but I don't follow your logic," said Harry Wharton easily. "Go and talk like a Dutch uncle to Dick Penfold, and shut the door as you go out."

Percy Bolsover clenched his fists, and his eyes blazed.

"You don't get rid of us as easily as that, Wharton," he said menacingly. "Penfold's in Coventry; besides, it's hopeless talking to that rotter. As captain of the Remove Form, we think it's up to you to act first. Either own up or resign the captaincy of the Form. A chap who lies low while a couple of dozen innocent chaps suffer, isn't fit for the job."

"Hear, hear!" roared the rest of the deputation.

Perhaps had Bolsover and the rest of the deputation been a trifle more polite and tactful, Harry Wharton would have seriously considered resigning the captaincy of the Remove Form, at any rate. But Bolsover's bullying manner put his back up.

"You and your silly deputation can go and chop chips!" he said. "I'm not going to confess to the Head, neither am I going to resign. If you care to go and speak to Dr. Locke, do so by all means."

"All right, you rotter," snarled Bolsover. "We can't make you act like a white man about last night's affair, but we can kick you out of the explanation!"

"Kick away!" grinned Wharton.

Bob Cherry gave a yawn.

"Now run away and play marbles, there's good fellows!" he remarked to the deputation. "We simply haven't the time to listen to your baying any longer."

But just then Skinner, from behind the others, yelled a cry that stirred the deputation to fresh fury.

"Who's a rotten captain and low-down beast?"

And a chorus of voices roared in unison:

"Wharton!"

"Mob 'em, lads!"



Skinner & Co. gathered round Penfold as he opened the slip of paper from Hooker. It gave the result of the race. The notice slipped from Penfold's hand, and all four gazed at each other in blank consternation. (See Chapter 7.)

But Billy Bunter, who was not so far back as Skinner, and therefore could not afford to be so brave, protested feebly that the present was inopportune. His remarks, however, were unheeded by others, who poured into the study intent on wreaking vengeance on Wharton and Cherry.

The Famous Five sprang to their feet like one man at the first movement of the enemy. Then they sallied forth with whirling fists to defend their stronghold. In less than two seconds a wholesale fight was in progress. Bob Cherry, the best fighter in the Remove, proceeded to wipe the floor with Bolsover, while Wharton, Nugent, and Bull drove back other intruders. Hurree Singh only smote Bunter a sharp and unexpected blow on the nose, and the fat junior spent an exciting five minutes during the remainder of the melee trying to rescue his little round spectacles from beneath the trampling feet of his Form-mates. Ever and anon a wild, agonised yell told his lips as one or another of the combatants trod on his fat fingers.

Fighting like furies, the Famous Five at length obtained the mastery of those of the deputation who had gained access to the room. Bunter secured his glasses and rolled out of the room as Bolsover and the others retreated. Harry Wharton & Co. followed up their advantage. The retreat was turned into a rout. Harold Skinner, who had kept well in the background egging others on, was bowled head over heels and trodden upon by friends and foes alike.

At last, flushed, breathless, and triumphant, the Famous Five returned to Study No. 1, banged the door to, and locked it against further invasion.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Two Interviews!

HAROLD SKINNER, the end of the Remove, rose to his feet.

His nose was bleeding, one eye was black, his hair matted and dishevelled, and his collar, tie, and suit torn, bedraggled, and dusty. He blinked at the closed door of Study No. 1, and muttered beneath his breath strange threats which he knew only too well he could never fulfil.

His companions of the deputation had deserted him. Most of them were on their way to put their heads under cold water taps and remove the traces of the recent hard fighting from their persons as far as possible.

Having also repaired to some extent the damage done to him, Harold Skinner made his way to Study No. 9, which Dick Penfold shared with two juniors named Anthony Treloach and Herbert Trevor. He knocked and entered the place, to find Penfold alone.

The scholarship boy looked up from his armchair at the end's entrance. There was a suspicious gleam in his eyes. Someone had sneaked to Wingate about his leaving the dormitory on the previous night, and it was clear that he suspected Skinner.

"Last night you weren't well, you know, 'Skinty,'" he remarked. "You couldn't come with me to Francine. But perhaps you made a quick recovery?"

"I—I had a touch of ptomaine poisoning, I think," said Skinner. "But I was quite all right again this morning."

"I suppose," said Penfold quietly, "you weren't fit enough to get out of bed at all last night?"

"No. Why?"

NEXT MONDAY! "THE MYSTERY OF THE CHRISTMAS CANDLES!"

A SPLENDID CHRISTMAS TALE OF THE JUNIORS OF GREYFRIARS. BY FRANK RICHARDS. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 722.

"Only that someone went down and informed, Wingate that I had gone on the tiles."

Skinner's face was deathly white, but his eyes flashed indignantly.

"Here, I say!" he exclaimed. "This is a bit too thick! Are you trying to make out that I would do such a low-down, caddish action as to sneak on a pal?"

"I think the circumstances are very suspicious," retorted Penfold. "You were the only one who knew I was going to that gambling parlour."

"No, you're mistaken there," replied Skinner. "Stott and Snoop got wind of it, and they spread it about to other chaps. Any one of a dozen fellows might have given you away. On my word of honour, I didn't!"

Dick Penfold's suspicions were lulled. He knew that Skinner was a sneak by nature, but he didn't believe that the fellow was so lost to all sense of right as to give his word of honour in support of a lie.

"I'm sorry, Skinny," he said. "But you must admit the thing looked decidedly fishy. My hat, though, I'd like to know who was the rotter who went to Wingate! I'd slaughter him!"

"It was Bunter as likely as not," said Skinner. "But how did you get along at Hookey Walker's place last night? Win any more of the dibs?"

Dick Penfold gave a slow smile, and, for answer, drew out a fat wad of Treasury notes from his breast-pocket.

"My niddy aunt!" gasped the cad. "How natchy have you got there!"

"Fifty quids!" replied Penfold easily. "Not bad—eh?"

"Fifty quids!"

Harold Skinner turned absolutely green with envy. He had always prided himself on being a gambler and a blade, but never in his life had he won a quarter of such stakes. In fact, Skinner, like all fast persons, would make a habit of gambling, but had not won more money than he had ever received.

"I say, Skinny," said Penfold, "you might bring me a racing paper when you go down to the village. You know the best to get, and—"

"Great pip! You're going to have a flutter on the gees now—eh, Pen? You've certainly become a gay dog!"

There was a touch of admiration in his tone that caused the scholarship lad to plume himself.

"I hope to make these fifty quids into a hundred before I've finished," he remarked calmly. "If you happen to hear a good tip for a horse you might let me know, old man."

The cad smiled. Well did he know that Penfold knew nothing about horse-racing, whereas he himself always followed the form of runners at the various race meetings.

"Trust me to help you, Pen!" he said. "I'll get a racing paper from Friarfield to-day. A friend of mine, who lives in Courtfield, often gets inside information about the gees, and if he gives me a tip I'll pass it on to you."

"Thanks muchly, old top!"

Skinner then made an excuse and left the study.

When the door had been closed behind the cad, Penfold drew out his roll of Treasury notes again, and, for the twentieth time counted them carefully. Then, with his hands clenched tightly over the precious money, he sank back into his armchair, and became lost in thought.

A short fortnight ago he had been a straight, decent fellow, a chum of Harry Newt.

THE MYSTERY

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 722.

Wharton and all the best fellows of the school. Then he was practically penniless. Now he was the owner of fifty pounds. But he had lost all his former friends, and was a consort of outsiders like Skinner. More than one of his old friends, including Marjorie Hazeldene, the sister of Peter Hazeldene, had tried to get him to "play the game." The lad's conscience troubled him greatly, but he was now determined to see things through. When he had got enough to send his ailing father for a voyage to South Africa and back he would start afresh.

With that thought in his mind, he rose and took a small wooden box from his desk. This he unlocked and laid on the table. Then he began placing his money inside it for safe-keeping.

He was engaged on this task when the study door was slowly opened, and the fat face of Billy Bunter peered into the study.

At the sight of the money the Owl's eyes opened wide behind his little round spectacles.

"Ahem!"

At the sound Penfold sprang up as though stung. His hands clutched over his precious money like the claws of a miser, and there was a wild, startle look in his eyes. But no sooner did he recognize Bunter than the surprise gave way to a fierce anger.

"What the thump do you mean by sneaking in here, you great fat toad!" he ejaculated. "If you don't get outside at once I'll apficate you!"

But in spite of the threat Billy Bunter did not move. His curiosity and his pishon had been too much aroused by the sight of so much money in the possession of a boy who was reckoned one of the poorest juniors in the school.

"It's all right, Pen, old fellow!" he said soothingly. "I won't let on to the other chaps that you're a giddy millionaire if you don't want me to."

This assurance partly allayed Penfold's anger. Unfortunately Bunter had seen his money, so that matter could not be helped now.

"Well, what have you come here for?" he growled.

Bunter, as a matter of fact, had called in the hope of borrowing a shilling. But, having seen the Treasury notes, he altered the form of his request slightly.

"Ahem!" he said, Pen, old fellow," he said, "would you lend me a fiver?"

"No, I won't!"

"A couple of quids, then?"

"No."

"A pound then, you mean beast!" snorted Billy Bunter.

Thoroughly fed up with the attentions of the fat junior, Dick Penfold darted across the room, and gripped Bunter by the ear.

"Get outside, you fat worm!" he howled. "Beat it! Vamoose! Skiddoo!"

"Yow-wow! Lemme go, you rotter!"

Penfold, still clutching one fat ear of his victim, dragged Bunter's head downwards, and pushed him through the doorway. Then he suddenly planted a boot hard behind the Owl, and sent him staggering against the opposite wall of the passage. Re-entering the study, he tucked his gambling winnings away in the box, which he then locked securely, and put in his desk.

Billy Bunter, meanwhile, sore in body and mind, rolled down the studies passage, breathing dire threats against his late assailant, whom he classified as "a rotten, sneaky, low-down son of a beastly cobbler!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Receives a Tip!

TWO or three days dragged by, days of gloom for the Remove Form of Greyfriars. No one had confessed to the bounds-breaking escapade, and no one had "sneaked" about the three calprits. Sneaking was not encouraged in the school, and although Skinner was quite capable of turning informer, he had reasons of his own for remaining silent. Meanwhile, the Remove lost one half-holiday, and feelings against Wharton, Cherry, and Penfold ran high in consequence.

A thoughtful hypocrite, Harold Skinner had only professed friendship for Dick Penfold for his own ends, as has already been pointed out. He had, in reality, always hated the scholarship boy. That Penfold had not been caught and expelled for this last affair was a source of extreme regret to the cad. But he knew that if he encouraged Penfold to continue his downward path at the pace he was travelling, the other would inevitably be caught sooner or later.

On the day prior to the opening of the local race meeting, Harold Skinner invited Stott, Snoop, and Penfold into his study for a game of nap. During the interval of waiting for the arrival of the last-named, Stott took the opportunity of studying the form of runners in a pink sporting paper he had discovered in the study. Skinner, meanwhile, made up a blazing fire, while Snoop amused himself by practising card tricks.

At last the scholarship lad put in an appearance.

For half an hour they played steadily, and then Harold Skinner threw down his cards in disgust.

"Hang it!" he muttered savagely. "I haven't held a decent card this evening! Let us turn it up for to-night!"

Skinner, although he often managed to cheat in a small way in the card games in which he participated, had not the cleverness to be a really dangerous card-sharp. Hand after hand Dick Penfold had held aces and kings against which the cad was powerless. Stott and Snoop had also lost to the despised novice, and so they too, were quite content to pack up and wait for another evening when the trick might be reversed.

Penfold pushed the fifteen shillings odd that he had won from his companions into his pocket with a sheepish gesture. Somehow, he felt mean and despicable in thus taking money from his school-fellows. With Hookey Walker he had not felt the same compunction.

"You chaps had better go and revenge another evening," he said, forcing a smile. "You've had no beastly luck at all!"

Harold Skinner lighted a fresh cigarette with trembling fingers. Never had his mean nature hated the scholarship boy so much as at that moment. Then, pushing the smoke in thick, blue clouds from his lips, he threw himself into an armchair before the fire.

"I never knew anything like your luck!" he snarled. "You can't do anything wrong. If I were in your shoes I'd bark it for it's worth before it changes."

Dick Penfold toyed with the pack of cards on the table. Certainly,

(Continued on page 13.)

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY, PAGE 27.
THE MYSTERY
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 722.

A SPLENDID CHRISTMAS TALE OF THE JUNIORS OF GREYFRIARS. By FRANK RICHARDS.

The Greyfriars Herald

SUPPLEMENT No. 50.
Week Ending Dec. 16th, 1921.



Assisted by BOB CHERRY (Fighting Editor),
VERNON SMITH (Sports Editor), MARK
LANLEY, TOM BROWN, and FRANK NUGENT.

Harry Wharton
Editor

Address all letters to HARRY WHARTON,
c/o The Magnet Library, The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

"WHAT I SAYS IS THIS 'ERE——"

By WILLIAM GOSLING
(The Greyfriars Porter).

Breaking-up time has arrived at last (I think that's the right word), and I have asked Master Wharton to allow me a brief space in his valuable paper, so that I can put a few things before the public.

I see by the newspapers that in future everybody who receives "tips" has got to pay income tax on them. You will realize, young gent, that this is a very serious matter. Even our "tips" are being taxed now! It means that unless we take a good deal more in "tips" than we used to take, we shall be heavily out of pocket.

Without wishing to impose on you young gent's in any way, I should like to ask you not to forget me when you go away for the holidays. Which I have been a good and faithful servant, and faithful service deserves a reward.

Last Christmas, I remember, Master Skinner "tipped" me twopenny. What's the use of twopenny to a man in my position? Why, it won't even buy a pint of—I mean, a loaf of bread! I think it was downright mean of Master Skinner, and if he does it again I shall throw the copper in his face.

Here have I been a-toiling and a-slogging all the term. I haven't counted the number of leaves I have swept up in the Close, but they must run into billions! Then, again, look at the times I've admitted some of you young gent's when you've been late for locking-up, and said nothing about it to the masters. Now is the time to ponder on such acts of kindness, and reward them accordingly.

I shall hope to reap quite a rich harvest of "tips" on this occasion. But, of course, there's no telling! I haven't forgotten the old proverb: "Blessed is he that expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed." But please, kind young gent's, try not to forget your faithful admirer and obedient humble servant—Gosling.

(At any other time Gosling would refer to us not as "kind young gent's", but as "young tips" and "young warms".—Ed.)

Supplement 1.

EDITORIAL!

By HARRY WHARTON.

There is joy in the Greyfriars camp. We are breaking up for that most glorious respite of all the year—the Christmas holidays.

All around me, as I write, are scenes of animation. Boxes and trunks are being dragged along the Remove passage; there is a babel of merry voices, and above the general din the gramophone of Tom Brown, who occupies the study next door, makes itself heard. It is having its last kick, so to speak. Thank goodness we shan't hear the beastly thing again until next term!

"Where do you intend to spend the vac, Harry?" is a question which many of my correspondents have asked me lately.

The general impression seems to be that we shall be going to Wharton Lodge, as usual. But this year we intend to ring the changes.

Harroo Janset Rem Singh, our dusky and illustrious Nabob, is giving a grand house-party in London, and his pals (surprising how many people are claiming to be his pals!) are going to join him.

I do not propose to deal, either in this issue or next, with our expedition to London. Mr. Frank Richards, in his own inimitable way, will describe this great event in his extra long Christmas Number story. I will leave him to tell of our experiences—fratly, because he can do so in a far more skilful and amusing manner than I; and secondly, because I feel sure none of you will want to read about the same happenings twice over.

Next week we shall publish the GRAND CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF THE GREY-FRIARS HERALD. It is going to be crammed with good things. All the amateur journalists in the Remove have been busily engaged in turning out contributions. Some of them, I am afraid, we shall be unable to find space for. Coker of the Fifth wants me to devote two whole pages to an article entitled "How to Enjoy Your Christmas Dinner." He will be rudely disappointed!

You must on no account miss this coming Christmas Number. It's going to be real good—quite the best number that has been prepared since we started on our merry course, nearly a year ago.

Tell your newswagon to reserve you the Christmas Number of The Magnet Library.

HARRY WHARTON.

THE CHRISTMAS VACK!

NOT by Dick Penfold, but by
that untamed, unmuzzled poet,
HORACE COKER.

The Vack is hear (Here, here!) right hear!

Arise and cheer, and cheer, and cheer! The cab arrives, and through the snow We (just a moment. Thank you!) go!

Portmanteaus, luggs, and trunks, and things Into the karridge the porter slings. And then the frase goes puff puff puff! Puff-puff puff-puff— (is that enuff?)

We rush on through the country green (At least, it's green where snow's not been.)

We wave from windoes, and we say: "Hip, pip, hip, pip, hip, pip, hooray!"

There's no more Latin, no more Greek, And no more French for many a week! With joy we scream, and shriek, and shout, Free from the tyranny of Prout!

Health, wealth, and happiness attend The Vack that we're about to spend! May we have heaps of fun and pleasure, And (wait till I've a rhyme, please) leisure!

Hoar's to the Christmas holidays, The dear, delightful, jolly days! And may we eat and drink our fill, But not too much, or we'll be ill!

(The fellows who read this doggerel will be ill, in any event. It's sure to give them a pain.—Ed.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 722.



Impertinent Interviews

By our Special Representative.

This Week - - - MR. PROUT.

"HERE'S a pretty kettle of fish!" I ejaculated. "You sent for me on the eve of breaking-up day, and tell me to go and interview old Prout for the Greyfriars Herald?"

"Well," snapped the editor, "don't you realize, you suffer, that I've already interviewed Prout once for the paper?"

"What of that? So long as the second interview differs materially from the first, our readers will have no objection. The fact that you've already interviewed Prout doesn't matter a scrap. I've already written an editorial. That's not to say that I'm barred from writing another."

"Well, you might choose a better time for an interview than the eve of breaking-up!" I protested.

"Be silent, doc! Our next issue must be prepared for the Press at all costs. We can't plead to the printers, as an excuse, that we're breaking up. Duty is duty, and holidays mustn't be allowed to encroach upon it."

"Oh, all right," I said, with resignation. "Just to satisfy your peace of mind, I'll go along and see old Prout!"

And I proceeded to the study which was occupied by the master of the Fifth.

Mr. Prout was seated at the table, with his head resting between his hands. He was deep in thought.

"Pardon my intrusion, sir," I said, stepping into the study and producing my notebook. "I have called upon you in the capacity of—"

"Ah!" said Prout, looking up. "You are just the boy I wanted to see. I am about to compile a list of the people to whom I shall give Christmas presents. I should like you to take down their names in your notebook, and write, at the side of each name, the nature of the present I propose to give. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"Take a chair, then," said Prout. "And we will get busy!"

I made myself comfortable in the Form-master's armchair, and sat nibbling my Red-rose, ready for action.

"This choosing of Christmas presents is a very difficult task," murmured Prout. "It has to be done with tact and discretion. Last Christmas, in the rush and hurry, I sent my sister Phoebe a bear-pipe, and she was very annoyed—considerably so! I sent my brother Robert, who is exploring in Central Africa, a tea-caddy. He, too, was very annoyed. This year I want to avoid a repetition of such tactical errors. Your assistance will be invaluable!"

I nodded, and picked my pencil ready.

"First of all," said Prout, "write down Cousin James—safety razor. Cousin James is always going about in an unshaven condition. He has twice been taken for a hot-sheriff. Now, have you got that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Now 'Aunt Rebecca—a tortoise. Also an ear-trumpet.' Both will be invaluable to her. At present, she is as blind as a post and as deaf as a bat—I mean as blind as a bat, and as deaf as a post. There is hardly a respectful way to speak of one's aunt, but no matter. Are you ready for the next item?"

I nodded.

"Uncle John—a pair of crutches. 'Aunt Judith—a bottle of smelling-salts.' 'Cousin Reuben—a trawler on How to be Happy Though Married.' 'Aunt Priscilla—a lap-dog.' 'Nephew Nick—a new coat—acres—acres!—"

"Have you got all these things?"

"Every one, sir," I answered cheerfully. "I envy Nephew Nick. I could do with a model aeroplane myself!"

Mr. Prout took no notice of my remark, but continued his dictation.

The job lasted nearly an hour.

Prout seemed to have friends and relatives dead all over the globe, and he didn't want to leave anybody out.

The list grew longer and longer, and I was

on the verge of getting writer's cramp when Prout finally desisted.

"There!" he said. "I think that embraces everybody. Perhaps you would like to come over to Courtfield this evening, and assist me to do the shopping. The shops will be open late."

"I'd love to come and give you a hand, sir," I said. There was a vague hope in my mind that Prout might buy me a pair of roller-skates that I had set my heart upon. "I've got a lot of packing to do first."

"Very well, my boy! Go and do your packing, and join me here at six o'clock. I am very grateful for the assistance you have rendered. It would have taken me hours and hours to compile that list by myself. I get so surried!"

I went along to my study, and packed my trunk in readiness for breaking-up.

Scidown have I spent such a busy afternoon. Mr. Prout was in a whirl by the time six o'clock came. In fact, I scarcely knew whether I was on my head or my heels.

I found Mr. Prout, with an overcoat on and heavily muffled, waiting for me.

"Ah, here you are!" he said, drawing. "I am afraid we shall need a conveyance, in order to bring all the presents back to Greyfriars. So I have telephoned to Courtfield for a taxi-car."

"It's coming now, sir!" I said. "I can hear it in the Close."



Mr. Prout came towards me with a wild look in his eyes. "Where is the taxi?" he repeated.

"Splendid! Come along, my boy!" A few moments later we were seated side by side in the taxi.

Prout was in great spirits. There is always a certain amount of joy at well as worry in buying presents by the score for friends and relatives.

It was not until we reached Courtfield, and came to a halt outside Chumley's Stores that the tragedy occurred.

"Now, my boy," said Prout briskly, "we will make a start with our shopping. Where is the list?"

There was silence—fifteen bars' rest, as a musician would say.

Prout came towards me. There was a wild look in his eyes. He shook me by the shoulders.

"Where is the list?" he repeated.

"I—I've lost it, sir!"

The words came faltering from my lips. "Lost it?" Prout danced to and fro on the pavement like a man denied.

"Yes, sir! I'm awfully sorry! When I was destroying some rubbish this afternoon, I must have put it on the fire by mistake!"

"Yes—yes—"

There was such a look of frenzy on Prout's face that I murmured to myself, "This is no place for me. I'd better scud-dle!"

I sped away, horse swiftly along on the wings of fear.

My last vision was that of a distracted and furious Form-master, executing a sort of waltz to the pavement to the unrecalled amusement of the street-arabs of Courtfield!

CHRISTMAS GIFTS ANTICIPATED!

By MICKY DESMOND.

Now that we are on the eve of breaking up, lots of fellows, hubbub over with generosity and the good old milk of human kindness, will be buying presents for other fellows.

I have been trying to anticipate the form that some of these gifts will take.

These are my forecasts:

Peter Todd to Tom Dutton.—An ear-trumpet.

H. Vernon-Smith to Tom Redwing (the sailor's son).—A length of rope.

(We don't think it would be altogether wise to give Redwing too much rope!—Ed.)

Harry Wharton to Bob Cherry.—A pair of curling-tongs.

(The suggestion is enough to make Bob curl up!—Ed.)

Harold Skinner to Hurree Singh.—A pair of whitewash, so that he may transform his complexion.

(Rather a black outlook for Inky!—Ed.)

Landlord of the Cross Keys to Gerald Loder.—A pack of playing-cards, with special markings on the backs.

George Rundell to Horace Coker.—Life-size drawing of Tarzan of the Apes.

Peter Todd to Alonzo Todd.—A woollen chest-protector.

Bob Cherry to Billy Bunter.—A magnificent cake-of soap!

The Remove Form to William Gosling.—A safety razor.

The Third Form to the Head.—A bundle of birch-twigs.

Sammy Bunter to Billy Bunter.—A French cun with a hole in it.

Johnny Bull to Wun Lung.—A bundle of Chinese crackers.

(I should think he would fairly explode!—Ed.)

S. Q. I. Field to Tom Brown.—A joint of New Zealand mutton.

The Remove Form to Mr. Quelch.—A book dealing with the abolition of corporal punishment.

I think you will all agree that the gifts described above would be most appropriate!

There's just one thing I've omitted, though. Here it is:

Editor of the "Greyfriars Herald" to Micky Desmond.—One guinea for its article.

(Some hopes!—Ed.)



The Famous Five's Breaking-Up Day.

By S. Q. I. FIELD.

"**B**REAKING-UP day!" said Skinner. "Or rather, the eve of it. To-morrow, my cherry pals, we shall go sorting bones in our bannier cars. Meanwhile, we've packed our traps; the afternoon is before us; and we're at a loose end."

"That's so!" said Stott. "All dressed up and nowhere to go, as they say in the classics."

"We've got to kill time somehow!" grunted Bolsover major. "There were four juniors in Skinner's study—Skinner himself, Stott, Snop, and Bolsover. They were, as Skinner had said, at a loose end. Their schoolfellows were either playing, in readiness for breaking-up, or they were playing football on Little Ridge."

Skinner & Co. had already packed, and they had no use for football. They were, at the moment, idle. And we are told that there is a certain gentleman who always finds some work for idle hands to do.

Skinner picked up a book that was lying on the table. It was a handsomely bound book—a present from his Aunt Selina.

Skinner's aunt was for ever sending him books. Skinner had quite a library of them by this time. He sometimes wished that his devoted aunt would give the books a read, and send, in lieu thereof, fat remittances.

"Now, you fellows," said Skinner, with a chuckle, "I'll read to you aloud. I'm sure you'd love me to. This book is entitled, 'Pious Percy,' no reflection on you, Bobey! The sub-title is, 'The Poverty-stricken Puritan. Listen!'"

"Poor Percy's persistent poverty sometimes brought a rush to his handsome cheek. At other times, the tears would well up in his bespectacled eyes. When he looked around him, and saw his sleek and immaculate school fellows, and contrasted their apparel with his own shabby coat and corduroy trousers, he was driven to the depths of despair. Everybody seemed to be wealthy but himself. He, poor wretch, hadn't the price of a bag of bullock's on him."

"But I will not cudge!" he cried, in tones vibrant with emotion. "Although my father is a millionaire many times over, I will not ask him for assistance! I will paddle my own canoe! Starvation stares me in the face, but—"

"Dry up!" chorused three voices. Skinner looked up in mock surprise.

"You don't want me to go on?" he said. "No!" booted Bolsover major.

"But poor pious Percy—"

"Bless poor pious Percy!" Skinner hurried the volume into the fire-place, with a reckless disregard of the beautiful binding.

"Of course, I was only retting," he said. "I've no intention of boring you fellows, on this day of tears and the pitiful adventures of Pious Percy."

"But what are we going to do with ourselves this afternoon?" inquired Snop.

Skinner picked up a pack of cards and a box of cigars—new brands. "In here," he said, tapping the bag affectionately, "are all the ingredients for a really happy afternoon. There's a pack of cards and a box of cigars—new brands."

Bolsover major frowned slightly. Although a rough diamond, and a fellow who was contemptuous of law and order, Bolsover was not overfond of smoking. True, he had indulged in the habit many a time and oft, but on no occasion had he really enjoyed it.

Still, he reflected, it was the last day of term, and a fellow was entitled to have a bit of a fling. A game of nap for penny points, and a quiet cigarette—what harm was there in that?

"Follow me, my brothers!" said Skinner, putting on his cap. "I know a nice little barn, not far from the school, where we can enjoy ourselves to our hearts' content!"

Taking the handbag with him, Skinner led the way from the study.

Animated scraps were in progress in the Remove passage.

Trunks and portmanteaus were being dragged along, to the accompaniment of a babel of voices. The holiday spirit was everywhere in evidence.

Skinner & Co. chuckled with satisfaction as they made their way across the Close. They told themselves that they were in for a jolly good time.

They did not know that their movements were being watched from the window of Study No. 1. Yet such was the case.

The Famous Five were present in the study. They had been working on the Christmas Number of the "Greyfriars Herald."

Bob Cherry had been standing at the window, and he had been the first to catch sight of Skinner & Co.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob. "Wonder where our young friends are going?"

"My hat!" exclaimed Johnny Bull, joining Bob at the window. "Skinner's got my hand-bag! I've been hunting for it all over the place. Hi! Skinner! Bring that bag back!"

But Skinner & Co. were out of earshot.

"Those fellows are up to something shady, beyond a doubt," said Harry Wharton. "We'd better go after them."

Johnny Bull was already dashing out of the study. He was anxious to regain his handbag.



Johnny Bull kicked open the crude wooden door of the barn, and confronted Skinner & Co.

Johnny's chums followed, and soon the Famous Five were hot on the trail of Skinner & Co.

"Helter skelter up a bit!" muttered Frank Nugent. "Don't let 'em know we're following. We want to find out where they're going, and what the little game is."

Skinner & Co. were skilfully shadowed. Harry Wharton, who was walking ahead, saw their branch off into Friarale Wood.

"Looks to me as if they're going to have a sort of smoking soiree in some old barn," said the captain of the Remove.

His surmise proved correct. Following as closely as they dared, the Famous Five tracked Skinner & Co. along the winding path.

Presently the quartette disappeared. It was not difficult to tell where they had gone.

Just off the beaten track was an old, disused barn. With grim faces, Harry Wharton & Co. approached the old wooden slant.

Skinner's voice was plainly audible from within. "Make yourselves at home, gentle! Deal the cards, Snopsey! Hand round the cigs, Bobey! This little handbag came in jolly use."

"It belongs to me!" interposed a grim voice.

Johnny Bull had kicked open the crude wooden door of the barn, and now confronted Skinner and his companions. Behind him were the other members of the Famous Five.

Skinner & Co., who had been on the point of commencing their game of cards, sprang to their feet.

"What do you fellows want?" growled Bolsover major. "It's like your check to interfere!"

"As captain of the Remove," said Harry Wharton, "it's up to me to put the kibosh on little stunts of this kind. So those are your headquarters, Skinner? Well, I'm sorry, but I'm afraid we shall have to smash up the happy home."

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry. "To-morrow's the official breaking-up day, but we'll have a breaking-up all on our own. There are a couple of wooden men's axes over in that corner. You fellows. Let's get busy!"

"This barn's private property!" said Skinner. "You'll get into an awful row if you start smashing it up!"

"We'll chance that," said Johnny Bull. He picked up one of the axes, and Bob Cherry armed himself with the other.

"I feel like a merry executioner!" said Bob. "And I've chosen my victim. So—"

The work of destruction commenced forthwith.

Harry Wharton tramped the box of cigarettes underfoot. Frank Nugent twisted the playing-cards, and ripped the pack in half. And Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull did great execution with the axes.

It was breaking-up day, with a vengeance! The heads of the Remove stood by with roared faces while the Famous Five went about their work.

The task did not last long. It is always much quicker to destroy a barn than to construct one.

Harry Wharton & Co. thoroughly enjoyed themselves while the fun lasted.

Not so Skinner and his cronies. They stood in the midst of the debris, looking very apprehensive.

"Let's make a bolt for it!" muttered Snop nervously.

As a matter of fact, Skinner had already started to edge away from the scene. But there was no escape for him. Bob Cherry, pasting from his execution, barred his path.

"No, you don't, my poppin!" said Bob. "We're going to teach you that it isn't right for little boys to smoke and gamble in secret haunts of this kind."

At least, they shouldn't be. Bump them, you fellows!"

"Look here—" began Bolsover aggressively.

But before he could proceed he was swept off his feet, and bumped with great vigour and heartiness.

Skinner and Snop and Stott, had they been youths of spirit, would have shown fight. Being ardent cowards, however, they simply stood and quaked.

After Bolsover major had been soundly and severely bumped, the others were served in similar fashion.

When the ordeal was over, they lay sprawling on the ground, groaning in a doleful chorus.

Then Johnny Bull rattled up his hand-bag, and the Famous Five, their task completed, tramped back to Greyfriars.

Skinner & Co. will have to learn to remember the Famous Five's "breaking-up" day!

Harry Wharton & Co. paid a visit to the owners of the barn, and tactfully suggested it might be useful as firewood. And, to their satisfaction, the owner agreed, and it was sold to the juniors for a mere song—

and the proceeds were given to the Gosling as fuel for his Yuletide fire!

So everybody was satisfied—except Skinner & Co!

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WHERE TO SPEND CHRISTMAS!

By Tom Brown.

(We cannot recommend our readers to carry out Browney's suggestion. If they write to their aunts and uncles in the manner described below, they will only be severely punished for their rudeness!—Ed.)

WHEN shall I spend Christmas? That question has given rise to many heartburnings since the world began.

Your Aunt Emma is a bit of a pecker; your Aunt Dorcas is rather a plump; your Uncle James, from Malabar, is a gay old stick; your Uncle Bill (whose effigy you burnt on Bonfire Night) is a gay old spark.

Now, you're got to decide which relative to spend the vacation with. I will tell you how to go about it.

First of all, map out a list of all your available friends and relatives. Something after this style:

Father.	Uncle Archibald.
Aunt Flora.	Uncle Clarence.
Aunt Emyntide.	Uncle Cuthbert.
Aunt Honoria.	Uncle Bill.
Aunt Sally.	Cousin Joe.
Aunt Kate.	Rector of your native village.

To each of the above you should dispatch a letter, couched in the following terms:

"Dear Sir (or Madam), I propose to honour you with my society during the coming vac."

"Before I definitely make up my mind to come to you, however, I should like you to gratify my curiosity by filling up the following form (merely a matter of 'form,' you know!):

1. Is there any skating or snowballing to be had in your district?

2. Shall I be permitted, when a member of your household, to rise each morning at eleven, and to go to bed any old time after midnight?

3. What sort of grub do you dish up? I shall require a healthy appetite with me, and I've no time to waste on trifles. Hefty plums and puddings are about my mark.

4. Will there be a dance on Christmas Eve? And shall I be allowed to appear in the ball-room in football boots?

5. State (in round figures) the amount of pocket-money I shall receive from you weekly.

6. Have you on your staff of servants a pompous old butler whose leg I can pull?

7. Will there be any chance of getting a case of footie, while I am with you? I don't mean that I want to dribble the aforesaid butler down your front steps!

—Kindly fill in this form and return it to me, together with the amount of my railway fare from Greyfriars, in case I should decide to come.

This is a really delightful brain-wave on my part.

As soon as all the forms come back to you, duly filled in, you will see at a glance which place appeals to you most.

Your Uncle Bill, for instance, might write and say that the ponds in his district are frozen over, and that there is skating to be had—likewise snowballing.

He may go on to inform you that if you go he will give you can get up and go to bed at any old time you like.

He will thoughtfully enclose a menu card,

maxim: "Skate, play footie, and be fit!"

Have you ever experienced the joy of turning out on a cold, frosty morning, with your pals, and indulging in shots at goal? I know there are some—fellows like Lord Manleyverer and Billy Bunter—who would shudder at the bare suggestion. They would lay in bed until midday if they had half a chance.

Have you experienced another joy—no less fascinating—the joy of moonlight skating?

As you glide and whirl across the ice your spirits are light as air, you feel that it's good to be alive. You don't envy the people who are curled up in warm beds. You could go on skating indefinitely.

There are other winter joys. There is the joy of the long tramp through the country lanes, with a pal at your side. There is the joy of tobogganing. And we must not forget such healthy pursuits as cross-country runs and paper-chases.

All these things will make you feel in trim and at the top of your form physically. You will go back to school, when the vacation is over, like a giant refreshed.

There are some who consider that I'm a fresh-air fanatic. Others have styled me a sports maniac.

If it is fanatical to keep the body fit, if it is maniacal to indulge in healthy recreation, then am I indeed a fanatic and a maniac.

But I am in good company. The editor of this paper will back up all that I have written (Right cheerfully!—Ed.), and so will every other sensible and sane-thinking fellow.

If you want your Christmas holiday to be a real "top-notcher," don't neglect your sports.

setting forth the items for the Christmas dinner in detail. He will add that there is to be a dance on Christmas Eve, and that it doesn't matter what you wear, even if it's only a sock.

The kind-hearted old butler will promise you a couple of gold a week pork-a-money, and he will tell you that he has a portly and pompous butler in his household. It will be dangerous, however, to pull his leg, because it's a cork one, and may come unstuck!

He will wind up by saying that there is a football team in the district that will be glad of your services, and that he is sanctioning the amount of your railway fare, plus a liver for yourself.

You will then decide—if you are wise—to spend the Christmas vac. with Uncle Bill.

As for the others, you needn't take any notice of them.

Aunt Flora will tell you that she can't stand snowballing, or either other kind of bogganising. Uncle Clarence will expect you to turn out sharp at six every morning. Aunt Honoria will point out to you that the price of food is high, and that you cannot expect to live on the fat of the land.

Uncle Archibald, when he sees the question about dancing, will say "Certainly not!" He's a dry old stick who strongly disapproves of dancing.

Cousin Joe will extend you a hearty welcome, but will reiterate that the maximum amount of pocket-money he can allow you will be a tanner per week.

Aunt Sally will frigidly inform you that she doesn't keep servants, let alone a butler. And the rector of your native village won't be interested in football.

So you can give all those good people a miss, and go to Uncle Bill.

The question of where to spend the Christmas vac. will thus be satisfactorily solved, and you will bubble over with gratitude towards Thomas Brown, for having shown you how to go about it.

Rather early to finish all a Merry Christmas, dear readers. I'll postpone this until next week.

I know the sort of holiday Billy Bunter would prescribe. He would tell you to eat, drink, and sleep to your heart's content.

But this type of holiday doesn't tend to physical improvement. Rather the reverse.

I remember one Christmas vac which I spent with Harry Wharton & Co., at Wharton Lodge, in Hampshire, when we played the villagers at footie on the Boxing Day and licked them hollow. We picked up a scratch eleven amongst the guests at the Lodge, and eight Greyfriars fellows were playing. As you may know, the chaps of the village have been our deadly rivals since the very first time there was a party at Wharton Lodge consisting of Greyfriars juniors, and it's a standing arrangement to play their football team on Boxing Day. Sometimes there happens to be one or two very good players on the villagers' side, and consequently we have our work cut out to keep them at bay. But this last time, if I remember rightly, their eleven was composed of mostly novices, and it was a case of two goals apiece. In the second half the game was a snow fight more than anything else. It came down in sheets, and we were like so many snow-men staggering about the ground, groping for a ball which was half-buried in the snow that had collected on the ground. But, for all that, it was grand sport, and I have never felt happier.

Sport costs nothing, or very little. And, remember, it keeps down doctors' bills.

And now I suppose you are weary of what you will call "Smithy's stale sermon," so I will ring off, merely concluding with the hope that your Christmas sports may be both successful and jolly.

[Supplement to.

CHRISTMAS SPORTS!

Specialty Contributed by
H. VERNON-SMITH.
(Our Sports Editor.)



Some fellows make the fatal mistake of regarding the Christmas holiday solely as a time in which to eat, drink, and be merry.

If a fellow gives himself up solely to eating, drinking, and merriment without regard for other things, there will be trouble to follow. The family doctor will be called in to prescribe for a case of biliousness!

Eat and drink, by all means—in moderation. Be merry also. An old proverb tells us that to be merry is to be wise.

But this is not all. There are other things to be considered. And one of the most important is keeping fit.

Rather than "Eat, drink, and be merry!" I would prefer to take as my

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"Back to the Fold!"

(Continued from page 8.)

Skinner had said, his luck was in. He had hardly been able to do a thing wrong so far. While he was on the flood tide of success, he would throw all his resources into one great flutter that should be his last.

"Let's see, the races start to-morrow, Skinner," he said. "Is there anything good going, do you know?"

For reply Skinner drew a dirty envelope from his pocket and extracted therefrom an equally dirty scrap of paper.

"Listen to me, Pen, and you other chaps!" he said. "I've some information here that is straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak. I'll pass it along to you on one condition—that you don't spread it to anyone else in the school."

"Rathee not!" chorused Penfold, Stott, and Snoop.

"Well, as you know, I'm pretty well in with some of the racing men of Courtfield," said Skinner, with a man-of-the-world air. "Among the number is a chap called Nobby Clark. Nobby attends trials of horses—of course, on the Q.T.—and he knows all the trainers and jockeys."

"And he has put you on to a good thing!" cried Penfold eagerly.

"He has," said Skinner. "a cast-iron, brass-bound cert!"

"Well, and what is the tip?" demanded Penfold impatiently.

Harold Skinner held up the grubby piece of paper under the light and read the pencilled note it contained.

"Happy Sally, in the Midget Stakes to-morrow," he said.

"Happy Sally!" ejaculated Stott. "That horse hasn't the form of Belfry Bat, Sneezer, Puffing Billy, and Up Jenkins, all of which are running in the same race."

"You can bet your boots," said Harold Skinner, "that Nobby Clark has got some information which isn't public knowledge about the gee. You know jolly well that some of these races are wangled, and then form goes to the dickens altogether. Anyway, I'm going to put a couple of quids on the gee!"

"You think the price will be six to one against?" asked Snoop.

"Bound to be," replied Skinner. "But you chaps had better make up your minds what you're going to do. We'll have to post our bets off to-night."

"Well, I'm going to put a quid on it!" said Stott.

"Right! I'll do the same!" cried Snoop.

Dick Penfold moistened his lips. If he put his fifty pounds on Happy Sally to win he would get his three hundred pounds back, excluding his own fifty—at least, that was Skinner's opinion. With three hundred and fifty quids altogether, he could send his father a trip to Australia and back.

"I'll do it!" he cried, bringing his fist down on the table. "I'll put the whole fifty quid on Happy Sally to win!"

"Good man!" exclaimed Harold Skinner. "Write a note to Hookey Walker making the bet. Walker's as good a bookie as any other. When you have done so, I'll stick it in the envelope with the betting slips of Stott and Snoop and myself, and send them to his Courtfield address."

With a fountain-pen loaned by Skinner

Dick Penfold wrote out his bet and signed his name to the slip. Skinner himself wrote out the other bets, and the whole lot were enclosed in an envelope, which the cad addressed to Hookey Walker. The letter Skinner undertook to post himself that very night.

From the time of the sealing of the envelope Dick Penfold lived in a state of suppressed excitement. His whole conversation during the rest of his stay in the cad's study was upon the races of the morning.

"But what time is this race for the Midget Stakes run?" he asked Stott, who held the paper.

"Two-thirty," replied Stott. "We should get the result through after school to-morrow afternoon."

"I've asked Hookey, in a post-script, to telephone the result through to Friar-dale," said Skinner. "The tobacconist chap has a phone for enabling customers to register bets. After school to-morrow I'll slip down to the village, and buy some fags, and, at the same time, ask the fellow to send a boy up with a note containing the result of the two-thirty. Then we shall be bound to get it through directly after lessons."

"My aunt! What a time we shall be able to have on our winnings!" cried Stott.

Dick Penfold gave a happy laugh. He had caught to a great extent the supreme confidence of the others in this cert given by Nobby Clark. As in a beautiful vision he saw his father setting out upon his much-needed sea voyage and himself free from all his present worries. And all through Happy Sally, the six-to-one shot in the Midget Stakes!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.**The Whirlwind!**

"BUNTER!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Did you do your preparation for English history last night?"

"Yes, sir."

It was the following afternoon, and Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was taking the class in the subject of English history.

The Form-master, who was standing by his desk, with a history-book in his

hand, had just dealt with the reign of one English king, and had turned over a page.

"Then, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, "you will be able to tell me the name of the next king to occupy the throne—king noted for the number of his wives."

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, you do know! And who was he?"

"Solomon, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the class.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Take a hundred wives—ahem!—I mean King David, for being such a dolt! Cherry, tell Bunter who was the English king in question."

"Henry the Eighth, sir."

"Right! Now, Bunter, give me the names of some of Henry's wives!"

Billy Bunter wriggled uncomfortably.

"I—I don't k-know, sir!"

"You don't know?" roared Mr. Quelch. "But you told me just now that you had done your English history preparation last night. The account of Henry the Eighth and his wives was in that part. How comes it that you did not study the subject?"

"I—I skipped a bit, sir!" murmured Billy Bunter.

"Indoed? And why?"

"I—I didn't like the idea of prying into private life, sir. It—or—don't seem quite the thing!"

"You ridiculous boy!" cried Mr. Quelch. "Take another hundred lines for being impertinent!"

At last the long afternoon drew to a close. No sooner was the class dismissed than Penfold, Skinner, Stott, and Snoop hastened out into the quad. Then, together, they sailed toward the school gates. Coming up the Friar-dale road they saw a small errand-boy.

"That's the tobacconist's lad!" said Harold Skinner excitedly. "Now we shall get the two-thirty result!"

Goading the porter, not being in sight, they dashed through the gates, and surrounded the village youngster. Penfold snatched the envelope from his hand, while Snoop gave the boy a sixpence for his trouble.

With trembling fingers Penfold extracted a half-sheet of notepaper. Skinner & Co. peered over his shoulders at some word which had been printed with a rubber-stamping outfit.

With eager eyes the quartette read the following announcement:

"2.30.—Midget Skates.—Result.

Belfry Bat 1

Up Jenkins 2

Sneezer 3

Also ran: Lazy Lass, Jessikins, Puffing Billy, and Happy Sally."

The notice slipped from Dick Penfold's hand to the ground. All four juniors stood gazing at each other in blank and silent consternation.

Then, with a choking cry, Dick Penfold spun round on his heel, and staggered rather than walked, towards the school building. Skinner & Co. made no movement to detain him. They had lost money themselves, and, for the moment, they were obsessed by their own troubles.

But unheeding the curious glances cast in his direction by other of his Form-mates, the scholarship boy made directly to his study. To his relief, you'll be glad to hear, the new Trelace was in the place. Throwing himself into a chair, he gave himself over to his own sad thoughts.

Happy Sally was an "also ran."

Those were the words that burst into

Great NEW Footer Game



Worry the Goalie

SEE THIS WEEK'S
FOOTBALL FAVOURITE

Out on Wednesday, December 7th.

NEXT MONDAY: **"THE MYSTERY OF THE**

CHRISTMAS CANDLES!"

A SPLENDID CHRISTMAS TALE OF THE JUNIORS OF GREYFRIARS. BY FRANK RICHARDS.

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his brain like fire. Instead of his being the possessor of three hundred and fifty pounds, as he had been fondly imagining for nearly twenty-four hours, he was now a pauper. So much for his scheme of saving his father!

Twice a knock sounded at the study door. But Penfold remained sitting with head bowed, quite lost to all else save his own troubles. Then the door opened, and Harold Skinner glided into the room.

"Penfold!"

The scholarship boy raised a wan, pale face to his cronies.

"Well!" he said, forcing a ghastly smile. "Don't say you've come," with another of Nobby Clark's cert tips.

"Hang the fellow!" muttered Skinner savagely. "Something went wrong somewhere. It's pretty tough on you, old man!"

For once in a way Skinner actually felt a sneaking sympathy for the cobbler's son. Penfold looked absolutely broken, and now that he was down and out, Harold Skinner, contrary to his expectation, felt more regret than satisfaction.

"It's my own silly fault," said Penfold. "I dined to Hookey Walker's, and now I've got to pay the piper. If you give me the chap's address I'll send the fifty quids to him right away. Might just as well pay my losses now as any other time."

Penfold rose from his seat and fetched pen, ink, and paper. Then he obtained his little wooden box from his desk and placed it on the table.

"This is where I've been keeping the dils, Skinny," he said wistfully.

While Skinner jotted Hookey Walker's

Courtfield address down on an envelope, Dick drew a small key from his pocket and unlocked the box. But as he threw open the lid an agonised cry left his lips.

"Gad! It's empty!"

White as a sheet, the cobbler's son gazed into the receptacle where he had stored his treasures.

"My g-giddy aunt!" gulped Skinner. "You don't mean to say the money's gone? Think, man alive! Are you sure you put it there?"

"Positive!"

"This is serious!" muttered the cad of the Remove. "The worst of it is you can't make much of a row about it. If you made it public that you had lost fifty quids, the Head would ask nasty questions as to where you had got it from."

For a couple of minutes the juniors discussed this fresh catastrophe. Then Skinner went off to confide the news in Stott and Snop.

Penfold sat with head bowed over the table, the empty box open in front of him. This was the final blow. He saw disgrace staring him in the face. Hookey Walker would demand fifty pounds from him, and would undoubtedly write to the Head if he didn't get it. It was no consolation for Penfold to reflect that having seen the wind he must now reap the whirlwind.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Penfold's Desperate Resolve!

"W HITHER away, Pen, old man!"

That question was asked by Skinner, as Dick Penfold walked out of the school gates. It was

directly after morning school on the following day, and Harry Wharton & Co. and several of the other juniors had already left the school to make purchases in the village.

"I'm going down to see my father," said Penfold quietly.

"I'll walk down to Friarfield with you if you like," volunteered Skinner. "I've nothing better to do before dinner."

"It's jolly good of you, old chap," said Penfold. "Yes, frankly, I'm not in the mood for company."

Skinner murmured sympathetically and moved off back to the quad to find Stott.

Glad that the other had not pressed his company upon him, Penfold walked down the Friarfield road towards the village. Suddenly he halted, as though he had forgotten something, and hastily retraced his steps to the school gates. A sigh of relief escaped his lips as he saw coming towards him Trotter, the page-boy.

"What luck!" he muttered. "Here, Trotter. I want you! Deliver this letter to Dr. Locke, will you?"

"Which as how I will, Master Penfold," said the page-boy, taking the envelope from the scholarship lad. "I've got a note here for you, too, a village lad left it a few minutes ago with Gosling, the porter, who gave it to me to hand you."

"Thanks, Trotter! Here's sixpence for you!"

It was Penfold's last sixpence, but he felt he might just as well be broke as have that minute coin between him and penny.

As he again set off on his journey to the village, Penfold tore open the letter the pageboy had given him. And as he had feared, it was from Hookey Walker, the professional gambler and boogie. The note was brief enough. It read:

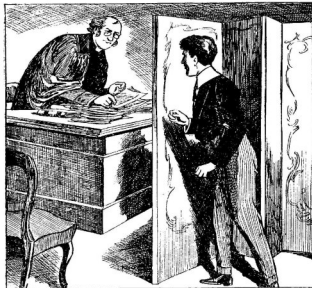
"H. W. presents his compliments to Master Penfold, and regrets to inform him that Happy Sally failed in the Midget Stakes. A remittance of fifty pounds will oblige."

Dick crammed the letter savagely into his overcoat pocket. What a fool he had been! Once he turned round and gazed at the school, and moisture welled into his eyes. For Dick Penfold was leaving Greyfriars for good.

The boy had reached this desperate decision only after much anxious thought. It was no good trying to conceal the facts from his father now. It cut him to the quick to have to go to his ailing parent and confess his misdeeds, but this would be better than waiting until he was publicly expelled before breaking the news. Perhaps as it was the old man would have it in his heart to forgive him. Whether he did or not, Dick determined to seek work after his confession, and try to earn and save money honestly.

But the nearer Penfold drew to his father's humble threshold, the more he shrank from the task of making his confession. He turned off the road and wandered to the bridge across the River Sark. There he stopped and gazed down into the sluggish water below, trying to connect the form his confession should take. But after a few minutes his thoughts wandered to a meeting on that very bridge with Marjorie Hazeldean, of the Cliff House School for Girls, when he had confided his troubles in his school-mate's sister.

Suddenly he became aware of Harry Wharton walking along the river bank in his direction. He turned to move away, but the Remove captain broke into



Hardly had Wharton concealed himself behind the screen than Dr. Locke strode into the study. He walked straight over to the desk and commenced to sort over some papers. Behind the screen Wharton stood waiting with bated breath. (See Chapter 8.)

a run, and rapidly came up with him. He caught him by the arm as Penfold moved away.

"Pen, old man," cried Wharton, "I've something to say to you. It's important!"

"But I'm in Coventry, you know," Penfold reminded him.

"Oh, rats! I—I've just been to see Marjorie Hazeldene, old fellow. She's opened my eyes a bit!"

A look of annoyance flashed across Penfold's face.

"She—she spoke to you about me, I suppose!"

"Yes. Look here, Pen, I understand partly what's been wrong with you. You let your father's illness prey upon your mind. At first your work suffered, and then your footer. Then you started playing cards and acting the fool generally in the hope of making money to give your girl a rest from his work for a time. Isn't that right?"

Penfold hung his head.

"It's true enough," he said, "I see the folly of it all now. I've been mad—mad! But it's ended now. I've left Greyfriars for keeps!"

"Left Greyfriars?"

"Yes, for keeps. I've sent a letter by Trotter to Dr. Locke confessing that I was the chap who broke bounds. I've neither mentioned your name nor Cherry's, but simply stated that the other two fellows had only left the dormitory to induce me to return. This afternoon I'm going to break the news to my father."

Harry Wharton gazed at the fallen lad with eyes filled with sadness and concern.

"Look here, Pen," he said; "don't play the giddy goat. It'll be a smashing blow for your old dad, ill as he is, to know that you've run away. Come back to the school with me, and throw yourself on the Head's mercy."

"No, no!" cried Penfold. "You don't understand! I've got to set to work and earn money now. Hooky Walker will demand his fifty quids, and—"

"You owe that rogue fifty quids!" gasped the Remove captain, in amazement. "Pshaw! I didn't know you'd been going the pace to that extent!"

"I had the money with which to pay him," said Penfold. "But fifty quids, which I had won at the roulette-wheel in Friarade, were stolen from a small wooden box in my study."

Then, in response to Wharton's demand, the unfortunate junior narrated the whole of his pitiful story.

"My hat!" cried Wharton, when the other had finished. "This matter wants looking into! Have you any idea as to who might have gained access to that box? Did Skinner know you had the money?"

"Yes; but Skinner, for all his faults, isn't a beastly thief," said Penfold, with commendable loyalty to the lad he had made his friend. "If there had been a ghost of a chance of finding the money again, I might have remained at the school and made a fresh start. For obvious reasons I didn't want to raise a hue and cry about my loss."

Wharton raised his cap and scratched his head.

"Yes, the position's decidedly awkward," he said. "At least come back to Greyfriars and try to find the money. I'll help you, and so will Bob."

"You forget," said Penfold, with a rueful smile, "that I've sent a note to the Head confessing everything. Going back is out of the question now."

"Hang it! I wish you hadn't sent



Swinging round the bend, Penfold saw a middle-aged man in the grasp of two footpads. Unmindful of any danger to himself, Dick flew like a tiger at the two hulking brutes, who turned round started at the sound of his unexpected approach. (See Chapter 9.)

that letter to Dr. Locke!" muttered Wharton. "But go home if you must, and I'll try to find the thief. Maybe he can light upon some clue to his identity. If I can return you your money, I will. That will relieve your mind of one big worry, old chap."

"Thanks, Wharton," said Penfold simply. "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!"

The hands of the two juniors met in a brief clasp, and then Penfold swung round on his heel and walked rapidly away in the opposite direction (to that in which the school was situated).

Thinking that he might be late for dinner, Wharton broke into a trot. Keeping up a steady pace, he passed through the gates of the school just as one o'clock was striking. He was darting into the School House when he bumped heavily against a small figure.

"Trotter!"

"Which as how I think it was your fault, Master Wharton," replied the pageboy, picking himself up.

"Yes, yes; I'm sorry and all that sort of thing," said Wharton hastily.

"Where's that letter that Penfold gave you for the Head?"

"I couldn't find Dr. Locke," said Trotter, "so I've just left the letter on the table in his private study, and—"

But Wharton did not wait to hear more. He darted away for the Head's private study, leaving Trotter staring open-mouthed behind him. The news that the Head had not as yet seen Penfold's confession had given the Remove

captain a sudden resolution to stop the delivery of the note—at least, for the time being. A faint hope possessed him that he might be able to trace Penfold's missing money, and induce the black sheep to return to the fold.

Fully realising the risk he ran, Harry Wharton peered round the door of the Head's study. Dr. Locke was not at his desk, and Wharton glided into the study and pushed the door to behind him in its original half-closed position. Crossing to the desk, he found the envelope addressed in Penfold's handwriting to Dr. Locke. This he hastily slipped into his jacket pocket.

He was just creeping stealthily to the door again, when a sound from without the room caused him to come to an abrupt halt. He drew a deep breath, and his heart thumped like a sledgehammer against his ribs.

"The Head!"

Wharton's eyes roved wildly round the study. A small Japanese screen standing in one corner caught his gaze. Like a hunted fox darting for cover, he sprang swiftly and noiselessly across the room and crouched down behind it. Hardly had he done so, than the door opened, and in strode the commanding figure of Dr. Locke.

The headmaster walked straight to his desk, and, dropping into his chair, began scribbling a letter. Crammed and scarcely daring to breathe, the Remove captain crouched out of sight. He was already late for dinner, but that matter did not worry him.

A SPECTACULAR CHRISTMAS TALE OF THE JUNIORS OF GREYFRIARS. By FRANK RICHARDS. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 722.

NEXT MONDAY! "THE MYSTERY OF THE CHRISTMAS CANDLES!"

Suddenly the Head blotted the letter he had written, and placed it in an envelope, upon which he wrote an address. Then, putting the massive in his pocket, he rose abruptly and left the study, shutting the door behind him.

"My hat!" gasped Wharton. "I'm in a pretty pickle now! He's locked it!"

A sharp metallic sound had reached his ear, which he construed as the noise of a key turning in the lock. Waiting a few moments, he crept to the door and gently tried the handle. To his abounding joy the door opened. The sound he had heard had merely been due to the delayed action of the catch.

Having safely got out of the Head's study and closed the door behind him, Wharton made his way upstairs to Study No. 9, which had been occupied by Dick Penfold. The scholarship boy had described the box in which he had kept his money, and Wharton thought he might be able to obtain a clue from an examination of the box and desk.

"I'm late for dinner anyway now," he muttered to himself. "So I might just as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. The chaps will all be in Hall, and I shall be able to have a quiet look round."

Reaching the door of Study No. 9, he was about to turn the knob, when a strange rustling sound came to his ear from inside the room.

"My aunt!" he said to himself. "There's someone in there!"

With sudden resolution he rapped sharply, and threw the door wide open. At the sight that met his eyes he drew a sharp breath.

"Bunter! What are you doing here?"

Billy Bunter stood by the table, his fat face white and flabby with fear. On the

table before him was a small wooden box surrounded by a pile of Treasury-notes.

"Oooh! How you did startle me, Harry, old chap!" gasped the Owl.

Wharton strode across the room and shook the fat junior by the shoulder.

"What the thump's the meaning of this, you fat worm?" he demanded. "What are you doing in this study, and with all that money?"

"Yarrogh! Leggo my arm! You're hurting!" squealed Billy Bunter. "I'm putting it back, ain't I?"

"Explain what you've been up to, you fat clam!" said Wharton, giving the other another shake, "or I'll slaughter you!"

"All right, you bea—I mean, Harry, old man!" spluttered Bunter. "It—it was only a joke. Tee, hee, hee! I saw Penfold with a whole heap of money the other day, and the mean rotter wouldn't even lend me a paltry quid. So to give the least a scare I opened his box with a similar sort of key I had and took the money away. I was just putting it back again when you butted in."

Harry Wharton released his hold of the porpoise of the Remove. His joy at the recovery of Penfold's money far outweighed his anger against the Owl for the latter's silly practical joke.

"You ally lunatic, Billy," he remarked. "You might have done a lot of harm by a rotten joke like that! Now, shove that money back in the box quickly. That's it! Now beat it!"

"But——"

"Vamoose, I tell you, you fat worm!"

Wharton raised his boot threateningly, and Bunter vamooseed.

No sooner had the Owl departed than Wharton gathered up the money from the box and tucked it into his jacket-

pocket. Then, after waiting a few moments, he stepped from the study. Hurrying down the passage, he passed into his own study.

Needless to say, there was mild sensation in the Form-room when Dick Penfold failed to show up.

"Does anybody know what has become of Penfold?" demanded Mr. Quelch testily.

No one replied to the question.

"Really the boy is becoming impossible!" muttered the Form-master, as though to himself. "His work in class has been disgraceful lately. And now he has taken to playing truant. Really I shall have to bring his case before the notice of Dr. Locke!"

After class was dismissed the Remove adjourned to the quad, where the whole talk among the juniors was upon the subject of Penfold's mysterious disappearance. When Mr. Quelch, wearing an overcoat and carrying a heavy stick, strode briskly out through the school gates, tongues wagged even faster. Harold Skinner's surmise that the Form-master was going on Penfold's track swiftly flew from mouth to mouth.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Quelch was on his way to see a poor ex-gamekeeper who lived on the other side of Friarland Woods. For some time the fellow had had a hard struggle to make ends meet, owing to an injury which had prevented him from following his proper calling. He was now sick, and Mr. Quelch was on his way to render him some assistance.

But the Removites did not know this, so the rumours that flew about were speedily accepted as facts by some of them. Among the number was Billy Bunter, who had heard Skinner give the first opinion on the subject.

REGISTER TO-DAY!

(No. 5.)

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"I say Skinny," he murmured, "will you lend me five bob until I—"

"Scat, you fat clam!" snapped Harold Skinner. "I'm fed up with you!"

"Look here!" said Bunter hoily. "I may not be able to prove about that first occasion when you went out with Penfold, but—"

"Scat, you fat beast!" howled Skinner.

His temper had been tried to breaking-point. Raising his boot, he planted it hard against the fat form of Billy Bunter.

"Yeop! Yow-wow! Yah, you coward! I'll tell all the chaps what a beast you are!"

The porpoise dodged just in time to avoid a second lusty kick. Then he waddled across to where Harry Wharton was chatting to the rest of the Famous Five.

"I say, Harry, old man!" he burst out. "D'you remember Dick Penfold accusing you of saying to Bob Cherry that you were jolly glad you'd kicked him out of the footer team, and that he was only a cobbler's son? Well, it was Skinner who imitated your voice."

"What? Look here, you fat worm, I don't want to hear—"

"But he did!" cried Bunter. "I heard the rotter tell Scott and Snopce so. Then some little time ago you accused Pen of writing a poem about your being sweet on Marjorie Haroldine—N-no offence, Harry, old chap, really!"

Billy Bunter drew back hastily as the captain of the Remove took a step towards him. Wharton's face was flushed and angry. He did not like being reminded of that poetry.

"You drop up, you fat rotter!" he snorted. "We don't want to hear any of your sneaking tarradiddles."

From his jacket pocket the porpoise drew out a number of scraps of paper and passed them to the Remove captain. And that was proof of Skinner's guilt. Wharton needed no further proof either. He spoke in a quick, sharp tone to his chums, and in less than five minutes he and Bob made for the bike-shed, secured their mounts, and rode rapidly through tee dusk and down the Friardale Road.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Timely Rescue!

IT had been Dick Penfold's intention to go home and confess his misdeeds to his ailing father. But, leaving Wharton on the bridge over the River Sark in the early afternoon, he had walked in the opposite direction to the village. Not until the short winter's afternoon had nearly

worn away did he find himself heading directly for Friardale.

His sad, lonely walk had been in a wide semi-circle, and now to avoid being caught by the darkness he made a short cut through Friardale Woods. Lost in his own thoughts, he was striding along a narrow, grassy path between the trees, when he was brought from his reverie with a start. It was a gasping cry from some distance ahead that had reached his ears.

"Help!"

Thoroughly roused, Dick Penfold darted down the path like a deer, the grass muffling the sound of his footsteps. Suddenly, swinging round a bend, he saw a middle-aged man wearing an overcoat in the grasp of two foreign-looking footpads. On the ground near by was a hard felt hat and a heavy walking-stick.

Unmindful of any possible danger to himself, Penfold flew like a tiger at the two hulking brutes. One, becoming aware of the boy, gave a cry of warning to his accomplice. Then, releasing his hold on the victim, he turned to grapple with the would-be rescuer.

Dick rushed almost into the embrace of the man when he ducked swiftly. Coming up inside the man's arms, he dealt the fellow a crashing upper-cut with his fist. As the first man staggered backwards under the force of the blow the junior spun round on his mate, who had a scarf tightly drawn over the victim's mouth.

But hardly had he taken a step when the first ruffian gave a howl of rage and sprang after him. In his hand was a short length of lead piping. But the yet attracted Dick's attention just in time. The boy half-turned just as the scoundrel aimed the weapon at his head. Penfold threw his left arm up to ward off the blow and jerked his head to one side. With a crash the lead pipe descended on the youngster's wrist, and Dick's left arm fell useless to his side.

"I'll kill ye, ye young varmint!" panted the ruffian. "I'll—"

But he got no farther. As he dropped downwards under the force of the blow he had received Dick Penfold had noticed the heavy walking-stick lying at his feet. Picking this up in his right hand, he aimed a vicious blow at the rogue's head. There was a resounding crack as the stick met the man's blue unshaven chin, and, for the second time, the ruffian staggered back.

In the second's respite afforded him Dick's brain worked like lightning. He saw that the other scoundrel was overpowering the person in the overcoat, and that he himself would prove no match for the other rogue. He determined to try what strategy would do.

"Bob! Harry! Frank!" he yelled, at the top of his voice. "This way you chaps! Help! Help!"

A crowd at heart, the boy's assailant looked round fearfully. He had sustained a broken jaw, and all the fight had been knocked out of him. He thought, moreover, as Penfold had intended he should, that there were other people close by in the wood. He hesitated a fraction of a second. Then, giving a shout of warning to his mate, he dashed away down the woodland path. A second later his cowardly accomplice was also in full flight.

Dick sprang forward, and tore the scarf from the victim's mouth.

"Good heavens! Mr. Quelch!"

It was, indeed, the Form-master, and he looked at the startled junior for a few moments in a dazed, uncomprehending sort of way.

"Penfold," he muttered at last—"Penfold, my dear boy! You have saved me from being robbed, if not from a worse fate! How came you to—? But, good gracious, my boy, you are injured!"

Now that the excitement was over, a white, drawn look had crept over Penfold's face, due to the excruciating pain of his injured wrist.

"It—it's nothing, sir!" he began, forcing a smile. "I'll tie it up, and—"

"Let me look at it!" said Mr. Quelch sternly. "Yes, it's broken, I'm afraid. I must help you back to the school, where the doctor can attend you directly I have rendered what first aid I can."

With a gentleness of touch, which the erring Penfold had never suspected him of possessing, the Form-master bound up the lad's wrist, and made a sling for his arm. Then he picked up his hat and stick, and, grasping Dick's other arm, set off down the path.

This strange situation afforded Dick Penfold another knotty problem. He was not a bit keen on returning to Greyfriars, but, with the master's grip on his arm, he saw no way out of it.

Mr. Quelch watched the lad keenly for a few moments as they strode down the path together. He knew that there was something mighty wrong with the scholarship boy, and he determined to probe the matter to the bottom.

"Penfold," he said, "I want you to forget that I am your Form-master until we get back to the school. Think of me only as a very grateful man and your friend, who is anxious to repay you for the plucky rescue you performed. Open your heart to me, my boy!"

Little touches, the harassed lad broke down completely. The floodgates of his heart burst, and from his lips poured out his manifold troubles.

(Continued on the next page.)

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