

WIN A BICYCLE THIS WEEK!

Full particulars on page 6.

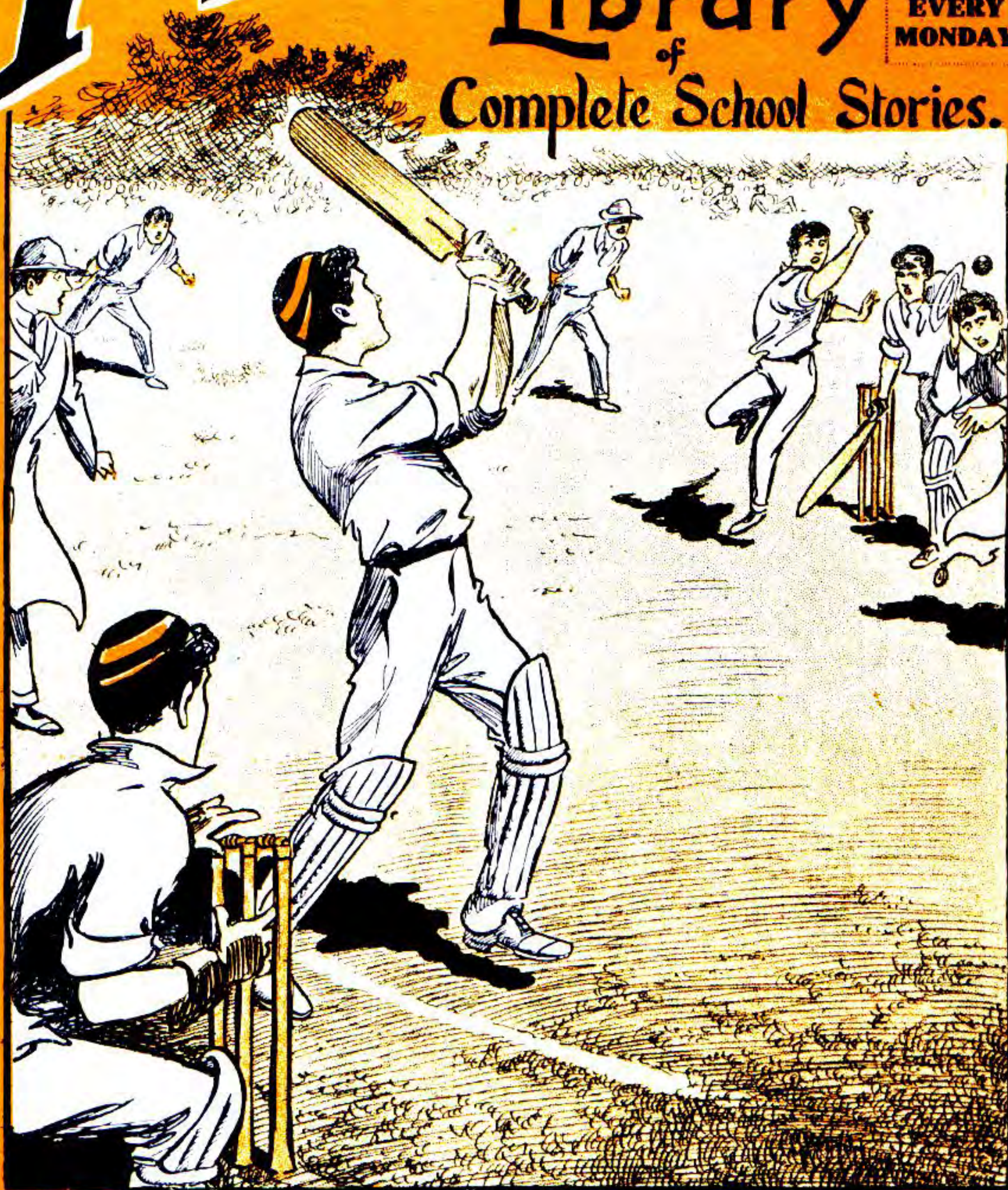
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The Magnet 2^d

Library

of
Complete School Stories.

**EVERY
MONDAY.**



A KNOCK-OUT BLOW FOR THE COURTFIELD UMPIRE!

THE WINNING HIT!

(A powerful incident from this week's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., inside.)

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Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Write to him when you are in trouble or need advice. A stamped and addressed envelope will ensure a speedy reply. Letters should be addressed "The Editor," THE MAGNET LIBRARY, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

START WITH NUMBER ONE

of the grand series of extra long complete stories dealing with the adventures of the Greyfriars Chums during the long vacation, boys. This wonderful series of yarns, the first of which is entitled,

"THE GREYFRIARS ARAB!"

starts next Monday. Mr. Frank Richards has gone "all out" this time, with the result that he has surpassed anything he has ever penned before. By way of opening, your favourite author introduces a new boy to the Remove—an Arab chieftain's son. At most public schools you will find representatives of almost every country under the sun. Why not, therefore, an Arab lad at good old Greyfriars? This newcomer is the goods—the real goods—with all the fiery, untamable nature of a stroller of the deserts. But before Ali Ben Yusef arrives at Greyfriars the Remove and the Upper Fourth are at loggerheads. With the promised coming of the Arab well in mind, Temple of the Upper Fourth sees a splendid opportunity of pulling his rivals' legs. It is not often that the lordly Temple descends to practical jokes—usually he considers such weaknesses to dwell only amongst the "fags" of the Remove. But Temple is struck by a

WONDERFUL WHEEZE,

and he loses no time in putting it into practice. It does not end quite as Temple expected it would—Temple's "wonderful wheezes" usually have a happy knack of going astray somewhere, but, all the same, the outcome is a feather in the lordly Fourth-Former's cap. Make sure of your introduction to the Greyfriars Arab next week, boys, by ordering the MAGNET NOW. When you have read the opening story of this

GRAND HOLIDAY SERIES,

you will, like Oliver Twist, be asking for more. But, unlike Oliver Twist, you will not be crying out on account of the poor quality of the fare provided—on the contrary, it will be because the fare, in this instance, is extra good. And when a thing is good we all like it served up "in chunks." Make no mistake about it, my chums, this series of stories is going to make a great hit. Hand-in-hand with Mr. Frank Richards we are going to explore the vast northern deserts of Africa. And with such a guide the success of the "trip" is a foregone conclusion.

BIKES FOR YOU!

For the benefit of those of you who have missed previous announcements concerning our splendid competition, I

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would again point out that A Magnificent "Royal Enfield" Bicycle is being presented free Every Week to the successful competitor in our "Characters" Competition. Now, this is the opportunity of a lifetime. Most of you are well conversant with the characters Mr. Frank Richards has created, and it should be a simple task to build up a three-word phrase from the character given each week. Five minutes' work—and a handsome jigger might be yours. Turn to page six now, and give it five minutes of concentrated thought.

"SHERWOOD GOLD!"

By Francis Warwick.

I don't think we have ever had such a popular serial in the pages of the MAGNET as that now appearing—if I can form any judgment from the stack of letters the postman brings every morning. Readers all over the country are loud in its praises. I can visualise my mail growing larger and larger as the weeks go by, for "Sherwood Gold!" gets better and better with every instalment. Next Monday Mr. Warwick describes, with that master-touch of his, how Robin Hood and his band of outlaws attack the castle of De Blois—familiarily known as the Red. No eighteen-inch howitzers in those days, chums, to batter down stonework and mortar from a safe distance. Storming a castle in Robin Hood's days was grim and dangerous work. How should we, I wonder, like to seize hold of a battering-ram, and, despite deadly arrows, scalding water, boulders, spears,

and the like hurtling from the battlements above, attempt to force the main gate of a castle? I can hear you all saying "we should like," and I believe you, for 'tis such spirit that has made Old England and the Empire what it is to-day.

"RUNNING!"

That is the subject on the "Herald" programme for next week. There is a lot to be said about running—especially if you have a wild bull bellowing at your heels. You will be more than interested in the exploits of Alonzo Todd on the track. Our tame Duffer is not exactly an athlete, even if his heart is in the right place. But although heart plays an important part in running—I'm referring to a stout heart—muscle is an all-important factor. The weedy Duffer gets smitten with the possibilities of his becoming a champion at running, but between ourselves I rather think that Alonzo is aiming too high. Anyway, you will see for yourselves next week. Don't miss this supplement, boys!

"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL!"

Already I have received several letters from my readers thanking me for giving them the "tip" well in advance re our famous Annual. Most of them say that the "gentle reminder" has had the effect of swelling their savings' accounts, so that by the time September comes round, and, incidentally, the "Holiday Annual," they will have saved up enough to buy it. Not a bad idea, too. After all said and done, there's not another volume on the market that can take the place of the "Holiday Annual," and no boy or girl should miss it.

LONGER STORIES!

Quite a budget of requests have reached me lately concerning the lengthening of the Greyfriars stories. Many of the writers will have observed that Mr. Frank Richards has once more obliged. His yarns of Harry Wharton & Co. ARE longer. I should be obliged if my thousands of reader chums would write me on the subject, stating their preference either for longer or shorter Greyfriars stories. Your Editor is always happy when he is assured of catering for the majority of his loyal chums, and to help him in that task every reader should "drop a line" occasionally.

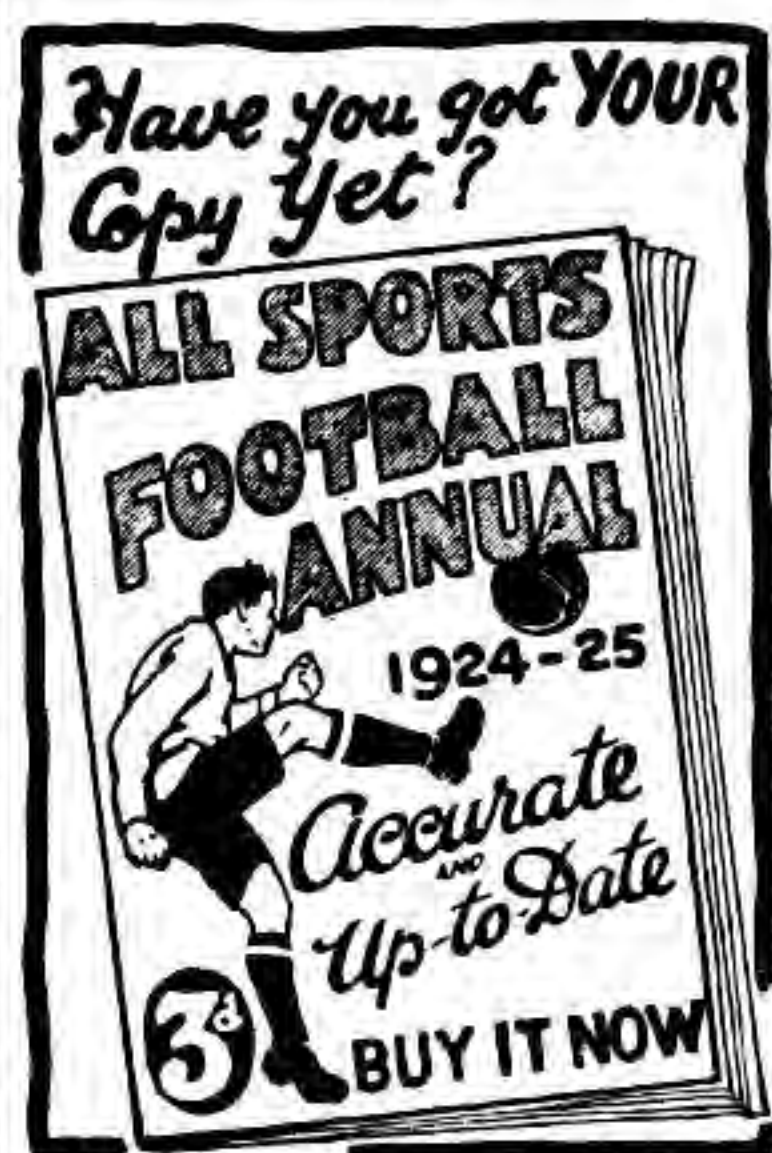
FROM DURHAM!

A letter reaches me from Durham, in which the writer, R. Renner, wishes to know if Bolsover has a brother at Greyfriars. Yes, my chum, the burly Removeite does possess a brother—Percy Bolsover of the Second Form. Thus we have Bolsover major and Bolsover minor.

PASS IT ON!

I would deem it a great favour if my chums passed on their copies of the MAGNET—when they have finished with them, of course—to non-reader pals. You would be doing a great service to your Editor, your pals, and incidentally yourself.

Your Editor.



If Thornton, the new boy in the Remove, has a secret to keep, he can be sure of finding Harold Skinner's crafty nose being poked into business that does not concern him—especially as that same new boy has shown his dislike of Skinner's long nose by punching it. Despite an overwhelming chain of evidence, collected by Skinner, that points to Thornton's being a rotter, it is admitted in the end that he is as straight as a die, and —



True Blue!

A Magnificent
Long Complete
story of Harry
Wharton & Co. of
Greyfriars, told
by Popular
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Every Inch a Cricketer!

"O H, well hit, Bob!" Bob Cherry had made a mighty drive off the bowling of Peter Todd, and the fellows on his side applauded.

But in a moment joy turned to dismay.

"My hat! It will catch Quelch on the napper!" cried Squiff—otherwise, Sampson Quincy Iffley Field.

"Look out, sir!" yelled Harry Wharton.

Mr. Quelch had been down to Little Side to speak to Wharton about a new boy who was expected to turn up that day. He was walking away when Bob made that stroke. Now, to the horror of all, the descending ball was falling right down upon him.

A whack on the head for the Form master might well mean concussion of the brain. Anyway, it must mean trouble for Bob and for Peter Todd and the rest of those actively concerned; for the Head would certainly blame them for resuming the game too soon if Mr. Quelch was badly hurt, while if he was only slightly hurt he would distribute blame—and impots—on his own account.

Mr. Quelch did not hear Harry's shout. He walked slowly on, thinking hard, while the ball came down.

Every second made it more certain that he would be hit. Harry Wharton yelled again, and others added their voices to his.

Mr. Quelch half turned. He did not realise his danger, but he had at last heard the shouts.

Then a lithe, agile figure leaped forward and with outstretched hand took a wonderful catch within six inches of the master's temple.

"Some catch!" gasped Bob, in great relief.

Mr. Quelch looked down at the boy who stood with the ball in his hand, and the boy smiled up at him.

"It would appear that you have saved

me from a nasty blow, my lad," said the Form master.

"Good catch, sir!" came a chorus from the players.

"I suppose it would have hit you, sir. But it was easy enough to stop it, and I'm jolly glad I was near!"

"I should not say that it was altogether easy—in fact, from such knowledge of the game as I possess, I should regard the catch as a very fine one. I am very much obliged to you, Thornton. You must be Thornton, I am sure, though you have arrived rather earlier than expected."

"Yes, sir, my name's Thornton."

"Come back with me, and I will introduce you to some of the boys in your Form."

So saying, Mr. Quelch advanced with measured strides towards the pitch, with the new fellow by his side.

"Now I'm for it!" murmured Bob. "Best drive I ever made, by long odds, and my reward will be two hundred lines, I suppose!"

But Mr. Quelch did not go straight to the wicket at which Bob stood, but diverged towards Harry Wharton, who was fielding at cover-point.

The game was a pick-up one, taken quite seriously, though on this glorious August afternoon, with the river and other attractions to rival cricket, it had been impossible to get together two full teams.

In consequence, the whole sixteen engaged in the game were actively employed. There were the two batsmen, eleven men in the field, and the umpires, while the job of scoring, which allowed of something like a rest, was taken in turn. Otherwise, play was exactly as in a match. No one belonging to the batting side was allowed to bowl or keep wicket; but all were expected to do—and did—their best to stop the hits and take the catches of their comrades.

"Wharton, this is the new boy whom I asked you to meet," said Mr. Quelch. "As Thornton has turned up by an earlier train than we expected there will, of course, be no need for you to go to

the station. But I trust you to take him in charge for the next few hours and tell him what is necessary as to the rules and customs of Greyfriars. Thornton, Wharton is captain of the Remove. He will make you known to some of the other members of the Form, and I have no doubt that you will soon shake down into your place."

Then the Form master turned towards the pitch.

"Did you hit the ball that so nearly struck me, Cherry?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. I'm very sorry, sir—at least, I mean I'm glad it didn't hit you, of course."

"It was a very big drive, sir," put in Peter Todd. "You were beyond the boundary, and it isn't often any of us clears that."

"I see, Todd—I see. It is evident that you consider I should congratulate Cherry as well as myself. Let it pass. Thanks to Thornton here, I escaped injury. But I should be obliged if you would abstain from continuing your game till I am well clear of the danger zone."

With that Mr. Quelch rustled away.

"He seems a very good sport," said the new boy to Wharton.

"He's a jolly good sort, though he can be strict enough. What would you like to do, Thornton? I can't leave the game just now, but—"

"Oh, I'll stay and watch! Don't you worry about me."

"Tell you what, Wharton," suggested Vernon-Smith. "Let Thornton take my place. I don't mind a bit. There's something I want to do; and as I haven't done anything but field it's fair enough."

"Right-ho, Smithy, if it suits Thornton!" replied Harry.

"Suits me down to the ground," Thornton said. "But I'd like to get into my flannels first."

"There's Bunter," said Johnny Bull. "The Owl can take Thornton along to the dorm, and I dare say he can find his own way back. He'll have to if Bunter tries the postal-order dodge and

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Thornton falls for it, because, in that case, Bunter's sure to make a bee-line for the tuckshop."

Nothing of this was lost on Thornton, as his slow smile showed. He could take a hint, and guessed that Bull was warning him.

"Bunter, come hither, porpoise!" sang out Bob Cherry.

The Owl of the Remove came with alacrity. He had sighted Thornton, and Bunter was always hopeful about a new fellow.

Thornton gasped when he saw Bunter. He had seen fat fellows before, but never one quite as fat as this.

Harry Wharton introduced them gravely.

"Bunter, this is Thornton, who's just turned up to join the Remove. Thornton, this is Bunter, who, if his customary obligingness does not fail him, will show you to the dorm, so that you can change. If you brought your luggage up with you it will be there by now."

"Yes, I brought it," answered Thornton.

He and Bunter had shaken hands. Now they strolled away together.

Bunter kept silence, meditating his plan of campaign. Sometimes a new fellow was mean enough not to rise to the bait Bunter offered, and perhaps a new bait was advisable.

Thornton spoke.

"Wharton seems a very nice fellow," he said.

"Ah! You don't know him yet," replied Bunter darkly.

"Well, he'd hardly be skipper of the Form if he wasn't a decent sort, would he?"

"Oh, really, Thornton, you are too green for anything! The cows will be eating you if you're not careful!"

Bunter had heard that somewhere and had treasured it up for use.

"Not just yet, I think," returned the new boy good-temperedly.

"Well, it's certain you don't know Greyfriars. Wharton's captain of the Form, I admit. But do you know who would be if he had his rights?"

"I don't. But I think I know who you think ought to be."

"Who, then?"

"Yourself, I suppose."

Bunter swelled with importance—though any swelling on the part of William George Bunter was quite unnecessary, and calculated to jeopardise the security of his buttons.

"You're right! I'm the man. Cherry—that's the chap who nearly killed old Quelchy—he's worse than Wharton. Got nothing in his head, y'know. Then there's Toddy—that's the chap with the long nose—silly-looking, thin chap. He's cunning enough—But there, I shouldn't like to tell you all I know about Peter Todd."

"I shouldn't if I were you," answered Thornton. "I'm really not very keen on that sort of talk. Give me a few days, and I dare say I'll be able to sort the fellows out for myself. Anyway, Wharton was decent to me, and so was the fellow who offered to give up his place."

"The Bounder? Oh, really, Thornton, you're easily taken in! That was just an excuse to cut cricket so that he could go off blagging somewhere."

"What's blagging?"

"Pub-haunting, playing cards, betting—all that sort of thing."

"But fellows here don't do that kind of thing!" protested Thornton.

Bunter winked a fat wink.

"Oh, don't they, though?" he said.

"I could tell you a thing or two if I

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liked. I've been rorty myself at times, and I'm not the only one!"

"I don't think I care much to hear about what you do when you're rorty," replied Thornton coldly.

He did not quite like this fat fellow; and Bunter, obtuse though he was, suspected the fact. But the Owl did not give up hope.

He showed Thornton up to the dormitory, and he waited while the new boy changed into his flannels and blazer, in spite of a hint that he had done all that was needful.

In the quad he made his venture.

"I say, Thornton, I've got a postal-order coming to-morrow."

"Lucky you!" answered Thornton, as he remembered Johnny Bull's warning.

But even without that he would not have fallen for Bunter's ancient dodge. Ted Thornton was as good-natured as most fellows, but he was not exactly anybody's fool—certainly not Bunter's.

"You wouldn't care to advance me five bob on it, I suppose?" Bunter inquired.

"You aren't so bad at supposing. I wouldn't," Thornton answered.

"I say, though, be a sport! It's only till to-morrow."

"Can't you wait till to-morrow?"

"I'm starving!" wailed Bunter.

"You don't look it," Thornton said.

"Anyway, there's nothing doing."

He moved briskly off towards Little Side. Bunter rolled away in the opposite direction, murmuring:

"Beast! Stingy beast! But I'll pay him out!"

When Thornton turned up on Little Side Vernon-Smith retired at once, and Squiff, who was captaining one side against Harry Wharton, said:

"Bowl at all, Thornton?"

"Yes."

"What's your style?"

"Left hand, pretty fast. But I bat right."

"Sounds good. Have a shot."

Thornton had a shot, and got Bob Cherry in his first over, caught at short leg off a ball that broke across the wicket. In his next over he bowled Frank Nugent. His fielding was first-rate, and when he went in to bat he scored 35 in quick time and good style.

It was evident that he was every inch a cricketer; and the keen cricketers of the Remove congratulated one another on such an acquisition. There was no bounce about him, either; he seemed a thoroughly nice, modest fellow.

But first impressions are apt to be changed later; and it was not long before Ted Thornton was to find all but one of the fellows, who were now so friendly, arrayed against him!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Thornton Makes Enemies!

"ALL I have to say is that my impression of the new fellow is not favourable," said William George Bunter, in the junior Common-room.

Bunter spoke as though his impression was important, and most of those present grinned.

"Wouldn't he lend you anything on the postal-order that's coming one of these fine days, Bunt?" inquired Treluce.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you think I would condescend to ask a new fellow I didn't like the look of to do anything of the sort?" returned Bunter, with a sniff.

"Yes!" answered Treluce.

And again nearly everybody grinned,

But Bolsover major did not grin. His sense of humour was never acute, and he was feeling sore just now. Bolsover believed that he ought to be in the Remove eleven, and he had just come from Little Side, where he had heard the fellows applauding Thornton's bowling in the second innings of Wharton's side.

On a rough computation there were at least a dozen fellows between Bolsover major and even the last place in the first eleven of the Remove. But that fact did not prevent Percy Bolsover from regarding any new boy who could play cricket as an obstacle in his path.

There were not many fellows in the Common-room, for the game was not yet over and the hour of lock-up had not come, so that some of those who had gone out of gates were still away.

But Skinner and Stott and Snoop were all there, with Bunter and Fish, and Trevor and Treluce, who, without being actual rotters, had rather a tendency to gravitate towards the rotters.

Percy Bolsover was by no means a complete rotter. He had his better moments; but they never lasted long. He was jealous and resentful and more than a bit of a bully; and Harold Skinner, the worst black sheep of the Remove, led him by the nose to a far greater extent than Bolsover realised.

The burly Bolsover stood in front of the grate, just as he might have done on a day in December, though on this torrid August day there was no fire, of course, and he did not need warming. A portentous frown was on his beetling brow. Already he was inclined to regard Thornton as an enemy.

"No chance for you in the next match now, Bolsy!" said Skinner slyly.

He had been with Bolsover on Little Side. They were pals just now, these two. But Skinner never spared a pal. His malicious nature found an evil pleasure in arousing jealous passions.

"We'll see about that," answered Bolsover. "Didn't I make over forty the other day?"

"Against the Second Form, and with seven chances!" spoke Trevor in the ear of Treluce.

"I shouldn't stand for it if I were you, Bolsover," said the Owl. "You put your foot down, old chap, and nip Wharton's plans in the bud before he gets in the thin edge of the wedge. It would be just like him to shove this new cad into the team instead of you."

"What study's the new chap in?" Treluce asked.

"No. 8, with Smith minor," replied Bunter. "I heard Quelchy telling Wharton so on Little Side."

"That wash-out!" snorted Bolsover, referring to Smith minor.

The Remove studies varied in size, and Study No. 8 was the smallest of them all. Smith minor, a quiet fellow who took no conspicuous part in the affairs of the Form, usually had it all to himself, which suited Smith minor very well indeed.

"Let's go along and see whether he's got any of his traps there yet," suggested Skinner.

He leered as he spoke, and they all knew that his motive was a spiteful one. Bolsover and he went off together, and Stott and Bunter followed them. But Trevor and Treluce stayed behind, and so did Snoop, who had no taste for rags, and Fisher T. Fish, who saw no prospect of profit in this.

The four found Smith minor getting tea for himself.

"Hallo!" said Bolsover. "I hear you've got the new chap coming in here, young Smith."

"He's coming, all right," answered Smith minor mildly. "But I haven't

heard that he's a cad. He looks quite decent. Can't say I particularly wanted him, or anyone; but it's no use kicking when Quelch says a thing is to be so."

"That his box?" asked Skinner.

"Yes, that's his box," replied Smith minor. "But don't you go interfering with it, Skinner. That isn't a decent thing to do, you know."

He flushed as he spoke. Smith minor was not a fighting man, by long odds; but he resented this intrusion into his study, and he had never liked Skinner.

"It's not locked," said the black sheep of the Remove, trying the lid, without paying any heed to Smith minor's protest. "All we have to do is to uncored it, and—"

"You leave that box alone!"

Smith minor had flared up. Skinner looked as surprised as he might have done had a rabbit turned upon him and tried to bite him.

Bolsover gave a great guffaw.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he roared. "Be careful, Skinny, or Smithy will give you a hiding!"

"I don't say that," said Smith minor, trembling, but not backing down. "But I do say that it isn't a decent thing to do; and I'm not afraid of Skinner, anyway. I've seen him take hidings enough. He wouldn't try this on if Wharton or Linley or Field were about."

Skinner paid no heed. He began to uncored the box.

"Give us a hand, Bolsy!" he said.

Bunter grinned fatuously. Stott cunningly. Smith minor's agitation amused them.

"You stop that!" cried Smith minor.

At that moment Ted Thornton came in.

"This is Study No. 8, I see," he began before he was well inside the door. "Smith minor, eh? Why, what are you doing with my box?"

Bolsover had been about to lend a hand. He drew back now, half-glad that he had not actually done so. In his heart he knew that it was not a decent thing to be caught out at.

The new boy did not hesitate. He seized Skinner's collar in a strong grip.

"You're not Smith minor, are you?" he snapped. "I was told that he was all right, but—"

"No, I'm not! You let go!" howled the black sheep furiously. "My name's Skinner—"

"Is it? Well, it might as well be Skinned if you're going to play your tricks with my property! Take that!"

And the new fellow, letting go, gave Skinner a cuff on the nose that made him reel.

"Now you'll have to fight him, and he'll lick you! Serve you jolly well right, Skinner!" said Smith minor. "I told you to leave that box alone!"

"Oh, you're Smith minor, then!" said Thornton. "Thanks, old fellow! You did all that could be expected of you with odds like this against you!"

He looked round him. Bunter shuffled under his steady gaze.

"You didn't expect to find your postal-order in that box, Bunter, did you?" Thornton rapped out.

"Nun-no! Not in the least, Thornton, really! I—I only looked in to ask Smith minor to lend me his Scott and Liddell! I've mislaid mine!"

The contemptuous glance of the new boy passed from Bunter to Bolsover.

"You in this?" he asked sharply.

Bolsover would have been glad to be able to say "No," but with Skinner's eyes upon him he could not. Moreover, he felt sure he could lick this new fellow, who was considerably below his weight, and he thought a licking at the outset would be quite a good thing for Thornton. Bolsover always did think he could lick a new boy, though in his time he had found himself mistaken pretty often.

"What if I am in it?" he snarled.

"Silly question!" answered Thornton. "I'm not going to be bothered with thrashing things like that"—he pointed a finger of scorn at the weedy Skinner—"but you're big enough and ugly enough to be worth taking on!"

Bolsover's wrath flared at once. But his anger was not so bitter and venomous as that of Skinner, who was cut to the quick by Thornton's contempt of him.

Thornton had made an enemy of Bolsover, but he had made a far more deadly and dangerous enemy of Skinner.

"You fight me!" gasped the burly Bolsover.

"That's the idea," replied Thornton coolly. "You don't seem very quick at grasping things. As soon as you like, too!"

Bunter had sidled out. But he had lingered in the passage, and he heard this.

Then he hurried off as fast as his fat little legs would carry him to take to the Remove the tidings that the new boy and Bolsover major were going to fight.

He thrust his head into Study No. 1 where the Famous Five—Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh, called Inky—were just about to start tea.

"Fight on!" he burred. "Bolsy and the new cad! Oh, I say, you chaps—raspberry-tarts and a beefsteak and kidney pie! Oh, really, there's no hurry, you know! I don't suppose they'll start yet. I guess I'll take a snack with you first, and then—"

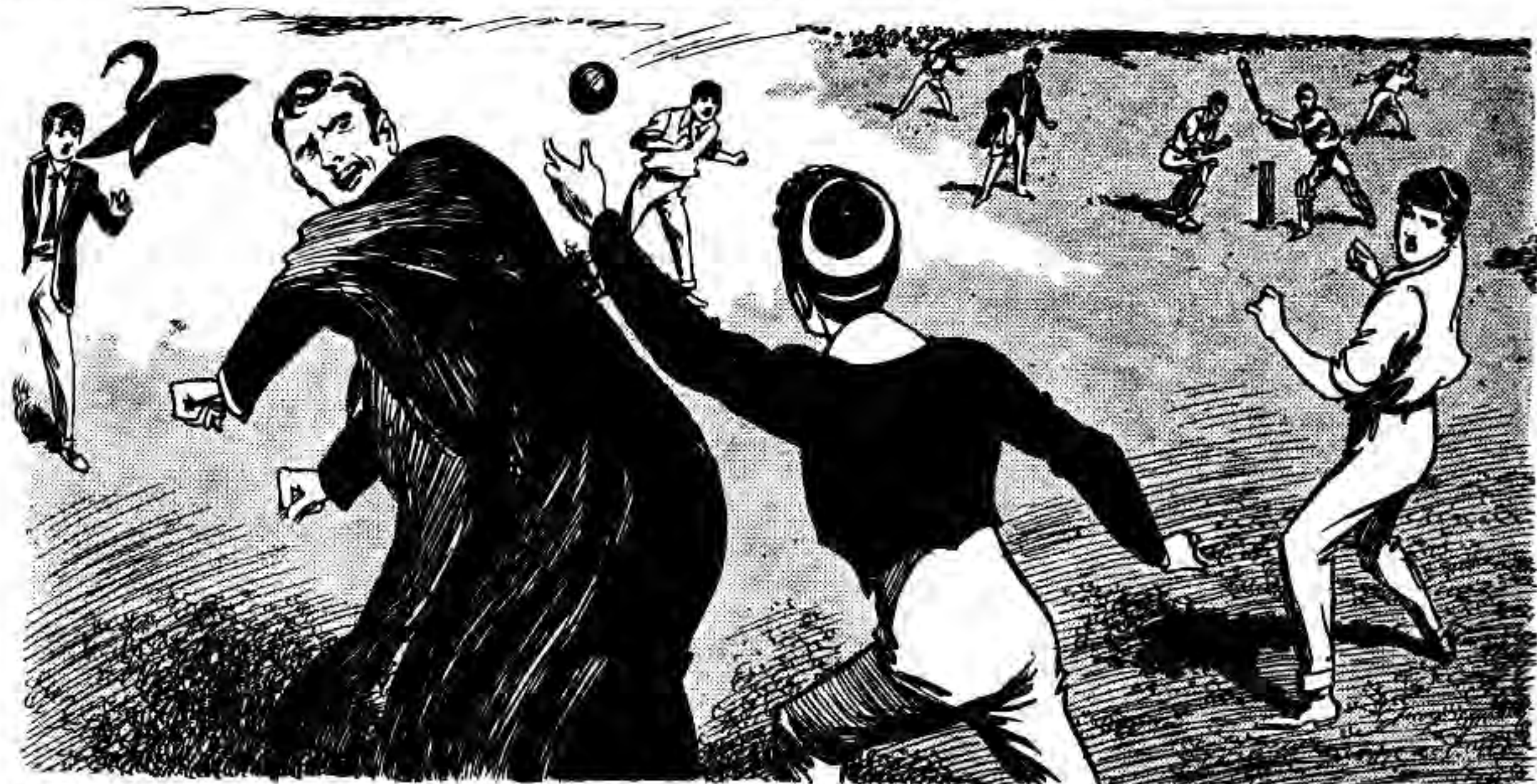
"Guess again, and guess differently, my fat tulip!" said Bob Cherry, while Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent hustled the Owl out, and Harry Wharton locked the door behind him.

The Famous Five hurried off. Bunter lingered outside that door like a particularly disconsolate Peri outside the gates of Paradise. A fight was all very well in its way. But it was not filling. Beefsteak pie and raspberry-tarts were.

But, as there seemed no prospect that those delicacies would be filling Bunter, Bunter rolled off to the gym in the wake of the rest.

Again Bolsover major had bitten off more than he could chew, as the first round plainly showed.

His lumbering brute strength was of no avail against the agility and boxing skill of the new fellow. The fight was disappointing except in so far as it showed the Remove that Ted Thornton was as clever a boxer as he was a cricketer.



"Look out, sir!" yelled Harry Wharton. Mr. Quelch half turned. He did not realise his danger, but he had heard the shout. Then a lithe, agile figure leaped forward and with outstretched hand took a wonderful catch within six inches of the Form master's temple. "Some catch!" gasped Bob Cherry in great relief. (See Chapter 1.)

His gloved fists smote Bolsover when and where Thornton chose. Thornton was too quick, too elusive, for the bully of the Remove.

But Percy Bolsover was no quitter. He kept on till he was knocked out in the fifth round. He did not relish being knocked out, of course. He left the gym with a grudge against his vanquisher.

But his enmity against Thornton was as nothing to the rancorous hatred of Harold Skinner.

The new fellow had despised Skinner. Skinner did not like being licked; but he could have borne a licking better than that utter contempt.

Let the new fellow look out for himself! Skinner would have his revenge yet!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

In the Night!

TED THORNTON settled down easily and readily to Greyfriars ways, and by the time he had been three days at the school he was on good terms with most of the Remove.

He would have been friendly with Bolsover, but Bolsover was not willing. But he ignored Skinner completely. To

Thornton, what Skinner had been about in No. 8 put him right outside the pale.

The new boy was shrewd enough to see that Skinner was the real offender. Bolsover, always ready to domineer, had only backed up his pal. Bunter and Stott were mere satellites, of small account. Bolsover had had his lesson, and was not likely to make the mistake of trying again to domineer over Thornton. But if Bolsover chose to cherish a grudge, Thornton did not care.

The two occupants of Study No. 8 got on quite well together. Smith minor liked Thornton, and Thornton liked Smith minor well enough, though it was with others—the Famous Five and the rest of the keen cricketers—that he spent most of his leisure hours.

He could never get too much cricket. No one was more regular in attendance at the nets than he. And the form he had shown in the practice game was more than maintained. Harry Wharton, the Bounder, Squiff, and Peter Todd were all cricketers of no mean calibre; but each and every one of them was ready to admit without jealousy that Thornton was at least his equal, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh, hitherto reckoned the Remove's most deadly bowler, said frankly that the bowlfulness of the new fellow was of the exceeding

swiftfulness and the great straightfulness.

Into No. 8, having watched his chance, stole Skinner. Smith minor was a good deal in Skinner's way just now. Like Alonzo Todd, who preferred improving books to any game whatsoever, and Tom Dutton, whose deafness kept him rather outside the ordinary life of the Remove, Smith minor spent many hours in his study when other fellows were on the playing-fields.

But he was absent now, and Skinner sneaked in.

Thornton had had a letter that morning. Skinner had seen it in the rack, and had noticed the Courtfield postmark.

That was queer, Skinner thought. Why should anyone at Courtfield be writing to a fellow who had but just arrived in Greyfriars?

It was an off-chance; but the letter might be in the waste-paper basket. In winter it would have gone into the fire at once, no doubt.

Skinner fancied his luck in. There were a few fragments of paper in the basket. Among them were some that looked like parts of a letter.

His hands trembled with eagerness; he sorted them out. It was easy enough to distinguish them from the scraps of exercise-paper among which they were.

Some of them were very small. Thornton seemed to have been careful to tear up thoroughly that part of the sheet which bore writing. But they could be pieced together.

Skinner's eyes gleamed spitefully at that thought. Somehow he felt sure that he had found a weapon against the fellow he hated.

He helped himself to an envelope from the drawer of the table, and swept the scraps of paper into it. Hardly had he done this before the door opened suddenly, and Smith minor appeared.

"What are you doing here, Skinner?" he asked sharply.

Skinner had thrust the envelope into his breast-pocket, as though he were returning his handkerchief thither.

"I looked in to see your dear pal Thornton," he replied coolly.

"Well, he isn't here just now, and if he was I don't reckon he would want to see you!" said Smith.

Skinner did not like his tone at all.

"Getting above yourself, aren't you, Smithy?" he sneered. "I shouldn't advise you to, when Thornton isn't here to protect you. He can lick Bolsy, so I suppose I shouldn't have any chance against him, but—"

"You think you can lick me, eh? Well, I don't mind letting you try! Anyway, if you don't clear out of here jolly sharp I'm going to punch your head!"

The worm had turned. That was the way Skinner looked at it, though he really had not sufficient reason for regarding Smith minor as a worm.

But for what he had in his pocket Harold Skinner might have been tempted to try conclusions with the worm. Perhaps not, though. Skinner was no hero. He very much disliked getting hurt.

"I'll clear," he said. "I don't like the niff of this study. You try your head-punching game in public, Smithy; and we'll see what happens."

"Right-ho! I shouldn't wonder if I did that some time before long," answered Smith minor unconcernedly. "But as long as you do a bunk now I'll let you off!"

The cheek of the worm! It was almost more than Skinner could stand. But a row just then did not suit Skinner's book.

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He retreated to his own study, No. 11, which he shared with Stott and Snoop. But those two were out just now, and, having put the back of a chair under the knob of the door, to ensure that no one should come in upon him unexpectedly, Skinner spread those fragments of another fellow's letter on a sheet of blotting-paper, and proceeded to piece them together.

He had plenty of patience. And as the words were pieced together, the cruelly exultant gleam in Skinner's eyes grew more and more intense.

This was his chance! It was better even than he could have hoped.

For someone who signed himself "Tom" asked "Ted"—that was Thornton, of course—to meet him just outside Courtfield at half-past ten that night!

Thornton might not go. But Skinner thought he would. The chap had no end of nerve.

If he went—Skinner gloated as he thought of that. He would hardly know the way out by the box-room window, which Skinner and many others knew so well and had used so often. Even if he had spotted it, Skinner would have no great difficulty in blocking his way back. If he tried another way that only meant that Skinner must lie awake and watch to see what it was.

Skinner said nothing to Bolsover, nothing to Stott or Snoop. Bolsover might have jibbed at what he had done to find out this; Bolsover was like that sometimes. Stott and Snoop were not bitter against the new fellow.

So Skinner lay awake and listened. His bed was only two from that which Thornton occupied.

He got impatient when the talk, which was often prolonged in the dormitory on these hot nights, when it was hard to get to sleep, went beyond what seemed to his keen spite any reasonable limit. Why, if the idiots kept on talking like this it would get so late that Thornton would not be able to go—hang them all!

But the talk died down at last, and in a few more minutes the sound of regular breathing and a snore here and there told that the Remove—for the most part—slept.

Not all the Remove! Skinner's sharp ears caught the sound of someone getting out of bed. It was not pitch dark, and Skinner's sharp eyes made out a shadowy figure not far away.

Thornton was getting into his clothes.

He wasted no time. He would have to hurry up to be near Courtfield by half-past ten, at best.

Now he was moving towards one of the windows. Skinner lay still. In the glimmer of the summer night he saw the lower part of the window blocked for a moment.

Then it was clear again. Thornton must have brought up a rope. He was a cool hand, and no mistake! The distance to the ground was not small, and this was a fellow who had been at Greyfriars only three or four days.

For a minute or so Skinner waited. Then he got out of bed and moved noiselessly to the window.

Yes, there was a rope. It was fastened to a leg of the heavy washstand.

Skinner's first impulse was to cut it. But he thought better of that.

He would leave it. Mr. Quelch or one of the prefects might look into the dormitory and see it. Thornton's empty bed would give him away, and he would be caught out without Skinner's having to show his hand in the matter.



"What are you doing with my box?" The new boy did not hesitate. He seized Skinner's collar in a grip of iron. "Yaroooh! You let go!" howled Skinner. "This will teach you not to play tricks with my box," said the new fellow. "Take that!" And he gave Skinner a cuff that made him reel. (See Chapter 2.)

That was a chance. But if no one came Skinner could carry out his first notion. He would cut the rope, and Thornton would be trapped outside.

It was not likely that the fellow would be back from Courtfield before midnight, and Skinner could trust himself to keep awake.

He sat up in bed, with the sheet drawn up over his knees, and felt a thrill of pleasurable anticipation. Thornton had treated him with contempt. Thornton should learn that Harold Skinner, the "widest" fellow in the Remove, was not to be treated that way!

Eleven o'clock struck. The quarter chimed. The half chimed. What a long time fifteen minutes was when one was waiting!

Three-quarters! Skinner began to fidget. It was unlikely anyone would blow in now. The Sixth-Formers would all be in bed, and Mr. Quelch, though he often sat up late, working at his "History of Greyfriars," seldom visited the dormitory at this hour.

The minutes dragged on. Thornton might be expected back at any time now. Skinner stole out of bed and to the window.

He had slipped on jacket and trousers over his pyjamas, for he meant to stand by the window and watch for Thornton. It would be interesting to see what he did when he found that the rope was no longer there.

Skinner began to haul up the rope. No need to cut it; better leave Thornton puzzled as to what had happened.

Then the door opened, and Mr. Quelch switched on the nearest light.

Skinner scuttled. But scuttling was useless. Mr. Quelch had seen him.

"What does this mean, Skinner?" demanded the Form master.

Skinner made no reply. There really did not seem to be anything useful he could say. Crafty as he was, he was taken aback for the moment, and failed to realise that he could clear himself and damage his enemy by a few words.

And while he hesitated his chance came.

"Do not answer now," said Mr. Quelch sternly, though in a low voice. "It is not necessary that the whole Form should be aroused from its sleep because of your misbehaviour. I will see you in the morning."

Then the light was switched off again, and Skinner listened to the retreating footsteps of the master.

Everyone else still slept on.

Hope came to Skinner. What an idiot he had been! But it did not matter; he had only to keep Thornton out, and he himself was safe. Mr. Quelch had forbidden him to explain then, and, of course, he could say to-morrow that he had not wanted to sneak on another fellow, anyway. Not only would Thornton be bowled out, but he—Harold Skinner—would get credit from the Form for refusing to give him away.

On that pleasant thought Skinner fell asleep.

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Wharton Believes!

IT was half an hour or so after the visit of Mr. Quelch to the dormitory when Thornton came back.

He looked for the rope, but could not find it.

What had happened?

With a sinking heart he realised that it was possible he had been caught out by someone in authority.

In that case the person concerned—master or prefect—would almost certainly be sitting up, awaiting his return.

But no light showed in any window throughout the vast pile of Greyfriars.

Thornton took courage from that. After all, this might only mean that some member of the Remove had found the rope and had hauled it up by way of a joke.

In any case, it was hardly worth while to spend the night outside.

He picked up a handful of gravel and threw it up at the window.

Then he waited. No one appeared.

He repeated his tactics, and waited again.

This time the sash was lifted, and a face glimmered in the half-light.

"Who's there?" came a voice.

"It's me—Thornton. Who's that?"

"Wharton," was the answer.

Thornton did not like it a bit. Harry Wharton was skipper of the Remove, with a good deal of responsibility on his shoulders. It might be his duty to report, for all that Thornton knew; and Wharton was the sort of fellow who would hold duty sacred.

But the new boy would have no grudge against Harry Wharton for doing his duty. The chief thing now was to get up to the dormitory.

He spoke, not loudly, but in tones that carried clearly up to Wharton.

"There ought to be a rope there, fastened to the washstand. Will you let it down to me, Wharton?"

The face disappeared for a second or two. Then it showed again. The rope was flung down, and Wharton watched the new boy make the ascent, coming up hand-over-hand like a sailor.

Harry helped him over the ledge. Then in the gloom they confronted one another.

"You're a silly chump, Thornton!" said Wharton. "I never thought you were this sort."

"What sort?" returned Ted Thornton, neither resentfully nor sulkily, but like one who seeks information.

"Oh, you know! I should have thought you might have waited a bit longer before you started going out blagging at night."

Blagging! That was the word Bunter had defined. It had been new to Thornton.

"I give you my word of honour, Wharton, that I haven't been doing anything of that sort," the new boy said earnestly. "I can't explain why I had to go out; but if I could I'm sure you wouldn't blame me."

Harry Wharton paused to think. It seemed to him that truth rang in Thornton's tones.

"Won't you believe me? Of course, if you feel bound to report I'm not going to ask you to hold up on me. But, on my word, I've been doing no harm—nothing that you wouldn't have done yourself in my place."

"I don't know that I'm bound to report," replied Wharton slowly. "Being skipper of the Remove isn't quite the same thing as being a prefect. I'll take your word, Thornton. I do believe you. But don't do it again, there's a

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good chap. And, I say, someone must have got on to you. For I suppose you left the rope ready to come up by?"

"Yes, I did. And one of the fellows must have hauled it up—unless it was a master."

"It wouldn't be a master," Harry said. "If it had been you'd never have had the chance to get up here again. He'd have been on the watch for you down below. I wonder who it was?"

"I don't care much, as long as it doesn't get you into a row, Wharton. Thanks for believing me. If it comes to trouble, I won't land you in it."

"If it comes to trouble I'm going to admit that I helped you, and face the music," Wharton said. "It's the only decent thing to do. But I don't think the fellow, whoever it was, will split. It's more likely he did it for a joke."

Harry did not guess that Skinner had been the fellow concerned, or he would have felt sure that this was no joke. He had noticed Skinner's hostility to the new boy.

But Skinner was in no position to split, unless matters came to the worst. If Mr. Quelch had taken him to the Head he would have tried all he knew to clear himself. To that he had made up his mind.

When he awoke next morning, and, sitting up, saw that Thornton was in bed and sleeping soundly, he realised that it might be dangerous to say anything.

Suppose Thornton denied having been out at all? How was Skinner going to prove anything?

One of the fellows must have flung the rope down to him, of course. But that fellow would not tell. Even if it came to a choice between Thornton's getting the sack and Skinner's getting it, he might not tell, Skinner thought. There were plenty of fellows in the Remove who would not mind seeing the last of Harold Skinner, and Harold Skinner seldom gave anyone credit for obeying higher motives than the self-interest which was his guide.

Nearly all depended upon Mr. Quelch's attitude.

As it chanced, that was an easier one than Skinner had dared to hope.

The Form master had no doubt whatever that Skinner had been going out by way of the window. But he had not gone; at least, presumably he had not gone. It was only in the morning that Mr. Quelch had bethought him of the fact that he had made a mistake in not taking away that rope.

But his own mistake would not have kept Mr. Quelch from reporting to the Head had he considered it necessary to report. In his inflexible justice he would not have spared himself.

He saw no use in worrying Dr. Locke with a matter of no great importance. And he saw no use, either, in questioning Skinner as to why he had been going out. Skinner would not tell the truth. To him lying came easily.

So Mr. Quelch spoke a few sharp words in which there was little that was new, for he had many times before told Skinner his candid opinion of him, warned the black sheep that it would fare ill with him if he were caught out in the same way again, ordered him to write three hundred lines of the Iliad, and dismissed him.

Skinner had not said a word, had not been asked to say a word.

When he got outside Mr. Quelch's sanctum he told himself that he had been a silly ass not to explain. After all, there was nothing against him that mattered if the truth were known—that is, something short of the whole truth.

But Skinner had been afraid of being questioned. He would have been in the soup as badly as Thornton if it had come out that he had been meddling with another fellow's correspondence. And Smith minor might have told more than Skinner wanted told.

So the black sheep went off with his burden of lines, and with more rancorous hatred than ever for Ted Thornton in his heart.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Courtfield Match!

THORNTON was distinctly off colour at the nets next day.

He did not shape a bit like himself. He was bowled by balls that in an ordinary way he would have hit hard or played back with ease. All the sting seemed to have gone out of his own bowling.

Most of the cricketers wondered. But Harry Wharton understood.

Thornton had been out when he should have been asleep in bed, and the dark rings under his eyes testified to the fact that he had missed his normal rest. There was something on his mind, too. Wharton was sure of that.

And Wharton was sympathetic. The new boy seemed to him straight and decent. He had a secret; but other fellows had had secrets before him, and in the event they had proved not blame-worthy.

But Wharton could say nothing to Thornton or anyone else. Thornton had not been willing to put full confidence in him, and it was plainly out of the question to give the new fellow away after accepting his word of honour.

Sunday came, without any cricket, naturally. Wharton hoped to see Thornton display his true form on the Monday.

He did not. He seemed to have gone all to pieces. In a practice game he was clean bowled for a duck, could not take a wicket, though he had a fair spell of bowling, and fumbled and missed catches in the field.

Skinner, Bolsover, Stott, Snoop, and Bunter were all watching together, and they chortled hugely.

"That's the chap they were making so much of," said Bolsover. "Why, he's a bigger duffer than you are, Bunt!"

"Don't talk rot, Bolsover!" returned Bunter. "Why, I could lick his head off at the game! I'm not saying that I'm quite up to your form, old fellow, but I'm jolly sure that I'm miles above Thornton's."

Bolsover major had had a remittance from home that morning, and William George felt affectionate towards him.

"There may be reasons why the rotter can't play up to the mark," said Stott darkly.

Skinner had told Stott and Snoop and Bolsover something. He had not told them everything, but they knew that Thornton had been breaking bounds at night.

Watching cricket soon palled on the quintet, however, and they went off to the tuckshop, where Bolsover stood treat—though not in a sufficiently free and handsome manner to satisfy Bunter. For that Bolsover was hardly to be blamed; had he gone in for satisfying the cormorant appetite of the Owl, he and the rest might have fared but ill.

The match with Courtfield was to be played on the Wednesday, with the return only a week later; and that evening the Famous Five, Squiff, and the Bouncer met in Study No. 1 to discuss the team.

Those seven, with Peter Todd and Mark Linley, who might have been present had they chosen, were all certainties. For the remaining two places there were several candidates.

"Tom Brown," said Johnny Bull, "Hazeldene, Delarey, Russell, Ogilvy, Redwing, Bulstrode—they're all pretty useful. Any two of them would do. We might almost as well write their names on slips of paper, put the slips in a hat, and draw, for all the difference it's likely to make."

"You've left out a better man than any of them, Johnny," Harry Wharton said quietly.

"You mean Thornton, I suppose? Well, I'd have said the same a day or two ago. But he seems to have gone all to pieces."

"Is he really better than any of them, Harry?" asked Frank Nugent.

"What's your opinion, Squiff?" Harry said.

"A good deal better, if he's in form," answered the Australian junior, who could always be counted upon to give a candid opinion, without fear or favour.

"He isn't in form," Harry said. "He's gone off badly. But don't you think it ought to be worth while to play him on the chance that he may show us something like he showed us on that first day?"

"Yes, I do," admitted Squiff.

No one else agreed. But this was not a matter to be voted upon. Harry Wharton was captain of the team, and had a right to choose his men. No one contested that right. But some—among his best chums, too—felt rather disgruntled at his choice.

Tom Brown was given the eleventh place, and Redwing made reserve man.

When the list appeared on the notice-board Skinner's tongue was loosened. He was full of rancour against both the new fellow and the skipper of the Remove, and he went about whispering things which made others look with eyes of suspicion upon Ted Thornton.

Skinner said nothing very definite. It was not safe to speak out yet. But most of the Form got the notion that there was something decidedly fishy about Thornton. In theory, no one took much notice of Harold Skinner's backbiting. They knew Skinner. But in practice it was different. Hardly ever does even the most unjustified backbiting fail to damage the reputation of its victim.

And Skinner really had something to go upon. He firmly believed that the new boy had been up to no good when he had gone out that night. He was hoping to catch him again. No mistake should be made this time. Skinner would see to that!

The Courtfield team drove over on the Wednesday afternoon, and among them was a fellow whom none of the Greyfriars fellows had ever seen before. But he was not a player, it turned out. He looked no older than Trumper or some of the rest; but he was a master, who had only just joined the staff of the school.

Skinner alone, watching keenly, noted that a nod of recognition passed between this young Council School master and Ted Thornton. Skinner had not forgotten that the letter signed "Tom" had come from Courtfield.

"That? Oh, that's Mr. Osborne, a new master at our school," explained Trumper to Harry Wharton. "He's come over to umpire for us. Of course we can't play him; it wouldn't be fair to you infants for us to play a master. But I wish we could. He's a nailing good cricketer, and has been coaching us as

no one ever did before. He'll be playing for Courtfield Town on Saturday, and I guess he'll buck them up."

So Osborne was the name of the fellow whom Thornton knew—hearing that was rather a disappointment to Skinner. He would not have been surprised had the name been Thornton; he was sure that he saw a likeness between the young Council School master and the new fellow. He wondered whether Osborne's name was Tom.

Trumper won the toss from Wharton, and naturally Courtfield batted first.

They batted well, too. No one but Trumper, who scored 52, made very many; but seven others reached double figures, and made their runs in good style. The total was 155, which was quite a useful score.

Osborne gave two of his own side out l.b.w., and was undoubtedly right in both instances.

"I told you not to do that, Grahame," he said to one of the two. "It doesn't pay to protect your wicket with your pads unless you can tell whether the ball that's coming is going to break or come straight. And your judgment isn't equal to telling that yet."

Ted Thornton took three wickets at a very small cost, and fielded as well as anyone on the side. He had certainly not let the team down yet.

When the innings had ended and the teams came off the field Skinner noticed that the Council School umpire and Thornton walked in together, talking as

they came. There was nothing in it to anyone else, any more than there was in the fact that Reeves, the Council School team's not out man, talked to Delarey, who was umpiring for the Remove, on the way to the pavilion. But Skinner's suspicious mind saw something in it.

Frank Nugent and Peter Todd were in first for the Remove. Frank failed completely. Trumper bowled him with a ball that had him beaten all the way. Bob Cherry joined Peter, hit two fours, and was then caught and bowled.

Harry Wharton came in, and broke his duck with a single. This brought Peter opposite Trumper, and Peter did not survive his first ball.

He came back to the pavilion looking very thoughtful.

"That chap's bowling googlies," he said. "He never did before; but I'm sure he's doing it now. I could have sworn that ball was coming in from leg, but it came in from the off instead, and beat me all ends up. You look out, Smithy! If you go cheaply there's not much hope for us."

Vernon-Smith smiled in his half-acid way, and went to the vacant wicket.

The Bounder was really the Remove's best bat. He had in him the making of a County player. No one on the side was better than he at sorting the bowling; no one knew better how to take toll of a bad ball.

He was grateful for Peter's warning now. Wharton scored a couple of twos off Grahame, the other Courtfield bowler, and then the Bounder faced Trumper.



The cad of the Remove began to haul up the rope. No need to cut it; better leave Thornton—who had broken bounds—puzzled as to what had happened. Suddenly the door opened, and Mr. Quelch switched on the nearest light. "What does this mean, Skinner?" demanded the Form master. "Why are you out of your bed?" Skinner made no reply. (See Chapter 3.)

The first ball he had was a rank long-hop, and was dispatched to the boundary for four. But the second would have bowled him but that Peter had put him on the qui vive.

It was evident to him that Trumper had to some extent mastered the difficult art of bowling the wrong 'un. Like most googly bowlers, he sent down some rank bad balls. But his best were practically unplayable to anyone who had no notion what he was doing.

The Bounder contrived to let Wharton know without any of the Courtfield fellows perceiving. Then, batting very carefully for the most part, but occasionally letting out in a manner that puzzled some of the onlookers, those two put on 51 before they were separated.

Vernon-Smith was the first to go, and it was not Trumper who got him. He was smartly caught at mid-on off a hard hit, having made 28.

Now Thornton came in. But hardly had he arrived when Wharton left, bowled neck and crop by Trumper.

Squiff came next. Peter had told Squiff what to expect, and the Australian, a fine cricketer, really did watch the bowler's hand, which was more than could be said for some of his comrades.

But Squiff only scored a couple. Then he was deceived, hit against the break, and was caught from a skyer.

Thornton's score had reached double figures when Johnny Bull went for a duck—another victim to Trumper. He might have gone earlier but that the new fellow had had most of the bowling.

Seven wickets were now down, with only 72 runs on the board. It looked bad for the Remove. But there was still Mark Linley to come. He had asked Harry to send him in late, for Mr. Quelch was giving him half an hour of coaching in Greek that afternoon, and had arranged to let him have it while the earlier Remove batsmen were at the wickets.

Mark only got there just in time to take his proper place in the order of batting, and Peter Todd had no chance of warning him.

"But it doesn't matter much," Peter told Wharton. "Mark takes notice of things."

Peter was right. Mark Linley twigged the fact that Trumper was bowling differently from of old at once, and was cautious.

Meanwhile Thornton, who did not seem at all bothered by Trumper, had begun to score fast. Mark kept up his end. Thornton did the hitting. Frantic cheers greeted the appearance of the hundred on the board.

The score leaped to 120, and Trumper went off. He was tiring, and had sent down some very loose stuff.

Mark hit his first four, and the cheering broke out again. Thornton slammed one high over the ropes, and Skinner scowled as the Remove yelled. For the moment they had forgotten all Skinner's whispers against the new fellow, and were making a hero of him.

On the board 140 appeared. A four by Thornton made the stand for the eighth wicket equal the runs scored for the first seven wickets.

But then Trumper went on again, and bowled Mark with a ball that might have bowled anyone.

The Lancashire lad had only made 25 of the 72 put on. But he had played fine watchful cricket at a critical time, and he was cheered to the echo as he came in.

Tom Brown went first ball—Trumper again! Inky whipped in, and kept two balls out of his wicket. Then the over

was finished, and Thornton faced Trumper again.

A four—a slashing off-drive. Then a ball that came straight through when it looked like breaking across. Thornton had got in front of his wicket to force it to leg—perfectly legitimate tactics. But he missed it, and it hit his right pad, and Trumper and half a dozen other Courtfield fellows shouted in chorus:

"Howzatt?"

Usborne had the decision to make.

"He'll say not out," muttered Skinner to himself. "He's a pal of that cad's, and I don't suppose he cares a scrap about the Courtfield bounders."

That was the way Skinner looked at things. Harold Skinner would not have made a really good umpire.

But he had a surprise.

"Out!" said Usborne.

And Grahame heard Thornton say to himself, "Quite right, Tom!"—and he wondered.

It was not Thornton's fault that the Greyfriars Remove lost that game. He had played splendid cricket for his 59. And he had not finished yet. There was still just an offchance that by getting Courtfield out quickly the Remove might pull off the game; and Thornton, bowling his best and fastest, took seven wickets for 22. But Inky was rather off colour, and the other bowlers tried were not effective, and when the Courtfield innings closed for 87 the game was abandoned, for the Remove could not possibly have hit up the 95 wanted for victory in the forty minutes left them.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Thief in Their Midst!

THE Courtfield fellows had all gone before the discovery was made.

Then Tom Brown found that his watch had vanished.

"Anybody borrowed my ticker?" he asked. "I'd rather no one did that without telling me, you know."

He spoke casually, without any real suspicion of theft. But suspicion awoke when Johnny Bull let out a howl.

"Mine's gone, too!" Johnny yelled.

And Johnny's watch was worth at least five times as much as that of the New Zealander.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh felt in the left-hand pocket of his waistcoat.

"I am also of the lossfulness," he announced. "To me it seems that a sneaky thief has been making hay in the sunshinefulness, as your English poet Shakespeare says."

Inky might take the matter coolly. He had plenty of cash, and his watch, valuable though it was, could easily be replaced. But others did not feel cool or resigned.

Skinner's eyes were on the new boy. It seemed to him that Thornton looked guilty. He had certainly paled under his tan, and, while others shouted about their losses, he kept silence.

Nearly everyone had lost something. Money had gone and other things. Some of them were things of little value to anyone but their owners. Two or three of the watches taken would not have fetched more than a few shillings each. But the thief, whoever he might be, had made a clean sweep. If he had missed anything it was a mere accident.

"This is too dashed thick for anything!" exclaimed the Bounder angrily.

"It's what comes of playing cads from Council schools," said Bunter loftily.

"Do you mean that any of the Courtfield fellows is a thief? For if you do, I've only to say that you're a liar, Bunter!" flashed out Harry Wharton. "We know them. They're as straight as we are."

"Well, there's a thief somewhere, that's a sure thing," snarled Bolsover major.

Skinner whispered in the ear of Vernon-Smith.

The Bounder was a good fellow, but his best friend could not have called him a particularly trusting one. His general view of human nature was distinctly lower than Harry Wharton's, for instance.

He swung round upon Thornton now. He saw in the new fellow's face what Skinner had seen, and both thought it guilt. But Skinner exulted, while Vernon-Smith felt rather sorry. He had nothing against the new boy—unless the new boy was the thief. In that event he would not spare him.

And most assuredly Thornton looked uncomfortable. If his face did not show guilt, it showed fear; and why should he be afraid if he were not guilty?

The Bounder pointed at him an accusing finger.

"Had you anything to do with this, Thornton?" he rapped out.

Every eye was turned upon the new boy, and beneath the gaze of them all he blanched. For a moment all there believed him guilty.

Then the colour flooded his face again, and he spoke out bravely, though his voice trembled a little.

"I hadn't," he answered. "You can search me if you like. I've been with you all the time. I couldn't have stolen the things if I had wanted to, and if I'd stolen them I should have had no chance of hiding them."

"If I'm wrong I'm sorry," said Vernon-Smith, a trifle shamefacedly.

No one else spoke. No one moved. Thornton stood in their midst, his head held high, his eyes level.

Then Skinner's jeering voice broke the silence.

"Isn't anybody taking him on?" Skinner asked. "If he's not the thief, he ought to be jolly glad to have it proved that he isn't. And if this is just bluff, you'll be letting him get away with the swag on him. He may not have had any chance of hiding it yet, but you bet he soon will if he gets out of here!"

"That's right; he ought to be searched!" growled Bolsover.

Harry Wharton looked at Thornton. Harry was full of sympathy, sure that the new fellow was innocent. It was best that his innocence should be proved then and there, of course. But to be searched for stolen property was a nasty ordeal for any fellow to undergo.

"You really don't mind, Thornton?" he said doubtfully.

"I've told you that I don't. Any of you may search me, except Skinner or Bolsover. I'm hanged if I'll stand their hands on me!"

"Come on, Smithy! You and I will do it," said Harry.

But the Bounder hung back. He was shrewd, and Thornton's manner had impressed him. He felt as sure now that Thornton was not the thief as that he himself was not, and he was annoyed that he should have allowed Skinner's cunning whisper to move him.

"I'd rather not, Wharton," he said. "I don't a bit believe Thornton had anything to do with it, and I'm sorry I spoke."

"All the more reason why you should do as I ask," replied Harry. "I'm sure



The new boy held up his arms. He had put on his blazer, and there was a hip pocket to his flannels. But altogether he had few places wherein to bestow stolen property; and quite certainly there was nothing of the sort about him. "Had you a watch, Thornton?" asked the Boulder sharply, when he and Wharton had finished their investigation. "Yes," said Thornton. "It's gone with the other stolen things, I suppose!" (See Chapter 6.)

Thornton hadn't. But we've got to convince anyone who doubts. You wouldn't prefer anyone else to Smithy, would you, Thornton?"

"Not a bit," Thornton said, smiling straight into the face of the Boulder.

And to the Boulder, prone though he was to suspicion, that smile seemed utterly honest and free from guile. He came to doubt later, but in that moment he could have staked all he had on Thornton's innocence.

The new boy held up his arms. He had put on his blazer, and there was a hip-pocket to his flannels. But altogether he had few places wherein to bestow stolen property, and quite certainly there was nothing of the sort about him.

"Had you a watch, Thornton?" asked the Boulder sharply, when he and Harry had finished their very thorough investigation.

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"With the other things, I suppose. It's gone, anyway."

"You didn't say anything about it," put in Skinner.

"There was enough said without my chiming in; and it wasn't worth very much, anyway."

"Looks a bit suspicious to me," mumbled Skinner.

"You're the sort of chap to whom everything looks suspicious!" snapped the Boulder. "I apologise, Thornton. I oughtn't to have listened to that sweep. But someone must have taken the things. What are we going to do about it, Wharton?"

"I don't know, Smithy. It seems rotten to suspect any of the Courtfield fellows, but—"

"I vote two or three of us ride over after we've changed and see Trumper and Grahame and one or two more of those we know best," Johnny Bull broke in. "It's no good making a public scandal of it. They will be as sick about this as we are. There are fellows among them we don't know as well as we do Trumper, Harry. He wouldn't shield anyone. If he can put us on to

the thief he'll do it, you bet your last dollar!"

"Good egg!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Yes, it's quite a good notion," agreed Squiff.

No one, not even Skinner, saw Thornton's face pale at the suggestion. He had turned it away, and was stooping to change his boots.

In the upshot Harry Wharton, Johnny Bull, the Boulder, and Squiff rode into Courtfield together, and sought out two or three of the leading members of the Council School team.

But Trumper and the others could tell them nothing. They were indignant at first that the Removites should imagine there was a thief among them; but when all was explained they saw that the guilt lay between someone at Greyfriars and someone at Courtfield, and that it was but natural the Greyfriars fellows should be unwilling to suspect any of their own Form-mates.

On the way home, riding hard to escape being locked out, the four debated the question whether the thefts should be reported to those in authority.

They decided against reporting, and the others who had been robbed agreed with them after some argument. Skinner was all for reporting, but Skinner was given very plainly to understand that, as he had lost nothing, this was no business of his.

"Tell you what it is, Bolsy," said Skinner later. "I reckon this is a put-up job between the Thornton cad and one, or perhaps more, of those Council School bounders."

"But how could it be? He doesn't even know them. He's only been here about five minutes," answered Bolsover.

"All the same, that's what I believe it was, and I've my reasons," Skinner said stubbornly.

Probably he did believe it. Harold Skinner was always loath to count anyone more honest than himself, and his standard of honesty was not high.

Moreover, he had that letter to go upon. He could not bring himself to tell his pals about it, but he did not forget it.

Who was the "Tom" whom Thornton had gone to meet? Could it be Usborne, the young master who had umpired so fairly and ably? Thornton knew him, and of that fact only Skinner at Greyfriars seemed aware.

It might mean nothing. The nod on each side might well have signified the merest casual acquaintance.

But it was suspicious that no more than an interchange of nods should have passed between those two if they knew each other well.

And, anyway, who was "Tom" if not Usborne?

Skinner was more resolved than ever to watch Thornton.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Caught Red-handed!

"WAKE up, Bolsy!"

Skinner shook Bolsover major roughly.

"Wharrer marrer?" muttered Bolsover, half asleep still, but putting up a heavy hand to thrust Skinner away. "Lemme be! 'Tain't rising-bell yet, I'm sure!"

"It's not midnight yet, and I haven't been to sleep!" retorted Skinner. "But there's something up! That bounder Thornton has been out again, and now he's coming back! I can hear him scrambling up!"

At that Bolsover came into a sitting position, rubbing his eyes to get the heaviness of sleep out of them.

"What you going to do, Skinney?" he mumbled.

"What do you think? There's only one thing to be done, and that is pounce on him as he gets in at the window, and then rouse the whole dorm! I don't care how much noise it makes! I don't care if Quelchy hears! This is where we get our own back on cad Thornton, Bolsy!"

Percy Bolsover got heavily out of bed. He wondered at Skinner's rancour; he really did not see that Skinner had anything much against the new boy. But

he himself had something. He had been licked. He might have forgiven and forgotten that by this time but for Skinner; but the black sheep had not allowed him to forget, and, in his dull way, Bolsover still felt enmity towards Ted Thornton.

Together he and Skinner, pyjama-clad, moved towards the window. Skinner knew which window, but he had pursued different tactics this time. He had left the rope alone, thinking it safer and more effective to catch Thornton on his return.

The sash was partly up. They saw a hand push it up higher. They saw a body squirm up actively on to the ledge, over the sill.

Then they pounced, and, as they pounced, Skinner let out a shrill yell.

"Burglars!" he yelled.

Half the Remove awoke at once. The other half—or most of it—was not long in following. Only Bunter snored on, and Lord Mauleverer still slumbered, and Tom Dutton, who was deaf, heard not.

Fellows scrambled out of bed, while beneath the window Ted Thornton, with something like despair in his heart, writhed vainly under the weight of Bolsover major and Skinner, who had pinned him down to the floor.

"What is it?"

"Did I hear someone yell 'Burglars'?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the caper?"

"Oh, I say, there they are! By the middle window! Pile in, you cripples!"

With a rush a dozen of the Remove—Wharton, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Squiff, Peter Todd, the Bounder, and others—were upon the struggling trio.

"Skinney!"

"That's not the burglar!" said the Bounder. "Skinney would never have the pluck for that trade!"

"I'd got pluck enough to go for him, anyway!" retorted Skinner.

"Tain't a burglar—it's Thornton!" growled Bolsover major. "Don't pull my legs off, you silly asses! I've got him all right!"

"But if it's only Thornton, and not a burglar, what do you want holding him down for like that?" asked Bob Cherry. "You don't want to smother him, do you?"

"I don't know that I'd mind a heap. There's something jolly fishy about this bizney! You ask Skinney!" Bolsover answered.

"If there's anything fishy in it, Skinney might very well happen to be the likeliest person to give information!" spoke the Bounder sardonically.

"I don't know anything about it except that I heard someone getting in, and woke Bolsy," sounded Skinner's voice. "We went for the beggar, and got him down. Bolsy says it's Thornton—I dare say he knows what he's talking about. But I thought it was a burglar. And if it really is Thornton—well, I think you chaps will have to admit that it looks jolly suspish! Might be some use searching him this time, perhaps."

It was a shaft drawn at venture, but it got home. Ted Thornton would almost rather have thrown himself out of the window than endure a search then.

But he had no chance to try any measure so desperate. He was securely held. The suspicion which had been aroused in the pavilion some fifty hours or more earlier, that had been lulled then, had leaped into vigorous life again.

Harry Wharton did not speak. He felt that if there really was anything wrong in this, Thornton had let him down badly. The fellow had seemed so honest

and sincere. He had convinced even the Bounder, who was, as Harry realised, far better equipped for the smelling out of a rogue than he.

But the Bounder had not known of that other night expedition. Harry had. And now into Harry's mind there leaped the conviction that Skinner had also known—that it was Skinner who had hauled up the rope.

But to prove Skinner a spiteful rotter was not to prove anything new. It would not put Thornton straight. Only Thornton himself could do that.

Could Thornton?

It did not look likely. The Thornton who spoke now, hoarsely, angrily, was not like the fellow who had so earnestly assured Harry of his innocence that other night—not like the Thornton who had impressed them all by his bearing in the pavilion, when he had submitted so readily to a search.

"Take your hands off me, all of you!" snapped Thornton. "I won't put up with this! Suppose I have been out! What's it to do with any of you? I don't doubt plenty of you have done the same thing in your time! Let me alone, I say!"

But his protests were unavailing. Even those who thought best of him felt that he had to clear himself.

"Search him again!" urged Skinner.

"Leave me alone!" cried Thornton.

They searched him, of course. And they found upon him the whole of Wednesday's plunder—the gold watches of the Bounder and Johnny Bull and Inky, other watches of far less value, pencil-cases, wallets, hard cash, and other things.

To them it seemed clear what had happened. Whatever he might say, he had contrived to hide that stolen property on the Wednesday afternoon, and had been out that night to fetch it from the hiding-place. It did not occur to them that in doing this he would have been taking a risk that was quite needless. But obviously the safer plan for him would have been to take the plunder outside the school precincts, not to bring it into the dormitory.

"You rotter!" said Vernon-Smith savagely. "I could forgive you for stealing my watch and my cash, but I'm hanged if I'll ever forgive you for getting me to apologise for hinting that you might have done it!"

"What did I tell you, Smithy?" chortled Skinner. "We've caught him red-handed now, and he's nothing to say for himself."

Harry Wharton's voice struck in:

"Hasn't he? Are you sure of that, Skinner?"

Wharton could not see it, but through the gloom Thornton shot at him a glance that was full of gratitude and affection. Ted Thornton would never forget that even in that moment the skipper of the Remove had done his very best to believe in him still.

"Have you anything to say, Thornton?" asked Squiff, his voice hard.

There was a pause that seemed longer than it was. It would have lasted only a few seconds, but it seemed like many minutes. And in that pause some of those who waited found themselves hoping that Thornton could put up some sort of a defence.

He was such a fine cricketer, and he had seemed such a decent fellow. It

would be rotten if he turned out merely a sneak-thief!

Thornton's voice broke the silence, and that voice was hoarse and desperate.

"Nothing!" he said.

"He's caught out, fairly and squarely! He's got to go through with it!" shrilled Skinner. "This means the sack for him! There's nothing else that can be done!"

"We can't sack him!" growled Johnny Bull. "He deserves it all right. But if this is reported now we shall jolly well get it in the neck for not reporting it before. I've nothing to say in favour of the fellow, but for our own sakes I'm not keen on reporting. A Form ragging and Coventry will about meet the case, I think."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg, Johnny!"

"That's the idea!"

Behind these and other like exclamations was something at which Thornton, in his misery, did not guess.

Whether they realised it or not, there were those present—Bull among them—who, because Thornton was a fine cricketer and had seemed such a decent fellow, desired mercy for him.

A Form ragging, as he could well guess, would be no joke; but it would be far better than expulsion, and expulsion would be his certain fate if this was reported.

"What do you say, Wharton?" asked the Bounder. "Will a Form ragging meet the case?"

"I don't know, Smithy. I'm not sure. I can't help feeling that we don't understand this properly. Thornton isn't a thief. Oh, do explain, Thornton! You can if you will, I'm sure!"

"I can't, Wharton." The new fellow's voice was hoarser still, and the words he spoke seemed almost to choke him. "But I'll take the ragging, however hard it may be, and be grateful to you fellows for not reporting. And you'll not lose anything—it's all here."

Wharton saw even then, and others recognised afterwards something manful in that speech. It was hard to reconcile with the character of a thief. For it was in no cringing tone that Thornton said he would be grateful, and he made not the least attempt to beg off the ragging.

"I don't say it's right," spoke Harry Wharton, "but I'd rather have nothing to do with it. There are plenty of you without me."

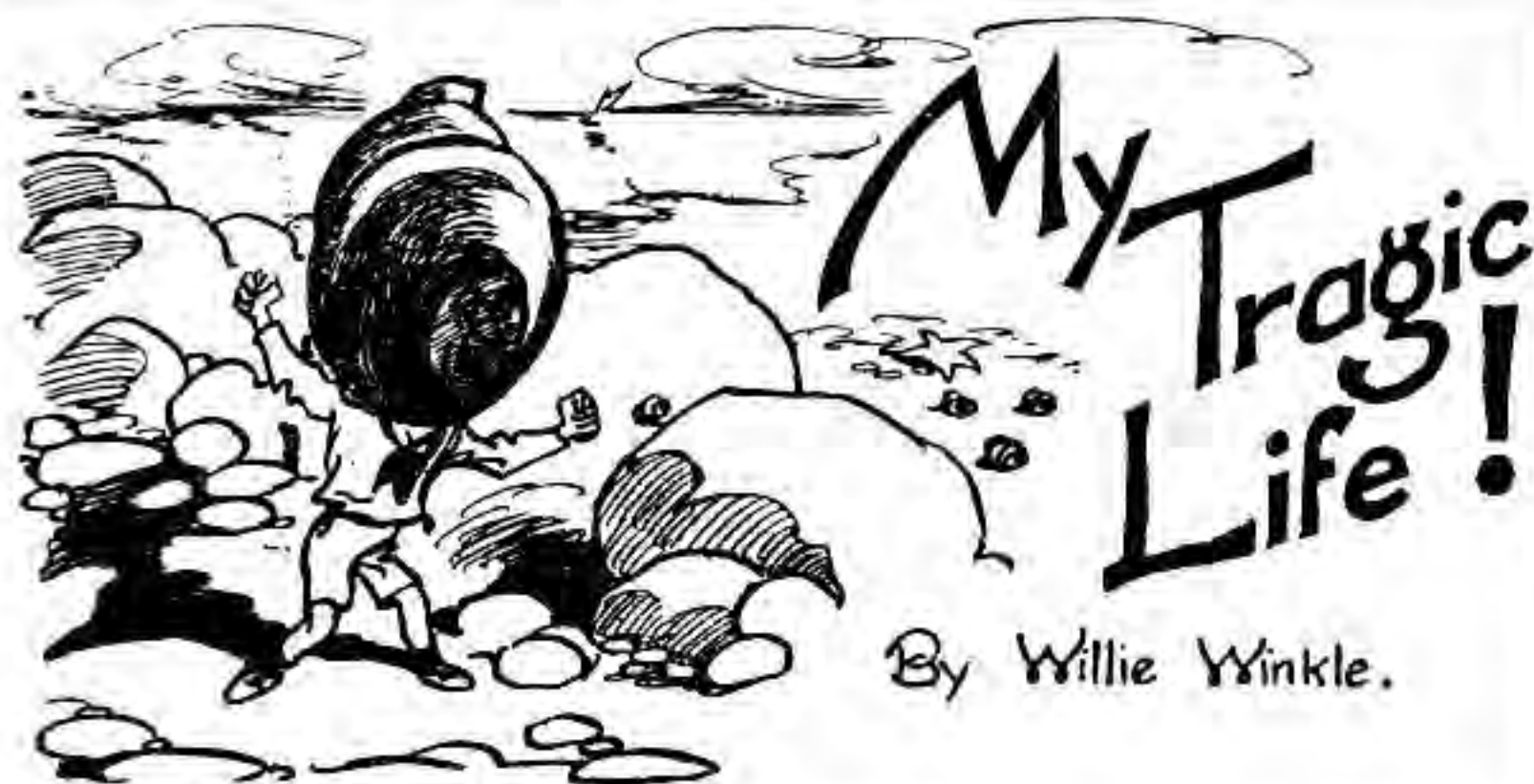
There were, and among them were several who meant to make the ordeal as nearly unendurable as it might be made.

Skinner and Bolsover knotted slippers into their towels—slippers such as would cause a good deal of pain to a fellow who got the full force of them. When a culprit ran the gauntlet the length of the dormitory and back again three or four times—which was one of the traditional Greyfriars Form raggings—it was not expected that anyone would strike him in the face, and slippers were not considered quite the thing. But in the confusion who was to know that a blow in the face was intentional or by whom it had been dealt?

It was Squiff who, still in the same hard, dry tones, told Thornton what he had to bear. Squiff was not feeling too happy about it; he did not like the conjunction of cricketer and thief. It hardly seemed possible to him that a fellow who played cricket as Thornton did should be dishonest. But the fellow put up no defence. He accepted

(Continued on page 17.)

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I AM a member of the Winkle tribe, and was born on a sandbank off the coast of Kent. I am an orphan, my poor parents having been caught and boiled by a number of Greyfriars barbarians, the leader of whom was Dicky Nugent.

A similar fate is probably in store for me—some day. That is why I am so sad, and my life is a tragedy.

Picture my plight, gentle reader! How would you like it if you had the haunting knowledge that one day you would be caught, and boiled in a tin can over the fire in the fags' Common-room, and then pricked out of your shell with a pin and eaten? Would you not spend sleepless nights and days in cruel suspense, even as I do?

You see, I never know which moment will be my last. Nearly every day, when lessons are over at Greyfriars, the members of the Greyfriars Winkle-Catching Corporation come and invade our sandbank, and start searching for us. Sometimes we lie concealed in the shallow, sandy water, and are not visible to the enemy. At other times we are left high and dry in our shells, at the mercy of our foes.

My father and mother lived to a ripe old age, as winkles go, but they met their fate in the long run. Dicky Nugent has the eye of a hawk for winkles, and I saw him pounce upon the two large shells in which my parents resided, and heard him shout to his companions:

"I say, you chaps! I've found a couple of whoppers!"

My poor parents were then exhibited to the gaze of a group of fags, and then stowed away in Dicky Nugent's pocket.

The reason why I escaped a terrible fate on that occasion was that I was such a small fellow that the fags didn't bother about me. But I've grown quite a strapping young fellow since then, and I expect at any moment to be pounced upon.

Why people eat winkles I can't

imagine. I'm sure we were never created to be the food of man—or, rather, boy. And yet lots of the Greyfriars fellows eat us ravenously—after having first put us through the painful process of boiling.

Sammy Bunter complains bitterly that winkles would be a much better article of diet if only they were bigger.

"The miserable specimens you find on the sandbank off Pegg," he says, "aren't a bit satisfying!"

Sammy has compiled a little table, as follows:

50 Winkles	-	-	1 Snack
100 Winkles	-	-	1 Meal
200 Winkles	-	-	1 Banquet
500 Winkles	-	-	1 Orgy

Fancy catching five hundred of my brethren and eating the lot! Talk about an infinite capacity!

As I say, we were not made to be eaten. It was intended that we should spend long and peaceful lives on our sandbank, undisturbed and unmolested. Yet day by day the sandbank is invaded by a tribe of fags, and we lie squirming in our shells, scarcely daring to breathe, and fearful lest the hand of the enemy should suddenly swoop down upon us.

I suppose I shall be caught soon, and placed with other captives in a tin can, and ruthlessly boiled.

My appeal to the fags of Greyfriars is this. Don't let me die a lingering death. Get it over quickly! The thought of being slowly boiled—going from cold to lukewarm, and from lukewarm to summer-heat—makes me tremble!

I shall bequeath all my personal estate—comprising two square inches of sand—to my sister, Winnie Winkle. But it's quite on the cards that she may meet her doom before I do, in which event my property will go to the Crown.

If some kind person will write to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Shellfish, and cause a ban to be placed on winkle-catching, I shall be eternally grateful.

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

THIS is the time when our thoughts turn instinctively to the delights of the seaside. Those delights are many and varied. Boating, bathing, surf-riding, fishing,—all are pastimes which provide keen enjoyment.

The Babes of the First take their pleasures in a more childish form. Paddling, and winkle-catching, and castle-building on the sands, appeal to them immensely. But the veterans of the Remove would not dream of doing these undignified things!

I suppose we must consider ourselves lucky at Greyfriars, for the sea, like the poor, is always with us. It can be seen from the dormitory windows which happen to face south; and a splendid view of it may be obtained from the top of the school tower.

St. Jim's and Rookwood are inland schools, and they do not know the delights of the sea, except at holiday-time. They cannot rise with the lark, as we do, and run down to the beach for an early morning dip. Neither can they indulge in that fascinating game of cave-exploring, for they have no caves to explore. So, as I say, we of Greyfriars must account ourselves jolly fortunate.

Not every Greyfriars fellow is a lover of the sea. Whilst it is a never-ending source of delight to poets like Penfold, who can sing of the "bounding billows" and the "murmuring waves," the sea has no attraction for Billy Bunter. He doesn't like bathing in it, owing to a rooted aversion to cold water.

Tom Redwing, a true son of the sea, has a great affection for it. And I am equally enthusiastic. I think my happiest moments are spent in breasting the waves, or fighting against the tide. I think the sea is just wonderful, and I love it, even though it has a habit of showing off its temper in the winter-time, when its waves are "mighty and rage horribly."

The seaside resorts, too, appeal to me immensely. I feel merry at Margate, and blithe at Brighton, and frisky at Frinton, and happy at Hastings. And I like the tiny, old-fashioned fishing-village of Pegg almost as much as the bigger resorts.

Well, the seaside is our subject this week, and there is no subject we would tackle in a more cheerful spirit!

HARRY WHARTON.

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What to do at the Seaside!

Some Helpful Hints from
our Cheery Contributors.

On arriving at the seaside you should partake of a good, square meal. Then—if you are a swimmer—go and have a dip. This should be immediately followed by another good, square meal. Then, if there is a konsert-party on the Peer, go and see it. Follow this up with a good, "round" meal, by way of variety! Then go for a ride on a donkey—but not unless you are an eggspieriensted rider, or you will look a bit of an ass yourself! Then partake of a light dinner of about fifteen courses; and, finally, "roll" home!

there are lots and lots of ripping things you can do at the Seaside. personally, i am very fond of winking and cockling and musselling. but don't be selfish with the shellfish. share them with your chums. there are heaps more ways of enjoying yourself, such as playing marbels on the sands, bilding sand-castles, fishing for seaweed from the jetty, throwing pebbles at bathing-masheen proprietors, sitting on gentlemen's straw hats, and other games of

skill, there's no reezon for a fellow to be dull at the seaside, even though the whether might be!

Take a jolly steamer trip; then enjoy a lovely dip. Eat a big vanilla ice; it will vanish in a trice! Take a stroll along the sands; listen to the German(?) bands. Feed at some delightful spot, where the soup is steaming hot. Fish for whitebait from the pier; give the Nigger Troupe a cheer. Play at leap-frog on the beach; grasp all joys within your reach. Hurry off and catch your train. Dash it! Back to school again!

Snuggle down on the silvery sands and sleep, *begad!* Drop into a delightful doze, and dream that there are no such things as Form masters and lessons and lines and lickings. And then wake up just in time to miss the last train back to school!

The seaside has innumerable attractions for the lover of Nature. Study

the dear little shellfish in their shells. Search for fossilised stones and rare pieces of fungus. Gather sea-shells. Feed the seagulls with buns from a paper bag. Paddle in the sea, by all means, but see that the water does not come above your ankles, otherwise you may be carried out to sea by a strong current. On no account go for steamer trips or sailing voyages. There is at least one fatal accident a year arising from these perilous enterprises; and who knows but that you may be the next victim?

"Wot's the use of arskin' me wot to do at the seaside? I never gets a chance to 'ave a gay week-end at Margitt, or to paint Brighton red! I keeps my nose perpetually to the grind-stone, an' never gets no rest nor respitt, as I've pointed out many times in these 'ere pages. Pity a pore old porter!"

Seek out some secluded spot, away from prying eyes, and enjoy the luxury of a Flo de Cabbagio cigar! (And spend the rest of your holiday getting over it!—Ed.)

"Eat, drink, and be merry"—and let yourself go in a giddy whirl of enjoyment! Forget all about Greyfriars, and imagine you're going to stay in your seaside paradise for ever!

Sit in a deck-chair and study Latin and Greek, so that you will not get into "hot water" with your Form master on your return to school!

Bathe, and play cricket on the sands alternately until you get as brown as a berry! And don't think of the fresh "tannings" you will receive on your return to Greyfriars!



WHAT THE WILD WAVES ARE SAYING!

By BOB CHERRY.

THAT Billy Bunter's bathing-suit of pink and purple is the biggest atrocity they have ever seen!

THAT if Mr. Quelch "made strokes" at swimming as powerful as his strokes with the cane he would be a champion!

THAT Skinner of the Remove is far from being an angel, and yet he indulges in "wings"—water-wings!

THAT when Billy Bunter bathes, the tide hasn't got a chance to come in!

THAT the antics of Coker of the Fifth, in a rowing-boat, made Father Neptune split his sides with laughter, and made all the mermaids hysterical with mirth!

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THAT the antics of Alonzo Todd are only less comical than Coker's. And that it's a wonder the pair of them haven't been food for the fishes long ago!

THAT Sammy Bunter can't swim for toffee. He can dive for it, though!

THAT Tubb of the Third hasn't taken a "tub" in the sea for several summers—hence his grubby appearance!

THAT the catching and subsequent boiling of winkles by the Greyfriars Winkle Catching Corporation, is a barbarous business, and ought to be abolished.

THAT when the oarsmen of the Fifth indulge in boating practice they are "all at sea"!

THAT there are more fish in the sea than ever came out of it—the Greyfriars fellows being such "dud" fishermen!

THAT the Bunter Brothers prefer "mixed biscuits" to "mixed bathing"!

THAT Gosling doesn't go to the seaside because he's such an old gander.

THAT Skinner was sent to Greyfriars because he is such a "fishy" person, and likes to be near his kind.

THAT Tom Newman was not much of a scholar until he came to live by the sea, and that ever since he's felt a "new man."

THAT Dicky Nugent declares the prettiest thing at the seaside is the Annie Moanie, and half the mermaids claim to be her.

THAT if you don't feel fit, the best thing to do is to go to the seaside and find out how the fit feel.



Berried Trezzure!

A thrilling story of a Grate Trezzure Hunt.

By

— DICKY NUGENT —

JACK JOLLY, the dashing, daring, delightful hero of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, could not fix his mind on lessons. His thoughts were full of the mysterious old parchment which he had found in one of the ancient volumes in the school library.

The parchment related to a trezzure which had been berried by smugglers in a cave on the coast. Jack Jolly had shown the document to his chums, Merry and Bright, and they agreed with him that it was perfectly genuine, and that he had made a rare find. The three chums had decided to pay a visit to the Smugglers' Cave, at midnite, and dig for the plunder.

No wonder Jack Jolly found it impossible to fix his mind on lessons! He wanted the hours to wizz by, and he was all a gog with eggshitement.

As he sat at his desk, he thrust his hand into his breast-pocket and drew out the parchment. Greedily his eyes devoured the lines of doggrel which were written in faded ink:

"He who seekyth wealth untold,
Shining silver, glist'ning gold,
Precious stones, and other spoil—
Let him diligently toil
At the witching hour of night
When the moon is shining bright,
Buried in the Smugglers' Cave
Close beside the murmur'ing wave,
He will find an old oak chest
Packed with spoil, to crown his quest.
Do not tarry or delay,
Seek the treasure straight away!

"(Signed) CAPTAIN FIREBRACE,
"Chief of ye Smugglers."

While Jack Jolly was feasting his eyes on that document, he was startled to find Mr. Lickham, his Form master, swooping down upon him.

"Jolly," cried Mr. Lickham, "what have you got there?"

"N-n-nothing, sir!" stammered Jack.

And he tried to smuggle the parchment into his pocket. But Mr. Lickham was too quick for him. He pounced upon the preshus document, and his eyes gleamed as he peroozed it.

"You can leave this paper in my custerdy, Jolly," he said as he went back to his desk. "I will investigate the matter."

"That's done it!" groaned Merry, who sat next to Jack Jolly. "Old Lickham means to go and serch for the trezzure himself! Jack, you prize idiot, why did you let him get hold of that parchment? He'll go to the Smugglers' Cave at midnite, and collar the spoils!"

But Jack Jolly merely smiled.

"I think I know how we can put a spoke in Lickham's weal," he mernored. "You leave it to me."

Jack Jolly had had one of his wonderful brane-waves. He happened to know

that there was an old oak chest in one of the lumber-rooms at St. Sam's, and he conceived the notion of filling it with brix, and berriying it just under the surfiss of the Smugglers' Cave, so that Mr. Lickham would find it, and think it was the jenuine trezzure. It was quite a cute dodge, and when Jack Jolly eggshplained it to his chums after lessons, they larfed hartily.

"We'll go down to the Smugglers' Cave at midnite and see the fun!" chuckled Bright. "Old Lickham will find the oak chest, and cart it all the way to St. Sam's; and when he gets it open he'll find it's full of brix!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Fourth laid their plans very carefully. Shortly before midnite, they rose and dressed, and stole silently out of the school bilding.

Crossing the quad, ahead of them, was a shaddowy figger, carrying a spade and lantern.

"Hang back a minnit!" muttered Jack Jolly. "That's Lickham!"

While the three chums were hiding in the shaddows, another figger emerged from the school bilding. Like Mr. Lickham, he carried a spade and lantern.

"Why, it's the Head!" gasped Merry in astonishment.

"He must have got to hear of the trezzure, somehow," whispered Jack Jolly. "Old Lickham must have been letting his tongue wag."

As soon as the coast was clear our heroes shinned over the school wall, and set out for the Smugglers' Cave.

When they reached their destination and peered cautiously into the cave, a drammatick scene met their gaze.

The Head and Mr. Lickham were in their shirtsleeves. They had both been digging for the trezzure, and they had unearthed an old oak chest. And now they were quarrelling feercely about it.



Crossing the quad, ahead of them, was a shaddowy figger, carrying a spade and lantern.

"It was me what found it!" said the Head in his dignified manner.

"Ratts! It was me!" said Mr. Lickham.

"You go and eat coke, Lickham! This trezzure belongs to me! I'm your seoperior, and, therefore, I'm entitled to bag the loot!"

"You—you theeving rotter!" hissed Mr. Lickham. "Now that we're outside the school presinks, I can talk to you eggactly as I like, and tell you just what I think of you, you mizzerable old toad! And, what's more, if you don't stand aside, and agree to let me have the trezzure, I'll biff you on the boko!"

The Head gave a feerce snort, and dropped his spade, and lowered his head, and rushed at Mr. Lickham.

The next minnit they were fighting like tigers. It was an undignified spectacle, to see the Head and the master of the Fourth pitching into each other for all they were worth.

Jack Jolly & Co., peeping round the corner, badly wanted to cheer the Head and to tell him to wipe up the floor with Mr. Lickham. But they held themselves in cheque.

Biff! Thud! Biff! Thud!

Round and round the cave the combatants tramped, hitting out savvidgely. The Head's nose was swollen nearly dubble, and Mr. Lickham's right eye had put up the shutters.

Prezzantly the Head began to get the worst of it. He was an older man than Mr. Lickham, and he couldn't go the pace. So he started to make terms.

"Tell you what, Lickham," he panted, "I don't want to knock you out—I've got grate affeckshun for you really. It's senseless to go on scrapping like this. Let's carry the old oak chest back to St. Sam's, and go halves with the plunder!"

Mr. Lickham breathlessly agreed to this arrangement. And having donned their coats and removed all traces of bludshed, the Head and the master of the Fourth lifted the old oak chest, and carried it out of the cave, with much gasping and grunting. Being filled with brix, it was no light weight.

Jack Jolly & Co. were fairly busting with larfter as they watched the cupple go stumbling along the shore with their burden.

"What a shock they'll have when they get to St. Sam's!" gergled Jack Jolly.

"When they get that chest open and find it full of brix, they'll have several sorts of a fit!" chuckled Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three chums then went into the Smugglers' Cave. The Head and Mr. Lickham had left their spades and lanterns behind, and the juniors soon got bizzly. They peeled off their coats, and

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BERRIED TREZZURE!

(Continued from previous page.)

Merry and Bright started digging for all they were worth, while Jack Jolly, who was no lover of manual labor, stood by and gave them advice.

Bigger and bigger grew the hole. Deeper and deeper it went, until Merry suggested that if they dug much deeper they'd come out in Australia!

There was no sign of a trezzure, and the diggers began to despare. It seemed that the old parchment which Jack Jolly had found in the school libery was, after all, merely a hokes.

"Better give it up as a bad job!" granted Merry at last. "All that I've come across, so far, is a worm and a fossilized winkle. There's no trezzure here."

Even as Merry spoke there was a metallick chink, as his spade struck something solid.

"What's that?" cried Jack Jolly eagerly.

"We'll soon see," replied Merry. And he and Bright started digging away with renewed vigger.

"The chest!" shouted Bright at length. "The old oak chest! Hooray! We've found the trezzure!"

It was a drammatick moment. The three chums fell upon each other's nex, and wept with joy. The berried trezzure had been located at last.

"We can't open it here," said Jack Jolly. "We shall have to cart it to St. Sam's, and open it in the woodshed."

The chest was terrible heavy, and it took the three chums over an hour to convey it from the cave to the school. But at last, breathless and eggshasted, they bore it into the woodshed, where there was a box of tools.

After pawsing to get back their breth, they started on their task of forcing open the lid of the chest. And when this operation had been performed they felt that they were well rewarded for their labers.

The old oak chest was simply crammed with trezzure. There were nuggets of old, and silver coynes, and dubloons, and peaces of 8, and joolery and trinkets of every deskription.

Jack Jolly & Co. were dazzled by the sight of all that plunder. For some moments they could only stand and stare. They were too speechless for words!

"I suppose," said Jack Jolly at length, "we shall have to hand over a certain amount of the loot to a grasping Guvverment. The rest of the plunder we'll whack out between us."

This was duly done; and after the Guvverment had taken its share, the juniors found themselves in possession of the magnnificent sum of two-and-three-pence apeace.

And the Head and Mr. Lickham—like the poor dog in the nursery rime—had none!

THE END.

MY SEA VOYAGE!

By BILLY BUNTER.



WITH a boatman I got pally;
I proposed a trip to Calais,
And to take me for a voyage
he agreed.

Said I, "Hold on a minute!
Before we both begin it,
I feel that I should like to have a
feed!"

So, with steps alert and nimble,
I adjourned to Mrs. Mimble,
And devoured a dozen doughnuts on
the spot.
For before you go a-tripping,
A good feed is simply ripping,
And it lays a fine foundation, does it
not?

We embarked upon the ocean,
And we couldn't feel a motion,
For the sea was smooth and placid as
a lake.

'Twas a motor-boat that bore us,
And the view that stretched before us
Was absolutely topping, no mistake!

Then, a dozen miles from Dover
(Rather more than half-way over),
A strong wind lashed the water into
foam.

It was something more than breezy;
I began to feel uneasy,
And almost wished that I had stayed
at home!

Then the sea grew dark and stormy,
And the motor-boat that bore me,
Was treated like a eggshell, I declare!
And with every mighty buffet,
I felt that I should "snuff it,"
And wrung my chubby hands in deep
despair!

I began to feel faint-hearted,
And to wish I'd never started,
But the boatman sat as stolid as could
be.

For he felt serenely happy;
Like a wise and thoughtful chappie,
He hadn't had a hearty meal, like me!

Oh, the pitching and the tossing
On that never-ending crossing!
It was like a ghastly nightmare, I
avow.

I can feel the queer sensation
And the sense of desperation,
And the swamping and the splashing,
even now!

On the shores of France we waited
Till the tempest had abated,
Then back we went across the peaceful
sea.

Though a giddy pleasure-hunter,
No more trips for Billy Bunter—
They will never make a sailorman of
me!

"TAKE MY TIP!"

A special contribution from
Trotter, the Greyfriars Page,
telling of "tips," lavish and
otherwise, which he has
received.

TEN bob a week is hardly what you might call a Cabinet Minister's salary, and if it wasn't for the "tips" I receive from time to time from the young gents at Greyfriars I should be in Queer Street.

I always reckon to reap a rich harvest of "tips" at Christmas-time. Also when the young gents break up for the Easter and summer vacations.

The biggest "tip" I ever received was a five-pound note. You can guess who it came from. Lord Mauleverer, of course! In all my fourteen years on this planet I've never met a more generous gent. His lordship doesn't believe in tipping in twopences and threepences. He would scorn to toss me a humble copper. When he gives anybody a gratuity there's no half-measures about it. I consider Lord Mauleverer quite the nicest young gent in the Remove Form. He might be a slacker and a lazybones, and all the rest of it, but he is always ready to open his heart—and his purse—and he always has a friendly nod and a cheery smile for an overworked menial.

The meanest "tip" I ever received was from Master Skinner. It was a sixpence with a hole in it. I tried to get Mrs. Mimble, at the tuckshop, to give me sixpennyworth of coppers in exchange for it, but she wasn't having any. And the shopkeepers in Courtfield and Friardale turned up their noses at the coin and refused to take it. Finally, I got fed-up with the beastly thing, and threw it in the River Sark.

Master Bunter is another fellow who can hardly be described as the soul of generosity. He only tips me on rare occasions, and then it's never more than a penny. When he went away for the Easter vac he had the cheek to tip me a halfpenny. And he didn't do it in a shamefaced way, either. By the lofty way in which he addressed me, you'd have thought he was presenting me with a hundred pounds. "Take my tip, Trotter," he said, "and mind you don't make a beast of yourself. Don't go spending it in riotous living, you know!" I felt so savage that I threw his halfpenny back at him, and it hit him on the nose!

So far as the masters are concerned, some are very generous in their tipping and others are Skinnerish—which is another way of saying jolly mean. Mr. Larry Lascelles and Mr. Twigg are the best tipppers. Mr. Hacker is the worst. Mr. Prout and Mr. Quelch vary their tips according to the mood they happen to be in. For example, if they happen to have just won a game of golf they fairly beam on me, and clink a couple of half-crowns into my willing palm. But if they have just lost a game of golf I get no tip at all!

The Head is a fairly good tipper, but he is absent-minded. He has a habit of forgetting my existence. He doesn't deliberately ignore me. It's just thoughtlessness. And I can't very well go up to him and say, "Excuse me, sir, but you've forgotten to tip me. What about it?"

I don't get nearly so many tips as Gosling, the porter, which is hardly fair, because I have to do all the running about, while Gosling sits in his parlour puffing at a pipe of peace—or, to be more correct, a piece of pipe.

Never mind! In about seventy years' time I might be appointed gate-porter at Greyfriars, and then it will be my turn to take the lion's share of the tips, while the poor page-boy, like the poor dog in the nursery-rhyme, has none!

I ought just to mention a tip that Master Cherry once gave me. He tipped me out of a wheelbarrow, and I came a fearful cropper. But those are the sort of "tips" I can very well do without!

[Supplement iv.

TELL YOUR YOUNG BROTHERS
AND SISTERS TO READ
"JUNGLE JINKS!"



(Continued from page 12.)

his punishment, and said he was glad to get off so lightly. Surely that was the equivalent of a plea of guilty?

"I understand," said Thornton.

He might be a rotter, but he had pluck!

Twice up and down the dormitory he ran, while everyone but Wharton and Mauly—who was nearly half-awake now, but took no part in the affair—swiped at him with wetted towels and loaded towels, with slippers held by the toe, and some few with other weapons of punishment.

He stumbled more than once. A lithe cane that someone had found slashed across his back, leaving a weal, and two or three blows landed on his face. He was dazed and bruised and smarting when it was over. But he never let out a sound of pain or wrath.

He took it all like a stoic. A thief he might be, but he had pluck. When the light was switched off and he crawled into bed he slept before some of those who had borne a part in his punishment. Squiff, Frank Nugent, Bob Cherry, Inky, Mark Linley—though Mark had done nothing to him that counted—perhaps the Bounder, and Dick Rake, and Tom Brown, and Piet Delarey, and a few more also, felt more than a little remorseful. For some of them were soft of heart, and all of them could appreciate courage; and it had been so many against one, and a decent fellow never feels quite easy about that.

But there was no remorse in Harold Skinner. He lay awake for a full hour feeling happy. And Bolsover major, though his glee was not sufficient to produce wakefulness, had no doubt felt that the right thing had been done; while Billy Bunter snored on without a qualm.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Right Stuff!

NO definite decision as to sending Thornton to Coventry had been made; but most of the fellows behaved next morning as though it were a settled thing, and pointedly refrained from speaking to or even looking at him.

He felt it cruelly. He was bruised and smarting outwardly, and his face was marked. But the worst was inside. They thought him a thief, and he could not explain. He had escaped the worst that might have happened—expulsion—but his name was stained, and it would be hard for him to live down that stigma.

Skinner found no end of pleasure in contemplating his bruised and brooding face; and Bunter sniggered whenever he looked at him. But Bolsover felt rather less happy about it.

Harry Wharton had taken charge of the watches, money, and other things which had been found in Thornton's pockets. He distributed them to their rightful owners, and no one was a loser. Except Bunter, that is. Bunter said he had been robbed of the sum of ten shillings and sixpence-halfpenny. But as Bunter had had no garment hanging up

in the dressing-room, and as it was held to be a sheer impossibility that Bunter should have possessed the sum he mentioned, the Owl got no sympathy.

When the school came out from breakfast Harry Wharton ranged up alongside Thornton.

To do that required a whole lot of moral courage. But Harry had that, as well as the physical sort. Had an attempt been made to pass a sentence of Coventry upon Thornton he would have spoken against it. His protest would have been fruitless, no doubt; then he would have bowed to the ruling of the Form.

But Thornton was not in Coventry, and anyone who had the nerve might reasonably speak to him. Two or three fellows who noted Harry's action felt in sympathy with him. Somehow they could not think Thornton wholly a rotter.

"I say, Thornton, you weren't fairly treated last night," said Harry. "There oughtn't to be any marks on your face, you know. We don't reckon to hit a fellow there when he's ragged."

"Oh, what's that matter? I don't care about all that, Wharton—truly I don't. If that could wipe it out— But it can't, and it doesn't, I know. Why, even you more than half believe me a thief!"

"That's not right," returned Harry. "It's a good deal less than half, at worst. No, Thornton, I don't believe you a thief at all. But you must admit that it's no end puzzling."

Thornton knitted his brows. If he could have told anyone he would have told Harry. His secret would have been safe.

But it was not his own secret, and he could not tell. He drew a deep breath before he said:

"I give you my word of honour, Wharton, that I'm as innocent of theft as you are. But I see plainly enough that my word of honour isn't worth much, for a thief wouldn't hesitate to give it."

"It's good enough for me. I'm sure you're not a thief, Thornton. You carry on, old chap! The rest will come to see it in time."

"I'm going to carry on—anyway. I shall try to. It won't be easy. But you have made it a bit less hard for me, Wharton—a big bit!"

"I'm glad of that, Thornton. Buck up!"

Then the bell went for classes, and the two separated.

Except in the Form-room and at dinner, Wharton saw Thornton no more that day until the cricketers were leaving the nets. The new fellow had missed practice for the first time. That surprised no one. As things were, he would know himself unwelcome among them.

Then up over the playing-fields from the river came Thornton alone, soaked, dripping, and with the bruises on his face showing up more clearly than ever against a deathly pallor.

There was a general move towards him, but Harry found others waiting for him to speak.

"I say, Thornton, what's happened?" he asked.

"Nothing much. I got into the river, that's all," was the reply.

Thornton's tone was brusque, almost savage, and he hurried on, plainly unwilling to tell more.

"I say, Harry, you don't think he's been trying to drown himself, do you?" quavered Frank Nugent. "It's an awful thing if he has."

"Rot!" snapped the Bounder. "Thief or not, the fellow has a heap too much pluck for that. He went through his ragging last night man-fashion, without

a whimper. If he's been up to any such cowardly game as that—well, hang it all, I'll never believe I know pluck again when I think I see it."

"I'm sure he hasn't, Franky," said Wharton. "It's more likely—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" cried Bob Cherry. "Here's another wet one—no, two wet ones! I rather fancy we shall get an explanation here."

Eight or ten youngsters of the Second Form approached, and there was about the party a very obvious air of excitement.

One of the wet ones was Dicky Nugent, Frank's minor. The other was a pale-faced youngster named Biggs, who had only joined the Form that term, and had had rather a thin time of it. He was not the right sort to shake down readily into the ways of a public school.

Frank Nugent darted forward.

"Dicky! You young ass! You don't mean to say that Thornton's had to jump into the Sark to rescue you, do you?" he cried excitedly.

"Oh, don't be silly, Frank! What would anyone want rescuing me? I can swim as well as any of you Remove duffers, you bet! It was Bighead here he went in after."

Gatty spoke up.

"And Bighead put Thornton through it. My hat! I thought they were both going to drown!"

"Bighead clutched Thornton round the neck and wound his legs round him," went on Myers.

"I—I couldn't help it—really I couldn't! I didn't know what I was doing," wailed the forlorn Biggs.

"But where did Dicky come in?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Just about there," answered Myers. "Dicky dived in to help. But Thornton wasn't taking any. He ordered Dicky off."

"And wasn't he just spluttering—eh?" chortled Myers. "Bighead had him right under twice. It's funny now, but it wasn't then."

"You were dead-right to go in; but I don't know what I should have said to the pater and mater if you'd been drowned, Dicky," said Frank to his minor only.

But Dicky spoke out so that all might hear.

"Me—drowned? Oh, don't be a silly idiot, Frank! I can swim better than you can, and I'm a fair whale at life-saving. But Thornton—I dunno—he seemed so fierce—I had to do as he told me. And he was right, too. He got Bighead to the bank, and we pulled the young sweep up. Thornton was nearly done in. He looked awful!"

"Awful's no word for it," said Gatty solemnly. "I thought he was going to croak. He must have brought up gallons and gallons of water."

The Remove fellows looked at one another. They had known already that Thornton had grit beyond the ordinary. Now they had another proof of it.

But there was another aspect of the affair that struck Harry Wharton, always ready with sympathy for the under-dog.

"How did Biggs come into the water?" he asked.

An awkward silence fell upon the Second-Formers.

"Go on, tell them, Bighead!" said Dicky Nugent at length.

"I don't want to tell them; I'm not a sneak, really, though you chaps think I am," protested Biggs.

"I will if you won't!" said Dicky resolutely. "You see, it was like this. Wharton. We didn't cotton to Bighead. He's too much of a mammy's boy for the Second. I suppose we have ragged him

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rather. When we saw him down by the river we went after him, and the silly young ass lost his head and bolted. Then he stumbled; and there he was in the Sark. And he can't swim a stroke—he can't do anything except swank how beastly clever he is in Form."

"We'd have had him out all right," said Gatty. "We wouldn't have let the young idiot drown. But Thornton was in before any of us got the chance, and he wouldn't let us help."

"I guess it wouldn't be a bad thing if you held up a bit on Biggs," said Harry Wharton. "It looks to me as though you'd been giving him a rough time of it."

"But you didn't fall in on purpose, did you, Bighead?" demanded Dicky.

"No, I stumbled," answered Biggs.

"Well, you be a bit more decent to him after this," Harry said. "If he's got better brains than you have for the Form work, that isn't his fault, you know."

"And it doesn't take much, after all," added the Bounder caustically.

Dicky put out his tongue at the Bounder. But he and all the rest were impressed by what Wharton had said. Harry's words carried more weight with the fags than those of most people. Dicky Nugent would listen to Wharton, when his own major, saying much the same thing as Harry, would merely have provoked him to derision.

It was fairly certain that "Bighead" would get more consideration in the Second after what had happened. Dicky Nugent & Co. had been pretty thoroughly frightened. And Biggs had not wanted to sneak—that would count in his favour.

"Cut along and get into dry things, you young duffers!" said Harry.

They hurried off.

Dicky had shown the courage that was in him, for all his waywardness; and his major was proud of him.

But it was not of Dicky Nugent that the rest of the Remove fellows thought. It was of Thornton; and most of them were fully in agreement with the Bounder when he said:

"Thief or not—I'd rather believe him not a thief, but I don't see how to get past the evidence—that chap's got the right stuff in him!"

"He went under twice with that silly kid all over him!" Squiff said. "And he wouldn't let any of the other kids risk their lives. You're right, Smithy. But I wish I could believe he isn't a thief!"

"I do believe that he isn't!" said Harry Wharton. "He's as straight as any of us. Oh, I know it looks jolly queer! You might say he has been proved a thief. But I can't see it that way. There's some giddy mystery in all this; but——"

"But, thief or not, Thornton's got the right stuff in him, as Smithy says," broke in Peter Todd. "I find it difficult to think well of Thornton; but I'm hanged if I'm going to think any worse of him than I can help!"

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Return Game!

MOST of the cricketers of the Remove were very much of the same mind as Harry Wharton, the Bounder, Squiff, and Peter Todd, about Thornton.

But they found themselves in a minority. What had impressed them so much counted for little with fellows who had not been present when Dicky

Nugent, Gatty, and Myers had told their tale, who had not seen Thornton's pale, drawn face, with the bruises that ought not to have been there standing out lividly upon it.

There was little opposition among the leading members of the Form when Harry Wharton said that he had made up his mind to play Thornton in the return game with Courtfield Council School. But when the list was posted it was soon made plain that there were others in the Form who objected.

Against Thornton's name was pencilled, in capital letters, the word "Thief!" To guess whose work that was presented little difficulty; most of them were sure that the hand was the hand of Skinner.

But to prove it was another matter. And even to prove it would not have settled the matter.

Fellows came to Wharton—decent fellows like Ogilvy, Russell, Desmond, and two or three more on the fringe of the Remove eleven, all of whom had played for the team at times, and wanted to play again, and asked him whether he quite realised what he was doing in giving a new chap, who had practically been convicted of theft, the preference over them; and Harry did not find it easy to answer them.

It was easier to deal with Bolsover major and one or two more of his sort.

"If three-quarters of the Form had the mumps, Bolsy," said Harry, "and we'd still got to play a match, we might put you in. It doesn't look well to take the field short, you know. But you needn't worry about who's in the first eleven of the Remove, with no mumps about, until you're quite sure of your place in the third eleven. Captain of the Fourth is about your mark!"

Wharton was not often sarcastic; but that was sarcasm, as Bolsover saw after reporting to Skinner, and hearing Skinner's comments. For there were not forty-four fellows in the Remove, and the imaginary post of captain of the fourth eleven was therefore something even less than a sinecure.

The feeling of the majority of the Form communicated itself to some of the chosen eleven, and several fellows upon whom Harry had counted for staunch support, wavered. Even of the Bounder and Squiff he was not certain; and only Peter Todd stood firm throughout. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull were inclined to side with the majority; Inky would not express a definite opinion, and Frank Nugent swayed first this side and then that.

Harry had an anxious time. But he would not give in. With all his heart he believed in Thornton.

He would have felt easier if Squiff and the Bounder had ranged themselves definitely on one side or the other, or if Peter Todd had shared his own complete faith in Thornton.

"I'm not sure that the chap's dead straight, Wharton," said Peter. "But I'm jolly sure that he can play cricket, and I don't think he's likely to be caught stealing again."

"It's for you to choose the team," said the Bounder. "I'm not kickin'. S'pose Thornton's not a lily-white angel? Well, there are some more of us. I'm not that kind myself. I'm willing to play with Thornton, even if that sweep Skinner does write 'thief' against his name."

"No, I wouldn't drop him, Wharton," Squiff said. "He can play cricket. That's the main thing, isn't it?"

Harry's own belief in Thornton never once changed. But he came near to

striking out his name and substituting Delarey's when Thornton himself said:

"See here, Wharton; you've been no end decent to me. I'm not willing to make trouble between you and the rest of the Form, and it's easy enough to see that most of the fellows would rather I shouldn't play. Cut me out!"

Just one moment Harry hesitated. It is easier to swim with the tide than against it. But Harry Wharton had never gone in for doing the easier thing when the harder seemed right in his eyes.

"I won't!" he said resolutely. "I believe in you, Thornton. If you let me down, I don't think I shall ever believe quite so thoroughly in anyone again. You've simply got to play!"

"I'll play all right!" replied Thornton. "With you feeling like that about it, I couldn't refuse. And I won't let you down. But——"

He broke off on that, as if he had said more than he intended, and went, leaving Harry wondering.

The return match had been fixed for Courtfield Common, upon which the Council School usually played their home games. But the common had been badly cut-up by a stampede of cattle on a market day, when the turf was in a soft condition; and Dick Trumper readily agreed to play the second game on Little Side at Greyfriars, like the first. The Courtfield fellows liked visiting Greyfriars, anyway, though this time some few of them came with a slight resentment in their minds. There had been some sort of suspicion of theft against one of their number, and it had never been cleared up. If there had been a guilty person among them he might have felt uneasy, and have suspected a trap, in which case he would hardly have fallen into it.

But the thief was not of their number, and only the three or four who had been interrogated by the Remove deputation knew of the suspicion against them. Each of these knew himself innocent, and each was sure of his comrades; but they were naturally a trifle worried by the feeling that the Greyfriars fellows might not be so sure of them.

They did their best not to let their feelings show. But there was something in the air which made this meeting between old opponents less friendly than earlier meetings had been.

The young master, Osborne, was with the team again as umpire. The news of what he had done for Courtfield Town against Lanchester on the Saturday had reached Greyfriars, though the local weekly was not out yet with an account of the match.

Osborne had scored 65 on a difficult wicket against good bowling. No one else had made more than 20 or thereabouts for either side, and the Council School master's bowling had been so deadly that Lanchester had been beaten by an innings and a good many runs.

The Remove players looked at him with keen interest. It was hard to think of him as a cricketer of such calibre. He was small and slight, and his pale face wore a troubled look.

Skinner, watching closely, saw that he and Ted Thornton did not recognise each other by even as much as a nod this time. It seemed to Skinner that each of them was careful not to look the other's way. And, as the black sheep of the Remove was quite certain that they had nodded to one another a week earlier, it was hardly wonderful that he saw matter for suspicion in this new attitude.

But he never guessed the truth. His rancour against Thornton most effectually prevented his doing that.

"Heads!" called Dick Trumper.

Heads it was.

"We'll bat first, Wharton," the Courtfield skipper said, with a cheery grin.

That cheery grin still persisted two hours later, when, for all that the Remove bowlers could do, the Council School had 150 up with only four wickets down, and looked like making their record score against the Remove.

Trumper himself was still in, and had made far more than half the runs. He was nearing his hundred. Dick Trumper, always good, had shown form such as he had never shown before, and each of the fellows who had been dismissed had batted really well and given him help.

The coaching of that pale-faced young master who looked so insignificant, no older than the boys he taught, had borne its fruit. Dick Trumper & Co. had never been opponents to be despised. Henceforth the respect felt for them would be greater.

Dick Trumper, who had never looked like getting out, ran past the hundred. It was not his first century; but it was his first against the Remove, and he got as much applause as he could have asked for.

He hit another four, bringing his score to 105, and then he had to go, bowled middle stump by Thornton.

It was only then that most of those who watched realised that thus far the new fellow had taken all the wickets. Inky, who usually did the best attacking work for the Remove, had tried all his wiles in vain. Three or four others had been on, and had met with no success. Thornton had bowled at one end most of the time, and had done what no one else could do.

And he had done it without the applause which means so much to a cricketer. His comrades in the field had not let what he had done pass unacknowledged. But from the ropes had come little cheering, and no burst of applause. Some of those who watched felt that, however finely Thornton might perform, he had no right where he was: that an inferior player whose honesty was above suspicion should have been in his place. There were others whose antagonism went farther than that.

"Who's going to cheer a blessed thief?" snarled Skinner.

"I'm jolly well not!" answered Bunter virtuously. "He ought to be kicked off the ground and sent to prison, oughtn't he, Skinney? Mean beast! He had the nerve to tell me that if my postal-order was coming in the morning, I could wait until the morning for it. What do you think of that, eh?"

No one said exactly what he thought of that. No one there believed in Bunter's mythical postal-order. But they were content to let Bunter make a grievance of Thornton's refusal to lend on that very doubtful security, though not one of them would have lent upon it. The Owl was on their side, and they bore with him for that reason.

The next man after Trumper's departure found one ball from Thornton enough for him. Six wickets were down for 177.

Now two of the Courtfield fellows, of whom in the ordinary way little would have been expected, made quite a decent stand. They carried the score past the 200. Harry Wharton had taken Thornton off, thinking that he must be tired. But now he asked the new fellow whether he would care to have another try, and Thornton nodded, and caught the ball deftly when Harry threw it to him, and bowled one of the two stickers at once.



The sash was partly up. Skinner and Bolsover saw a hand push it up higher. They saw a body squirm over the sill, and then they pounced. "Burglars!" yelled Skinner. Fellows scrambled out of bed, while beneath the window Ted Thornton, with something like despair in his heart, writhed vainly under the weight of Bolsover major and Skinner.

(See Chapter 7.)

Seven for 208. The Remove would have to buck up to win.

And still the applause for the fellow who had done all the damage was half-hearted at best.

Thornton felt it, but would not show that he felt it. The strong courage within him stirred. They might believe him a thief, but, by the Lord Harry, they should be made to see that he was a cricketer!

His next ball was altogether too good for No. 9, and eight wickets were down for 208.

A couple of minutes later nine were down for the same total, and the new boy had done the hat-trick! Following up, he had taken a catch almost off the bat of the incomer.

Now there was a positive roar of applause from the field. But from the watchers came only a feeble clapping.

It was just at this stage that Dicky Nugent & Co. arrived upon the scene, later than they would otherwise have been by reason of the fact that something like a riot in Form that morning had meant detention for them all.

Biggs was in their midst, treated now as comrade and equal, but still not feeling sure of his footing. When they learned that the Courtfield last man was coming in, and that thus far Thornton had taken all the wickets, their exuberant enthusiasm brought upon them the wrath of Skinner.

Much the Second cared for Skinner's wrath and scowls! They had made up

their minds about Thornton. Thornton was a hero and a first-class cricketer, who ought to be playing for England instead of for the Greyfriars Remove! They were backing Thornton for all they were worth.

All out 208! The last man on the Courtfield side had not been able to withstand even one ball from Thornton. He had taken four wickets in four balls, and his analysis for the innings was ten for 62.

"Hurrah! Thornton for ever!" roared Dicky Nugent.

And the Second roared with him, and with them the players shouted. But Skinner and his crowd were dumb. A beastly sneak thief had taken all ten wickets—a feat never performed in a Remove match before—but were they going to shout? Not they!

Better that the Remove should lose than that they should win through the exertions of an outsider like that!

Skinner & Co. groaned. But some of them groaned with little conviction, and the noise they made was drowned in the cheering.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Hard Hitting!

IT was no light task that the Remove had to face. As many as 209 were wanted to give them victory, and it was seldom they made a score like that.

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But they did not despair. The pitch was good enough for anything, and plenty of time was left for the making of the runs.

"Would you care to go in first, Thornton?" asked the Remove skipper.

The new fellow did not hesitate in his reply. He had done more than his share of the bowling, and he felt tired. But if Wharton wanted him to go in first, he would go in.

"Right-ho!" he said.

When he came out, padded and gloved, Peter Todd was his partner. But the cheers that made the welkin ring were not for Peter. They came from the Second Form mainly, shrill cheers in the tones of small boys. But they helped Thornton.

He disappointed his Second Form admirers at the outset. They had expected him to hit sixes. He did nothing of the sort. His batting was very restrained and subdued. He was playing himself in carefully. The big hits might come later, if he could stay; but at present he was simply incapable of them.

His task was to keep up his wicket; and that task he fulfilled.

He saw Peter Todd go for a dozen and the Bounder for a duck—the Bounder's own fault, as he candidly admitted afterwards, for there was no chance of a run when the ball was played straight to Dick Trumper at cover—and meanwhile he had only scored five singles himself—"five measly singles," as the Second-Formers put it.

But after that things were livelier. Bob Cherry was next, and Bob always hit. He slogged a four, and a sharply run single brought Thornton to the batting end to face Trumper.

Crack! The bat met the loose ball full on.

"My word, that's some hit!" exclaimed Nugent minor.

It was indeed some hit. It went past mid-off like a flash. It was a boundary from the second it left the bat.

The next ball was a cut for four, and that which followed was sent crashing to the leg boundary.

Dicky Nugent and his pals let themselves go now. From the pavilion sounded clapping and cheers. Skinner & Co. looked sad and sour.

Dick Trumper passed his hand over his nicely smoothed hair, and made up

his mind that someone else should take the bowling from his end next over, for plainly his googlies had no terrors for Thornton.

The change of bowling made no difference, however. Bob and Thornton went on hitting.

Bob Cherry had always been reckoned the fastest scorer the Remove had—as long as he stayed, which was unfortunately seldom as long as they would have liked to see him stay. To-day he hit as hard as ever. But he could not keep pace with Thornton.

The new fellow seemed to find all the bowling dead easy. At first he had contented himself with singles; now he made his runs chiefly by fours. Dicky Nugent and his pals cheered themselves hoarse. Skinner & Co. grew ever glummer and glummer.

Of exactly 100 put on for the third wicket Bob Cherry made 39. When he left the Remove looked pretty safe.

But in a few minutes the situation had altered completely. Harry Wharton, Squiff, and Johnny Bull had all left with only ten runs added.

Six down for 132, and 77 still wanted for victory!

Mark Linley was not playing, and the next man was Piet Delarey. Always cool in a crisis, the South African junior showed at his best now. He only just reached double figures; but he stayed while 43 were added.

Thornton's score stood then at 99. It was still 99 when Tom Brown left, after making a two through the slips.

Frank Nugent, pale but resolute, took the New Zealander's place at the wicket.

At this moment there was a commotion in the pavilion.

"My watch has gone again!" sang out Johnny Bull.

His voice carried right to the pitch. Thornton heard, and Frank heard, too. Frank shook with agitation; he was highly strung, and the situation was already quite strenuous for him.

He looked at Thornton—not accusingly—indeed, the thought uppermost in his mind was that this was bound to put the new fellow off his game.

Thornton behaved very queerly. He took three or four strides down the pitch, as though to speak to someone; then he went back and asked for fresh guard.

It was the last ball of an over which had disposed of Tom Brown, and not yet had Frank to face the bowling.

The Courtfield umpire, Osborne, came forward to give Thornton guard. He was wearing the correct long white coat, and he thrust his hands deeply into the pockets as he stooped slightly over the wicket.

"Middle and leg," he said. "I mean middle and off. No, I don't. You haven't begun to get it, Ted. Shift your bat six inches to the off—I mean the leg."

Frank thought he must have gone mad. The fellow was a cricketer of more than ordinary ability; but he seemed incapable of distinguishing off from leg. And he had called Thornton "Ted"! What did that mean? Only Skinner and the one or two he had told were aware that Osborne and Thornton knew one another.

Dick Trumper and the rest stared in wonderment. In the pavilion the hubbub increased. It was fairly easy to guess that others besides Johnny Bull had lost property.

"All right! Get on with it!" said Thornton.

He turned the ball neatly to leg, and they ran one. Thornton had made his century; but the feat passed almost unnoticed, except by the Second Form contingent, who yelled frantically.

"Hang it all, the match ought to be stopped till we find the thief!" snapped the Bounder. "It's altogether too thick! I'm not saying it's Thornton, but—"

"How's that?" yelled Grahame, the bowler, and half the field.

In his nervousness Frank Nugent had played a straight ball with his pads instead of his bat. He was palpably out; but Osborne, putting his hand to his forehead, said uncertainly:

"I don't know. I think—oh, not out!"

The mistake made no difference. With his next ball Grahame bowled Frank's middle stump, and only the Nabob of Bhanipur was left to help Thornton.

Inky did not count himself a batsman; but he had nerve and pluck, and the game was not over yet, though 31 were still wanted.

They sneaked a single, and Thornton had the bowling. He hit two fours and a two off the next three balls, and then realised that he had made a mistake. They ought only to have run a single off that last hit. The two had brought Inky opposite Dick Trumper, who had gone on again now.

There was plenty of excuse for Ted Thornton. Try as he might to fix his mind upon the match, he could not put out of it other matters.

Big trouble was coming, and he could not make up his mind just how he should meet it.

Inky did a good stroke of work then. He patted Trumper's first of the over past point, and there was an easy single. Thornton faced the bowling once more, with 19 wanted for victory.

He went for it all out, recklessly as it seemed, but it was a calculated recklessness. For well he knew that if he was to win this match for the Remove he must win it speedily. He could not stand much more.

Trumper sent down a short one, and Thornton slogged it clean over the ropes—the biggest hit of the match. Six for that—13 wanted!

The next ball was a much better one; but Thornton, jumping in to it, banged it past the bowler and to the boundary. Nine wanted!

Now even in the pavilion all attention was upon the game.

"He's going to win the match for us;

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but I don't know that it's any credit if he's what he seems to be," said Bob Cherry mournfully.

For most of them had made up their minds that Thornton must be the thief. Only Harry Wharton was still full of faith in him, while Squiff and one or two more wavered, hoping for the best.

Another four scored—only five needed to win now.

The Second Form contingent shrilled applause, as yet another boundary brought the scores level.

Thornton slammed again. He had lifted the ball somewhat; but it went past Trumper, who had followed up, like a flash, and it looked certain that no fieldsman could get to it.

"Run! Run!" yelled Harry Wharton excitedly.

They were already running. But the ball was stopped. It had struck Usborne on the head. He dropped, and as he dropped Johnny Bull's watch tumbled out of his pocket!

"Oh, I say! You fellows—it isn't possible, but—"

It was Dick Trumper who shouted these incoherent words, while other members of the Courtfield eleven ran forward, and one of them thrust his hand into the pocket of the umpire, and brought out another watch!

From the pavilion rushed the Remove players. From the ropes swarmed the spectators, Skinner & Co., a score of other Removites, and the Second-Formers.

But Thornton was standing over the insensible thief. He was like a lion at bay.

"Leave him alone!" he cried. "I won't let you touch him! If he did take them, it's not that he's really a thief. He doesn't realise what he's doing."

"What do you know about it?" snapped the Bounder.

"I ought to know. He's my brother!" answered Thornton defiantly.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Well Played, Thornton!

EVERYONE gasped—even Skinner, who knew more than the rest.

"But—his name—" began Trumper.

"Never mind about all that now. I'll explain everything later, for it's no good trying to keep the secret any longer," Thornton broke in on him. "What I've got to do this moment is to find out whether he's badly hurt."

Usborne might not be seriously damaged; but he lay unconscious. For the moment that had hardly been realised; but now those around thought more of the consequences of what had happened to him than those of what he had done.

"I'll go for the doctor," said Harry Wharton. "That is, I'll get Quelch to let me ring him up on his phone."

"Don't do that, Wharton, please!" Thornton pleaded. "I do believe he is coming to. If we bring Mr. Quelch into this—"

All understood what his pause meant. They hardly saw how Mr. Quelch was to be kept out of such a matter. But later what Thornton told them put a different aspect on it.

Tom Usborne sat up, putting a hand to his head. He was badly dazed, even now that he had recovered consciousness, and some of them had to help him to the pavilion.

"Clear out, all but the players!" spoke Wharton sharply.

But the crowd did not begin at once to clear. Skinner's voice rose in mutiny.



"Search him again!" urged Skinner. "Leave me alone!" cried Thornton fiercely. But the Removites searched him, despite his struggles, and they found upon him the whole of Wednesday's plunder—the gold watches of the Bounder and Johnny Bull and Inky, other watches of far less value, hard cash, and other things. "What did I tell you, Smithy?" chortled Skinner. "We've caught him redhanded!" (See Chapter 7.)

"We've as much right to hear what Thornton's going to say as any of you have, Wharton," Harold Skinner protested. "We may not believe it as easily. But we have a right to hear."

"Of course we have, Wharton," piped up Billy Bunter. "Oh, really, you know, Wharton, it's all very well for you to make a pet of this new chap, and stick him into the eleven, though we all know that he's a thief, but there's a limit!"

"There is, and you would be the nearest here to it if Skinner was away, you fat lump of lard!" snapped the Bounder.

He turned to Thornton, and spoke in quite friendly tones:

"If I were you, Thornton, I'd explain it all," he said, "and before everyone. It can't be kept dark now, and you can't shield this fellow any longer."

Thornton stood in the midst of them and told his tale, simply and briefly, not at all as if he thought himself a hero. His voice almost broke now and then, and sometimes he flushed redly, and then paled again. It was the worse ordeal for him because Usborne was there to hear.

But Tom Usborne hardly seemed to hear. He was still so dazed that it may be he did not understand.

"We're half-brothers," Thornton said. "That explains why our names are different. The mater married my father about two years after Tom's dad died. But we've always been like real brothers, though my pater and Tom didn't get on well together. That doesn't matter: the pater's dead now, and

mother, too, and I promised her when she was dying that I'd always do what I could for Tom."

"He's a good fellow, but he's curious about some things. You chaps have heard of kleptomania, of course?"

"Oh, yes!" replied a dozen voices.

"But we're not mugs enough to believe in it," spoke one—Skinner's.

"If we're not, it's a bad look-out for your fat pal, Skinney!" replied Bob Cherry.

Thornton paid no heed to Skinner. From first to last he treated the black sheep of the Remove with contempt.

"Tom's a kleptomaniac. There are times when he gets moody and queer. It generally ends up with something like this. If I could be with him always, I think I could keep him off it, for I've an influence over him that no one else has. This fit—if you can call it that—has lasted longer than ever before."

"And that's why you've been going out at night—to meet him and try to keep him straight?" put in Wharton.

Thornton nodded.

"Likely—I don't think!" sneered Skinner.

"When the watches and things were first stolen I felt sure Tom must have done it," went on Thornton. "I got them from him and brought them back; but I was caught getting in, and everybody but Wharton reckoned I must be the thief. I don't blame you—it did look like it."

(Continued on page 28.)

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"Heigho! He bends his bow—flies the shaft of Robin Hood! Heigho!"



SHERWOOD GOLD

By
**FRANCIS
WARWICK**



INTRODUCTION.

Story is staged over the period when Richard Lion-Heart, the king, was away in Palestine on the Third Crusade.

TOM HADLEIGH—a youth of sixteen, who was found as a babe by the monks of Hadleigh Priory deserted in Sherwood Forest. He breaks away from the master to whom he had been apprenticed, and throws in his lot with

LANTERN—a carefree adventurer of diminutive stature, but withal a sterling swordsman.

ROBIN HOOD—chief of the band of outlaws, whose headquarters are in the depths of Sherwood Forest. A good friend to the poor and needy, and a source of continual worry to **EARL HUGO** of **CHARNDENE**—an unprincipled vassal of Prince John, known to the people of Nottingham as the Black Wolf.

FRIAR TUCK, ALAN-A-DALE, LITTLE JOHN, etc.—members of Robin Hood's band.

LON—once jester to Earl Hugo, but now the friend of Tom Hadleigh and Lantern. Lon tells Tom that the peculiar talisman in his possession—a half circle of polished horn upon which are the words "The cave betwixt—a split oak—follow the water—Gold," which was found near Tom by the good monks of Hadleigh when the former was a babe—would reveal the whereabouts of a wondrous treasure could the other half of the talisman be fitted to it. Lon declares that the other half of the talisman is in the possession of the Black Wolf. They set out to seek it.

Alan-a-Dale and Tom are captured by Earl Hugo's men and taken to the castle of Charndene, while Lantern, who was with Tom and Alan-a-Dale at the time of their capture, is thought to have deserted them. The castle is raided by Robin Hood and his band, and the prisoners are set free. In the fight that ensues Tom engages Earl Hugo, and succeeds in wresting the talisman from him. But before the lad can read the inscription thereon the talisman is snatched from his hands by a mysterious hooded figure, who makes off with it. Tom is now set the task of rejoining his comrades, who are steadily retreating from the castle. Unfortunately for Tom he runs into a party of Earl Hugo's men-at-arms, and in a few moments he is fighting for his life. He is wounded in the fray, and just when consciousness is leaving him Lantern suddenly appears. The little swordsman keeps the soldiers at bay, fighting like a wizard until he, too, is wounded. Tom, half swooning on the ground, realises that the fight cannot go on much longer, for Lantern can hardly keep steady on his legs.

(Now read on.)

The Friar to the Rescue!

THINGS were looking black, and, with an effort, I (Tom Hadleigh) tried to shake off the semi-stupor, and rise to aid Lantern. But he shook his head as he fought.

"Nay, Tom, nay! Lie there, lad. You have done your share. 'Tis not hard to manage such scum as this!"

I sank back with a little groan. I realised that I could not have aided him if I would. Though he did not tell me so in his reassuring words, I was looking like a very corpse, so white and haggard was I.

But I could see that his leg was troubling him as he fought on.

Things might have gone hard with us had there not sounded all suddenly a great bellowing shout from down the corridor. The next moment Friar Tuck, his green cassock girded high around his waist, had come upon them from behind.

"Oho!" roared he. "Sherwood! Sherwood! We'll show these castle rats such men as the forest breeds! Stop this an you can, you featherless crow!"

And with that he aimed a mighty blow with his broadsword at a lean, sinewy rogue, who answered vastly well to Tuck's description of him.

A man of wondrous strength was the Friar, despite the good fat that rounded his crimson cheeks. He was as worthy a foeman as the steel of any man could desire, though such brawn, it seemed, did not appeal to Hugo's men.

Though five of them still were unscathed, or with but slight hurt, their spirit was broken already by Lantern's strange skill. I think some of them

began to believe him the Evil One upon earth. And the coming of the brawny father upon them in the rear robbed the villains of their final courage.

They fought on for a little while, and then they turned and fled down the passage in a panic, leaving no less than nine comrades slain or wounded, victims of Lantern's blade, or Friar Tuck's, or mine own.

"As goodly a collection of knaves as ever did litter a passage!" cried the Friar. "But come, the struggle in the courtyard is going hard with us, I fear. Too many are against us, though I'll warrant me more men have fallen upon their side than upon ours by many a mark. But we must hasten. Oho! Look at this young fighting-cock. He is in a bad way, methinks."

And the next moment the Friar had swung me into the air as though my big frame was no more than a child's.

With Lantern ahead of us, sword ready, I was carried swiftly down a dim passage. Down some stairs and up some stairs we went, but as far as I can tell you—for I knew little of those anxious minutes—we met no one. Lantern and Tuck, it seemed, knew a way out into the courtyard, and the next thing I realised was the cool, fresh bite of the early morning.

That revived me a little, and I was able to see what followed.

I think Lantern and Tuck had thought to come out into the ranks of the outlaws. But our friends had lost ground, I suppose, for we had to run the gauntlet of Hugo's party—I helpless in the Friar's mighty arms, and Lantern guarding our retreat with his nimble sword.

The struggle in the courtyard was still waging very fiercely, but what a shout rose from the ranks of the men in Lincoln green to see Lantern and Tuck racing t'wards them, with me in the Friar's arms!

I learnt afterwards that my absence had been discovered. Someone had declared seeing me race from the great hall after Hugo, so that they guessed I was not slain. And now, as I say, a great shout rang out and echoed round the grim battlements of Charndene when they saw me safe.

A group of the outlaws surged forward to meet us, and the next moment we were safe in the ranks of the men of Sherwood.

I saw the tall, lean figure of Alan-a-Dale laughing across at me, mighty glad to see me alive, so he told me afterwards, for he had never thought to clap eyes on me again, although Lantern and Friar Tuck, and some of the others, had succeeded in slipping into the castle unobserved in search of me.

I saw, too, the giant form of Little John, his great war-hammer smashing down upon his foes in the thickest of the fight. And in the ranks of our foes I descried De Vaux and De Blois the Red, his great red beard tossing as he fought. But of Hugo there was no sign.

"Sherwood! Sherwood! Sherwood!"

The battle-cry of the outlaws rang 'gainst the grey walls of Charndene. And above the clang and clamour of the fight came the answering cry:

"Charndene! Charndene!"

But it all seemed very faint and far away to me. And then there sounded the clear note of a horn.

'Twas the silver bugle of Robin Hood giving the signal for the retreat.

But I knew nothing further. I had swooned away at last in the arms of Friar Tuck.

"The King is——"

WHEN I opened my eyes 'twas to see the green leaves of a glorious beech-tree, all dappled in the sunlight.

I had not the energy to look around me, but stayed with my eyes fixed upon that greenwood tree. I realised that I was back in Sherwood, and with eager nostrils I breathed deep of the smell of the woodland. Back in Sherwood! I felt that I was home again.

Thus soon had the magic of the greenwood enchanted me and won my heart.

When I had the energy to look about me I found that I was lying upon a deerskin, spread upon the sward in a clearing of the trees. Not far away were some of the bowmen, and a little apart from these I descried Lantern in talk with Alan-a-Dale.

Alan-a-Dale's face seemed vastly troubled. Then, of a sudden, Lantern laughed merrily, and clapped the lean, nut-brown outlaw upon the shoulder. The next moment he glanced my way; and, seeing my eyes fixed upon them, he and Alan-a-Dale crossed swiftly t'wards me. I saw that Lantern limped.

"And how's my young fighting-cock?" laughed he.

My three wounds—shoulder and leg and wrist—were paining me, 'twere vain to deny. But I saw that Alan-a-Dale's face was clouded, and, instead of answering the question, I asked of him the reason. Alan laughed shortly and was about to speak, when Lantern motioned him to silence.

"We will not trouble you with that, Tom," said he.

But as he looked down upon me I could see a queer look, strangely sad, in his eyes. And in a moment an instinct told me.

"About the Red inn!" I said, to wish a moment later that I had not spoken.

"Ay," said Alan-a-Dale. "We were sorry fools, Tom, you and I!"

Lantern laughed oddly.

"I'm afraid I was not quite so craven as it seemed," said he. "You see, Tom, as I have just told Alan here, I was quite powerless to rescue you, wounded and single-handed, with you both bound and helpless. I knew, too, that they would not kill you, for it occurred to me that since you knew the secret of the words upon the talisman Hugo seeks, he would want you alive to obtain that information from you. 'Twas only when he was hot with wine that he risked those shafts being shot around you; and in the fight afterwards I doubt if he would have slain you as he could. 'Twould have served his purpose far better to strike you down and make you prisoner. Then he could have extracted your knowledge in his own way at his leisure in those dungeons you and I, Tom, know only too well.

"I realised this—that your life was in no immediate danger—I knew that De Vaux would take you to the castle. And so I seized the chance to escape from them that I might gallop into Sherwood for Robin Hood. I believed that I could fetch the outlaws to Charndene in time to save you—and, with the help of St. Christopher, the patron saint of us all who love the greenwood, so I did! By a stroke of wondrous luck I found Robin Hood with Little John and Tuck and a large party of the bowmen, hidden in the woods above the town. They had come there upon a thought of the Friar's

to be ready at hand in case of just such a need as did arise! And so was I able to bring them to the castle so swift."

I gazed at Lantern dumbly. Then I gasped:

"So 'twas you who brought the outlaws to Charndene!"

Lantern nodded.

"Ay. And I fancy 'twas more useful than waiting in that room at the inn for De Vaux and his men to overcome me—as soon they must—and bind me and drag me off to Charndene with you, for us all three to perish in the end, with our friends never knowing what had become of us!"

He spoke a little bitterly, and very ashamed I felt.

"I—I—" I stammered.

Lantern laughed. But there was still that odd look in his eyes—that look that made me feel, I say, so shamed.

"'Twas nothing," said he. "How could you think otherwise? And yet—well, I could have hoped you had judged Lantern less readily. But there——"

And his eyes cleared and began to twinkle merrily, and he looked down at me, with his head upon one side and his nut-brown face all smiling; while I wondered with amaze how I could ever have believed that Lantern—Lantern, of all men on earth!—could have done what I had believed of him! But I knew that from this day I would never doubt him again.

At that moment Robin Hood entered the clearing and came t'wards us. He smiled as my eyes met his, and held out a strong hand. Then Friar Tuck joined us, and for a little while we five talked together.

I learnt of the retreat from the castle, fighting every inch of the way till the trees were reached; and, further, our foes durst not follow us. And then I told them of what had happened when I went in pursuit of Hugo—how I had

gained the talisman, only to have it snatched from me in my moment of triumph by the mysterious, hooded man.

"Ay, that is the man who has Hugo's half of the talisman now," I cried—"the owner of this knife, whoever he may be!"

And I drew forth the poniard that had each end of the cross-piece of the hilt formed like a human hand.

They stared at it in turn with high curiosity. Then said Robin Hood:

"Perchance, we have someone here who can tell us whose this is!"

And he called to a man who was talking with the bowmen. As this fellow came t'wards where I lay I saw that 'twas the gallant man-at-arms who had refused to slay Alan-a-Dale in the great hall of Charndene.

"He has joined our band," said Robin Hood to me in a low voice as the other approached—"and seems, too, as fine a man as we have! He is called Ranulf of the Plough, for he was not always a man of war."

But Ranulf shook his head over the poniard. He knew no one at Charndene who had possessed such an one.

"Though that goes for little," he added. "Hugo himself might have owned this knife for all I could tell you otherwise."

"You say you knew Charndene ere Hugo came there?" I asked suddenly. "Perchance you can tell us of one, Edward Athelstane?"

And as I spoke I drew from my jerkin the tattered parchment, half-destroyed, that I had found in the secret room in the north tower where sat the grinning nine.

I had not mentioned this to the others as yet, and vastly was their interest aroused when I told them of that grim assembly in the room where no window was, and of the iron casket, and what I had found therein. They listened eagerly



There was a scream of pain and fury from De Blois when the staff struck his wrist and sent the whip flying amidst the bushes hard by. (See Page 26.)

as I read aloud the few words still legible betwixt the gaps:

"I, Edward Athelstane, Earl of Charn-dene, the . . . soon sailing from England upon the King's affairs, and fearing treachery, leave this evidence . . . my son . . . upon his chest a birthmark in the rough form of a falcon . . . the saints, and the curse of Heaven upon any that shall usurp—"

"Upon the King's affairs—that would be King Harry the Second," said Robin Hood.

"Ay, a good and wise ruler," put in Friar Tuck, "rest his soul!"

And the Friar crossed himself reverently.

"Edward Athelstane!" cried Ranulf excitedly. "Ay, I call him well to mind! This Edward Athelstane was Earl of Charn-dene—as was his father, and his father's father before him—he who fought at Hastings and died in that last stand, even as did Harold himself, with a shaft piercing his eye. I remember the day Edward Athelstane left England—never to return, for he died mysteriously in France. He had an infant son. I know, but 'twas believed that the child perished soon after his mother died of her grief. A sad ending to that noble English family!"

"But Hugo—" I began.

"Hugo is but a foul impostor!" cried Ranulf of the Plough. "Hugo has no drop of the blood of Athelstane in his veins! But Prince John aided Hugo in this, and the King, warring 'gainst his enemies, could not then deal with the affair. And later, if there were men of the blood of Athelstane, they durst not come forward, so powerful has Hugo become."

"But suppose the child mentioned in this parchment did not die?" I said eagerly.

"Ah, then what would I not give to fight 'neath his banner!" cried Ranulf of the Plough.

"Ay, what would I, too, not give to fight 'neath his banner!" I echoed.

"If he still lives," said Alan-a-Dale, "why, then he must be just about of the age of Tom here."

Lantern looked at me quickly.

"Ay," said he, "so he must! And by St. Christopher, you were found in the forest as a babe, lad! Let us have a look at your chest, to see if this falcon perches there."

I laughed.

"I will save you the trouble of looking. I have no such birthmark upon my chest," I told them. "If I had, I should surely have remembered it when first I read this parchment."

I began to feel very tired, and they saw it, Robin Hood, who seemed mighty eager and interested in the parchment, asked if he might keep it where it would be safe.

"For," said he, "some day it might be mighty useful evidence, even as its writer intended it to be, if by strange chance we should ever find this lost heir of Charn-dene; and who is to say that he is not living yet? For when the King returns, if Hugo be proved usurper, I'll warrant the banner of the black wolf's head would fly no more o'er the towers of Charn-dene, unless it be that the King comes too late. For then, even if he of the falcon were found, I fear that the plottings of his treacherous brother will have gained such strength as to bring about the overthrow of Richard Lion-Heart. Pray Heaven the King does not return too late!"

And Robin Hood's face was clouded.

I fell asleep very soon after that, and

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so soundly did I slumber that I never knew when, shortly after, I was laid upon a litter, and the outlaws resumed their march.

I did not awaken until the sun had long set, and we were back in the outlaws' camp in the heart of mighty Sherwood.

One of the first of the bowmen whom I clapped eyes upon was none other than Roger of Avon. I cried aloud with joy, and he came across to me. I saw that he had been badly wounded, but though he looked white he smiled cheerily at me.

"Ay," said he in answer to a question of mine, "the villains left me for dead at the inn, but I was only senseless. Robin Hood sent two bowmen to the inn to see if I still lived, at Lantern's suggestion, when the rest set off with him for Charn-dene. As for the other two, those whom we left in the town at the other tavern, mighty grieved were they to have thus missed all the fun."

"Fun, you call it, Roger?" laughed I. "You make light of your hurt, I declare. But—"

"My hurt is nothing," said he. "But you are wounded badly, I hear?"

"Nay," I answered in some astonishment. "I am, at least, no worse than you, I do declare."

But I was very wrong in that, for Roger of Avon, like Lantern, was a sick man for little more than a week. Whereas the weeks dragged on, and yet was I but little better.

One of the outlaws was mighty skilled in curing wounds, and in all manner of healing, and he and his helpers looked after me most strictly. I learnt afterwards that for some weeks, indeed, they feared I might lose the use of my right hand, and that at least I should limp for evermore.

But thanks to their skill neither of these things happened. Gradually my wounds healed and I grew stronger, though not till many long weeks had passed, till, indeed, summer gave place to autumn, and the leaves were drifting down, gold and russet, throughout the forest.

But one comfort had I. News came that Hugo had been himself no little time recovering from the wound I gave him in the great hall of Charn-dene, when the sword of Little John bit deep into his thigh. Then, I heard, so soon as he was able, Hugo went off to York, to Prince John, where, doubtless, the treacherous prince and his rebel barons were mighty busy with their evil plots 'gainst the Lion-Heart's return.

All this long while, when I was thus forced to play the part of a sick man, the outlaws were busy.

Despite strong guards, the rich Norman nobles and prelates who ventured on the roads of Sherwood were vastly likely to clap eyes ere long on men clad in the Lincoln green. Sometimes they were but relieved of any riches they chanced to bear with them; the greater prizes were kept prisoner in Sherwood until a goodly ransom was paid for their release.

More than one attempt was made during that time to rout out Robin Hood, but the Normans, though they should number five hundred or more, were powerless in the forest 'gainst such skilled woodcraftsmen, who were able to send those terrible cloth-yard shafts whistling 'midst their foes from the cover of the trees without displaying so much as bow-tip or cap of Lincoln green.

Lantern, though he declared yet that he would call no man master, not even Robin Hood, had thrown in his lot with the outlaws for the time, waiting till I was well and we might together renew our efforts for the hidden gold that we

knew to lie somewhere in Sherwood. And many a brave tale did I hear of his doings with the outlaws in their forays. How galling 'twas for me to be utterly inactive.

But 'twas all for the best, as I saw afterwards. For at last a day came when I was pronounced strong and well, firm of wrist, nor with any trace of limp or weakness in my leg, a thing, as I have said, that at one time they believed impossible to come about.

Ay, I was cured at last! How I threw myself into all the old sports, determined to regain swiftly my old skill at arms, a skill—what there ever was of it—grown mighty rusty after this long inactivity. And I did not feel that I was indeed my old self again until the trees were bare in Sherwood, and the snow came.

The snow was mighty heavy that winter of the year 1192, and very deep it lay in the untrodden clearings. Food was scarce, and we were more or less imprisoned in the forest depths. But at last came the thaw, when for days the heavy dripping from the trees of the melting snow was like a downpour of leaden rain.

And then—'twas early in the month of February—came the terrible news.

I well remember that night. We were sitting round a fire in one of the huts in the outlaws' camp. I and Lantern and Alan-a-Dale, Robin Hood and Friar Tuck, Little John, and the Miller, and Lon, too, the hunchback jester, who had fled from Charn-dene and helped us to escape from there.

Alan-a-Dale was singing to us, his harp held 'twixt his knees, singing the song I loved above all others—the song of the merry men of Sherwood:

"Heigho!

He bends his bow,

Flies the shaft of Robin Hood.

A streak of ash through the free green wood.

Flying straight, flying true

From the humming string of his six-foot yew.

Heigho!"

Outside the sun was setting, and darkness drew on apace. Alan-a-Dale had sung this song to us, I say, and we, in our turn, had sung it to him, roaring it in chorus. And then, all suddenly, as the gleeman again touched the harp-strings, a dark figure brushed aside the skin that hung over the portal. 'Twas Will Scarlet.

His black eyes were burning strangely from his ruddy countenance as he stood there in the leaping firelight.

For a moment we stared at him. Then something in his face set us all swift upon our feet.

"What is it?" cried Lantern.

"News of the King!" said Will quietly. "News of the King! He should have been in England now, it seems, back from the Holy Land. But the King is—"

He broke off, and there was a tense, waiting silence, broken only by the flutter of the fire and the strange, eerie dripping from the forest all around, of which I have spoken.

"He is not dead?" I whispered.

Will Scarlet shook his head.

"Nay; not dead. But the Lion-Heart lies in an Austrian dungeon—the King is a prisoner in the hands of his enemies!"

The Capture of Lon!

WILL SCARLET'S tidings of the King threw all into a deep despondence for many days. Whether the Lion-Heart's plight was due to the evil machinations of Prince John or no, we could not



A savage blow upon the head knocked Lon senseless. The next instant I had leapt upon De Blois, and we were struggling together fiercely. (See page 26.)

know; but we could picture well enough the delight with which the King's brother and the rebel barons had received those same tidings.

Hugo of Charndene, the Black Wolf, though but recently returned from York, had at once hurried thither to the Prince. And all true English hearts were mighty troubled by all these sorry happenings. For with the Lion-Heart a captive in a distant land, who was to save England from the merciless tyranny of the robber barons? Not Prince John, of a surety!

'Twas shortly after these tidings came that Lon, who all the winter had been pining, as he owned, for a glimpse, at least, of town or city, suggested a visit to Nottingham. And right eagerly did I agree to accompany him!

I had not clapped eyes upon the roofs of Nottingham since that day I strode from it upon the forest road—the day I first saw Lantern. Vastly keen was I to see the old place again.

In the end, four of us decided upon the venture—Lon and myself, Lantern, and Friar Tuck.

"We cannot go all openly," warned Lantern. "Our faces are too well known, and Hugo's men will be ever on the look-out for us, we may be very sure. Although this terrible business of the King will be holding Hugo from the scent at the moment, he will soon be trying as hard as before to obtain your talisman, Tom, when he returns from York. For although his own talisman has been taken from him, he knows what was upon it."

"Ay," put in Robin Hood, who was standing with us; "Tom, lad, I advise you to destroy the talisman you carry, the four pilgrims we appeared to be? scratched thereon: 'The cave betwixt . . . a split oak . . . follow the water . . . Gold'—that is the broken inscription, is it not?"

But laughingly I shook my head.

"Nay; I could not find heart to destroy it," I said. "'Tis safe enough around my neck, and I feel that 'twould be a black deed to destroy the talisman I have worn since a babe, that was found with me in Sherwood! Ay; ill-luck would most assuredly follow such a deed!" I turned to Lantern. "But what of this disguise you hint upon?"

"Ay; a disguise will be necessary as you visit Nottingham!" cried Little John. "Hugo of Charndene, that black villain, knows well enough, I doubt not, that he has a better chance of capturing Tom or Lon than of gaining the actual talisman. But with either of them in his power, he will trust to the torturer to extract the knowledge he desires! So 'tis certain that all Hugo's men and the men of the vassal barons, such as Gilbert De Vaux and De Blois the Red, have orders to lay hold on either at any cost as they clap eyes on them. And as for Lantern, everyone knows that he is an old enemy of Hugo's."

"Hugo has much advantage over us in this quest for the treasure," I said, "for he knows where to find the knowledge he seeks; whereas we know not where to lay hands upon the lost half of this talisman, except that the hooded man who has it is he who once owned this knife of the two hands."

"Never fear; we shall know that some day!" cried Friar Tuck cheerily. "I feel it in my bones that we shall solve that riddle ere long! But for this matter of a disguise—what would be better, by the will of St. Dunstan, than the sackcloth gown and hood of a devout pilgrim? 'Twill be thought that we pass through Nottingham upon the way to Canterbury. I trust, my sons, that such a garb as old Father Tuck suggests will not be disgraced by things little in accordance with the vows of a good pilgrim!"

And thus it was that on the following day, with the forest sweet and fresh, and the trees all putting forth the new green of spring, we four set out for the town that once, for a while, had been my home.

'Twas far enough to Nottingham, so that we must be away from the outlaws' camp for two nights at least. But I will not weary you with details of that visit. E'en though we must perforce walk with downcast heads and hoods well drawn over our faces, 'twas mighty pleasant for me to see the place after all those months. And Lon, who, unlike us, was a man of towns and crowds rather than the forest, found rare delight in all the busy life around us.

But at last the time came when we turned our steps again, trudging along a

road that twisted through the outskirts of Sherwood, our pilgrim's staves in our hands.

The cold weather of winter had given place most suddenly to an unaccustomed warmth, and there was thunder to be heard, rolling through the heavens somewhere 'midst the hills. Tuck grunted.

"I vow I am sweating all the flesh off my bones!" he declared. "I shall be thin as that lean rascal Alan-a-Dale 'less I remove this hood. 'Tis safe enough, I think, for no one seems to be about who would take objection to the face of old Father Tuck because he happens to be an outlaw brave!"

And so saying, the Friar cast back his hood from his face.

We made to do the same, when a sudden sound of hoofs had us all hooded in a moment. A minute later, round a bend in the road, came galloping a troop of horsemen.

Swiftly they drew nearer. And then I heard a gasp from Lon. The hunchback's keen eyes had discerned what a moment later I myself saw—the flaming red beard of the foremost rider, a big, burly fellow clad in a shirt of mail, with a steel cap upon his head.

"De Blois!" muttered Lon.

Ay; 'twas Guy de Blois—De Blois the Red, as he was called. And with him were half a dozen companions of aspect no less villainous than his own.

My heart beat a little faster as that troop of horsemen drew swiftly nearer along the forest road. For De Blois the Red knew our faces well—he it was that had gashed my shoulder in the great hall of Charndene upon that memorable day. Would he pass unheeding now?

But why should he look twice upon the four pilgrims we appeared to be? The first excited thrill passed as I realised that 'twas vastly unlikely Guy de Blois would penetrate our disguise, e'en as he gave us more than an indifferent glance in passing.

We moved towards the side of the road to enable them to pass. But it seemed that De Blois was not content with less than all the road, proud tyrant that he was. He galloped straight on as though we had not been there, and had

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Stooping, De Blois swung the senseless form of the hunchback across the saddle-bow of his prancing steed. Another moment and the Normans were thundering down the road with De Blois at their head. And Lon was with them, their prisoner. (See this page.)

not Tuck leaped aside when he did, the big horse would have over-ridden him.

As 'twas, the steed shied in passing, and there came a stream of curses from De Blois.

"Make way, you knavish churls!" roared he.

"Way was made as you had taken it, you churlish knave!" answered Tuck readily, and I all but laughed to see De Blois' face then.

Black as thunder his face went. In a moment he had turned his horse, and as he galloped straight t'wards the Friar, he raised a heavy whip as if to strike Tuck down.

Had that blow struck home, 'twould probably have split the Friar's head. But in a moment, Friar Tuck—a rare hand with the quarterstaff—swung round his pilgrim's staff.

There was a scream of pain and fury from De Blois when the staff struck his wrist and sent the whip flying amidst the bushes hard by. He screamed out a curse upon us, and his companions, who had halted twenty yards away, swung their steeds around and galloped upon us, their weapons gleaming.

Such men, who feared neither men nor God, would not hesitate to strike down even four pilgrims if they deemed they had suffered insult at their hands.

'Twas clear that trouble was in store for us unless we took to the trees. Yet very loth we were to run before such villains.

But we were unarmed, save for our

staves, and they were seven to our four—and of the four one was hunchback. Wisdom prevailed 'gainst recklessness, and turning quickly, we darted in amidst the trees, where the horsemen would be unlikely, we thought, to follow.

But such was De Blois' mad rage that he set spurs to his horse and thundered in among the trees in pursuit.

And then Lon fell.

He had caught his foot in a twining bramble, and in a moment De Blois was on him. I heard a gasp of amazement from the Norman baron, and I saw that he was staring down at the hunchback. For Lon's hood had fallen back, revealing to De Blois those strange, aquiline features that De Blois must have seen many a time and oft when Lon was Hugo's fool at Charndene.

The horse reared back upon its haunches as Guy de Blois dragged back the bit. In another moment he had leapt to earth.

Lon was struggling to his feet, but a savage blow upon the head knocked the hunchback senseless. The next instant I had leapt upon De Blois, and we were struggling together fiercely.

Lantern and Friar Tuck came racing to my aid. But De Blois' companions were coming swift upon the scene, and my comrades had perforce to engage with them.

De Blois had snatched out a knife, but my hand was at his wrist in a flash. Thus we struggled together, swaying and staggering back and forth across

that carpet of last year's leaves—and all suddenly it came upon me, in some dim corner of my brain, that once before had I struggled with this same man in just such a manner!

My hood had fallen back, and he knew me. I laughed to see his face.

"What band of pilgrims is this?" he cried sneeringly, breathless though he was. "So 'tis thou, young lion-cub! This night the torturer shall have thee!"

"Take me to him, then, redbear!" I cried mockingly.

And with that I put all the strength of my wrist into bending back his hand. Back I forced it, back—back; and at last, with a foul oath, the steel he held dropped to earth.

I panted triumphantly, and in that moment he collected all his burly strength into one effort, and threw me from him.

Back I staggered 'gainst the bole of a tree, and my skull cracked 'gainst it most heartily. I stood reeling, with senses all a-swim, and for a moment I thought De Blois would leap upon me. But then his eyes fell upon the white face of Lon, and in another moment De Blois had changed his plan.

Stooping, he swung the senseless form of the hunchback into his arms. Another moment, and Lon was lying across the saddle-bow of De Blois' prancing steed, while De Blois cried harshly to his companions.

Lantern and Tuck were fighting desperately with their staves 'gainst the swords of their adversaries. But in answer to their leader's command, the Normans turned and ran to their horses.

And with a thunder of hoofs, De Blois and his comrades galloped away down the road and disappeared behind the trees. And Lon was with them, their prisoner!

"They will torture him!" I groaned—"they will know that he has the secret of the talisman, and De Blois will torture him to make him speak!"

"Not if they take him to Charndene!" growled Friar Tuck. "De Blois, assuredly, will take him to Charndene for Hugo, his master; and Hugo has yet to return from York. Perchance we can rescue the hunchback ere he returns, by the grace of Heaven."

Something gleaming at my feet caught my eye. I stooped and picked it up. And then a swift cry broke from me.

"De Blois will not take Lon to Charndene!" I whispered hoarsely. "He will take Lon to his own castle, there to extract the secret, not for Hugo, but for himself! For look!"

And I held out the knife I had picked up.

'Twas a slender poniard, and each end of the cross-piece of the hilt was shaped like a little human hand—the fellow of that which the hooded man in the north tower had attacked me with that night long ago at Charndene!

"'Tis clear now!" I muttered. "De Blois himself was that hooded figure—'tis he who has Hugo's talisman! De Blois is working for his own ends; somehow he has learnt of the two talismans, and of this Sherwood gold we all are seeking, and he means to outwit Hugo and have the treasure for himself! And now that he has got Lon in his power—Lon, who knows the secret of the half De Blois seeks—"

Lantern's face was set very grim. "And so, if Lon tells—" he began.

"Lon will never tell!" I cried hotly. "Surely we can trust him—"

"The torturer can make any man tell, my son," said Friar Tuck—"no

dishonour; just the fact that human flesh and blood cannot stand all things. Some may bear more, some less; but in the end—"

"But we must save Lon from the torturer!" I cried desperately. "For his own sake, we must save him! Let us hasten to Robin Hood; he and his bowmen will march with us upon the castle of De Blois the Red!"

And Friar Tuck's great booming voice echoed the words in that dim woodland glade:

"Ay, we must march upon the castle of De Blois the Red!"

The Outlaws March!

"AY!" echoed Friar Tuck. "With Robin Hood and the bowmen all, we must march upon the castle of De Blois the Red!"

The face of the brawny Friar was very grim as he stared through the trees towards the road.

The thunder of the hoofs had died away. Nothing was left to tell of that fierce struggle that had taken place a moment ago in that quiet woodland glade—nothing save the trampled grass and the gleaming poniard I held in my hand; that poniard that had betrayed Guy de Blois as the hooded man who had snatched Hugo's talisman from me in the north tower of Charndene.

"'Tis clear enough," I muttered. "Guy de Blois is working for his own ends, like the crafty red fox he is! And if we do not act right swiftly, he will outwit us all!"

"But art sure of this?" cried Lantern. "The likeness of the knives is not certain proof that De Blois is the same man as he who snatched Hugo's talisman."

"Ay, 'tis proof enough! Even when struggling with him, I felt that night that the hooded man was one I knew, could I but see his face. Looking back, I can see now most clear that 'twas De Blois. But he had been fighting in the great hall but a little while ere that—"

"Ay, and he was fighting in the courtyard but a little while afterward," put in Friar Tuck. "I saw him there! The crafty villain! Doubtless he returned swiftly to the fight, that Hugo should never dream who 'twas who snatched his talisman on the stairs."

"And now, beside holding Hugo's talisman, he has Lon in his power—Lon, who knows the words written upon that talisman of thine, Tom!" cried Lantern. "Doubtless the rogue thinks to have his claws buried to the elbow in this Sherwood gold ere many days have passed. For, as Tuck says, the torturer can open the lips of any man in the end—save that he is careless, and slays his victim ere the stout heart within is broken! Stab me, but 'tis a sorry business!"

"But with the help of Robin Hood, we will save Lon yet—ay, and wrest the talisman that was Hugo's from De Blois!" I cried. "Whate'er befall, Lon must be saved!"

And swiftly I crossed to where lay the staff I had carried in my guise of a pilgrim. Drawing our hoods o'er our faces, we hurried through the trees towards the road. For if we were indeed to save the hunchback from the torturer's devilish hooks and screws, there was little time enough to be lost!

But we were yet mighty far from the outlaws' camp, and 'twas noon of the day following ere we came to them. And what a stir there was when we told our news!

No need to ask the help of Robin Hood—'twas forthcoming without the asking. For, though in the grim matters with which he had been associated with Lantern and myself when first we knew him, Lon was serious enough; at other times the jester's merry quips and pranks had made him vastly popular among the men in Lincoln green.

"If we save not the poor fool, may I ne'er draw a grey-goose feather to my ear again!" cried Robin Hood.



Lantern and his piebald stallion, Hereward.

Swift preparations were made. Scarcely a man was left in the camp, so that when the outlaws marched, without counting their leaders, they were over a hundred strong.

Night came and found us upon the march, and we did not rest till dawn. Then scouts were sent forward, and returned to say that all was well for our advance. On we marched once more.

Lantern and I were ahead with Robin Hood and Little John and the other leaders. Lantern walked beside his horse

for the most part, for the branches hung so low over our route that the way was all but impassable for a horseman. And as he went the little swordsman would sometimes play to us upon the reed he always carried, coaxing from it the strange music, wild and sweet, that always spoke to me of the very spirit of the greenwood. Or Alan-a-Dale would play upon his harp, and sing to us that song that I loved above all others, the song of the men of Sherwood:

"Heigho!"

He bends his bow!

Flies the shaft of Robin Hood—

A streak of ash through the free green wood!

Flying straight, flying true

From the humming string of his six-foot yew!

Heigho!"

How that tune, those words, the voice of Alan-a-Dale, had power to thrill my very soul!

The stronghold of De Blois was situate midway 'twixt Nottingham and Hugo's stronghold—for all that land was part of the vast demesne of Charndene. All that day we marched, resting but seldom; and sunset found the outlaws encircled thick in cover of the trees around the castle of De Blois the Red!

'Twas an ugly, squat building, crouched upon a little hump of rising ground, like some black evil beast, outlined sharp 'gainst the pale evening sky. The ground for six bowshots around had been cleared of trees, and the castle was girt with a great dry ditch, broad and deep.

A surprise attack would have availed us little. Accordingly, Robin Hood rode forth boldly upon his big brown colt towards the battlements, with Lantern at his side, astride Hereward. Little John, Friar Tuck, Alan-a-Dale, and myself accompanied them on foot. We were all armed. I carried the great broadsword that Little John had lent me upon that stirring night at Charndene, and had since given me for my own. How I longed to test the temper of that blade again!

As we appeared from the trees where the rest of the outlaws lay hidden, we could discern men upon the battlements before us. We halted at bowshot distance, and Robin Hood raised his silver bugle to his lips.

Thrice he blew it. Then his strong, deep voice rang out with a note of challenge:

"Ho, there! I would have speech with your master, Guy de Blois—he who is known, as much for the blood of innocent men that he has spilt as for the colour of his barbe, as De Blois the Red! Tell

(Continued on the next page.)



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(Continued from page 21.)

He paused.

No one spoke. All had not been said yet.

"Now, I suppose," said Thornton, with a sigh, "we've got to move on again." Our guardian is a brick. I've been to four different schools in the last year so that I could keep near Tom. He never grumbles, though it puts him to a lot of trouble. And he believes—he's a doctor, and ought to know something about it—that Tom will grow out of it in a year or two. I wish I could stay. I like Greyfriars no end."

"Well, why can't you?" asked Johnny Ball.

"You can't stick on at Courtfield after this. It may not be easy for him to get a post anywhere."

"I say, though, Thornton, we wouldn't make it rough for your brother," Dick Trumper said eagerly. "Now we know how things really are—"

"But do we?" broke in the sneering voice of Skinner.

The Bounder strode through the throng, seized Skinner by the scruff of the neck, and thrust him, squirming, out of the pavilion.

"You're a good fellow, Trumper, and I know you and the rest here would be decent," Thornton said gratefully. "But if you think it over, you'll see that it's no go."

The Bounder, having disposed of Skinner, stepped up on to a bench, and waved his hand to show that he had something to say.

"We've heard Thornton's story," he said. "I'm rather a suspicious chap, but I, for one, believe it every word. What do you say, Wharton, eh?"

"I believe it, too," answered Harry.

"What do the rest of you say?" inquired the Bounder. "Hands up those who believe?"

Nearly every fellow there put up a hand—even Bolsover major and Snoop.

Bounder hesitated, and then his podgy hand went up.

"Two words more!" said the Bounder. "Thornton's won the match for us to-day by the best cricket anyone has ever played for the Remove—all ten wickets and a beautiful century. But I'm not talking only about that, though that comes in, when I say he's 'True Blue!'"

"Hear, hear!"

"For he's a jolly good fellow!" chanted Bob Cherry, and the rest joined in with lustiness.

Tom Usborne was in hospital next day, and Thornton had another week or so at Greyfriars. Skinner lay low, thinking himself lucky that only a few knew of his spiteful plotting against the new boy.

Then Ted Thornton and Tom Usborne, the elder brother looking very pale and frail, left together. Wharton, the Bounder, and Dick Trumper saw them off. Thornton did not want a crowd at the station.

He was deeply touched as was Usborne by what the Courtfield fellows did. They had subscribed to buy for the young master who had coached them so ably a copy of John Hobbs' book. They would not let him think he was going in disgrace.

Only a few days later Harry Wharton had a letter from Thornton.

"Dr. Wells—that's our guardian—says he believes that whack on the head may turn out to be the luckiest thing that has ever happened to Tom," Thornton wrote. "He's ill still, but something's changed in him, and there is hope that the kleptomaniac instinct will never return."

"Tell the fellows that I count on coming back to see them one day. I'll let you know how Tom goes on. But if Dr. Wells isn't right, I've got to stick to Tom all the same, haven't I?"

"Of course you have!" murmured Wharton, with a bit of a lump in his throat. "You're a brick, old chap—real True Blue!"

THE END.

(Don't miss the first story of our grand holiday series, dealing with Harry Wharton & Co.'s adventures in the East—starting next week. The opening story is entitled "The Greyfriars Arab!" and you'll vote it top-hole, rhums.)



(Continued from previous pages)

him that one waits without, by name Robin Hood!"

What a stir there was upon the walls at those bold words!

'Twas some minutes ere De Blois appeared. But at last there stepped forth upon a projecting bartizan of the tower above the great gateway the figure of a huge man in-mail. Over his gleaming breast there flowed a mighty beard flaming red. 'Twas De Blois!

His great voice thundered out to us.

"Guy de Blois is little wont to be parley with churls and serfs!" roared.

"But it interests me to clap eyes on you, outlaw, for your very insolence can guess your mission well—to ransack the Fool, Lon, runaway serf of Lord Hugo of Charndene. But listen, Robin Hood! Here and now I vow, by the bones of St. Thomas of Canterbury, your head shall be set upon a spear carried before me by this very Lon, a gift to Lord Hugo, his master!"

Shouts of applause rang out from the evil brood that thronged upon the battlements.

Robin Hood laughed.

"Now hear me, Guy de Blois!" roared he. "Know you that I hold your head as hostage for the shortest hair upon the Fool's neck! If the hunchback comes to any hurt, you shall indeed pay the reckoning to my hand! The kites and eagles of this demesne, glutted though they be with the victims of Hugo's tyranny and evil deeds, and yours, shall yet find appetite, I'll warrant, to pick the bones of De Blois the Red cleaner than a peeled willow wand!"

The great beard of the baron tossed upon his chest as he snarled out such reply. Then, all suddenly, he placed his whistle to his lips and blew upon it.

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