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See Page 19, Boys!

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TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

YOUR EDITOR'S LATEST FREE GIFT!

FOR the benefit of those of my readers who missed the special announcement in our last issue I take this opportunity of bringing to their notice the good news. And good news it is; nothing less than a presentation of twelve superb photogravure plates featuring the absolute latest types of craft at present on the Active List in the Royal Navy. What do you think of that, boys?

OUR FIGHTING FLEET!

Now's your chance to get to close quarters, as it were, with these wonderful guardians of our shores. Each plate, which by the way, is 9½ ins. by 6½ ins., is a picture in itself well worth framing. The finest photographs have been secured, showing the different types of ships at their best advantage from a pictorial point of view. How many of you, for instance, know what a monitor looks like? How many of you are familiar with the horsepower capacity of the giant engines that speed these walls of steel through the ocean? Again, how many of you know the number of guns our battleships carry, their range, bore, etc. These tit-bits of information are all contained in our splendid series of photogravure plates.

DON'T GET LEFT!

I want all my loyal chums to make certain of obtaining this magnificent series by ordering their "Magnet" regularly and at good time. You can see for yourselves that this WONDERFUL FREE OFFER will catch on in quarters where, for many months in the year, the "Magnet" Library does not penetrate. That's all to the good from Your Editor's point of view, for it will mean many additional thousands of readers to the banner of the paper which has held its head so high in these days of competition. Boys who suddenly desire to "bag" these photo-plates will naturally enough read the brilliant stories in the "Magnet" and wonder why they never read them before. As I said before that's all to the good. But Your Editor is concerned about his loyal chums who have stood by him all these years. They must not, to quote Fisher T. Fish, "get left." When the rush for these gorgeous photogravure plates takes place I want to feel assured that regular readers have benefited by this GRAND FREE GIFT. Now I have given you the tip in advance it's up to you, my chums.

THE DATE!

That's what you are all dying to know. Well, boys, that piece of information will be "let loose" in next Monday's "Magnet." Be sure and order your copy early.

GRAND NEW SERIES OF FOOTER STORIES!

That's the second item of news I have to deal with this week. At great trouble and expense I have secured the services of Walter Edwards, than whom there is no living writer more skilled in the art of telling a football story. I have read the first half-dozen stories of this coming series, and, without hesitation, I say that they will rank as the finest sporting yarns that have ever appeared in these pages. Mr. Edwards tells of the uphill fight a certain professional team experiences chiefly on account of the fact that the managing director of the club—a pompous newly-created baronet—insists upon running the club's affairs his way. That his way is the wrong way goes without saying. Look out for No. 1 of the series, boys.

ES BICYCLES!

On page 24 will be found the name and address of the prize-winner in our Frank Nugent Characters Competition. To the "Magnet" chum goes a ripping "Royal Enfield" Bicycle listed at £8. The beauty of this competition, boys, lies in the fact that it is a ONE WEEK affair. No waiting for umpteen weeks, collecting coupons, etc. All you have to do is to fill in the coupon and post it. Your part of the contest is finished then. Remember—A ROYAL ENFIELD BICYCLE IS GIVEN AWAY EVERY WEEK! Fill up the coupon on page 19 now.

"THE MYSTERY WRECK!"

Now we come to the splendid programme for next week. To commence with there is, of course, a grand, long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. In this yarn Dick Penfold astonishes the natives by winning a money prize in a photographic competition. But that's only the beginning of the story. What really concerns us is the winning snapshot. It shows the derelict hull of a sailing vessel which has been "piled up" on the sands of Pegg for many years. There is something mysterious about this old vessel that appeals to the Famous Five. They investigate and—what they discover you will learn next week. Be sure and read this story, boys.

"FOUR AGAINST THE WORLD!"

There is another treacherous instalment of this superb serial for next Monday. As it contains a great surprise worked up in Hedley Scott's inimitable fashion I will leave it to that celebrated author to unfold in his own fashion. If any "Magnetite" misses this next instalment he will feel like kicking himself afterwards. It's the real goods!

A REAL POPPER! Sir Hilton Popper is a man of big ideas, a would-be monarch-of-all-he-surveys kind of gentleman. Needless to say, the cheery chums of the Greyfriars Remove don't quite see eye to eye with the dear old gentleman. Indeed, they refer to him as that "peppery old fossil." All Poppers are made alike, it would appear, for Gerald of that ilk loses no time in getting on the wrong side of Harry Wharton & Co. Read how the Famous Five make the acquaintance of—



**Sir Hilton's
Nephew!**

A Magnificent, New,
Long Complete Story of
Harry Wharton & Co.,
of Greyfriars, intro-
ducing Gerald Popper.

By FAMOUS
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Pon's New Pal!

"OH dear!" Billy Bunter, of the Remove Form at Greyfriars, halted as he gave vent to that dismayed exclamation. His young brother Sammy, of the Second Form, also halted and echoed Billy's dismal ejaculation.

"Oh dear!" "It's that beast Ponsonby, of Highcliffe," groaned Billy. "Oh dear! What shall we do, Sammy?"

"The beasts haven't seen us yet," squeaked Bunter minor tremulously. "Hide in the hedge—quick, Billy!"

Without waiting for his elder brother's approval of the expedient, Sammy Bunter dived for the shelter of a thorn-bush in the hedge bottom.

For a brief instant Billy hesitated in terrified indecision, and then he, too, dived for shelter.

Two minutes later both Bunter major and Bunter minor had good cause to regret their choice of a hiding place.

Four youths came sauntering along the Redclyffe Road. Four extremely elegant youths, three of whom wore Highcliffe caps. The fourth was a complete stranger to the Greyfriars juniors.

But the three Highcliffe juniors they knew only too well. They were Ponsonby, Vavasour, and Monson, three of the biggest cads and bullies at Highcliffe School, and the Bunter Brothers knew what to expect if they fell into their clutches.

Puffing negligently at their cigarettes, the four elegant youths strolled on until they came abreast of the Bunter brothers' hiding-place, and then Ponsonby, Vavasour, and Monson made a flying leap for the thorn-bush.

There came a yell of surprise from Billy Bunter, and a terrified squeak from Sammy, as the clutches of the Highcliffe "nuts" fell upon them, and

they were dragged, struggling, into the roadway.

Quite obviously, they had been seen, after all!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Highcliffe juniors roared at the expressions of alarm and surprise on the fat faces of their captives.

"Thought we hadn't spotted you, eh?" chortled Cecil Ponsonby, eyeing his hapless victims gloatingly. "Dash it all, this is a bit of luck, and no mistake. I was just feeling bored to death, and you've just turned up in time to supply a bit of badly-needed entertainment, my fat tulips!"

"Yes, rather!" chuckled Monson.

"Oh, absolutely!" agreed Vavasour.

The strange youth, who, unlike his companions, was attired in a neat lounge suit and elegant hat, eyed the Bunter brothers with a supercilious sneer on his somewhat blotchy and pimply features.

"Oh, gad!" he ejaculated. "Pon, old bean, who the thunder are these awful freaks?"

"I've told you all about Greyfriars, haven't I, Gerald?" grinned Ponsonby. "I've told you we're up against the cads, and you said you'd like to chip in with us against them."

"Oh, rather! But dash it all——"

"Well, here's your chance," grinned Ponsonby, twisting his eyeglass into his eye, and regarding the shivering Bunter brothers reflectively. "These fat beauties are Greyfriars chaps, and they're goin' to supply us with a little entertainment."

The boy addressed as Gerald grunted. "Not much sport in ragging these beastly fat duffers, anyhow!" he said with a sniff. "Why, they're simply shivering with funk! Can't you dashed well find better specimens than these to tackle, Pon?"

Ponsonby coloured a trifle. The plain truth was that Ponsonby & Co. were too cowardly to tackle anyone but funks like

the Bunters. But he did not explain that fact to his friend.

"Oh, yes!" he exclaimed with a laugh. "But these fat freaks supply the most fun, old chap. Now, who's got a brain-wave?"

"Better get 'em into the wood," suggested Monson, glancing up and down the road. "Some of these Greyfriars cads may happen along at any moment."

"Good wheeze!" grinned Ponsonby. "Come along, old fat freaks!"

"Yarrough! Ow! Leggo, you beasts!"

Billy Bunter howled fiendishly as Ponsonby grabbed a fat ear, and started to lead him towards the trees lining the quiet road. Sammy did likewise as Monson took a firm grasp on his collar, and helped him along with frequent applications of his boot.

They crossed the ditch, and negotiating the thin hedge, passing through into the woods beyond.

Those woods belonged to the Popper Court Estate, and were private property. Ponsonby hesitated, and looked at the dandified youth called Gerald.

"We're trespassing here, of course," he grinned. "But I suppose it'll be all serene, as you're with us, Gerald?"

"Oh, yes, rather!" said Gerald carelessly. "My uncle told me I could take my pals anywhere. All serene, of course!"

"Oh, good!"

Ponsonby went on, dragging the hapless Bunter with him, and the rest followed, poor Sammy Bunter openly blubbing. They soon found that the more they struggled and yelled the more their tormentors twisted and kicked, and they soon stopped struggling.

Deeper into the brown woods Ponsonby led the way, and then he stopped in a little clearing through which curled a woodland path, thickly carpeted with dead leaves.

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"I don't quite see this game," remarked Gerald Popper—for that was his name—with a slight sneer. "What are you going to do with these fat merchants?"

"You'll see presently," chuckled Ponsonby wickedly. "You'll see some fun, old chap. I've got a wheeze. We'll make the beggars dance to our tune. Who's got some string or cord?"

Vavasour had, and he produced it.

"Good!" grinned Ponsonby. "Now tie the fat toads back to back. Then we'll cut some switches and make 'em dance."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The suggestion evidently met with the approval of Ponsonby's chums. They laughed, and advanced to carry out their leader's orders.

But it didn't meet with the approval of the hapless Bunter brothers, and they howled with fear. They were still howling and struggling in the grip of the Highcliffe cads when an unexpected interruption occurred.

Down the woodland pathway came three graceful, girlish figures, wearing the Cliff House Girls' School colours round their hat-bands.

They were Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, and Phyllis Howell, the girl-chums of the Famous Five of Greyfriars. As they sighted the scene in the clearing they stopped. Then one of them—Clara Trevlyn—ran forward, her face flushing with indignation.

"Stop!" she cried clearly. "Stop, you cowards!"

"Oh, gad!" gasped Ponsonby.

The sight of the Cliff House girls in the forbidden woods of Popper Court was so unexpected that the Highcliffe cads were staggered.

"So you are up to your bullying games again, Ponsonby?" exclaimed Clara Trevlyn scornfully. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Let them go at once!"

"Look—look here!" stammered Ponsonby, his face scarlet. "Look here, Miss Trevlyn, this is no concern of yours."

"Let those boys get at once!" snapped Miss Clara imperiously.

Ponsonby's face darkened. It was not the first time the cads of Highcliffe had come "up against" the girls of Cliff House in similar circumstances, and the look of scorn and disgust on the girls' faces now made Ponsonby inwardly fume with helpless rage. A faint grin on Gerald Popper's face did not add to the dandy's comfort, either.

"I shall do nothing of the sort!" he said furiously. "Will you mind your own business?"

Miss Clara flushed at the insolence.

"It's the duty of all decent persons to put a stop to bullying when they can," she retorted calmly. "You are a coward, Ponsonby! You dare not try your bullying tricks on boys like Wharton. You always vent your spite and hatred on boys like Bunter—who cannot defend himself."

"I—I—I—"

"You're still holding Bunter's ear!" said Miss Clara sharply. "Will you let him go? If you don't I will make you!"

"Wha-at?"

"Make him let us go, Miss Clara!" wailed Bunter. "He's hurting me—Yarrough!"

Bunter's voice ended in a shrill yelp of pain as Ponsonby gave his ear a sly, vicious twist. Miss Clara Trevlyn's face flushed, and her eyes gleamed.

"I said I'd make you, and I will, Ponsonby!" she snapped.

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And, stepping swiftly forward, she slapped the Highcliffe leader across the cheek.

Smack!

"Oh, Clara!" murmured Miss Marjorie, not a little scandalised.

There was a silence. Ponsonby had staggered back, and had released his grip of Billy Bunter in sheer astonishment. In a flash Bunter was away, bolting from the clearing like a frightened rabbit.

He was followed an instant later by Sammy. Vavasour had been holding him, but he had let him go quickly enough then. He had no intention of sharing Ponsonby's fate at the hands of the warlike Miss Clara.

That somewhat autocratic young lady was facing the enraged Ponsonby. Her face was a little flushed, but she was quite calm and collected.

"You—you—you—"

Ponsonby stuttered, and stopped, his eyes flaming with passion. He seemed to be on the point of losing all control, when at this juncture Gerald Popper gripped his arm.

The baronet's nephew was looking not a little uneasy.

"Hold on, Pon, you idiot!" he snapped. "Let me deal with this." He turned, a trifle insolently, to the girls. "I don't know who you happen to be," he said churlishly, "but you're trespassing here; these woods are private."

"Oh, indeed!" retorted Miss Clara haughtily. "And may I ask how it concerns you whether we're trespassing or not?"

"It concerns me because I happen to be Sir Hilton Popper's nephew," was the lofty reply.

Miss Clara laughed.

"Oh, really!" she said. "I might have guessed it, you know. You're just like him!"

"Eh? Why—"

"I mean you're just as crusty and mean and bouncing as your uncle," explained Clara coolly. "Anyhow, as it happens, we're not trespassing—at least, I hope not. You see, we're going to a gamekeeper's cottage—Robinson's—through the wood there. This path is used by tradespeople and others to get to the cottage. It isn't trespassing, is it? Come along, girls!"

She started forward, followed by her somewhat scared chums, and Monson and Vavasour fairly leaped out of their way. They reached a plank that did duty as a bridge across a stagnant pool, and, crossing it, vanished through the trees.

"By gad!" ejaculated Gerald Popper, staring after them with flushed and furious face. "What a little spitfire!"

"Spitfire!" choked Ponsonby. "I—I'll pay her back for this, by gad! It isn't the first time she's treated me like this. By gad!"

Ponsonby paused, staring with glittering eyes at the plank bridge.

"I've got it!" he breathed. "I see a way to pay those dashed girls out—a thundering good way! Come on! They'll have to come back this way, and—"

"But—but—"

Ponsonby did not wait to finish. He hurried through the trees towards the green, slimy pool. His chums were following him, when Gerald Popper suddenly halted.

"Half a sec!" he said. "I've left my stick behind."

He hurried back into the clearing, and barely a minute later his chums heard a yell of triumphant glee from behind them.

"I've got him! Quick, you fellows!"

Wonderingly, Ponsonby & Co. ran back through the leafless trees. They found Gerald Popper standing in the clearing, a grin on his face. In one hand he held a gold-mounted walking-cane, and in the other he gripped the collar of a squirming, yelling, fat youth.

It was Billy Bunter.

"Oh, good egg!" ejaculated Ponsonby, in delight. "Quick, you chaps! The other little sweep can't be far away. Hunt for him!"

"Yes, rather!"

Monson and Vavasour rushed away in search of Sammy Bunter. Ponsonby grinned at the hapless Billy, a cruel gleam in his eye.

"So you've come back, Billy!" he said blandly. "Now, that was kind of you!"

"I—I— Lemme go!" gasped Bunter. "P-pup-please let me go!"

"What did you come back for?" grinned Ponsonby, staring.

"I had to!" groaned Bunter. "I dropped Loder's watch somewhere here. It was a beastly cheap thing—only a blessed silver turnip, it was. He sent me to fetch it from the watch-repairer's in Friardale. But Loder's a beast! He'll half kill me if I go back without it! Oh dear!"

"Have you found it, Billy?" grinned Ponsonby, highly entertained.

Billy Bunter shook his head, and groaned again. He knew that Ponsonby's interest in the watch was merely banter—that he was playing with him. He bitterly regretted his rashness in returning for the lost watch now.

"Nunno!" he mumbled. "P-pup-please let me look for it, Ponsonby! Lemme go!"

"Oh, let the dashed little freak go, Pon!" sniffed Gerald, as if he regretted having captured him now.

"Not much!" gritted Ponsonby, with sudden anger, as he stroked his still red cheek. "This little rat got me this, and he's going to pay the piper. I'll—Hullo! Oh, good! They've got his dashed brother, too!"

They had. Monson and Vavasour entered the clearing, dragging the squealing Sammy Bunter with them. Evidently Sammy had been waiting somewhere near for Billy—to his obvious regret now!

"Tie 'em up!" snapped Ponsonby. "We'll get our own back out of those dashed girls later—they'll hardly be coming back yet, anyhow. That cord, Vassy, old man."

Vavasour produced the cord, and, supplemented with handkerchiefs and scarves, Sammy and Billy were tied back to back, with their hands secured, but their legs free.

When this was done the Highcliffe nuts cut switches from a near-by thicket, while the luckless fat brothers watched preparations in trembling fear.

"Now we're ready!" grinned Ponsonby. "You two fat worms simply dance, and we'll play the tune. This is it!"

He gave the fat legs of Billy and Sammy a sudden lash with his switch, and the hapless victims danced—they simply had to. And as they danced they yelled—fiendishly.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

To the Rescue!

"YARROUGH!"

"Hullo, hallo, hallo!"

"Yarrough! Ow! Yooop!"

Stop it, you beasts! Oh dear!

Help! Yarrough!"

Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove at Greyfriars stopped and looked at each other in alarm.

They were quite startled. They were just strolling along the Redclyffe Road towards Greyfriars, in the dusk of early evening, when quite abruptly the quietness was shattered by sundry distant howls of pain and wails of woe.

"Comes from the woods," remarked Frank Nugent, staring up at the trees lining the roadway. "And it sounds like Bunter's cheery tinkle."

"And young Sammy Bunter's, too!" opined Johnny Bull.

"In trouble, as usual," added Bob Cherry. "Well, they seem to enjoy looking for trouble, so, now they've found it, let's leave 'em to it. Pity to spoil their innocent enjoyment, bless 'em!"

Harry Wharton chuckled, but he shook his head.

"Better investigate," he said. "It sounds like murder, at least, and we don't want even the Bunters killed, you know. Come on!"

The dismal sounds of discord were easy to follow; and, climbing the bank, the juniors dived into the woods and pressed on until suddenly they emerged into the clearing.

They fairly gasped at the astonishing sight that met their gaze.

It was the Bunter brothers, of course, and an extraordinary sight they looked.

Their clothes were dishevelled, their hair ruffled, and their fat faces red with rage and frantic exertion. They were still tied back to back, and they were dancing madly and desperately on the carpet of dead leaves in the clearing.

And as they danced they yelled and howled like savages at a war-dance, but with greater reason.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton.

Just for a fleeting moment he allowed himself to grin at the extraordinary sight; he could not help grinning.

In the gloom of the brown woods, the hapless Bunter brothers, dancing grotesquely, like a great, fat, two-headed, eight-limbed spider, would, as Bob Cherry put it, have made an undertaker's cat laugh.

But as the captain of the Remove caught sight of the Highcliffe gang hovering round the luckless dancers, lashing their legs whenever they showed signs of slacking, his face darkened and his eyes gleamed.

As yet Ponsonby & Co. had not sighted them. They were roaring with laughter, and much too busy with their own cruel task to observe the newcomers.

"Oh, the cruel cads!" breathed Harry Wharton. "Go for 'em, you chaps! Don't let one escape!"

"No fear!"

The Greyfriars juniors burst into the clearing with a rush. They were hitting out right and left before Ponsonby & Co. caught sight of them, and the hilarious laughter of the bullies changed abruptly to startled yells of pain.

The Bunters fairly shrieked with relief, and collapsed together in a gasping, groaning heap.

Over their prostrate forms the fight waxed fast and furious. It was from Ponsonby & Co. that the howls and yells of pain came now.

"No quarter!" yelled Harry Wharton, his eyes blazing with the light of battle. "Teach the cads a lesson they won't forget in a hurry!"

"Yes, rather!"

The Famous Five proceeded to do so with a will.

As a general rule, Ponsonby & Co. avoided scraps of any kind. They had no stomach for fighting. But they had no chance to do anything else now. The angry and incensed Greyfriars fellows

drove them round and round the clearing, and gave them no chance to fly.

The clearing and woods resounded with the tramp of feet, the thud of blows, and sundry gasps and yells.

Ponsonby & Co. knew what to expect if they failed to break clear, and their only reason for putting up such a resistance against the odds was to try to break clear.

But it was a hopeless task for Ponsonby & Co. They were not fighting men, and soon all three were down, with Greyfriars juniors sitting on their chests.

But Gerald Popper did not go down so quickly. He was evidently built of sterner stuff than Ponsonby & Co. By sheer chance Harry Wharton had found himself pitted against him, and, though he hadn't the faintest idea who the stranger was, Harry went "for him" with a will.

Champion fighter as he was, however, Harry very soon found that he had his hands full—to his great surprise.

From the stranger's appearance—his blotchy, unhealthy-looking skin—he had supposed his opponent to be neither in good condition nor handy with his fists.

But, though obviously in bad condition, indicated by his panting breath, Gerald Popper knew how to use his fists, and from their seats on the prostrate forms of Ponsonby & Co., Harry's chums watched the fight with interest.

"Well, he's got pluck, anyhow!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Go it, Harry, old top! He's getting winded."

There was little doubt about that. Gasping and panting hoarsely, Gerald

Popper staggered about, his guard low now, his blows wavering and uncertain.

A hefty drive from Harry Wharton's fist laid him low at last, and this time he stayed down. The fight was over.

With arms outstretched and chest heaving, he lay flat on his back, and his eyes glinted up with malice as he glared up at Harry Wharton.

Harry stood waiting for a moment or two, and then he stooped and held out his hand.

"You put up a thundering good scrap, anyhow," he said, with generous good-nature. "You've put those Highcliffe pals of yours to shame. Here, let me help you up."

Gerald Popper's eyes glittered.

"Get out!" he panted huskily. "Let me alone, hang you! I—I'll pay you back for this, you howling cad! Clear out of these woods!"

Harry shrugged his shoulders, and picked up his jacket.

"What about these merchants, Harry?" Bob asked, glowering at Ponsonby. "I vote we put the bullying rotters through the hoop for this."

"Oh, let the cads go now!" snapped Harry, in disgust, his lips curling as he glanced at Ponsonby's battered, vicious features. "They've had a sound licking, and I fancy it'll be a lesson to 'em for a bit. Let's get out of this."

Somewhat reluctantly, Harry's chums obeyed. They felt that the cads deserved far more than they had got. They allowed the Highcliffe juniors to get up, and Bob Cherry started to cut the wretched Bunter brothers loose.



"Now we're ready!" grinned Ponsonby. "You two fat worms simply dance and we'll play the tune! This is it!" He gave the two juniors a lash with his switch, and the hapless victims danced. And as they danced they yelled: "Yarr-ooooh! Ow! Stoppit, you beasts! Groooogh!" (See Chapter 1.)

Billy Bunter was fairly spluttering with wrath and disgust.

"I say, you fellows," he snorted indignantly, "you're not going to let the beasts off, are you?"

"You dry up, Billy!"

"But I'm aching all over!" hooted Bunter furiously. "My legs are cut to ribbons. Look here, Bob Cherry, just you hold old Pon while I kick the awful beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll do nothing of the sort, Billy!" grinned Harry Wharton. "But what started the rumpus?"

"It wasn't our fault," grumbled Bunter. "We were just walking quietly home, and these beasts collared us. They dragged us into the wood, and started to bully us, just for nothing."

Harry Wharton nodded. He did not question Bunter's story—for once. He knew that Ponsonby & Co. were quite capable of such senseless, caddish work. They would do it just out of sheer love of bullying and hatred of all Greyfriars' fellows.

He turned and looked at Ponsonby again.

"You rotter, Pon!" he said, eyeing Ponsonby's savage face scornfully.

"This is not the first time we've caught you bullying fellows like Bunter. But let this be the last. I warn you here and now!"

"Hang you!" hissed Ponsonby.

Harry was turning away, when Gerald Popper stepped forward and faced him, his bruised features red with rage.

"Just a minute, you cads!" he hissed through clenched teeth. "I've something to say yet."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

More Trouble!

HARRY WHARTON faced Gerald Popper calmly.

"Well?" he asked coolly.

"What is it?"

"You've licked me once——"

"And I'll lick you again if I ever catch you bullying a Greyfriars kid!" snapped Harry, eyeing his new enemy steadily. "Got that?"

"Hang you, and hang Greyfriars!" snarled the ill-favoured youth bitterly. "You think you've finished with me—but you haven't. Do you know who I am?"

"I don't know. I don't want to know, and I don't care!"

"I'll make you care, though!" was the savage retort. "My name's Popper, and my uncle's Sir Hilton Popper, a governor of your dashed school."

"Blow your giddy uncle!" said Bob Cherry sweetly. "My hat! So you're a giddy nephew of that crusty old buffer, eh?"

There was a chuckle, and Gerald Popper fairly shook with rage. He had evidently expected the juniors to tremble at the very name of the august baronet who was his uncle, and a governor of Greyfriars.

But they didn't—far from it!

"You—you insolent cads!" he hissed furiously. "You'll be sorry for saying that. I'll tell my uncle—I'll get you flogged and expelled!"

"Good!"

"You fools! Don't you understand? My uncle's Sir Hilton Popper, who owns these woods—who owns Popper Court. I suppose you don't know you are trespassing, now, hang you?"

"Go hon!"

"You—you cads!" spluttered young Popper, almost beside himself with rage.

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"I'll report you—I'll get your names from Ponsonby! You know 'em, Pon?"

"Yes!" hissed Ponsonby viciously.

"I know them!"

"Oh, absolutely, Gerald!" added the parrot-like Vavasour.

"You hear that?" gritted Gerald Popper. "You—you'll hear more of this!"

Harry Wharton laughed cheerfully.

"You can go and masticate coke, young Popper!" he said. "And you can tell your blessed uncle to do likewise, old fruit!"

And with that Harry led his chums away—all of them grinning. Apparently the threats of Gerald Popper did not disturb them in the least.

"So that's Sir Hilton's giddy nephew!" remarked Johnny Bull, as they tramped away. "Beauty, isn't he? I heard the old chap had a nephew staying with him."

"Well, we've been introduced to him now," chuckled Bob Cherry. "My hat! Wonder how he got pally with old Pon and his pals?"

"Don't ask me!" grunted Harry. "Birds of a feather, I suppose?"

"Think he'll report us?" asked Nugent.

"I don't think so," said Harry, after a moment's reflection. "And if he does, we've got a good reason for having gone into the woods, anyhow. I fancy, though, that Pon won't let him peach. Even Pon can't want the yarn made public. What's up, old lard-tub?"

Billy Bunter, who was trotting along with his young brother just in front, stopped suddenly.

"Oh dear!" he groaned. "That blessed watch! I say, you fellows, you'll have to come back with me!"

"Eh?"

"What's the matter, Bunter?" asked Harry.

"Loder's watch!" groaned Billy Bunter. "That's what I went back for the second time when those beasts collared me. Oh dear! It dropped out of my pocket when I was struggling—just before those girls turned up!"

"Girls!"

"Eh?"

"Whatter?" ejaculated Harry Wharton blankly. "What the thump d'you mean, Bunter? What girls?"

"You didn't give me the chance to explain everything," grumbled Bunter. "It was Miss Clara, Miss Marjorie, and Miss Phyllis. They think no end of me, y'know."

"You fat ass——"

"Oh, really, Cherry!" stuttered Bunter. "It's true, you know. They must like me, or they wouldn't have come to my rescue like they did. Miss Clara fairly knocked old Ponsonby spinning. He, he, he! You should have—Ow! Leggo, Cherry, you beast!"

"You fat idiot, what are you gassing about," snapped Bob Cherry, still holding Bunter's ear. "Explain, or I'll burst you, you fat frog!"

"Aren't I explaining?" hooted Bunter. "They were just tying us up the first time when those girls came along and chipped in."

He explained at length what had taken place in the clearing, and Harry Wharton & Co. whistled, and eyed each other queerly.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Wharton. "Why the thunder didn't you tell us this before, Bunter?"

"Wasn't I telling you——"

"Oh, dry up!" snorted Harry, his face dark. "My hat, you fellows! I thundering well wish we had given those cads something more now! You say

the girls have gone on through the woods, Bunter?"

"Yes—to the gamekeeper's cottage," grunted Bunter. "They had a basket with them."

Harry nodded. He could guess what the basket contained. He knew that Miss Primrose encouraged her girls to visit sick people, under certain circumstances, and he guessed their errand now.

"Look here, you chaps, we'd better go back," he snapped, wrinkling his brows. "If those cads meet the girls again, and get up to mischief——"

"It's getting dusk, too," said Bob Cherry grimly. "We'll go!"

"My hat, yes!"

"I say, you fellows, I was just going to suggest that," said Billy Bunter. "That beast Pon said something about getting his own back on the girls when they were on their way back!"

"Great Scott!"

"That settles it, then!" snapped Harry Wharton. "Come on, you chaps! You and young Sammy had better get back home now!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! What about that watch?"

"Blow the watch!" snorted Bob Cherry. "Let's be off, Harry!"

"We'll look for the watch, Bunter," said Harry. "You are sure you dropped it in the clearing?"

"Yes, of course!" grunted Bunter. "You——"

"Right! Then cut off home, and leave it to us! Come on, you fellows—quick!"

Billy and Sammy trotted away—Billy grinning with relief. He was only too glad to get away, and to shove the responsibility of Loder's lost watch on to somebody else's shoulders.

And the Famous Five started back the way they had come at top speed, unhampered by the company of Billy and Sammy Bunter. They felt they had not finished yet.

"If those cads have dared to play any tricks on those girls, I'll smash them to a jelly!" panted Bob Cherry.

"Let's hope we're in time to stop them," said Harry.

In a state of seething rage and anxiety, the chums of the Remove raced back to the clearing. They soon reached it, and found it empty.

But as they stopped breathless, the sound of a loud laugh from somewhere ahead, through the trees, reached their ears.

"That's Pon's laugh!" snapped Harry. "Go carefully now, and we'll see what the rotters are up to."

The juniors pushed on, moving with the quiet stealth of Red Indians on the warpath. They soon came upon Ponsonby & Co.

Standing round the green-covered woodland pool were Gerald Popper, Monson and Vavasour, and they were grinning. At one end of the little plank bridge Ponsonby himself was stooping, and he seemed to be attaching a long length of creepers, twisted into a rope, to one end of the plank.

Even as the juniors glimpsed the scene, Ponsonby straightened himself with a laugh. His eyes were gleaming.

"That's fixed 'em!" he chortled. "We'll teach those dashed girls a lesson. Now, hide, you chaps. They can't be long now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And, laughing, the cads of Highcliffe ran to the shelter of some bushes, Ponsonby taking the other end of the rope of creepers with him.



Stuck fast in the barbed wire of the fence, struggling frantically and yelling with fear, was a youngster of fourteen, or thereabouts. "Great Scott!" panted Harry Wharton, as he raced to the scene. "Quick, Franky!" The alarmed juniors went to the rescue with a rush. Heedless of burns, they tore at the boy's clothing in an effort to release him. (See Chapter 6.)

"I don't quite see this game," muttered Bob Cherry, wrinkling his brows. "What—"

"Don't you see?" hissed Harry Wharton, his face dark with wrath. "They mean to wait until the girls come along, and then they'll pull the rope, and let them down into the pool. Oh, the dirty cads!"

"Great pip!"

Bob Cherry gave a deep growl, and clenched his big fists. But before anything further could be said, or done, the critical moment arrived abruptly.

There sounded girlish voices from the dusky depths of the gloomy woods, and down the path the three Cliff House girls came hurrying.

They had reached the plank bridge before the juniors realised it, but as Miss Clara's foot touched the plank Harry Wharton's startled voice rang out:

"Look out, Miss Clara! Stop!" Then Harry yelled again to his chums: "Collar the cads!"

It was not the time for ceremony, and once again Harry's chums went into action with a savage rush. They took the Highcliffe cads completely by surprise, and all four went down yelling in alarm.

Harry Wharton jumped to the plank and wrenched away the creeper. Then he turned and raised his cap to the startled girls.

"What—what—"

"All serene now, Miss Clara," he said, flushing as he met the girls' astonished looks. "These cads were just going to play a rotten trick on you."

And without further ado Harry ran to his chums' assistance.

But Bob Cherry and the rest required none.

Ponsonby & Co. had already had as much fighting as they wanted, and they scarcely put up a struggle. And Bob and the others were in no mood to spare them.

"In with them!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Give them what they intended the girls to get!"

"Hear, hear!"

Splash!

Bob Cherry grabbed the bewildered Monson and fairly hurled him into the stagnant pond. He was followed instantly by Vavasour and Ponsonby, in turn. There was a bit of a stiff struggle when it came to Gerald Popper's turn, but against the odds he stood no chance, and went hurtling with sprawling limbs into the green morass.

Splash!

The pool was little more than a ditch, whose water was a few inches deep, but what it lacked in water it more than made up for in mud and slime. And Ponsonby and his luckless pals looked shocking sights as they scrambled up on hands and knees and staggered ashore, gasping.

All the glory of their elegant attire had gone. They were dripping with water, and slime, and festooned with weeds.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The anger of the Greyfriars juniors gave place to laughter at sight of them. Even the startled girls could scarcely refrain from laughing at the picture they presented.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Miss Phyllis Howell. "What—what does this mean, Harry Wharton? Did they—"

"They intended something like that to happen to you, Miss Phyllis," said Harry, becoming serious again. "The cads had a rope fixed to the plank and meant to pull it when you stepped on the plank."

"Oh!"

"The horrid cads!" breathed Miss Clara.

"It's safe enough now," said Harry. "You can come over."

The girls tripped lightly across the plank bridge and joined the chums. By this time the discomfited Ponsonby & Co. were all ashore. They gave the grinning Greyfriars juniors deadly looks, and bolted from the scene. Evidently they had had enough at last.

"Let them go," said Harry. "I fancy the cads won't try their tricks again after this."

"How did you discover the plot,

Harry?" asked Miss Clara, glancing at the pool with a shudder. "What a narrow escape we had!"

"I hardly think they intended you to get what they got," smiled Harry. "They meant to leave you stranded in the middle so you would have to wade out. It was a dirty trick, and I'm thankful we were in time to stop it. It was Bunter who told us they were up to something."

As they walked along the path Harry told how Bunter and his minor had come to grief again, and the girls told how they had rescued them in the first place. The juniors grinned as Miss Clara told how she had smacked Ponsonby's face.

"Ponsonby's a brute!" snapped Miss Clara. "And that horrid boy, Popper, is as bad. He said we were trespassing; but I don't see it. We've been this way before. Mrs. Robinson, the keeper's wife, used to be the housekeeper at Cliff House. She's ill now, and Miss Primrose asked us to take her some flowers and fruit."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I don't fancy they'll worry you again," he said. "If they do they'll regret it, Miss Clara. Anyway, we'd better escort you to the road."

The juniors escorted the girls to the Redclyffe Road, and there they parted, for it was not far to the girls' school from there.

"We'd better be getting back, too," said Harry, as the girls vanished up the road. "It must be close on calling-over, and— Oh, my hat! What about Loder's watch?"

"Blow Loder's watch!" said Bob.

"Blow it—yes!" grinned Harry. "But you know what Loder is. He'll flay Bunter alive if he doesn't get it. We can't let poor old Bunter down. We promised him we'd see to it, and we'll have to."

"Oh, dear!"

The juniors did not relish the prospect of entering the woods again—especially as it was close on locking-up, and dusk. But there seemed no help for it.

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A moment later they were treading the woodland pathway again. They soon reached the clearing, and were about to search round for the unlucky watch, when Harry gave a warning hiss.

To their ears came the sound of voices and the tramp of feet amid the undergrowth. And before the juniors could hide, or think of hiding, several figures entered the clearing in the deepening dusk.

They were Gerald Popper and Ponsonby & Co. And with them was a tall, angular, aristocratic man, wearing shooting-clothes and an eyeglass.

It was Sir Hilton Popper, Gerald Popper's uncle, and a governor of Greyfriars School.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Harry Wharton.

The adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. were not over yet for that evening.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Captured!

GERALD Popper was the first to sight of the juniors, and he gave a yell.

"There they are, uncle! Those are the cads! Stop them!"

He started forward with Ponsonby & Co.—now valorous enough—at his heels.

"Run for it!" gasped Harry.

Even as he spoke the baronet whipped a small silver whistle from his pocket and blew a shrill blast upon it. It was answered almost immediately by another shrill blast from somewhere behind the juniors, and the next moment three brawny keepers merged in upon the clearing from different directions.

Harry Wharton charged full tilt into the arms of one of them, and Johnny Bull was grasped by another. Frank Nugent and Bob Cherry could have got clear, but they stopped as they glimpsed the capture of their chums.

"Run, you asses—never mind us!" yelled Harry, struggling vainly to free himself.

But it was too late! The third keeper made a rush, and grasped the hesitating Bob Cherry in an iron grip. And before Frank could stir a foot Gerald Popper and Ponsonby & Co. had surrounded him, bringing him to earth with a crash.

"Hold them! Hold the young rascals!" roared Sir Hilton Popper.

It was useless to struggle—the juniors soon realised that. They were fairly caught.

"Give in, chaps!" panted Harry Wharton. "It's no good—we're done!"

There was little doubt about that. Evidently Ponsonby & Co. had stumbled upon Sir Hilton and the keepers, and in his blind rage Gerald had brought them hurrying back to capture them. And the Greyfriars juniors had walked blindly into the trap.

Sir Hilton came stumping up, his brow thunderous.

"Ha, so I have caught you, you young rascals!" he exclaimed grimly. "Are these the same boys, Gerald?"

"Those are the cads, uncle!" said Gerald Popper viciously. "They belong to Greyfriars—"

"I am quite aware of that!" snorted Sir Hilton, glaring through his monocle at the captives. "I know them well! It is not the first time I have caught them trespassing on my property! Huh!"

"We—we were doing no harm, sir!" began Harry.

"Harm!" hooted the baronet. "You have trespassed in my woods, you have actually had the effrontery to insult me behind my back, and to assault my

nephew and his guests in an abominable manner!"

"But—but—"

"Silence, sir!" stormed the angry baronet. "I strongly suspect that those are not the only offences you are guilty of. I believe you are responsible for the shooting of my pheasants!"

"Ph-ph-pheasants!" stuttered Harry Wharton.

"Yes, pheasants!" snapped Sir Hilton.

"For some days now my keepers have reported finding dead pheasants lying about the woods and coverts. They have been shot by air-guns—air-guns owned and used by you young villains!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Sir Hilton," said Wharton calmly, "we have never used an air-gun in these woods in our lives. We've done nothing wrong, either. We're trespassing right enough, I suppose, but—"

"Ha, so you don't dare to deny that!" snarled Sir Hilton bitterly. "I suppose you won't attempt to deny this, my lads?"

He indicated with his hunting-crop the bedraggled forms of Gerald Popper and his now triumphant chums.

"We don't deny that, either, sir," said Harry steadily. "They acted like howling cads, and deserved it, and more!"

"We merely told them they were trespassing—ordered them to leave the woods, uncle," said Gerald Popper. "And they flew at us like—like hooligans!"

The young rascal told the lie coolly, with a scarcely concealed grin on his blotchy face.

HAVE YOU GOT YOUR "HOLIDAY ANNUAL" YET?

"You—you liar!" said Bob Cherry angrily. "Why—"

"Enough!" stormed Sir Hilton, raising his hand. "My nephew is quite right—you are hooligans! I am almost ashamed that I am connected in any way with the school that shelters you!"

"But, sir—"

"Silence! Denials and excuses will not save you now, my fine fellows! You have assaulted my nephew, and you have insulted me, begad—me! You told my nephew to tell me to—to— Begad! What did they tell you to tell me, Gerald?"

"To go and eat coke, uncle!" said Gerald. "They said they didn't care a hang for you!"

"That was it!" choked Sir Hilton, his face growing suddenly purple with outraged dignity. "I—I'll teach them, begad! Huh! Robinson, hold that young villain firmly. A taste of this crop is what they badly need. Ha!"

"Yes, sir!"

The man holding Harry Wharton, who was evidently the head keeper, twisted Harry round, his own face expressionless. Sir Hilton raised his hunting-crop, with the lash twisted round the haft and held firm in his fingers. His intention was only too obvious.

"Look here, sir!" panted Harry. "You've no right to do this! We're willing to go before the Head! He'll see we get justice, anyhow!"

"Justice—Dr. Locke!" hooted the baronet. "I am tired and weary of complaining to Dr. Locke. He will not see justice done; but will shield you, as he always has done! I am about to take

the law into my own hands, my lad. A well-merited thrashing will perhaps teach you not to trespass again, or to be impudent to me. Ha!"

Just for a fleeting second Bob Cherry's eyes met Harry's, asking an unspoken question, but Harry shook his head. It was useless to resist against such odds. Moreover, he knew that resistance would only enrage the angry old martinet more.

They were "in for it," and the best thing to do was to take their medicine without whining.

And they did. The next moment Sir Hilton Popper was bringing his hunting-crop into play with a will. Again and again he brought it whistling down across Harry Wharton's shoulders, and then it was Bob Cherry's turn.

It was over at last, and by that time Sir Hilton was panting, and the hapless juniors were squirming and writhing painfully. It had been a terrific thrashing, but the five juniors bore it manfully, without a murmur passing their lips. They would have died rather than have whined before the grinning, gloating eyes of Ponsonby & Co.; indeed, the fact that those cads had witnessed their discomfiture was the worst part of the flogging to the Greyfriars juniors.

But it ended at last.

"There!" panted Sir Hilton, lowering his hunting-crop. "Let that be a lasting lesson to you. And I warn you that the next time I shall hand you over to the police. Robinson, show the young rascals off my property."

"Yes, sir!"

Escorted by the three keepers the chums of the Remove trooped dismally and painfully out of the darkening woods. They could scarcely contain themselves as they heard the chuckles of Ponsonby & Co. follow them.

At the edge of the woods, on the Red-clyffe Road, the keepers released them.

Robinson, who was a big, good-natured-looking man, gave them a kindly warning before parting.

"You'd best keep clear of these woods after this, young sirs," he said quietly. "The old man's fairly got 'em these days, and he won't be gentle next time."

The juniors did not reply—they couldn't! Their feelings were too deep for words. And the thought that Ponsonby & Co. had had the last laugh, after all, was the bitterest pill of all to swallow.

In dismal silence they started on their tramp along the dusky road towards Greyfriars, and the knowledge that trouble with Quelch awaited them for being late for call-over did not make them feel any happier.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

What Bunter Heard!

"I SAY, you fellows—" Billy Bunter looked into Study No. 1, and, finding it occupied by its owners, he slipped hurriedly inside and closed the door carefully after him.

"I say, you fellows!" he gasped breathlessly. "Oh, good! You've been a thumping long time, I must say. I've had an awful time! Loder, the beast—"

"Outside, you fat ass!"

"Skedaddle!"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, who were at the table doing their prep, fairly glared at Bunter and pointed to the door. They had only just settled down to prep, after a far from pleasant interview with Mr. Quelch, and they were still feeling sore in body and mind, and in no mood for the charming society of Billy Bunter.

But Bunter had evidently come on business, and he stayed.

"Oh, really, Wharton," he exclaimed eagerly. "You jolly well know what I've come for! What about that blessed watch?"

"Oh, great walking Felix!" gasped Harry Wharton.

The juniors had completely forgotten all about Loder's precious watch and their promise to Bunter.

"Have you got it?" said Bunter, staring anxiously at Wharton. "My hat, you don't mean to say—"

"I'm sorry, Bunter!" said Harry, shaking his head. "We forgot all about the blessed thing!"

"You—you've not got it!" howled Bunter. "Oh, you burbling chumps! What about me now? Oh crumbs!"

"It can't be helped! Old Popper collared us in the woods, Bunter! We didn't get the chance to hunt for it, and we forgot about it afterwards, too!"

Bunter fairly spluttered with wrath and dismay.

"But what am I to do?" he hooted. "Loder's after me now. He wouldn't believe me, and thinks I've popped the beastly thing and spent the money! Oh dear! It's all you beasts' fault! You promised you'd find it—you know you did!"

"Oh, blow the watch and blow Loder and blow you, you fat ass!" snorted Harry, exasperated.

"But—but what about me? What am I to do?" groaned Bunter wrathfully. "You promised me—"

"And we'll keep our promise—tomorrow!" snapped Harry. "We couldn't to-night, Bunter. If Loder asks again you can send him to us. Now clear out, you fat idiot!"

"You mean that—that you'll make it right with that beast Loder?" demanded Bunter in great relief.

"I've said so. Now get out! Where is Loder?" asked Harry as an afterthought.

"I don't know," grinned Bunter. "He's looking for me. He wouldn't believe me when I told him what had happened to it, and he started lamming me—the beast! But I gave him the slip, and bolted—hid in Skinner's study. He's hunting about for me now—in a fine wax, I bet! And, I say, you fellows, what d'you think?"

Bunter chuckled, and his eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. Apparently Bunter had some exciting and interesting news to impart.

"What do you fellows think?" he repeated, grinning. "Old Skinner, you know—did you fellows know he was pally with that beast Gerald Popper?"

Harry Wharton, who had been about to catch Bunter by the scruff of the neck and pitch him out, paused abruptly.

"What do you mean, Bunter?" he demanded. "We know he's pally with Pon. of course. But—"

"He's pally with Popper, too," grinned Bunter knowingly. "I saw them together only yesterday."

"Well, what if he is, you silly chump?" sniffed Frank Nugent after a pause. "They're Skinner's style, and it's only likely they're pals. Blow Skinner! Get out, and take your tattling tongue with you!"

Bunter merely grinned.

"That's not all, though!" chortled Bunter. "I say, isn't Skinner a dog, you fellows? He's up to a nice game with those cads. I've suspected him for some time now."

"You burbling ass, what are you gassing about?" said Harry sharply. "What is Skinner up to, do you know?"

"I know," said Bunter, nodding. "He's breaking bounds at night to meet

Ponsonby and his pals. What d'you think about that? He meets those cads in the Popper Court Woods, and I fancy I know what for."

"Oh!"

"That isn't all, either!" grinned Bunter. "Skinner's got an air-gun—a ripper, too. I've seen it!"

"My hat!" breathed Harry Wharton, glancing at Frank meaningly. "Is—is this true, Bunter?"

"Fact!" grinned Bunter. "You can guess what they're up to—what? Looks to me as though the giddy night-birds are popping at bunnies or something. Poaching, you know. I bet old Popper don't know it, though. I say, Wharton, you ought to put a stopper to Skinner's game. You're skipper of the Remove. The beast kicked me—kicked me out of the study just now!" grumbled Bunter, his eyes glittering spitefully.

Harry Wharton drew in a deep breath. At any other time he would have ignored the yarn. At least, he would have suspected its veracity, coming as it did from Billy Bunter.

But he didn't now. He remembered Sir Hilton Popper's words concerning air-guns and dead pheasants, and Bunter's news filled him with amazement and alarm. Yet it seemed incredible that even the caddish and "sportive" Skinner and Ponsonby & Co., could be so reckless and daring.

"Look here, Bunter," he exclaimed quietly. "How did you find this out?"

Bunter grinned again.

"I keep my eyes open," he remarked loftily. "I knew Skinner was up to some game, and to-night I found him out. Loder was chasing me, you know, about the blessed watch, and I dodged into Skinner's study. Then Skinner and his pals came in. I thought it was that beast Loder, and I hid under the table."

Bunter paused and chuckled.

"I heard them talking about it all," he went on. "They're going out to-night, or to-morrow night. I'm blessed if I know which. I say, isn't it a bit thick, Wharton? And I saw the air-gun—a beauty, it was. Then Skinner spotted me under the table and kicked me out. He was wild. Said I was spying, you know. As if I could help hearing what they said. You ought to stop Skinner's game, Wharton."

"You can leave that to me. I'll stop Skinner's game all right!" said Harry grimly. "Have you told this to anyone else, Bunter?"

"Not yet," grinned Bunter. "But I—"

"Then don't!" snapped Harry. "If you do, they'll get wind of it, and I'll not get the chance to stop it. And you won't get your revenge, either," added Harry with a grim laugh. "Mind you don't breathe a word!"

"Rely on me, old chap," sniffed Bunter. "I'll keep mum. Wharton, honour bright. And— Oh crumbs!"



"Now!" hissed Harry. There sounded the striking of a match—sharp and clear. A tiny flame shot up, followed instantly by a blinding glare of white light. It flared up with startling abruptness, and as the alarmed amateur poachers stopped dead, there sounded a faint click as the camera shutter was released.
(See Chapter 11.)

Bunter broke off with a gasp of alarm as the door swung open, and a tall, lanky senior looked in.

It was Loder, the most unpopular prefect at Greyfriars. He sighted Billy Bunter, and his eyes glittered.

"So this is where you're hiding, Bunter?" he snapped. "Come here!"

And without waiting for Bunter to come, the prefect made a leap into the room, and his grip closed on Bunter's fat ear.

"Now, you little worm!" he hissed. "What about that watch? I'm going to teach you better than to play tricks with my property, by gad!"

"Yarrough!" roared Bunter, squirming in the prefect's grasp. "Leggo! I've told you what happened to it, Loder. Make him lemme go, Wharton. It was your fault——"

"I'll let you go!" snapped the furious senior. "Think I believe that yarn, you fat clam! You've dashed well sold the watch and spent the cash on grub, you grubby little beast! I know you! I'm going to give you the licking of your life!"

He swung the yelling fat youth across a chair, and raised the ashplant he carried.

"Stop that, Loder!" called Harry Wharton.

He sprang across the room and grasped Loder's arm.

"Let Bunter alone, Loder!" he snapped. "It's not his fault about the watch."

"Get out!" hissed Loder. "What do you know about it, Wharton?"

"I know that Bunter's story's true," said Harry. "He was attacked by some Highcliffe fellows, and in the struggle Bunter lost the watch. It wasn't his fault."

Loder lowered his arm. He knew that Harry was not in the habit of telling lies.

"Then where is the watch now, Wharton?" he snarled. "I'm going to get the dashed thing, or know the reason why!"

"It's where Bunter dropped it—in the Popper Court Woods," said Harry. "Anyway, you can leave Bunter alone. It's not his fault. He would have searched for it, but we stopped him."

"You—you little sweeps!" hissed Loder. "I tell you I valued that watch, and I'm going to get it back. I don't believe a word of the yarn, you young liars! And I'm going to tan the hide of this young rotter!"

"Will you?" snapped Harry grimly. "Touch him, prefect or no prefect, and you'll have us to deal with!"

"You'll dare to lay hands on me?" gasped Loder.

"Touch Bunter, and you'll see! I've only to shout, and you'll have a dozen Removites round your ears," said Harry. "If anyone's to blame, it is myself. I stopped Bunter hunting for the thumping watch. I meant to see to it myself, but something happened and I couldn't."

"It's got to be found," rasped Loder, "or someone will sit up, I warn you!"

"You needn't make such a fuss about the dashed thing!" said Harry, his lip curling. "I promised Bunter I'd find it, and I mean to keep to my word. I'll go and look for it to-morrow afternoon. That ought to satisfy you, Loder."

Loder breathed hard, his face furious. But he knew that the juniors were not afraid of him, and he had had experience of trouble with a swarm of angry Removites before.

He bit his lip, and released the squirming, shaking Billy Bunter.

"Right!" he snarled at last. "I'll give you until to-morrow to find it."

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Wharton. If it doesn't turn up, I'll—I'll—well, you'll be sorry for it, that's all!"

And with that Gerald Loder stamped out, slamming the door after him. Harry Wharton turned to Bunter.

"Get out, you fat clam!" he said curtly. "I'm just about fed-up with you and your thundering troubles. Clear, or I'll boot you out and along the passage!"

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

Harry Wharton took an angry step towards him, and the fat junior fairly hurled himself through the door. Frank Nugent kicked the door shut.

"You thundering ass, Harry!" he exclaimed in disgust. "What on earth did you want to promise Loder that for? It will muck up a whole afternoon. Hang Loder and his blessed watch!"

"I was an ass, I suppose," grunted Harry. "But it's got to be done. We promised to see to it, and I'm going to, anyway. Bunter won't dare to enter the woods even, much less search. And if the watch remains missing, that bullying brute Loder will flay the fat ass alive!"

"That's so, I suppose," nodded Nugent. "But, my hat! Isn't that the limit about Skinner? It looks as if those cads are the blessed poachers old Popper was howling about."

"It does," said Harry grimly, his face puckered in a frown. "Those silly fools must be absolutely potty to play such a dangerous game. Well, the rest of the beauties can do as they like, but I'm going to keep an eye on friend Skinner. And if I catch him going out at night there'll be trouble."

"It ought to be stopped."

"Skinner's game's going to be stopped," said Harry, setting his lips. "Anyway, I'm going to look for that dashed watch to-morrow. The rest of you needn't come unless you wish. No good us all mucking up a half."

"I'll come, anyway!" said Nugent. "Count me in!"

"Good!" said Harry. "That's settled then. Now for prep."

And having made that decision, Harry and Frank settled down to prep again, little dreaming into what a bunch of trouble that decision was to lead them.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

In the Woods!

AS Harry Wharton expected, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh, the Indian junior, were not at all keen to join in the search for Gerald Loder's luckless silver watch.

But they offered to accompany their chums, for all that. Harry would not hear of it, however. There happened to be no match on that afternoon, but there were plenty of other things to be done—things more interesting than searching for the lost watch. And Harry saw no reason why they should sacrifice their half-day to what Harry conceived to be his duty.

He was glad to have Frank Nugent with him, however, and the two of them started out after dinner the following afternoon accordingly.

They had not lost sight of the danger they ran in trespassing once again on the property of the irascible old baronet, and they made sure the coast was clear when they entered the woods.

"Better keep our ears skinned," warned Harry. "Old Popper promised to make it a police matter next time—though I fancy that was only spoof. Anyway, it'll mean serious trouble, Franky."

"No doubt about that," grinned Frank.

They advanced cautiously, and very soon reached the quiet clearing in the dusky woods. All was silent and still around them, and the juniors set to work swiftly. Billy Bunter had told them where to look, and presently Frank gave a triumphant exclamation, and held up a white cardboard box, still wet with dew.

As Harry ran up he opened it, and disclosed to view a massive silver watch of ancient design.

"That's it!" said Harry, grinning. "Good old Waterbury! Thank goodness! Now we can clear out. The rest are gone on a cycling spin, so I vote we run along to Cliff House and give the girls a call."

"Good egg!" said Frank eagerly. But, as Fate would have it, they were not destined to visit Cliff House that afternoon.

The chums struck the woodland pathway, and, turning their backs on the way they had come, followed the direction they had taken when escorting the girls the previous evening.

They had scarcely gone a dozen yards, however, when Harry gave a warning hiss, and caught his chum's arm.

"Someone coming!" breathed Harry. "Quiet, for goodness' sake!"

As still as mice the juniors crouched amid the thickets, and waited.

The tramp of feet and the sound of voices Harry had heard came nearer, and suddenly their owners burst into view.

"My hat!" breathed Harry. "Bunter was right, then! Skinner!"

It was Skinner of the Remove at Greyfriars, and with him were Gerald Popper, Cecil Ponsonby, Vavasour, and Monson. To the hiding juniors' alarm, they stopped less than a dozen yards away.

"Here we are, old tops!" said Gerald Popper, with a chuckle. "You got yours, Skinney?"

Skinner nodded, and, opening his raincoat, he tugged open his jacket, and revealed a long, shining instrument that was tied round his waist with string.

It was a neat, deadly looking airgun, and Skinner chuckled as he unfastened the string and handled it.

"Neat way of carrying the beauty—what?" he grinned. "I think I'll keep it here, though, after this, Gerald, old man. It isn't safe at Greyfriars. That fat toad Bunter's seen it already. Sure it's safe this afternoon?"

"Don't worry!" grinned Popper. "The two dashed under-keepers are off—were on duty all last night. And Robinson's at home this afternoon, too. It's right as rain! Trust me to make sure of that."

The daring conspirators crossed over to a big oak-tree close by. Plunging his arm into a hollow in the trunk, Gerald Popper drew forth three more airguns, and handed them to Ponsonby & Co.

"Phew!" breathed Harry Wharton.

"And now for the giddy sport!" said Gerald Popper, taking out a gold cigarette-case and handing it round. "Light up, old beans, and we'll make a start. It's the birds this afternoon; but to-morrow night I vote we try the bunnies—what? Better sport, I think!"

"And not so risky," grinned Ponsonby. "I say, old man, your uncle's getting a bit warm, though! We'll have to take care."

"Rot!" sniffed Gerald. "I know how things are, my dear man. Safe as houses!"

The young rascals moved away, and passed out of hearing. Harry and Frank

left their hiding-place, and looked at each other.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Harry. "Who'd have thought those rotten funks would have had the nerve?"

"Popper has, anyway," sniffed Franky. "He's led them on, I suppose, and they feel fairly safe, as he's the old hunk's nephew. I wouldn't like to be in their shoes if they do get collared, anyway."

"My hat, no!"

"Think of it!" muttered Harry, his eyes gleaming. "The frightful cads must have been shooting pheasants at night—that means while the birds are sleeping. It's a bigger crime, in a sportsman's eye, than shooting a blessed fox. Oh, the howling rotters!"

"And they're going shooting rabbits to-morrow night!" said Frank.

"Skinner isn't—not if I know it!" snapped Harry, through his teeth. "Anyhow—'Sh-sh!'"

The juniors, who were just about to leave their hiding-place, dropped back again abruptly as once again the tramp of feet sounded, and into their view came a burly form, clad in gaiters, with a gun slung under his arm.

It was Robinson, the head-keeper, and Harry gasped as he noted that Robinson was making for the direction which Ponsorby & Co. had taken.

"My hat!" he whispered, in alarm. "Those fools will be collared now!"

Robinson was not hurrying, however, and he had, obviously, no idea that others were abroad in the woods. His face was downcast, and he looked very worried indeed. He passed within a few feet of the juniors, and vanished through the trees.

"That's done it!" said Franky. "It serves the cads right, though."

"We must warn them!" snapped Harry.

"Eh? Warn them?" gasped Frank.

"Yes. Don't you see? I don't care what happens to that fool Popper. But Sir Hilton will never overlook the others. He'll have absolutely no mercy on them. It means the sack for them all—perhaps worse. After all, Skinner's one of us, and we don't want him sacked, and we don't want a scandal. That's what it'll mean. Come on! We must do something!"

Franky followed his chum at once, though he did not at all approve of Harry's Quixotic ideas. Bringing all their scoutcraft into play, they trod in the wake of the keeper.

Harry was hoping for a chance to slip round and get in front of the man; but, as it happened, this did not prove to be necessary.

The trail led them to a high, thick hedge, and, reaching this, Robinson turned down a rough path to the right. On reaching this a moment later the juniors got a glimpse of the red roof of a cottage nestling snugly in a distant hollow.

"Going home!" muttered Harry. "Oh, thank goodness!"

"Looks as if it's all serene, then," said Frank. "Hadn't we better get back?"

"I think so. Yes, we will. Come on!"

The juniors retraced their steps and started back, greatly relieved that the necessity for action seemed to be gone.

But that feeling did not last long.

They had returned some hundred yards or so, when both juniors stopped dead as a sound came from behind them—a loud, shrill, terrified shriek. It was followed instantly by another and another.

And at the same moment they were aware of a queer sound above their



"So—so that's the game!" panted Gerald Popper hoarsely. "We'll see about that, you beastly outsiders!" As he spoke he sprang for the precious camera in Harry's hand. But the Famous Five had anticipated such a move. Bob Cherry's foot shot out and Gerald Popper sprawled headlong. (See Chapter 11.)

heads—the sharp, whirring of numerous wings.

Looking sharply upwards, they saw a flock of large birds flying overhead, heavily, but speedily, and obviously much alarmed.

"Pheasants!" breathed Harry. "They're terrified of something, too. Something's wrong!"

He hesitated a moment, and then, with a quick word to Franky, he started back at a run, and Franky followed.

They reached the high hedge in next to no time, and then they saw what was amiss. A fairly large volume of thick smoke was rising skywards from beyond the hedge, and through the hedge they glimpsed smoke-riven flames.

While they had been running the shrieks had continued without pause, and Harry did not hesitate.

He ran along until they reached a gap in the hedge, and led the way through it.

Beyond was a thick shrubbery and several wooden buildings.

"The pheasants' enclosure!" gasped Harry. "Hallo?"

Harry's voice ended in an alarmed gasp. Beyond a barbed-wire fence a large heap of brushwood, dry as a tinder, was blazing furiously, and the shrubbery itself was burning, too.

And stuck fast in the barbed wire of the fence, struggling frantically and yelling with fear, was a youngster of fourteen or thereabouts.

And no wonder! The flames were almost upon him, and now his jacket

was already alight. They could scarcely see his form for the flames and smoke.

"Great Scott!" panted Harry. "Quick, Franky!"

The alarmed juniors went to the rescue with a rush. The posts of the fence were already blazing, as was the grass round about. From somewhere in the distance a whistle was shrilling, but the juniors gave no thought to their own danger from fire or discovery.

They reached the shrieking youngster, and, heedless of burns, tore at his clothing desperately in a frantic effort to release him.

In the thick, numerous strands of barbed-wire it was caught in dozens of places, for the terrified boy had evidently tried to scramble through in his blind terror. The wire tore their hands, and their eyes, filled with pungent smoke, smarted and burned, while the grass beneath their feet was now alight.

It seemed a hopeless task, and their senses reeled under the strain. But they stuck it savagely, and at last they tore the boy free, and dragged him through the gap they had made in the wire.

The terrified boy was sobbing quietly now, and the juniors hurried him to the back of the pheasant preserve which bordered the fence there.

"I don't know who you are, kid," said Wharton, after making sure the boy was not seriously harmed, "but it looks to me as though you know something about this business. You'd better clear!"

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"And we'd better clear, too," said Franky swiftly. "My hat! Listen!"

From somewhere beyond the high hedge sounded an angry, bellowing voice, and as he heard it the boy gave a startled whimper. Then he tore himself free from Harry's kindly grasp, and fairly flew for the gap in the hedge. He had just reached it, when a crouching form squeezed through from the far side, and, rising upright, revealed a tall man in shooting clothes, with a red, furious face and an eyeglass.

It was Sir Hilton Popper.

"Oh, great Snakes!" groaned Harry.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Spotted!

THE baronet's face was blazing with rage, but it went fairly crimson as the hapless youngster blundered into his august form and almost bowled him over.

"Oh gad!" he stuttered as he staggered backwards. "What—what—Ha!"

His arm shot out, and his big hand closed on the terrified youngster's collar.

"You—you young villain!" he choked. "Caught in the act, begad!"

Quite obviously the raging baronet had jumped at the same conclusion as had Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent.

But at that moment half a dozen men, evidently workers on the Popper Court Estate, came hurrying through the gap, and as they stood staring Sir Hilton turned upon them savagely.

"Don't stand staring there, you infernal idiots!" he roared. "Get that fire under, confound you! Ha!"

Once again the baronet gave vent to his favourite ejaculation—this with deadly emphasis as still another man wormed his way through the gap.

It was Robinson, the headkeeper, and Sir Hilton's eyes glittered on sighting him. And as Robinson's eyes fell upon the youngster, firmly held in the baronet's grasp, his face paled.

"Sir Hilton—" he faltered.

"Yes, sir!" roared Sir Hilton. "You may well look at the young villain, Robinson! You see what your confounded son's done—hey? It's not the first time the infernal little brat's done mischief, either, begad!"

"You—you don't mean he's caused this, sir?" stammered the man, aghast. "He's mischievous, I know; but—"

"I didn't do it—I swear I didn't do it!" sobbed the kiddie. "I didn't do it, dad! I found it burning—"

"Don't add falsehoods to your crime!" hooted the crusty baronet, who was a great deal of a bully. "I caught you red-handed, begad! I met the young—Ha!"

The baronet's eyes fixed themselves suddenly on something sticking from the boy's waistcoat pocket, and he gave a roar.

It was a small, coloured packet that obviously held—or had held—cheap cigarettes. It was final evidence—to Sir Hilton!

"There!" he hooted. "I knew it, begad! The young rascal has been smoking here. Good gad! Refute it now, Robinson! I say refute it now! Ha!"

The hapless headkeeper bit his lip hard; but he remained silent.

"They—they're only cigarette pictures—" began the boy in a whimper; but Sir Hilton's bellowing voice silenced him.

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"Cigarette fiddlesticks!" he roared.

"By gad, Robinson, can't you see—"

"I can see what you mean, sir," said the man steadily but respectfully. "But—but my boy don't smoke; and I must say I can't feel he did it, Sir Hilton."

"What?" bellowed Sir Hilton. "You dare to shield the young scoundrel after this! Begad! This—this is too much! This is the last straw!"

He indicated the still blazing fire round about which the men were working frantically to stay the flames.

"This is the last straw!" he choked. "You confounded dunderhead, Robinson! You can't stop the shooting of my confounded pheasants, and you can't even keep your own brats under control!"

"But, sir—"

"Enough!" growled the baronet bitterly. "I warned you that unless you could catch those villains who were shooting my pheasants, you would have to go, and this settles it! Begad, it does! You're sacked, my man!"

The head gamekeeper's face went white.

"You—you can't mean it, sir—"

"I do!" snapped Sir Hilton. "You'll pack up at once, Robinson!"

"But—but my wife!" stammered the hapless man. "She's ill—she can't be moved—"

"I can't help that, man!" snorted the baronet, with a heartlessness that made the listening juniors grit their teeth, though they guessed the autocratic old gentleman scarcely knew what he was saying in his towering rage.

"I can't help that, and— Good heavens, man," he went on, breaking out into a bellow again, "don't stand there like a dummy! Wake up! Do something! Get that fire out, confound you!"

Without another word, and without a glance at his son, the keeper turned away, and, grasping a bundle of brush, and joining the other men, attacked the flames with furious energy.

The wretched youngster, finding himself free now, bolted through the gap. Sir Hilton, his brow thunderous, also joined the fire-fighters. The drama—for the time being—was over.

"Well, my hat!" growled Harry through his teeth. "The brute! That poor kiddie!"

"And poor old Robinson!" muttered Frank Nugent. "But now's our chance, Harry. It'll be poor old us if we're caught here now!"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry grimly. "Watch for a chance, and then dive for the hedge, Franky!"

So far, the juniors had been hidden from sight round the wooden building, and they waited breathlessly now for a chance to race across the open ground. In other circumstances they would have been the first to lend a willing hand at the fire-fighting. But they realised that it would be utter folly to show themselves at such a time.

A moment or two passed, and then Harry gave the word, and they made a dash for the gap in the hedge.

But their luck was out that afternoon.

They were half-way across when several figures appeared, coming along the passage between the hedge and the pheasant reserve. They were Ponsonby & Co., and the five looked not a little scared. Harry saw at once that they had got rid of their airguns.

Gerald Popper saw the two Greyfriars fellows at once, and he gave a yell.

"Greyfriars cads!" he yelled. "Stop them!"

"Rush 'em!" hissed Harry.

The two juniors fairly hurled themselves at Ponsonby & Co. Gerald Popper went reeling backwards under a straight left from Harry, and Frank sent Monson staggering with a shoulder charge.

They went through the five like a knife through butter, and next moment they had reached the gap. Frank went through first, and Harry followed close at his heels.

And as they went through there came an angry bellow from Sir Hilton Popper, who had evidently seen that brief encounter.

"Oh, my hat!" panted Harry Wharton. "That's done it fairly! Old Popper's seen us, too! Run like blazes, Franky!"

They could hear the enraged baronet still bellowing, and they fairly charged on through the wood, helter-skelter.

With shouts and the crashing of pursuit in their ears, they dashed on, heedless of direction, and presently the sounds behind them died away. But they did not stop running until they emerged, at last, on the Redclyffe Road.

Then they dropped, panting, to a walk.

"Safe enough now!" gasped Harry Wharton, wiping his perspiring and smoke-grimed face. "Oh, crumbs! That was a narrow escape, if you like!"

"Too narrow for me!" panted Frank ruefully. "We're in for it now, Harry, in any case, though. Those cads will split, even if old Popper didn't recognise us."

"We're for it right enough!" groaned Harry, frowning dismally. "We've got that dashed watch all serene, but, by Jove, it's landed us for trouble, I'm afraid. What a bullying old brute old Popper is! Fancy sacking that poor chap just because his kid did that."

Frank Nugent stopped suddenly, and his hand went to his pocket. He brought out something that shone in the cold sunlight, and showed it to Harry.

"I'm not so sure about the kid doing it, Harry," he said quietly. "Look at that. I found it just inside the fence. Was it the poor kid who caused the fire? I don't think so. See the name on this—Gerald Popper!"

"Phew!" breathed Harry.

He recognised the thing in a flash as the gold cigarette-case that the baronet's rascally nephew had handed round to Ponsonby & Co.

"That shows the cads were on the spot just before the fire," went on Frank crisply. "And they were all smoking, remember. It seemed to me that that kid was telling the truth when he swore he hadn't done it."

"And I'm blessed if I don't think so now," said Harry uneasily. "What a thundering shame if it is so, Franky!"

"We ought to do something!" growled Franky. "Those cads ought to be shown up in any case. They're the beastly poachers, and they're the rotters who've brought all the trouble on that gamekeeper chap. No wonder he couldn't stop the shooting. He wouldn't dream of suspecting them."

"That's so. But we can't prove a thing. They'd swear till they were black in the face they were innocent, and they'll easily spin some yarn to account for this case being there—or that we've planted it. It's no go, I'm

(Continued on page 17.)

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2:



Supplement No. 195.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON

Week Ending October 18th, 1924.

DOWN WITH DRILL!

By Billy Bunter.

DRILL is about the most diabollic torcher ever invented.

The horrors in Nero's time, and the torchers of the Spannish Inkquisition, were blissful plezzures compared with drill.

"Before I came to Greyfriars I didn't know what drill was. We didn't have any at my preparatory school. It was a sivilized institution.

But when I came here there was a drill-sergeant who used to put me through an hour's torcher a day. I put up a petition to the Head, asking if I might be eggscused drill, on the grounds of a weak hart, and a Bunyon on my big toe. But the Head throw out my petition, and I had to face the musick.

I well remember my first eggspierience with the drill-sergeant. When he gave the command, "Quick march!" I fell down flat and started to wriggle across the floor of the Jim.

"Bunter," shouted the sergeant, "what on earth are you doing?"

"Marching, sergeant," I replied. "The Duke of Wellington said that an army marches on its stummack, so I thought I'd better do the same!"

A sharp rap from the sergeant's drill-stick soon caused me to leap to my feet.

Dubbling is even worse than marching, bekawse it soon puffs you out, and makes you feel like a punctured football.

Hopping on one foot is another abomination. How can a fellow like me, who turns the scale at fourteen stone, possibly support the whole of his body on one foot? I've heard of Atlas supporting the World, but that was an easier feat than the one I've just mentioned.

Dumb-bells—so called bekawse they can't have a friendly chat with you—are the bane of my life. I can't stand the beestly things. As for club-swinging, it's the worst form of torcher ever devised. I prefer "swinging the lead" to swinging clubs!

Fizzical jerks are enuff to drive a fellow off his dot. Where's the sense in flinging your arms about like windmills, and bending and stretching, and tying yourself into knots?

I hear they are going to have a new drill-sergeant at Greyfriars. If he does come, I shall clear out. I'm not going to stay here and be drilled till I drop with hart-failure. A pal of mine had hart-failure once, and they haven't cured him yet!

"Down with Drill!" I hope every reader of this artikle will echo my war-cry.

Supplement i.]

DRILL!

By Dick Penfold.

DRILL, drill, physical drill,
That's the stuff to make you ill!
Marching here, and marching there,

Tramping, stamping, everywhere!
I'd pulverise him, with a will,
The merchant who invented drill!

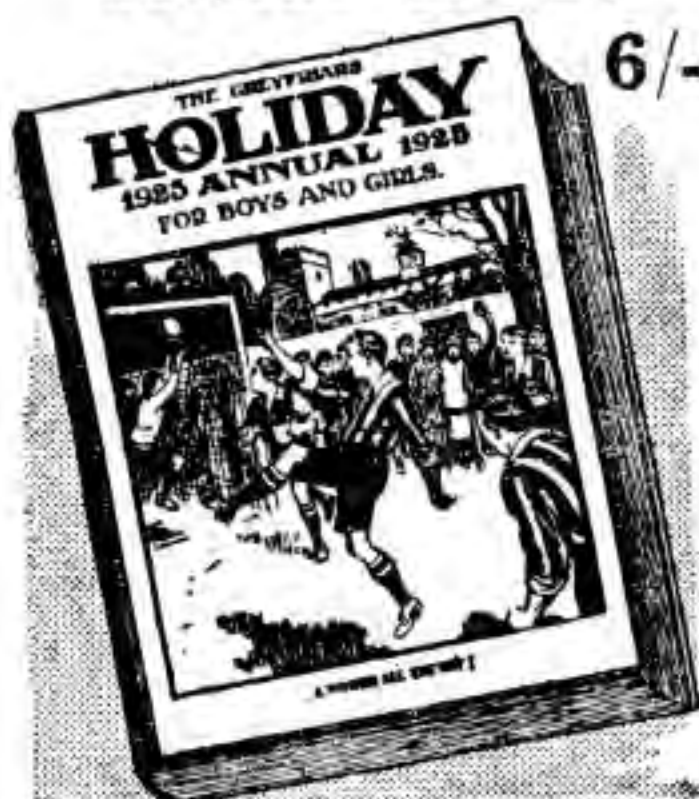
Jerks, jerks, physical jerks,
Confound the fellow and all his works,
For daring to invent such things!
What tired and tortured limbs it brings!
We get no peace or rest until
The welcome words, "Dismiss from drill!"

March, march, rapid march,
Over the cobbles and under the arch;
Down to the gates, and down the lane,
Then "About turn!" and back again.
Felix keeps on walking still—
So do the Greyfriars chaps at drill!

"Halt! Front! Stand at ease!"
With drooping shoulders, sagging knees.
The sergeant's voice is like the roar
Of breakers booming on the shore.
The pace has been enough to kill;
It makes one dread the name of drill!

"Move to the right in fours!" What-ho!
Heels click smartly; off we go!
Marching in a human column,
Looking very sad and solemn.
Where's the scuse, and where's the skill,
In such a tiresome thing as drill?

Drill, drill, physical drill,
The sergeant's voice is shouting still.
"Hold your head up, Number Six!
Hi, there! Stop them monkey tricks!"
'Tis a necessary evil; still,
We're sick and tired of physical drill!

SOMETHING EVERY BOY SHOULD HAVE!

360 pages of real delight.
NOW ON SALE!

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

MANY bitter things have been said at Greyfriars about the man who invented drill. He is classed in the same category as the man who invented the treadmill and the man who invented "painless" dentistry.

The fact is, drill is not popular. No doubt it is a great asset to physical fitness, and all that sort of thing; but if you asked the average fellow which he preferred—ninety minutes' drill or a footer match—he would plump for the footer match.

Greyfriars has no drill sergeant at present, but in the past it has had several, and most of them have been martinets of the Prussian type. Many a time we have had to double round the Close, panting and perspiring, with the sergeant bellowing at the top of his lungs, and whipping up the stragglers with his drill-stick. And we have carried hefty dumb-bells above our heads, and swung Indian clubs till our arms ached.

The more drill we have, the less we like it. Some fellows, in fact, hate it like poison. Ask Billy Bunter what he thinks of drill, and he will tell you that there has been no form of torture like it since the Spanish Inquisition. Ask Lord Mauleverer what he thinks of it, and his lordship will shudder at the mere mention of drill.

If any fellow prefers drill to footer there must be a curious kink in him somewhere. It is hard to understand such a preference.

But, of course, there is humour in drill, just as there is humour in everything, if we have an eye for the funny side of things. This week our merry contributors have let themselves go on the subject of drill, and, in consequence, I do not think our circulation will "mark time." It will "double." And there will be a "rapid march" to the newsagents to secure this issue of the MAGNET LIBRARY.

I have had lots of letters lately, containing suggestions for future Special Numbers. Some of these suggestions are splendid, and will be carried out. But I regret I cannot humour the young fellow who wants a Special Number dealing with criminals, or the boy who wants a Special Butterfly-catching Number. In the first place, the members of my staff are not authorities on crime; and, in the second place, the butterfly-catching season is over. And, anyway, such a sport is not exciting enough to appeal to the majority of my chums.

HARRY WHARTON.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 87L



The Tyrant of St. Sam's!

A Powerful and Dramatic Story,
with a Thrilling Climax.
By DICKY NUGENT

"SERGEANT BROOT," said Jack Jolly, "is a broot of the first water!"

"Here, here!" said Merry and Bright.

"He's a beastly tyrant!" went on Jack Jolly, his voice trembling with commotion. "He ought never to have been appointed drill sergeant at St. Sam's. Did you hear what he did to Weekling of the Third? Made him dubble round the Jim twenty times, till the poor kid fell down in a faint."

"Shame!"

"We shall get no piece till Sergeant Broot is kicked out of St. Sam's," said Jack Jolly. "He ain't fit to be in charge of the sons of gentlemen—like us."

Strictly speaking, Jack Jolly was the son of a pork butcher. But pork butchers can be gentlemen, just as much as lords and barrownets, and other members of the Harry Stockrassy.

"I've written a poem about old Broot," said Merry. "Would you fellows like to hear it? It starts like this:

'I do not love thee, Sergeant Broot,
And when I hear your voice I scoot.
You want the Order of the Boot,
You beesily, boollying, berly broot!'

No sooner had Merry recited the first verse than a savvidge bellow came from the doorway.

The juniors spun round with a start. Standing on the threshold was the subject of Merry's poem, a short, thick-set man, with a curling millitary moustosh, and a pair of black, bushy high-brows. He was a horrible-looking specimen—not at all the sort of man you would care to meet on a dark night.

"Ho!" roared the sergeant. "Takin' my name in vain, are yer? Holdin' me up to riddicule—wot? I'll learn yer! Follow me into the Jimmy-nasium, all three of yer!"

Jack Jolly & Co. looked for a minnit as if they would defy the sergeant's order. But they thought better of it, and trotted off obediently to the Jim.

"Now you young bratts!" said the sergeant savvidgely, "I'm going to put you through the mill. Take a pair of dumbbells apiece."

The juniors obeyed.

"Fall in!" thundered the sergeant.

"Raise the dum-bells above yer 'eads by numbers. One—two! Right turn! Dubble march!"

Jack Jolly & Co. started to dubble round the Jim. It was no joak, for the dum-bells were as hevvy as lead. They wayed about half a ton each.

Jack Jolly went first, followed by Merry, and Bright brought up the rear of the grim percession. Round and round the Jim they went, with the sergeant's rawkus voice booming in their ears.

"Left, right, left, right, left! Pick yer feet up, there! Keep them dum-bells above yer 'eads, an' don't dare stop till I gives the word of command!"

It was terrible torcher to the three juniors. Beads of inspiration streamed down their faces, and it made Merry regret the inspiration which had led him to write that poem about the sergeant.

"I can't stick this!" panted Jack Jolly, as he stumbled along.

"Dubble up, there!" thundered the sergeant, "or I'll come behind yer with my drill-stick!"

The three juniors were nearly in a state of collapse by this time. The dum-bells seemed to have got hevvier and hevvier. At last, unable to stand the strain any longer, Jack Jolly let go of his dum-bells. One of them dropped on the floor of the Jim with a sickening thud, the other landed on the foot of the sergeant.

Crash!

"Yaroooooo!"

With a wild yell of angwish the sergeant hopped round the Jim on one leg, clasping his damaged foot with the other, and breathing out threatenings and slawter.

(Say, Dicky! That sergeant must have been "some" contortionist!—Ed.)

"You—you young villen!" he spluttered. "You done that deliberate!"

"I never!" said Jack Jolly.

"Yus, you did!"

"No, I never!"

"Come 'ere!" roared the sergeant, flurishing his drill-stick.

"Sha'n't!" flashed Jack Jolly.

"Wot! First you chuck a dum-bell at me, then you hurl defiance at me!"

"Yes! You're a broot and a tyrant, and we're not going to be boollied any longer!"

"Here, here!" cried Merry and Bright.

Then Jack Jolly made a signal to his chums, and with one accord they rushed at Sergeant Broot. In the heat of the moment they did not stop to count the cost. They tackled the tyrant low down—a Jew had once taught them Jew-jitsu—and the sergeant's legs were swept from under his feet. He hit the floor with a loud crash!

"Now we'll give him a dose of his own meddisin!" panted Jack Jolly.

"Turn him over!"

The sergeant, snorting with fury, was rolled over, and then Jack Jolly started to lay into him with the drill-stick.

Whack, whack, whack!

Clouds of dust rose from the sergeant's baggy trowsers, and his bellers of pane could be heard all over St. Sam's.

Jack Jolly didn't stop until the drill-stick broke into three halves. Then, as in a flash, he realised the awful enormity of his conduct. When the Head got to know about it it would surely mean the sack.

Jack Jolly turned quite pail, and so did Merry and Bright.

As for Sergeant Broot, he staggered to his feet. His face was purple. He looked as if he was going to have an appleplectic fit.

"I'll report yer!" he cried in a choking voice. "I'll report yer to the 'Ead this very minnit!"

And he strode towards the door. But before he reached it a cupple of stern-faced men stepped into the Jim, and a pair of handcuffs clicked upon the wrists of the dasterdly tyrant.

One of the men spoke.

"I am a detective officer in plane close," he said. "Benjamin Broot, alias Charles Crool, alias Sidney Savvidge, I arrest you in the name of the law!"

"For why?" snorted the sergeant, beginning to bluster.

"I arrest you on a duzzen separate charges of croolity to small boys. Before you came here you were drill-sergeant at St. Bill's, where you boollied the boys to such an eggstent that some of them are maimed for life!"

"Shame!" cried the St. Sam's fellows in chorus.

The detective then seized the sergeant by the scruff of the neck, and marched him away to meet his doom. The St. Sam's fellows flocked after them, hooting and hissing.

The Head, attracted by the uproar in the quad, opened his window to see what was going on. But he hastily shut it again, and dodged back into his study. For reasons of his own, he had no wish to be seen by detectives. Like Sergeant Broot, who was now being marched away to the police-station, the Head had a guilty conscience.

THE END.

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[Supplement ii.]



Curing the Slackers!

— By TOM BROWN —

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "What's the matter with Prout?"

Not many fellows heard Bob's question, for they were sound asleep in their beds.

The rising-bell had not yet sounded, but Bob Cherry, being an energetic mortal, had bounded out of bed at an early hour. Whilst giving the final twist to his necktie, Bob happened to glance out of the window, and he saw that he was not the first person at Greyfriars to be up and doing that morning.

Mr. Paul Prout, the master of the Fifth, was out in the Close. And he was performing a number of weird and wonderful antics.

"What the thump—" gasped Bob Cherry, in amazement.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent and Johnny Bull were out of bed in a twinkling, and they joined their chum at the window. They stared in surprise at Mr. Prout, and Johnny Bull tapped his forehead significantly.

"Potty!" he murmured. "Mad as a hatter, or a March hare! I'd often suspected that old Prout had bats in his belfry, but I didn't expect him to break out like this!"

Mr. Prout was attired in a white sweater, a pair of grey flannel trousers, and light canvas shoes. There was nothing insane in this. It was Mr. Prout's method of progression which suggested insanity. He was lifting his knee high in the air, shooting his foot forward, and then planting it firmly on the ground. After which he repeated the performance with the other leg.

"Why, he's doing the goose-step!" said Harry Wharton, with a laugh.

"Think he's in Prussia, I suppose!" said Nugent.

Blissfully unaware of the fact that four pairs of eyes were regarding him from the dormitory window, Mr. Prout went on with his goose-stepping. He goose-stepped all the way to the tuckshop, and then back across the Close to the school gates.

"Oh, my hey!" gasped Gosling.

Mr. Prout halted a moment.

"I have been reading a valuable book entitled 'How to be Fit at Fifty,' Gosling!" he said. "It contains a series of exercises, which have to be performed early in the morning. I am afraid the book would be of no use to you, Gosling. But I will gladly lend you the companion volume, 'How to be Nimble at Ninety.'"

Gosling glared.

"Which I ain't ninety yet, sir—not by a long way!" he growled.

"Then I will lend you the volume entitled 'How to be Sound at Sixty,'" said Mr. Prout. "A course of physical

exercises, Gosling, would do you a world of good."

"I ain't got time for them sort of capers," replied Gosling. And he shuffled through the Close on his way to ring the rising-bell.

Mr. Prout resumed his goose-stepping, to the vast amusement of the juniors who watched him from the upper window.

Most men, at some time of their lives, develop a craze for physical culture; and Mr. Prout had caught that craze now—in fact, he was badly bitten by it.

Had the matter ended there, all might have been well. But Mr. Prout never caught a craze without trying to kindle the enthusiasm of others for it. He tried to convert Mr. Quelch, Mr. Twigg, and Mr. Hacker into physical culture fanatics. But he failed, just as he had failed with Gosling.

Having no luck with the members of the staff, Mr. Prout turned his attention to the boys. He informed the Head that there was a great deal of slacking at Greyfriars on half-holidays, and he asked permission to take the slackers in hand and put them through a course of physical exercises. The Head consented.

"I do not wish you to interfere with the boys who are playing football," he said. "But those who are simply lounging about in their studies and elsewhere will certainly benefit by a course of drill."

So on the next half-holiday Mr. Prout rounded up the slackers. He began by bursting in upon Skinner and Snoop and Stott, who were lazing in Skinner's study, and ordered them to go and wait for him in the gym. He then pounced upon Billy Bunter, who was perched on a stool in the tuckshop, waiting for some good Samaritan to come in and treat him. And he rudely disturbed the sweet repose of Lord Mauleverer, whom he found fast asleep on his study sofa.

Having shepherded his victims to the gym, Mr. Prout joined them there, and addressed them.

"You boys appear to be incurably lazy," he said. "You take no part in sports, and your main object in life seems to be to dream and doze. I have been given permission to drill you, and I trust it may be the means of curing your physical sloth. We will now proceed."

The slackers of the Remove looked very glum. They were lined up in a row, and Mr. Prout numbered them off. Then he ordered them to "form fours"—a rather difficult matter, since there were only five of them!

Eventually, Mr. Prout decided to march them in single file. And he himself led the way.

Round and round the gym went the

little squad of slackers, and Mr. Prout set a hot pace.

Billy Bunter was soon puffing and panting, and so were his companions in distress.

Then came a spell of goose-stepping and doubling, and dumbbell exercises.

Never had the slackers spent such an agonising afternoon. They were kept on the go all the time, without rest or respite. Lord Mauleverer was groaning; Skinner & Co. were grunting; Billy Bunter was gasping. They had looked forward to a nice, restful half-holiday, but the fellows on the football-field were having a much more restful time by comparison!

The only person who appeared to be enjoying himself was Mr. Prout. His face, naturally florid, now had the hue of a beetroot.

"Ow!" gasped Billy Bunter, who was balancing a pair of enormous dumbbells above his head. "I—I can't go on! I've got a weak heart, and the doctor says that violent exercise will very likely kill me! My knees are beginning to give way. Have pity, sir!"

Mr. Prout frowned.

"You are talking utter nonsense, Bunter! There is no finer thing than physical exercise for the weak-hearted, the pigeon-chested, and those who, like yourself, wish to become slim."

"But I don't want to be slim!" wailed Bunter.

"Be silent!" snapped Mr. Prout.

And the "tortures" continued.

It was not until tea-time that the welcome word of dismissal came.

Harry Wharton & Co., returning from the footer field, were surprised to see five juniors come tottering out of the gym in a state of utter collapse. Skinner & Co. were leaning upon one another for support, and Billy Bunter was actually crawling on his hands and knees. As for Lord Mauleverer, he was as limp as a rag.

When laughingly questioned by their schoolfellows as to what had been happening, the slackers were too exhausted to reply.

On the following Wednesday afternoon Mr. Prout again made a tour of the Remove studies for the purpose of rounding up the slackers. But there were no slackers to round up.

Skinner & Co. and Billy Bunter and Lord Mauleverer were on the football-field, where they were safe from the clutches of the physical culture fanatic. They loathed football, and they loathed drill; but of the two evils they wisely chose the lesser!

THE END.

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The Delights of Drill!

As Described by our
Contributors.

DRILL SERGEANTS OF GREYFRIARS!

An entertaining article.

By GEORGE WINGATE.

DRILL and discipline go hand in hand. Both are very necessary at public schools, although lots of juniors don't seem to think so. Undrilled fellows are inclined to grow slovenly. They cease to walk with squared shoulders and a light step. Drill keeps them physically up to the mark, and is jolly good for them.

(I suppose we must bow to your superior wisdom, Wingate, old man; but drill is our pet abomination.—Ed.)

LORD MAULEVERER: "Drill has no delights. It's an abomination, begad! I hear they are goin' to revive drill at Greyfriars, an' appoint a drill sergeant. That means that there will be no rest for my weary limbs. It will be, 'Left, right! Left, right!' from morn till night, an' I sha'n't have enough energy to crawl up to bed, begad! What's the use of drill, anyway? Some people say it keeps you fit; but my own recipe for keepin' fit is an afternoon's nap on my study sofa. Down with drill, an' perish all drill-sergeants!"

ALONZO TODD: "I think drill is delightful, provided it isn't overdone. I love to pick up a pair of light dumb-bells—weighing not more than an ounce apiece—and to raise them above my head. If I feel strong enough, I repeat this performance two or three times, but never more, in case I sprain my biceps. I am also fond of swinging Indian clubs, but I am a trifle erratic, and the other day, when making a backward swing, I accidentally hit my cousin Peter on the nose. He has not spoken to me since. I confess I am not very partial to marching and doubling and doing the goose-step; but on the whole I consider that drill is highly beneficial to British boys."

BILLY BUNTER: "What delights are there in drill, I should like to know? It duzzent suit a frail and delli-ket constitution like mine. I can't march once round the Jim without feeling like a punctured football. Besides, it makes me lose weight, and that's a jolly serious matter, bekawse I've always been a fellow of great weight and inflewence. As for clubs and dum-bells, I regard them as instruments of torcher, and consider they ought to be abolished. Drill-sargents and dentists are my pet aversions. As old Gosling says, 'they oughter be drowned at birth!'"

BOB CHERRY: "I suppose the son of a soldier ought not to speak slightly of drill, but I confess it doesn't make the same appeal to me as a game of footer or a bout with the boxing-gloves. Drill is too monotonous and mechanical. It wants brightening up. They ought to have a brass band in attendance, playing selections. Then we should march ever so much better. I'm rather fond of the dumb-bells, but they're jolly weighty things, as the drill-sergeant discovered when I dropped one on his pet corn! He bellowed like a bull in pain. Club-swinging is also good sport, and it keeps the muscles from getting flabby. But as for marching and doubling and goose-stepping, they don't appeal to me a scrap."

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WILLIAM GOSLING: "In my young days, which is goin' back about sixty years, I used to be rare fond of drill. I belonged to the Volunteers in them far-off days, an' I used to spend all my spare time doublin' round a drill-hall, an' learnin' to 'andle a rifle. I was born too late for the Battle of Waterloo—more's the pity—an' just too early for the Boer War. I reckon I should 'ave made a jolly good soldier. Can't you imagine Colonel William Gosling leadin' his men over the top? I should 'ave won the V.C., as sure as eggs. I thought of volunteerin' for the last big War, an' tried to pass meself off as a man of thirty-five; but it wouldn't wash. The recrootin'-sergeant says to me, 'Gosling,' says he, 'the country ain't so 'ard up for men that it's got to call upon vegetarians of eighty!' I suppose he meant octogenarians. Anyway, he told me to run away an' draw me Old Age Pension. But to get back to the subject of drill, I considers it a mighty fine thing for the young rips of Greyfriars. It keeps 'em out of mischief, an' fits 'em to defend their country, thus killin' two birds with one stone, so to speak."

"D'ARCY'S BABY!"

The Most Amusing Yarn of
Tom Merry & Co: ever told—
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GOING back still further into the school's history, we come to another tyrant and tartar—a Sergeant Burke. This inhuman individual was at Greyfriars in the early 'seventies. There was a weak headmaster at the time, and Sergeant Burke seemed to do pretty much as he liked. He practically governed the school. On rising in the morning the fellows had to "fall in" in the Close, and the sergeant doubled them to and fro till they were breathless. No doubt it gave the boys excellent appetites for breakfast, but they hated the interference with their leisure. In the afternoon they were given another dose of drill. Then, if they happened to get into Sergeant Burke's black books, they were drilled again in the evening. Drill is a splendid thing—in moderation; but there was not much moderation in the methods of Sergeant Burke. His tyranny led up to a mutiny and a "barring-out," and the Head realised that the only way to restore law and order was to send Sergeant Burke packing. This he did, and Greyfriars breathed freely once more.

NOT every drill-sergeant has been an inhuman monster. Years ago there was a Sergeant Joy—a plump, genial person who was very popular with the boys. But he neglected his duties in a shocking manner, and when the governors of the school came down to witness a drill display, they discovered, to their horror, that nobody knew any drill at all! Of course, there was an inquiry, and Sergeant Joy had to go.

AT the present time Greyfriars is without a drill-sergeant, but there is a rumour that one will shortly be appointed. Let us hope our luck will change, and that we shall get a decent sort—a man like Mr. Larry Lascelles—instead of a brute who believes in the mailed fist and the iron hand. Drill is necessary, as I have said; but it is also necessary to have drill-sergeants who are just, as well as firm, and who are not wholly drained of the good old milk of human kindness.

(Hear, hear! Wish you were our drill-sergeant, Wingate. I'm sure you would give us an easy time!—Ed.)

[Supplement iv.]



(Continued from page 12.)

afraid. And it looks as if we're in for it, too, now, Franky. Oh, blow that dashed watch, and blow Bunter, and blow Loder! Let's get back for goodness' sake! My clobber's about ruined, and my hands are scorched all over. Oh, blow!

And Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent started for Greyfriars, dismal and sore and full of forebodings. They saw trouble ahead. But, at the moment, they little dreamed what form that trouble was to take.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Harry's Decision!

"WELL, I'm blowed!"

That was Bob Cherry's inelegant remark when Harry and Frank told their story to the rest of the Famous Five over tea that afternoon.

After a visit to the bath-rooms—a much-needed visit—Harry and Frank had handed over the recovered watch to Loder of the Sixth, and had lounged about No. 1 Study, nursing their hurts until their chums had returned from their cycling spin.

And now, over steaming tea and toast and eggs, the chums of the Remove were discussing affairs in a far from cheery manner.

Harry and Frank knew there was trouble in store for them. They had no delusions on that point. Dr. Locke, much as he cordially disliked the pompous and arrogant Sir Hilton Popper, insisted upon the baronet's property being "taboo," and he came down heavily on offenders.

"It means a dozen of the best, at least!" groaned Harry. "And my blessed hands are sore enough, goodness knows! And he won't take the story of the watch as an excuse, you bet!"

Bob shook his head.

"Hardly," he said. "But—but, I say, I'm thundering sorry about that poor gamekeeper chap! The Cliff House girls will be upset about it, too."

"It's a thundering shame!" said Harry. "Those cads deserve flogging alive! They are at the bottom of Robinson's troubles with old Popper, and the more I think about it the more certain I am that they caused that fire, and not that poor kid."

"It looks like it," agreed Johnny Bull.

"We ought to do something, Harry!" snapped Bob Cherry, his good-natured face angry and indignant. "We can't let an injustice like this go on. It's up to us. Right's right!"

"We're going to do something," said Harry quietly. "I've already determined on that, you chaps. But we've got to prove what we know, remember."

"We've got that cigarette-case—" began Frank.

"That's not much proof," said Harry slowly. "We'll keep it, though, for a bit. We've got to stop that poaching, and we've got to make those cads own

up they caused the fire." He paused a moment, and then he went on quietly: "I think I know a way of doing both, you fellows."

"You do?"

"I think so. I won't tell you what it is yet, though. Are you fellows game for an expedition into the woods again to-night, after lights out?"

"Wha-at?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It's risky, I'll admit," said Harry, smiling as he met his chums' amazed looks. "But I fancy you chaps aren't the sort to funk it, in the circumstances."

"No fear! We're coming," said Bob promptly.

"Yes, rather!"

There was an immediate response. The rest of the Famous Five would have followed their leader anywhere.

"We'll do it, then," said Harry. "The idea's this. We've got to get clear proof about the poaching. And with that in our hands we'll frighten the cads into stopping the game, and we'll thundering well force them to own up about the fire!"

"They'd never do that," sniffed Johnny Bull.

"I fancy they will, though," said Harry grimly. "The fire was an accident, and the punishment wouldn't be so serious—that is, unless there was proof it was done maliciously. But the poaching's different; it's frightfully serious. Old Popper would have no mercy on them."

"That's so."

"There's Skinner to be thought of, though," said Harry, looking worried. "He's not as bad as the others, I think. And, after all, he's a Greyfriars chap. I don't think he realises what a serious thing he's doing. I think we ought to warn him."

"What rot!" grunted Johnny Bull. "The cad deserves what the rest deserve."

"Perhaps so, but if they're caught it means disgrace for Greyfriars. That won't do. I fancy if Skinner knows someone knows what's going on, he'll jolly soon drop out. He's too big a funk to risk things."

"But he'll warn the others," said Bob Cherry.

"Not him, he's too afraid of us to do that. And Skinner only cares about his own precious skin," said Harry, his lip curling. "We sha'n't tell him our plans, of course. Anyway, I'm afraid of something going wrong to-night, and I'd rather Skinner wasn't there."

"I don't like it," said Bob. "But go ahead, if you really think it best, Harry."

"I do," said Harry, rising from the table. "And I vote we see Skinner now. You fellows had better come, too."

Harry's chums made no further protests. They saw he had made up his mind, and they followed him to Skinner's study. They found that junior at tea with Stott and Snoop.

He looked not a little scared at the entrance of the Famous Five.

"We want a word with you, Skinner," said Harry curtly. "Will you come outside a minute?"

Stott and Snoop looked at Skinner, and then they looked at the Famous Five. They saw there was trouble in the air, and they decided to keep out of it.

"We've finished tea," mumbled Snoop. "We'll clear out, if you like."

And, without waiting for Skinner's views, Snoop got up from the table and went out rather hurriedly. Stott followed him just as hurriedly.

"Look—look here," stammered Skinner, eyeing the juniors nervously, "if it's about this afternoon—"

"That and something else!" snapped Harry.

"It—it wasn't my fault you fellows were spotted. I couldn't help it," muttered Skinner sullenly. "It was nothing to do with me."

"I know that, Skinner," said Harry. "I've not come about that. I've just come to give you warning. This poaching game's got to stop, Skinner. I want to warn you that if you don't chuck away that airgun, and steer clear of the Popper Court Woods in future, you'll have good reason to regret it!"

Skinner's face went white. He stared at the juniors dumbfounded.

"You—you know about that?" he breathed.

"Yes, we know!" snapped Harry. "We've just come to give you a friendly warning, Skinner. You've been playing a dangerous game; but if you're wise you'll stop it now. If you value your precious skin you'll stay at home to-night, and keep clear of the woods. We happen to know you intended going, and we're warning you now to keep clear. You understand?"

Skinner stood, white-lipped. The secret was known now, and he trembled with fear. How much the juniors knew he could only guess, but he was conscious they knew quite enough.

"You—you're not going to tell?" he whispered.

"We shouldn't have come to warn you if we intended that," said Harry.

Skinner drew a deep breath. He naturally supposed that the keepers had set a trap for them that night, and he believed that the juniors knew of it and were warning him.

"Thanks for warning me," he stammered. "I—I don't know how you fellow got to know, but it's true. We've been fools! I wasn't going to-night, though, in any case. I told those fools it was getting too hot. I certainly won't go now."

"Right!" said Harry. "There's one thing, though, Skinner. We don't want you to warn your precious pals on any account. If you do, I promise you you'll be sorry for it."

Skinner stared at them.

"I won't," he said eagerly. "Hang them! It—it serves them right. They wouldn't listen to me. I won't say a word, Wharton."

"You'd better not!" snapped Harry. "Anyway, that's all, Skinner."

"I say," stammered Skinner, "I'm grateful for this, you chaps, and I'm sorry about the fire. I know you chaps didn't do it. But old Popper thinks you did. Has—has he been here yet?"

"Eh? What do you mean?" said Harry suddenly.

Again Skinner stared.

"Old Popper's raving," he said. "The fire did a lot of damage—burnt out the pheasant enclosure, and some sheds in which a lot of fruit-trees were placed. And he's lost his pheasants—they've gone over into the Ravenscroft Estate, and he'll find it hard to get them back. He swears he won't be satisfied unless you're sacked!"

"Great Scott!"

"You—you don't mean to say the old idiot thinks we did it?" babbled Harry Wharton, in utter dismay.

"Of course!" said Skinner. "He thought it was that keeper's kid until he spotted you and Nugent. Then he fairly

went mad. He thinks you did it to get your own back for that thrashing the other night."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Harry, in alarm.

The Co. were staggered. Such a possibility had never even occurred to them, though Harry realised now that they might have guessed it, knowing Sir Hilton as they did.

"But—but that's too thick!" said Bob Cherry angrily. "It was you rotters who did it—you know that thundering well, Skinner, you cad!"

Skinner, bewildered and scared as he was, did not attempt to deny it.

"It was Gerald Popper who did it," he muttered. "He threw a lighted match down—I saw him. I remembered it afterwards. We were running at the time—we heard someone coming through the shrubbery. It must have been that kid. Anyway, it was Popper's fault. I told him the match hadn't gone out, but he only said it would go out, and ran on. How—how did you fellows find out?"

"We found Popper's cigarette-case near the fence," said Harry briefly.

Skinner licked his lips.

"It'll all come out now!" he groaned. "You fellows will keep me out of it, won't you?"

Harry's lip curled.

"You'll be safe enough, providing you keep your own mouth shut!" he snapped. "Remember about to-night, though, Skinner. Come on out of this, you fellows."

And Harry led the way out, a look of disgust on his face. It was clear that all the cowardly Skinner troubled about was his own skin.

"Well, this looks like being serious," said Frank Nugent, as they crowded outside. "What on earth are we to do, Harry?"

"I scarcely know," said Harry, "unless—"

He paused as Mark Linley, of the Remove came up to him.

"Seen Wingate?" he asked, eyeing the juniors curiously. "He's hunting for you and Nugent. He told me to tell you to report yourselves to the Head at once, Wharton."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Something's up," went on Linley. "Old Popper's in with the Head, bellowing like a mad bull. Better look out!"

"Right, Linley," said Harry. "We'll get along at once."

Linley passed along, and the juniors exchanged looks of dismay.

"Can't be helped!" grunted Harry. "Come on, Franky—let's get it over."

And with their chum's good wishes ringing in their ears, the two unfortunates started for the Head's study.

But before they had reached it, Harry stopped. His face was set, and his eyes gleamed with resolution.

"Just a minute, Franky," he said quietly. "I want to ask you something. I think we can clear ourselves of this. We can call on that kid to prove we came up after the fire, and that we saved his life. The Head knows we're not smoking rotters, and I fancy he'll accept our word. He won't let old Popper have it all his own way, at all events."

"Well, that's so," said Frank, looking relieved.

"But you know what that means—if we do clear ourselves," said Harry grimly. "Old Popper is out for blood. He's determined to find a scapegoat. He'll immediately charge that kid again, and Robinson will be sacked. Remember

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his sick wife, Franky. It means ruin for him."

"Go on," said Frank quietly.

"That mustn't happen," said Harry through his teeth. "It's a thundering shame. We can stand a flogging better than that poor chap can stand ruin at such a time. I want to know, Franky, if you're game to stand the blame for this—to refuse to defend ourselves for that chap's sake?"

Frank Nugent gasped, and stared at his chum. Many fellows in the Remove called Harry Wharton "soft." But Frank knew him as a loyal, generous, and unselfish fellow. He knew it more so now.

"But—but we know it was those cads now," he stammered. "Skinner's admitted—"

"Skinner's word's worth nothing. And it will take more than our word and Skinner's to convince that old idiot, Popper. We can prove nothing. It's useless charging them," said Harry.

"But is it necessary?" muttered Frank. "If your plan succeeds to-night—"

"It may not—we can't afford to risk failure," said Harry. "If we clear ourselves now, our chance to save Robinson will be gone. We've got to decide here and now, Franky."

"It—it may mean expulsion!"

"It may. But that can't happen to-night. I'm hoping my plan to-night will succeed, and then everything will be all right. If it fails, we'll fight against expulsion. It's what's before us now that counts. Are we to defend ourselves and get the blame put on that poor kid, or are we to save him and take the blame? If it means expulsion, it won't matter so much—we'll have time to clear ourselves. But if old Popper insists on a flogging at once—and he may—are you willing to take it, Franky?"

"I see," said Frank. He was silent for a moment, and then he nodded slowly. "Yes," he said steadily. "I'm game!"

"Good man!" breathed Harry. "I knew you'd say that. I don't think you'll regret it afterwards. Come on!"

And Harry, with his chum at his heels, advanced to the Head's study door, and knocked, and the deep voice of Dr. Locke bade him enter.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

On the Carpet!

SEATED in the Head's study, with the Head, were Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, and Sir Hilton Popper.

Sir Hilton's features were purple, and his white moustache fairly bristled with rage. Dr. Locke's kind old face was pink, and his eyes held an angry light. It was pretty clear to the juniors that the two old gentlemen had been engaged in a more than usually heated argument.

Mr. Quelch wore an intensely worried expression, and he motioned to Harry Wharton to stand before the Head's desk.

"Boys," began Dr. Locke, turning a searching look upon the juniors, "I have sent for you to answer a very grave charge. I understand that you were caught in the Popper Court Woods trespassing last evening, and that you received a severe thrashing at the hands of Sir Hilton Popper?"

"They did, begad!" snorted the baronet, glaring at the two juniors. "These two lads and three other young

rascals. It was a well-merited thrashing, and I did not spare the rod. I imagined it would be a lasting lesson. It was a vain thought. The young villains—"

"Sir Hilton!" interrupted Dr. Locke tartly. "Pray allow me to deal with this matter."

"Huh!"

Sir Hilton subsided, grunting, and the Head turned again to the juniors.

"I will not, at the moment, go into your reasons for entering the woods against my express orders, Wharton," said the Head, pursing his lips. "This time the charge against you is far more serious. Sir Hilton Popper now claims that you trespassed again in the woods this afternoon, and that you wilfully caused a fire on his property—a fire that has done a great deal of damage."

Harry Wharton was about to speak, but the Head waved his hand for silence.

"The matter is far more serious than you apparently imagine, boys," he said gravely, eyeing the juniors' composed faces. "Sir Hilton is convinced that it did not come about by accident, but by wilful design. In short, he claims that you, Wharton, and Nugent caused the fire to avenge yourselves on Sir Hilton Popper for the thrashing he administered to you last evening."

The juniors remained silent.

"That is a very serious charge—so serious, that Sir Hilton is acting generously," went on the Head with a faint cough, "in not wishing to bring the police into the matter. I propose to give you every opportunity of defending yourselves, Wharton. Do you admit that you were in those woods this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir!" said Harry steadily, though his heart was thumping fast. "It's quite true!"

"Were you the boys Sir Hilton saw racing away from the scene of the fire?"

"Yes, sir!"

"What were you doing there, Wharton?" demanded Dr. Locke in a hard voice.

His features had set grimly, and Mr. Quelch was looking quite startled. Obviously both masters had hoped the juniors could deny the charge promptly.

There was a silence. The critical moment had arrived. The silence became deadly. Neither of the juniors spoke.

"Do you hear me, Wharton?" said the Head in steely tones. "What were you doing there?"

No answer.

The Head's brow became thunderous. "Does this mean that you refuse to answer me—that you have no answer?" he gasped.

"I'm sorry, sir," said Harry Wharton quietly. "But we've nothing we wish to say."

The Head seemed to be dumbfounded. He was obviously quite taken aback.

"You understand what your refusal to speak infers?" said the Head at last. "I can only conclude that you are guilty, Wharton. Unless"—the Head eyed the juniors sharply—"unless you are shielding someone, Wharton? A possibility I can scarcely credit."

"Shielding fiddlesticks!" hooted Sir Hilton, quite unable to restrain his excitement and wrath. "It's as plain as a pikestaff, Dr. Locke. The young villains haven't a confounded leg to stand on, begad! They stand there self-condemned by their silence, sir. Huh!"

Dr. Locke ignored the furious baronet's outburst.

"This is far more serious than I had supposed," said the Head, his voice strained. "I will give you one more

chance, Wharton. You have admitted being on the scene of the fire—you do not disclaim it. Yet you will not, or cannot, give reasons for being there. If you still persist in your refusal to tell me, I shall deem you to be guilty, and condemn you without further discussion. I am waiting, Wharton!"

"I—I've nothing to say, sir!" said Harry, a trifle shakily.

"Neither have I, sir," said Frank Nugent huskily.

There was a dead silence.

"Very well!" exclaimed the Head at last. "I am amazed and horrified that two boys in whom I had hitherto reposed the utmost confidence could have been capable of such rascality. You are self-condemned, however. You are guilty, and must suffer the consequences. I will consult with Mr. Quelch, and to-morrow I will pass sentence."

Sir Hilton fairly leaped from his chair, and thumped his fist on the Head's desk with a violence that made Dr. Locke jump.

"That, Dr. Locke," he choked, "will not suit me! I demand that the young scoundrels be sentenced here and now. I insist that they be given no opportunity of devising lying excuses and denials. I insist that they be publicly expelled without delay! I say I insist upon it, begad! Nothing less will satisfy me. They have ruined my pheasant preserves, have done grave damage to my property. My pheasants are gone. My pheasants, begad! That is not all, sir. Their rascality has all but caused me to commit an act of injustice—to dispense with the services of a valuable servant. Ha!"

"Pray restrain yourself, Sir Hilton," said the Head with some heat. "I can understand your anger and intense desire that justice shall be done. But I must point out to you that I am the headmaster of Greyfriars, and I insist upon punishing my boys without interference, sir."

"Then," snarled the baronet, "as you refuse to carry out my wishes, I shall place the matter in the hands of the police, sir!"

It was the Head's turn to leap from his seat.

"Sir Hilton!" he gasped in alarm. "I beg you to reconsider that decision. It is impossible for me to deal justly with such a matter as this at a moment's notice. It is also almost impossible for me to get the boys together for a public ceremony at this hour. To bring the police into a matter of this nature would do great harm to Greyfriars. As an old boy, and a member of the governing body, I appeal to you not to take such a step. It would be a blot on the good name of the school."

Sir Hilton subsided with a grunt into his chair again. The Head's appeal had not been in vain. Sir Hilton had a great deal of money sunk in the school, and he was the last man to wish harm to it.

"Very well, Dr. Locke," he grunted, glaring savagely at the juniors. "I will take no action until to-morrow. Let me tell you, however," he snapped, "that I shall be satisfied with no half measures."

"You need not fear that the punishment will not be severe," said Dr. Locke briefly. "If it is not expulsion, it will be a public flogging, with other severe penalties. The school will assemble at nine to-morrow, and I will announce my final decision then, Sir Hilton."

The Head turned a hard look on the juniors.

"Wharton and Nugent," he said sternly. "you have heard what I have said?"

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"Yes, sir!"

"Very well, you may go. I hope, my boys, for your own sakes, that before morning you will have arrived at a more sensible frame of mind, and will either answer my questions or confess your fault. Should this prove to be the case, it may influence my final decision considerably."

He nodded wearily, and the juniors crept out, their faces white and strained from the ordeal they had gone through.

They found their chums awaiting them anxiously in the passage.

"Well," demanded Bob Cherry, eyeing his chums' faces curiously, "what's happened? You—you cleared yourselves all serene, surely?"

"Come along to the study and we'll tell you," said Harry in a low voice.

Like Frank, he was feeling far from easy and comfortable in his mind now; indeed, he was deeply worried and scared. They had come to their decision to take the blame on their own shoulders hastily, without careful reflection. And now they were beginning to realise what a serious position they were in.

And yet, in their own minds, they knew they did not regret what they had done. Nor did Bob Cherry and the others when they heard the story a few minutes later in Study No. 1, blame

them, or attempt to influence their chums to act otherwise before it was too late. They respected their chums' generous motives too much for that.

"It's awful, though," groaned Bob Cherry. "It simply must come right, Harry. Supposing—"

"It's not really so frightfully serious," said Harry, trying to smile. "We've got the bit of time we wanted. We can do lots before morning. Just stop worrying, and I'll outline my plan for to-night. Shut that door, and listen!"

And behind the closed door Harry Wharton outlined his plan to his chums, the plan he fondly hoped would bring about the downfall of Ponsonby & Co., and thus clear themselves, and save Robinson, the gamekeeper, from disaster.

And evidently the scheme met with his chums' approval, for they were smiling hopefully when he had finished.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. The Night-Birds!

IN addition to making plans for the night expedition, Harry Wharton & Co. kept a close watch on Harold Skinner that evening. They hardly felt it likely he would leave the school

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to warn his chums, but they were taking no chances.

But Skinner made no attempt to leave the school, and he was sleeping soundly when Harry Wharton gave the signal in the Remove dormitory.

The five juniors dressed quickly and noiselessly. From Skinner they had learned that Ponsonby & Co. were meeting at the big oak in the woods at ten-thirty, and it was a little after ten when they left the school by the box-room window and started out.

It was a moonlight night, quiet and still. It was none too warm, but the juniors soon got accustomed to the chill night air.

"Go easy," warned Harry. "It's quite early yet, remember, and there may be masters prowling about."

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors skirted the school buildings, keeping well in the shadows; and after an anxious few minutes they reached the road in safety, and then they breathed freely.

All the juniors were excited, and their faces were tense and serious. A great deal depended upon the success or otherwise of the expedition. Harry and Frank had had plenty of time to think things over, and they had no delusions now as to the results of failure—to themselves.

Their chances of proving Ponsonby & Co. guilty were almost nil. They had no real proof, only Skinner's word, which was worth nothing at Greyfriars or elsewhere.

Certainly the Head might support them, though even that was scarcely likely, after refusing to defend themselves that evening. And, in any case, Sir Hilton held the trump card by threatening to call in the police, which he would certainly do should the Head back them up against his nephew, Gerald Popper.

It was a pretty dangerous situation, as Harry admitted to his chums as they hurried through the shadowy fields, creeping along the hedges like ghosts.

"The howling cads may not even turn up to-night!" he muttered gloomily. "And if so we're done absolutely, you fellows. I suppose we were asses in a way for not defending ourselves to-night; but—but—well, I felt so beastly sorry for that gamekeeper chap. And even now I don't regret it."

"Nor do I," said Frank quietly. "But, to tell the truth, Harry, I don't think it would have made much difference, in any case. Old Popper came to-night absolutely convinced that we'd done it. It would have taken more proof than we've got to convince him otherwise."

"I'm afraid you're right, Franky," said Harry. "Our case is pretty hopeless, unless this camera does its work well to-night, you fellows."

And Harry patted a box-like object he carried in his hand hopefully. It was a camera he had borrowed for the carrying out of his plan from Dick Penfold, who was the camera "fiend" of the Remove.

"You've got the flashlight ribbon, I hope?" asked Bob Cherry suddenly.

"I've got it. Trust me not to forget that!" said Harry grimly.

Nothing more was said until the chums had plunged into the black maw of the Popper Court Woods, and then Harry called a halt.

"We'll need to go carefully now," he said. "We don't want to muck up the whole show by stumbling into those cads. We're early yet, of course, but we can't take chances. Come on!"

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Treading cautiously on the carpet of dead leaves, the juniors pushed on. They were none too familiar with the woods, and in the deep gloom it was none too easy to take their bearings. Stray, ghostly shafts of moonlight filtered through the leafless trees, but these helped little. They had brought torches, however, and these were useful, though they used them sparingly and cautiously.

In silence they crept on, and all their scout's woodcraft was needed. They found the spot at last, however. There was no mistaking the giant oak, with the curious slit in the hollow trunk.

On sighting it they breathed deeply with relief. They sank down amid the wet undergrowth, and Harry began to get the camera ready. This done, he took a tin from his pocket, and, opening it, revealed a length of what appeared to be lead tape.

It was a piece of flashlight ribbon used for night and indoor photography, and this Harry handed to Bob Cherry.

"Got the matches, Bob?" asked Harry.

"Yes," said Bob, taking out a box and examining it closely. "All serene—all O.K."

"Good! Then you know what to do. Wait until I give the word, though."

The juniors settled down to wait. They were quivering with excitement now, and their nerves were whipped up to a high pitch. Where they crouched it was deep darkness, but the giant oak and the open space before it was lit up by the moonlight, giving the place a ghostly, mystic appearance.

It was intensely trying, waiting in the deep stillness. Not a breath of wind moved the trees, and a deep silence rested on the woods. Far in the distance a dog was barking, and the faint bleating of sheep in the pastures beyond the woods reached their straining ears.

Then came the very faint sound of the Friardale Church clock sounding the half-hour, and the juniors stirred expectantly.

Another five minutes passed—minutes that seemed like hours to the waiting juniors—and then through the woods sounded a rustling and crackling. It came nearer, and presently several dim figures became visible to the juniors. They were treading cautiously, yet the sound of their approach came clear and loud in the general stillness.

They moved into the patch of moonlit clearing, and their faces showed up clearly, white and unmistakable.

They were Gerald Popper, Ponsonby, Monson, and Vavasour.

The wait was ended, and the hiding juniors tensed.

"Wait!" breathed Harry Wharton.

Evidently the eerie stillness of the woods had got on the nerves of Ponsonby & Co., also, for they glanced about them nervously, and their nerves were twitching. They looked anything but daring and hardened sportsmen.

Only Gerald Popper appeared to be at all self-possessed, and he chuckled as he looked at the strained faces of his companions.

"Buck up, you mouldy lot of footling funks!" he grinned. "You look as if you're booked for your own funerals instead of a giddy night's sport. That funk Skinner hasn't turned up, I see!"

"He said he wasn't coming," muttered Ponsonby, still glancing about him. "I don't blame him, either, Gerald. I'm about fed with this game. It's all right in daytime, but these dashed woods at night, in this moonlight—ugh!"

Ponsonby ended with a shiver, and Gerald Popper chortled. The hiding

juniors could not help admiring the daring young rascal's nerve. It was only too plain that it was only Gerald Popper's coolness and arrogant self-possession that had kept the cowardly Highcliffe "sportsmen" at the rash and risky game.

"You funky owls!" he grinned. "What the thump is there to be afraid of? Nobody's likely to suspect us, and that old fool Robinson is stumped. My hat, though, I thought we were done this afternoon over that fire! I thought that kid had seen us run away."

"But he didn't," chuckled Ponsonby. "And those Greyfriars cads got the blame. It's too rich! It was a bit of luck for us their turning up!"

"Oh, absolutely!" chortled Vavasour, his white face breaking into an ugly grin. "That settles the rotters!"

"It was their own fault," said Gerald, as if to excuse himself. "They shouldn't have butted in. I didn't want them to be blamed—just a bit too thick! I hate the cads, but—but— Oh, hang them!"

"You sound as if you were dashed sorry, old man," said Ponsonby, eyeing his pal curiously. "I'm thundering sure I'm not!" he snapped viciously. "I hope the cads are sacked!"

"Oh, shut up!" snarled Gerald Popper. "What's the good of wasting time gassing about it, anyway? Let's get the guns and make a start."

And, pushing the chortling Ponsonby roughly aside, the baronet's nephew reached into the hollow of the tree-trunk.

Harry Wharton was amazed at the attitude shown by Gerald Popper. It was quite clear that the baronet's son, unlike the gloating Ponsonby & Co., was far from easy in his mind regarding their being blamed for the fire. He seemed to be a curious mixture of good and bad.

But there was no time for reflections on the character of Gerald Popper just then. The critical moment was at hand, and Harry, alert and watchful, kept his eyes steadily on the group before the tree.

He was kneeling now, an open space in the bushes before him, with the camera held to his chest. On his right, slightly behind him, knelt Bob Cherry, a match ready in his hand to be struck and applied to the flashlight ribbon.

Harry gave the word suddenly and abruptly.

The last airgun had been withdrawn from the hollow tree, and the four young rascals were facing them now, the airguns in their hands—an ideal position for their purpose.

"Now!" hissed Harry.

There sounded the striking of a match, sharp and clear. A tiny flame shot up, followed instantly by a blinding glare of white light.

It flared up with startling abruptness, and as the alarmed amateur poachers stopped dead, and looked towards it, there sounded a faint, quiet click.

Then the light went out, and sudden blackness descended upon Harry Wharton & Co. like a blanket.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

An Unexpected Development!

"GOOD gosh!"

It was Ponsonby's voice, hoarse and terrified.

Clearly visible in the moonlight, they stood and stared, transfixed like stone statues, into the blackness where the juniors hid. Their white faces showed utter consternation and frantic fear.

For an instant they stood thus amidst a dramatic silence, their palsied hands still clutching their weapons, their bodies tense and rigid.

Then Ponsonby's mouth opened in a terrified gasp.

"Run for it!" he panted. "Oh, gad! Run for it!"

He hurled his airgun away from him, and raced away into the darkness. And after him went Monson and Vavasour.

They vanished into the blackness, and their plunging progress through the undergrowth died away.

But Gerald Popper did not attempt to fly.

He stood staring into the shadows under the trees, his face showing mingled rage and bewilderment. Then quite abruptly he sent his weapon whizzing into the bushes, and ran forward, snatching something from his pocket as he did so.

It proved to be a pocket-torch, for the next instant a white stab of light shot into the thickets, and blazed into the eyes of Harry Wharton & Co., almost blinding them.

"Oh!" he hissed, recognising the juniors in a flash. "I—I thought as much! You—you sneaking, interfering cads!"

He glared at them, trembling with rage, and his eyes glowering with suspicion. Then he spotted the camera, and he seemed to understand then.

"So—so that's the game!" he panted hoarsely. "We'll see about that, you beastly outsiders!"

And as he spoke he flew for the precious camera in Harry's hand.

But they had anticipated such a move. Bob Cherry's foot shot out, and Gerald Popper sprawled headlong. In a flash he was held powerless in the grasp of Bob and Johnny Bull, while Hurree Singh and Frank Nugent stood by ready to help if necessary.

"That game's no good, Popper!" snapped Harry. "You needn't try it again. We've taken too much trouble to get this to allow you to muck it up, my pippin!"

Flat on his back, his eyes glittering

with fury, Gerald Popper glowered up at Harry Wharton. Bob had fixed the spring of his torch, and a steady light shone on the scene.

Gerald Popper gazed from Harry's steady eyes to the hard faces of the other juniors. He read no weakening there, and he became suddenly calm.

"What are you doing this for, Wharton?" he muttered, through his teeth. "I suppose that toad Skinner's done this—he's split, the sweep!"

"Nobody's split—at least, that wasn't necessary," returned Harry coolly. "We already knew yesterday what was going on. We saw you here—we were hiding in this very spot. We followed you later."

"Well," snarled the baronet's nephew, "what are you doing this for? It's no dashed concern of yours, hang you!"

"I'll tell you!" said Harry. "We've bowled you out! We've taken a photograph of the four of you—taken in the act! It shows you there with the air-guns in your hands. It shows the guilt and fear in your faces—the guilt and fear of sudden discovery. It is evidence of your guilt—absolute and complete!"

"Hang you!" breathed Popper. "I thought that was it. You—you're going to show it to my uncle?" he went on, with a bitter sneer. "You're going to peach—to get your dashed revenge!"

"Revenge did not enter our minds," said Harry quietly. "We leave that sort of thing to you cads. We're after justice—we mean to see justice done. You know we're charged with having caused that fire yesterday, and you know that if we clear ourselves that poor chap Robinson will get it. That's not going to happen, Popper!"

"It was none of my doing!" said Popper.

"You caused the fire, and you know it!" snapped Harry. "We found your gold cigarette-case on the spot. You can have it back now—we've no further need of it. I fancy that evidence, such as it is, won't be necessary. You've got to go to your uncle and confess that you dropped a match and caused that

fire. If you don't, a print of this photograph—which ought to turn out a good one—will be sent, or taken, with explanations to Sir Hilton. Take your choice now."

Gerald Popper stared at them, a curious look on his face.

"You—you're not going to show us up, then—with that?" he gasped.

"Not if you do the right thing," said Harry calmly. "We're after justice—not revenge. The only other stipulation we mean to enforce is that you stop this mad game, Popper. Not for your own sakes, but for the sake of that poor chap Robinson. You'll stop this poaching, and you'll own up about the fire."

"So that's it?"

"That's it. If you've any sense, you'll come to terms. I fancy you know what will happen if your uncle gets to know about this game. It's thundering serious. But the fire was an accident—carelessness, I suppose, but an accident. He'll be raging with you, but he'll get over it. Well, what's your answer?"

There was a silence. Tense and watchful, the juniors gazed on their captive's features and waited. But the answer never came—then. With startling abruptness something happened.

The stillness of the autumn woods was shattered by an ominous sound—the report of a gunshot. It was followed by cries for help, and the distant sounds of a desperate struggle.

"What's that?" gasped Harry Wharton.

Gerald Popper's face was scared.

"It was my uncle's voice!" he panted. "Something's wrong! Quick—let me go!"

The juniors hesitated, their faces startled. Then came the cry again—fainter now:

"Help! Help!"

This time it was followed by the blast of a distant whistle—short and sharp, as if abruptly broken off.

Harry Wharton made his decision in a flash then.

"Come on!" he gasped. "We can't ignore that! Let Popper go, and come on!"



Gerald Popper fairly hurled himself across the clearing, and he made a plucky jump for the scoundrel's arm. He clutched it desperately, but the gun swept downwards, for all that. The heavy butt struck the plucky fellow's head, and he dropped without a sound. In a flash Harry Wharton & Co. were at grips with the scoundrels. (See Chapter 12.)

He leaped away as he spoke, and his chums released Gerald Popper and followed. That youth leaped to his feet and raced after them.

With their torches lighting the way before them they raced in the direction of the commotion. Their hearts were thumping with excitement. The cries had been urgent, appealing, and desperate, and they forgot all else at that moment.

They could only guess what was happening, but they knew that somewhere in the woods before them black work was afoot, and they did not falter.

They were dimly aware as they charged on blindly that Gerald Popper was running with them. They could hear his gasping breath. And when at length they burst out of the woods, with open ground before them, the baronet's nephew was the first.

In front of them was a stretch of rough, open ground, riddled with rabbit-holes, lit up by the moonlight, clear almost as day.

Beyond this was a dark spinney, and it was from this that the commotion came.

"Come on!" panted Harry.

They charged across the open ground. It was but a short run, and in no time they were under the dark trees again.

In a moment they were on the spot—in a clearing lit by moonlight. Just at first it seemed to be full of struggling figures, and then a glance round showed Harry that only five men were engaged—three burly, rough-looking men, a gamekeeper whom he recognised as Robinson—and a tall, well-known form in shooting clothes.

It was Sir Hilton Popper, and he was bellowing and gasping hoarsely as he struggled with one of the rascals. Even as Harry glimpsed the scene Robinson went crashing down, and lay still. Immediately all three of the ruffians fell upon Sir Hilton.

"You scoundrels!" he panted. "I—I—"

"Look out!" almost shrieked Harry Wharton.

As the baronet struggled helplessly in the grasp of two of the poachers the third raised Robinson's gun aloft, and it came sweeping downwards. It was aimed at Sir Hilton's uncovered head, but it never reached it.

Harry Wharton, with his chums at his heels, raced forward, but another boy was before them. It was Gerald Popper.

He fairly hurled himself across the clearing, and he made a plucky jump for the scoundrel's arm. He clutched it desperately, but the gun swept downwards for all that.

The heavy butt struck the plucky boy's head, and he dropped without a sound.

What happened next none of the excited juniors had any clear idea. They were in the thick of it in a flash, hitting out right and left. Sir Hilton was still bellowing, and the clearing rang with a medley of shouts, gasps of pain, and the smacking of fists.

"Go it!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Go it! Help's coming!"

Even as he fought his keen ears had caught the thudding of heavy feet, and voices shouting, and his eyes got a brief glimpse of lights flickering through the trees.

Then a heavy, brutal blow caught Harry on the temple, and he went down, his brain reeling. And when he staggered dazedly up a couple of moments later the fight was over.

Hearing the approach of help, one of the rascals had bolted, and the other two were on the ground, still struggling.

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but safely held in the grasp of the rest of the Famous Five.

Just then three startled menservants dashed into the glade, and all danger was past then.

At the same moment Robinson staggered to his feet, his hand to his head. He helped to take over the two prisoners from the juniors' grasp, and in a few seconds they were bound and helpless to do further harm.

Leaving them in charge of the menservants, the head-keeper hurried across to Sir Hilton.

"By gad!" gasped that dazed gentleman helplessly. "The—the villains!"

He stood swaying for a moment with exhaustion, and then he stooped over the still form on the grass, while Robinson shone the light of the lantern on Gerald Popper's white face.

"Good gad!" breathed the baronet hoarsely. "Good gad! It—it's Gerald! The poor lad—"

"Stunned!" gasped Robinson after a moment's examination. "A tidy knock he's had, too, Sir Hilton!"

"The—the scoundrels!" choked Sir Hilton. "They—they shall suffer for this! Get the poor lad up to the house at once, Robinson."

"Yes, sir!"

The burly gamekeeper stooped and lifted the unconscious boy in his arms, and Harry Wharton & Co. waited no longer.

As yet the paronet had scarcely given them a glance in his anxiety and excitement, and they did not wait for the bewildered old gentleman to recover himself.

At a word from Harry Wharton they dived into the trees and took to their heels. Harry was the last to go. He stopped behind to find the camera, which he had dropped to the ground during the struggle.

He found it at last. It was smashed and utterly ruined. It had evidently been crushed beneath the trampling feet during the struggle.

Harry took the buckled-up camera and raced after his chums. But it was not until they were deep in the woods that he announced the tragic discovery to his chums.

As they stopped, panting and breathless, he turned the light of his torch on the wrecked instrument.

"I've got bad news for you chaps," he said, a deep note of bitterness in his tone. "Look at that! Our night's work ruined. We're done!"

The juniors gazed at the wrecked camera in utter dismay.

"That's our evidence, our proof, gone!" he groaned. "We've failed, you chaps!"

There was a silence, and then the juniors brightened a little, as Bob Cherry pointed out something Harry had forgotten.

"Gerald Popper doesn't know it, though," he said. "He doesn't know it's smashed, and he may own up yet."

"But supposing he's too ill to think of it?" put in Frank Nugent dismally. "That keeper chap didn't seem to think he was badly hurt, but he may be too ill to bother about that. And we don't even know if he agrees to own up."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Anyway, let's get back to bed now," said Harry gloomily. "It can't be helped, and we must hope for the best."

And the juniors went on again, deeply depressed and with little hope in their hearts. It was cruel hard luck! With the proof in their hands—in the moment

of their success—it had been snatched from them. And as they climbed into bed for the second time that eventful night they wondered dismally what the morrow held in store for them—and especially what it held in store for Harry and Frank.

Would Gerald Popper, ignorant that the proof was gone, own up and accede to their demands? And if so, would his confession come in time to save them? Harry Wharton, at least, spent many sleepless hours that night wondering.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

In Time!

"W HARTON! Nugent!"
"Yes, Wingate!"
"Coming!"

The Famous Five were standing in the quad the following morning after breakfast, when Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, came to the top of the School House steps and called to them.

All the faces of the juniors were white and strained, while the faces of Wharton and Nugent showed clearly the traces left by a sleepless night.

"Now for it!" muttered Harry Wharton. "That means the Head!"

The juniors had expected the summons. It still wanted some time to nine o'clock—the time for the General Assembly in Big Hall, and the two unfortunates fully expected to be called into the Head's study before then to hear their sentences—indeed, Mr. Quelch had warned them to be prepared for that.

As he answered the captain of the school, Harry ran over to him, and his chums followed. It was, as they had anticipated, the summons to the Head's study.

Bob Cherry and the other two escorted Harry and Frank to the study door, and parted from them with many expressions of sympathy and hope.

In no little trepidation the two chums entered the dreaded apartment, and their first surprise was to find Sir Hilton Popper seated with the Head.

Both gentlemen eyed the juniors with curiously fixed looks as they marched in and stood before Dr. Locke's desk. The Head's kindly face expressed surprise and relief. Sir Hilton's face was red, but he looked strangely subdued.

The two juniors were puzzled.

"Boys," began the Head quietly, "Sir Hilton Popper has hurried here at this early hour in order to prevent what we both now know would have been a grave mistake—a miscarriage of justice. He has related to me a story that has filled me with amazement, and no little heart-felt relief.

"To begin with, he has told me of the happenings on his estate at a late hour last night, and how you took a plucky part in rescuing him from the hands of desperate ruffians. But for your timely intervention, he is convinced that nothing short of grave injury could have happened to him."

"Begad, that's true!" rapped out Sir Hilton, giving the juniors a very peculiar look. "The scoundrels would have finished me! Huh!"

"What your reasons were for being in those woods at such an hour," went on the Head grimly. "I am utterly at a loss to imagine. I shall desire to know them later, however. I will first tell you what it has delighted me beyond measure to hear, and that is that you are innocent of the charge brought against you yesterday. The boy who caused the fire

(Continued on page 28.)

WHAT WOULD YOU DO if you were down and out and hungry? That's a question requiring a careful answer. The Melton twins know what to do, however. As young Dicky cheerfully remarks, "pride goeth before an empty stomach." Read how they "bring home the breakfast."



Four Against the World!

By HEDLEY SCOTT.

The Twine's Contribution!

THERE was an air of finality in George's words that choked the appeal rising to Sir Humphrey's lips. He turned and gazed at Sandy Robson miserably.

The old trainer seemed too stunned for words. Gone in a flash were his dreams of springing on the public a heavy-weight champion—a white hope! His eyes turned appealingly on George Melton, but he read no comfort in the battered and angry face before him—saw no relenting. He shrugged his shoulders, and commenced to pack up his traps.

Ferrers Locke engaged Sir Humphrey Dallas in a whispered conversation, and then, with a smile of farewell to George, vacated the dressing-room. Within half an hour the latter was attired in ordinary dress; an attache-case was in his hand containing his "props." Then, with that characteristic impulsiveness which in the past had earned him many friends, George turned to the baronet.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, sir," he said quietly. "But may I remind you that the disappointment hits me as much as it does yourself. No, no; there's no relenting," he added, noting the hopeful expression that sprang to the kindly features of his benefactor. "But—but I must thank you for what you have done for me—done for all of us!"

He extended his hand, and almost mechanically the sporting baronet took it and wrung it.

"I don't think we've seen the last of you in the ring, George," he said. "I dare wager you a hundred that before another year has passed you'll be back in it. But, as for thanks—tush, old friend! They're not needed. Now, about the twins and—the cottage—"

"Of course, sir," said George hurriedly. "We will leave the cottage immediately Dicky is out of danger, and—"

"But, my dear boy, that's just what I don't want you to do!" broke in the baronet. "You are welcome to make the place your home for as long as you like. After all, it's no use to me," he concluded lamely.

"Again I must thank you," said George quietly. "But, really, sir, we could not possibly take advantage of that generous offer. Besides, we must fall into employment of some kind, and Cobham, I'm afraid, won't provide any work for us. No, Sir Humphrey, it's London for us—London!"

And with a cheery smile—a smile that he felt far from feeling—George slipped quietly out of the dressing-room, gripping Sandy's gaunard fist on the way.

"So end your dreams, Sandy!" commiserated Sir Humphrey. "He's gone!" And Sandy, usually above reproach in the matter of transports, muttered an imprecation that relieved his feelings.

HOW THE STORY OPENED.

GEORGE MELTON—a powerful, well-built fellow, approaching twenty years of age. Boxer of great promise.

MATTHEW MELTON—a clever footballer, two years his junior.

DICKY and MARCUS MELTON—known as the twins. Fourteen years of age.

JUSTIN MAHONE—the Meltons' guardian—who refuses to assist his wards. Something of a mystery man.

SIR HUMPHREY DALLAS—known as the Sporting Baronet. Saved from a terrible fate by George Melton. Sir Humphrey shows his gratitude by starting George on a professional boxing career, at the same time allowing his brothers the free use of a cottage belonging to him in Cobham.

SANDY ROBSON—a veteran pugilist, who trains the Sporting Baronet's pupils.

FERRERS LOCKE—the world-famous detective.

In course of time George is matched against Johnny Cavendish, the British Heavy-weight Champion. While he is training for the fight, Matthew, thanks to Ferrers Locke's influence, secures a job with the Pendlebury Rovers. His life as a professional footballer, however, is very brief. He gets mixed up in a brawl on the football-field with an opposing player, and unintentionally strikes the referee, who is attempting to separate the combatants. Despite his real innocence in the whole affair Matthew is suspended by the Football Association for life.

The day of the big fight comes round. Just before George enters the ring Sandy receives a telegram from Ferrers Locke warning him against foul play. George surprises everyone with his wonderful knowledge of the noble art, and practically has the fight in hand. Then he receives a telegram between rounds saying that his brother Dicky, who is just recovering from an illness, has suffered a serious relapse, and is asking for him. In those few agonising moments George goes to pieces, and Cavendish "puts him to sleep." To crown it all, George hears in the moment of his defeat that the telegram is a fake. When he comes to, the elder Melton declares that he will never don boxing-gloves again. "Tis here, Sir Humphrey, that you and I must part!" he says bitterly. "I'm through with pugilism! It will always be tainted for me!"

(Now read on.)

The first train back to Cobham saw George Melton on board. He had slipped quietly out of Belcher's, noting, with a cynical smile, great crowds of people who were waiting to "get at" the boxer who had betrayed them. But their very eagerness proved their undoing, for George, unnoticed, unrecognised, walked under their very noses until he reached a waiting taxicab.

He gave his destination as Waterloo, and leaned back in his seat, trying to calm his troubled thoughts. On the way to the station he heard the shouts of the news-boys:

"Great fight result! Alleged foul play! Special!"

And then a fast-moving train was bearing him away from London to those in the world who best understood him—those who believed in him. His early arrival at the cottage in Cobham came as a shock to the Meltons gathered there.

"Well?" queried Matthew anxiously, while from the bed room adjoining came the same ejaculation, only voiced more feebly.

George smiled sadly. "It's all up!" he said, with a hopeless shrug of the shoulders. "But tell me first—how's Dicky?"

"Right as a trivet!" came a small voice from the room adjoining. "If you haven't won on a knock-out to-night, George, prepare for a licking from me as per promise!"

But, instead of the chaffing reply Dicky expected, there was an irksome silence. Then, with a bound, George was in the bedroom, his long arm braced round Dicky's upright figure. The whole story came out—the easy victory in George's grasp until the fateful telegram had arrived, and then the disgrace.

"The rotters!" piped Dick, patting his elder brother on the back. "The dirty cads to think a Melton would play them false! I'd—"

"And so would I!" chirruped Marcus wrathfully, hitting out right and left at an imaginary public.

Matthew gave his brother a smile in which sympathy and understanding were blended. No need for him to speak. Had not much the same fate overtaken him on the football-field?

A very silent and unhappy family of Meltons sat down to their supper that night; the two eldest were thinking of the future—always the future!

That explains now why Ferrers Locke came hustling here to find out whether Dicky was all right," said Matthew, breaking the ominous silence. "He didn't stop to say much. It's a deuced pity he didn't arrive at the ringside earlier!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 871.

"Let's forget all that now," said George. "It's part of a past that hurts to think about. We must start afresh."

The subject was dropped—was put behind them, so much so that not one of the brothers picked up as much as the next morning's paper to read the diverse opinions of the "big" fight. And thus a nasty wound began to heal.

In a fortnight Dicky was declared by the doctor to be fit and well. In consequence, George wrote to Sir Humphrey Dallas, informing him that they would be leaving the cottage that same day. Without waiting for a reply from the baronet, George superintended the packing, got his young charges in readiness, and caught the first train to London. In Russell Square he engaged a large "combined" bed-room and sitting-room at the rental of one pound a week, and in this dreary, shabby semi-basement room the Meltons spent the next few weeks of their lives.

All of them paid periodical visits to the Labour Exchanges, and every morning found them at the "library" scanning the advertisements. Luck was not with them, however. Interviews they had in plenty, but no employer of labour seemed to think that they suited him.

"Kids," said George, after a particularly fruitless day, "we've got to cut down our rations; the cash is running out. Unless one of us gets a job of some sort during the week we shall have to seek cheaper lodgings, cheaper food! It's cheap enough now, I know!" he added bitterly. "But there it is!"

"Cheer up, old boy!" said Dicky affectionately. "We'll pull through, mark my words! You leave it to me and Marcus!"

The twins exchanged knowing glances that puzzled George and Matthew at the time, but neither paid much heed to them after that. Neither knew, for instance, the next morning that Marcus and Dicky were out of bed extra early, nor did they see Dicky come out of a toyshop with a tin-whistle tucked away in his ragged pocket.

Had George been in a certain quarter of Oxford Circus half an hour later he would have received the shock of his life. For the twins, in their eagerness to assist, had put their pride in their pockets, had donned their cheeriest smiles, bagged a "good pitch" at the entrance to the Tube station, and were endeavouring to amuse a stream of amazed pedestrians.

On the pavement in front of Marcus was a cap that had once borne the colours of St. Bart's. Marcus looked at Dicky nervously, and, receiving an encouraging nod from that imperturbable youth, began to

sing. He was accompanied by Dicky, who was something of an "expert" on the tin-whistle, and before five minutes had passed these two Meltons had collected a huge crowd around them.

A kindly policeman had looked the other way when he had noticed the youthfulness of these itinerant musicians; perhaps he had kiddies of his own. Be that as it may, Dicky and Marcus had collected a capful of pennies, occasionally brightened by pieces of silver, before he intervened.

"You can't do that kind of thing here, sonnies!" he said kindly. "Move on!"

"Let them stay!" begged one dear old lady, dropping a couple of half-crowns into the tattered cap. "The poor darlings!"

Dicky and Marcus winced at the "darlings," but their faces shone with gratitude when they spotted the generosity of their patron.

"What will George say?" said Marcus anxiously. "He'd never forgive us if he knew we had done this."

"Mustn't say anything about it," replied Dicky. "I don't like deceit, but in this case there's no alternative. We shall have to tell him a white fib."

"Don't much like the idea," said Marcus nervously. "You—you know, Dicky, old George is fearfully proud."

"But pride won't earn us our bread and butter, will it?" exclaimed Dicky logically.

"Let's see!" he added, as he counted their "takings." "Not so bad, Marcus, old scout!"

"How much?" queried Marcus nervously.

"Ten-and-sixpence!" was the reply. "Gee! That's top-hole! You leave the explanation to me."

Marcus was content to leave that part of the affair to Dicky; he was better cut out for it. After all, he argued, they had not been begging; they had entertained the public and had been paid for their services. Thus, with cheery faces and pockets jingling to a lively tune of coppers and silver, the twins showed up at the "combined room" in Russell Square.

"Hallo! Where on earth have you kids been?" demanded Matthew and George.

"Shut your eyes and—!" began Marcus.

"He's got it wrong!" grinned Dicky.

"Open your mouth and shut your eyes, and see what the twins have brought you! Go on!" he roared, as the elder brothers stared at him in amazement. "Do as I tell you!"

Humouring Dicky, Matthew and George shut their eyes, and waited for further instructions.

"You can open them now!" said Dicky, with the air of a showman.

Two pairs of eyes opened wide in amuse-

ment. But the amusement faded out quickly enough when two piles of copper and silver came into line with their vision.

"W-what—" began George.

"How—what—" gasped Matthew.

"Little us!" said Dicky, striking up a dramatic attitude. "Don't ask any more questions, you two! That's our contribution! We said we'd help you out last night, didn't we? Well, here we are delivering the giddy goods!"

"B-but where has it all come from?" stammered George.

"That's our business," spoke up Dicky, kicking Marcus surreptitiously as a command to keep silent. "It's honest money, if that's what you are driving it," he added indignantly.

"I know that, kids!" said George, with a smile. "Good lord, I'd never doubt you two kids, cheeky as you are."

"Well, cut it out," retorted Dicky. "We've never asked you where the money came from when you subscribed, did we?" he added, as an afterthought. "Well, we're all on a level now."

It was a bold stroke, and it silenced the host of questions that sprang to the lips of George Melton, much to Dicky's relief and more to Marcus'.

"Well, I think we ought to celebrate the occasion in a modest sort of fashion," said Matthew. "I'm feeling ready for breakfast, too."

"Good idea!" agreed George.

Five minutes later four kippers were being "toasted" in front of the small grate in the semi-basement at Russell Square. Four hungry appetites were soon after appeased. Thus was the order of the "celebration" in honour of the twins' first contribution to the Meltons' exchequer.

The Wanted "Man!"

THE same programme was carried out by Dicky and Marcus for the next few days, and although Matthew and George pondered over the affair, they refrained from asking the "kids" by what manner of means they brought in the money.

Then came another stroke of luck. Dicky was interviewed by a City gentleman who needed an office-boy, and was engaged on the spot. Even with this "leg up" came the usual drawbacks that the Meltons had experienced. Although Dicky was usually liked wherever he went, he continually fell foul of the cashier's chief clerk—a pimply-faced young man of about twenty-one, who seemed to think that he owned all the earth.

"You'll have to put up with his swagger," advised George, when Dicky had been at his new job a week. "He's got his knife into you for some reason, but if you don't let your temper get the better of you he'll find it's poor fun trying to take a rise out of a chap who won't get offended."

"All right, George," said Dicky cheerfully. "I'll stand him. It means a quid a week to us, anyway."

That was the princely salary for which young Dicky slaved from eight o'clock in the morning until six at night, running about with messages, addressing envelopes, totalling long lists of figures, keeping the offices clean, and filing innumerable stacks of correspondence. He stuck to his job, however, with all the tenacity of purpose that formed so big a feature in his elder brother's make-up.

"Seems strange," confided George to Matthew, one day, "that the advertisement young Dicky answered should have been worded so queerly."

"Don't get you, old scout," said Matthew. "Can't remember ever having seen it. How did it read?"

"Like this," answered George thoughtfully. "'Public schoolboy, age about fourteen, required in City office as junior clerk, etc.'"

"Well," said Matthew, "what's wrong with that?"

It was on the tip of George's tongue to explain what he meant, but he refrained.

"Oh, nothing," he said lamely. "But—but—"

His words trailed off unintelligently, and Matthew looked at him with concern in his eyes.

"You're all right, old boy?" he asked. "You're not worrying about things too much, are you?"

"Good Lord, no!" smiled George. "Why should I? Rather fancy that I shall bag that job as gymnastic instructor I wrote after to-day."

BRAVO, ESSEX!

Result of MAGNET Characters Competition (Frank Nugent).

In this competition the prize of a Gent's "Royal Enfield" Bicycle, worth £8, has been awarded to:

RONALD W. GOODWORTH,
"Lynton,"

**Belfairs Drive,
Leigh-on-Sea,
ESSEX,**

for the following line:

"Aptly named Frank."

**ANOTHER RIPPING CYCLE OFFERED AGAIN THIS
WEEK, CHUMS. GO IN AND WIN!**

"That would be prime!" exclaimed Matthew. "And I've got a feeling that something is in the wind for me."

He was right. That same evening the post brought two welcome letters—formal communications from business people to the effect that George could consider himself engaged as a gym instructor to a well-known polytechnic institute, and that Matthew was desired to be present at a London newspaper office for an interview.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Matthew excitedly. "I'm going to get a job as a giddy reporter."

Only Marcus' face fell. He was the only one in the family who had not succeeded in finding a situation. Matthew noted his downcast features, and slapped him on the back.

"Cheer up, Marcus!" he roared heartily. "You can work for me. If I get this job as a reporter you and I can tootle round together. You can be my employee—savvy?"

Marcus' face brightened considerably.

"That's a go!" he exclaimed. "I can use a typewriter, and I've been mugging up shorthand. You mean that we can fill the job together, eh, Matthew?"

"That's the idea," agreed Matthew. "No one need know anything about our private arrangement. Gee, we're in clover!"

And in clover it seemed the Meltons were. The next meeting of the family—the evening meal for the next day—found four cheery faces gracing the supper-table. Matthew and George had started work that same day, both had earned golden opinions from their respective employers, while Marcus had made himself useful in a hundred ways to his reporter brother.

"Everything in the garden's lovely!" chuckled Dicky, tucking into some cold meat and vegetables at a dangerous rate for his digestive powers to keep pace with. "Even old pimply face at the office was human to-day."

Undoubtedly the luck had changed. Every one of the Meltons was earning his salt, was doing well in his respective capacity. Then came the bombshell.

George was the first one home, about three weeks later, and he set to with a will to prepare the evening repast. Matthew and Marcus, arriving at the basement shortly afterwards, assisted him; but of Dicky there was no sign.

"He's jolly late," said George, looking at his watch. "I suppose we had better wait and—"

He broke off abruptly as there came a sharp rat-tat at the door. In answer to his call the landlady of the house appeared, rank disapproval written in every line of her coarse features.

"Nice goings on!" she rapped, arms akimbo. "Didn't know I'd been sheltering a gang of crooks!"

"What do you mean?" demanded George, starting to his feet.

"What I says!" came the fierce retort. "Think of me reputation as a respectable landlady! Who'll come to this 'ere place when they know the police 'ave raided it?"

"Bats!" muttered Marcus, tapping his forehead; but his action roused the good lady into a fury.

"Yes, you can snigger!" she growled, turning suddenly on Marcus. "It's your twin brother they're after. He's a low-down little thief—wanted by the police! Shouldn't wonder that you're not all thieves!" she added vindictively.

It dawned on George that something was amiss—something serious. He strode forward, and, in his agitation, almost shook the skinny figure of his landlady. A torrent of words rose in his throat, but they were never uttered. For at that moment the door of the room was suddenly thrown open, and two tall, military-looking men strode in.

No need for George to ask who they were. Plain-clothes officers was written all over them. They eyed the Meltons grimly.

"What—what are you doing here?" asked George faintly, instinctively knowing what the answer would be. "Who—"

"We hold a warrant for Richard Melton's arrest," said the taller of the two newcomers ponderously. "We are police-officers from Scotland Yard. Richard Melton is wanted on a charge of embezzlement. Where is he?"

For a moment dead silence followed those significant words. The brothers looked at each other in horror and amazement. The question was repeated, this time with less civility.

"Where is he?"



Marcus looked at Dicky nervously, and receiving an encouraging nod from that imperturbable youth, began to sing. He was accompanied by his brother, who was something of an expert on the tin whistle, and before five minutes had passed the ragged cap on the pavement began to fill with coppers and an occasional piece of silver. (See page 24.)

"I'm here! Pleased to meet you, I'm sure!"

The occupants of the "combined room" started violently as that boyish voice pealed forth, and all heads were turned in the direction whence it proceeded.

"Oh, good gad!" exclaimed George involuntarily.

"My hat!" ejaculated Marcus.

"Well, my heye!" gasped the skinny landlady, scratching the back of her head.

From beneath the large double bed in the far corner of the room appeared a shock-headed youth, with an expansive grin on his face—Richard Melton, by all the saints! On hands and knees he grinned out at that amazed assembly, not a whit abashed by the ponderous, disapproving glances in the faces of the two police-officers.

"Pleased to meet you!" he repeated, making a mock salute.

Avenged!

"WHAT'S the giddy game?" demanded Matthew, recovering from the shock.

"Game?" echoed Dicky cheekily. "Why on earth are you all looking like silly owls?"

The plain-clothes men moved forward and ranged themselves on either side of their diminutive charge. Still, Dicky's imperturbability was as strong as ever. He stuck his fingers in the armpits of his waistcoat, bent his knees policeman fashion, and put his tongue in his cheek.

George had to laugh—the impromptu tableau was strikingly original.

"Young fellow," grunted one of the police-officers, "you've got to come along with us. Where's the four hundred pounds you stole from your firm this morning?"

"In the bank!" was the cheeky response.

"Ah!" The Scotland Yarders winked at each other knowingly. But Dicky's voice again broke in on their complacency.

"In the bank," he reiterated, "placed to the credit of the firm's account."

"Eh?"

The Meltons and the plain-clothes officers voiced the ejaculation in unison. Over the faces of the former spread relief, in those of the latter blank astonishment.

"What—what do you mean?" growled the taller of the two officers. "The managing director of Simpkins, Watson & Riley applied for a warrant for your arrest two hours ago. You've been missing from your office since ten o'clock this morning. Likewise four hundred pounds!" he added.

"That's right!" grinned Dicky, winking at his brothers. "It's a long story, and if you sit down a moment—before you run me in," he added, "we'll have it out over a bit of food."

It was an unusual request to make to two Scotland Yard men, but both were good judges of human nature, and now neither read anything but innocence in that cheeky face before them.

"Well, young shaver," one of them remarked, "we'll let you have your head, providing, of course, that you can show us proof of this four hundred being paid in your firm's account before we waste any more time chinwagging."

"That's easy," answered Dicky.

And, fumbling in his pockets, he withdrew a signed credit note for that amount on a well-known London bankers.

"That's genuine enough!" muttered the police-officers.

"'Course it is!" said Dicky. "Er—we sha'n't be wanting you any further, Mrs. Ogbin," he added, indicating the door to the skinny landlady. "These gentlemen will be staying for a bit."

"Well, my heye!" The landlady's vocabulary was limited. She made reference to her "heye" hundreds of times in the course of a day, and there was nothing particularly attractive about that bleary, watery optic either. "Well, my heye!"

"Glad it's yours," whispered Dicky, when the good lady had made herself scarce. "Looks as if it's been 'dotted' a few times."

There was a general laugh at his words, for Mrs. Ogbin's "heye" certainly looked as if it had encountered trouble recently.

"Well, you young imp," said George at last, "let's hear all about your goings on!" "I'll start at the beginning," said Dicky, "and—"

"People usually start at the beginning, don't they?" interrupted Marcus.

"Take no notice of young Marcus!" said Dicky loftily to the police-officers. "He's ignorant, you know! He'll grow out of it—"

"For Heaven's sake, get a move on with your yarn!" exclaimed Matthew impatiently.

"I'm coming to it. This morning I arrived at the office half an hour earlier than usual," commenced Dicky, seriously now. "Thornton—that's the pimply-faced chap who thinks he owns the earth—seemed to be frightfully busy. He mentioned to me casually that he wouldn't have time to run up to the bank to pay in the previous day's takings, and hinted that I should have to go for him."

"That's unusual for a chap of your age, isn't it?" queried one of the police-officers.

"Hold on!" said Dicky. "There was a motive for that. As soon as he mentioned the stunt to me I began to get wise. The strict rule of the firm is that no one under twenty should ever be entrusted outside the building with any large sum of money—thieves or somebody might relieve them of it on the way to the bank. Funny, wasn't it, that a fellow of fourteen should suddenly be pitched into the job? Well, old pimply face and I had always been at loggerheads. I knew he was only waiting for a chance to do me a dirty turn, and I became suspicious."

"I didn't let him see that I suspected anything, however," continued Dicky. "But a few minutes later, when he was out of the room, a telephone call came through for him. I answered it, little knowing that I was talking to a nice gentleman who had planned to relieve me of the four hundred quid. The fathead asked if he were talking to Thornton, and before I could answer in the negative he was telling me that he recognised my voice."

"And you played up?" asked Marcus eagerly.

"Bet your life!" grinned Dicky. "The chap seemed a bit excited. He said that he was prepared to carry off the stunt if that young fool of an office-boy—that was me—took the money up to the bank."

"Well, what happened?" asked George.

"Oh, Thornton handed me the quidlets, and ordered the commissionaire to hail me a taxicab. The money, by the way, was in a strong leather bag. Thornton, urging me to pay in the money without lingering on the way, waved me off, and told me that I needn't come back that day."

"What next?"

"Coming to it," said Dicky cheerfully. "I made the taxi-man pull up at a leather shop where they sold bags etcetera. I bought another bag—one of black leather."

"Good gad!" exclaimed George. "What ever for?"

"Coming to it!" chuckled Dicky. "I also got on the phone to Mr. Ferrers Locke."

"What, the private detective?"

This time the two police-officers interrupted.

"Sure thing!" replied Dicky. "He's a pal of mine, you know. I told him the phone message I had received by mistake, and suggested a counter plan. He agreed with my idea, and promised to help. Right! I re-entered the taxi, and off we went to the bank. Outside the door of the bank a swell-dressed fellow of about middle age smiles upon me, and addresses me by name. He informs me that he is a director of the firm for which I work, and follows up with a command for me to hand over the bag. Had I not known of the plot, ten to one I should have handed over the blooming bag, so convincing was this swell-dressed merchant."

Dicky paused.

"As a matter of fact," he added, "I did hand him the bag."

"What—?" began George.

"But it only contained a short message," continued Dicky, with a grin. "The bag with the 'oof' in it was lying on the seat in the taxicab."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed one of the Scotland Yard men. "You're a smart youngster!"

"Thanks!" said Dicky. "But wait till you hear the end of it. There was a surprise in store for our swell-dressed fraud. You see, I had taken the trouble to write to him. This is what I wrote: 'Ferrers Locke, the detective, is watching you read this.'"

"Oh, my hat!" roared Matthew. "And was Locke at hand, do you know?"

"Sure thing!" chuckled Dicky. "He had arranged to be present at the bank when this fellow approached me. Then he was going to shadow our bogus director to his lair. He copped him all right," he added. "The chap's at Bow Street now!"

"But why did you come back here?" asked one of the police-officers.

"Because Mr. Locke advised me to. He seemed to think that there was a big plot behind this stunt. He reckoned that pimply face Thornton would give the alarm at the office after a few hours had gone by, and that a warrant would be issued for my arrest. That was why I paid the four hundred into a branch office of the bank. And Mr. Locke was right," he added. "He thinks the whole affair was a put-up job to get me into trouble."

"Well, Mr. Locke seldom makes mistakes!" muttered one of the Yard men.

"He doesn't," said Dicky. "He reckons that no charge will be preferred against this chap at Bow Street when the firm hears that the four hundred is safe. But at present, though, no one knows that the bogus director has been copped. It's me they want to stand in the dock."

The Yard men looked incredulously at the cheeky-faced youth before them. What possible motive could anyone have in wishing to place him in the dock?

They rose to their feet at last.

"Well, it's the strangest story I've heard for many a long day!" remarked the spokesman of the two. "But you had better come along with us to the station. I believe in you," he added. "But I'm not the law; I'm only a part of the machine. We still hold a warrant for your arrest, remember."

"Oh, that's all right!" grinned Dicky. "I'll have it framed afterwards. Are we going to cab it to Bow Street?"

"Yes, young shaver!" was the smiling reply. "Will you come quietly?"

"Like a bird!"

And, leaving his brothers sorting out their confused thoughts, young Dicky sallied forth with his "captors." On arrival at Bow Street he found the superintendent in a state of indignation and wrath.

"So you are the young fellow they are playing about with—eh?" he rapped, eyeing Dicky up and down. "I don't know what's the matter with the boss at your firm. He

was sharp enough to ask for a warrant to arrest you for embezzlement, but when he discovers that he has made a mistake in the matter of the thief he mildly expressed his desire to let the matter drop."

"What! Has the swell-dressed fellow been released?" roared Dicky indignantly.

"He has," was the superintendent's reply. "Your managing-director came in here half an hour ago withdrawing the warrant he had asked to be issued against you, saying that the money alleged to have been stolen had been paid into the firm's account. I made him acquainted with the details, as told me by Mr. Ferrers Locke, showed him the 'swell-dressed' chap, as you call him, young shaver, who had tried the old confidence trick—"

"And he didn't prefer a charge against him?" roared Dicky.

"No," said the superintendent. "We were bound to release him. But we've got him under surveillance," he added grimly. "He won't go scot-free again!"

"But Mr. Locke—" began Dicky.

"Mr. Locke has got something up his sleeve, young man," smiled the superintendent. "For reasons best known to himself he wants you to forget this nasty incident. Return to your office to-morrow as if nothing had happened. You'll get the sack," he added, with a sly wink, "but don't worry."

"Get the sack!" hooted Dicky wrathfully. "What—after saving the firm four hundred quid?"

"Yes," said the official. "But just you leave affairs with Mr. Locke. There is a big surprise coming along for a certain party, and Mr. Locke wants the said party to have a little more rope."

"Oh, does he!" grunted Dicky. "But what about my salary? I can't exist on nothing!"

"Ah, Mr. Locke has arranged that," replied the superintendent. "He has left a note here for you."

Dicky took the letter wonderingly. It ran:

"Dear Dicky,—In less than one week from date you and your brothers will be worth a quarter of a million apiece. That being so, you will allow me to advance you the enclosed amount as a loan. Your job, by the way, will terminate at Simpkins, Watson & Riley to-morrow sure as eggs. Don't be surprised; simply accept the inevitable. Leave the rest to me.—Yours, FERRERS LOCKE."

Enclosed with the note was a cheque for a hundred pounds. At sight of it Dicky's astonished eyes opened to their fullest capacity.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he gasped. "If this doesn't beat the band!"

Treading as if on air, he vacated Bow Street Police Station, and made his way home to the combined room in Bloomsbury. And when his brothers heard the latest news, and saw the letter from Ferrers Locke, with the enclosed cheque, their astonishment knew no bounds.

"It can't be true!" muttered George, reading the note through for the tenth time. "A million quid between us in a week's time. I shall go off my rocker if I think about it much longer. There must be some mistake!"

"Mr. Locke never makes a mistake," reminded Dicky. "Anyway, here's the hundred."

The Meltons retired to rest that night in such a state of excitement that sleep did not come until the first grey streaks of dawn glowed on the horizon. Despite their promised change of fortune, however, each of them went to his respective job, as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

But Dicky Melton was soon home again in the combined room. On arrival at Simpkins, Watson & Riley's, he was called into the manager's office. He attended the summons with promptitude, curious to see whether Ferrers Locke had forecast correctly.

Ferrers Locke had not made a mistake. Dicky was churlishly commended for having outwitted the man who had tried the confidence trick on him, but was severely censured for having taken the remainder of the day off. Had he returned to the office straight away, the manager informed him, and explained matters, no warrant would



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have been issued for his arrest. But his non-appearance at the office had led to inquiries. The bank had been telephoned, and, according to their books, no cash had been paid into the firm's account that day. No one, naturally, had thought of phoning the branch office of the bank.

"Why did you pay in the money at the branch office?" asked the manager.

"Because I was afraid that someone else might be on the look-out for me at the main offices," lied Dicky glibly, not wishing to explain that Ferrers Locke had prompted him to take this course.

"Indeed!" was the manager's comment. "But why didn't you return to this office afterwards?"

"Because Mr. Thornton told me that I could take the remainder of the day off," retorted Dicky.

"Mr. Thornton denies giving you such permission," said the manager.

"Then Thornton is a liar!" declared Dick heatedly. "Bring him here and ask him before me—"

"Mr. Thornton is otherwise engaged," said the manager coldly. "In any case, Richard Melton, your conduct leaves a lot to be desired. After careful consideration I have come to the reluctant conclusion that we shall require your services no longer. You will hand this chit to the cashier on the way out. He will give you a week's salary. Good-day!"

Chuckling inwardly, Dicky took the chit and sailed out. Whistling a merry tune, he stalked into the cashier's office, drew his money, and looked about him. At the far end of the room was "pimply face." He seemed anxious to avoid a meeting with the youngster he had tried to disgrace. Dicky walked up to him.

"Hallo, you pimply-faced scoundrel!" he greeted. "What have you got to say for yourself?"

Thornton turned a savage glance on him, and pushed back his cuffs.

"You young cub," he hissed, "I'll tan your hide for you as a parting present."

"Will you!" returned Dicky, his glance wandering to the large inkpot on the desk. "You ought to be in quod, you scoundrel!"

Thornton made a grab at the ruler lying beside him. At the same instant Dicky jerked the leg of his high stool from under him.

Crash!

"Pimply face" descended to the floor with a loud crash and a roar. But his troubles didn't end there. Young Dicky snatched up the large inkpot containing black ink, and with cool deliberation emptied it over Thornton's head. Then, leaving his old enemy yelling and gasping at alternate intervals, Dicky sauntered out of the office, still whistling, and took the bus to Bloomsbury. He had derived more satisfaction from emptying the inky fluid over Thornton's face than if he had seen old "pimply face," complete with handcuffs, on his way to gaol to serve a "stretch."

Dicky had avenged his wrongs in his own way, and was elated at the satisfaction it had given him.

The World's Champion!

"WE must celebrate the occasion!" declared Matthew emphatically.

"Hear, hear!" from the twins.

It was the following day—a day that was likely to be remembered for all time, so far as the brothers were concerned. Ferrers Locke had paid the Meltons a visit, had confirmed the contents of his short note to Dicky, but had refused to explain anything further.

"Possess yourselves in patience," he said, as he rose to go. "I cannot afford to let my plans be known in a certain quarter. Not that I distrust you," he added swiftly; "but what you don't know you can't very well talk about, can you? Remember the old saying, 'Walls have ears.'"

"Seems genuine enough," remarked George cheerily, when the famous sleuth had departed. "Gee, it was the finest day's work we ever did when we met Mr. Locke. I'm burning with curiosity to know the end of it all."

"Same here!" agreed Matthew. "In any case, I think we ought to 'splash' ourselves to-night. What about a feed up West, and a show? Great Scott! It's ages since we did ourselves well."

"We're on!" came the support of the twins.

"Right!" grinned George. "It's a go!"

For the first time since the reception at Sir Humphrey Dallas' house in Mayfair the Meltons donned their evening clothes. A taxi came round for them at seven o'clock, and the party drove off to the Criterion, in Piccadilly. George had "booked" a table, and the Meltons sat down to the most sumptuous dinner of their lives.

From the Criterion the brothers drove to the Haymarket Theatre, where a box had been reserved for them.

"This is something like!" muttered Dicky, as the curtain fell on the first act of the piece. "Bit of a change from the usual evenings in Bloomsbury."

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed Marcus.

George did not answer. He was gazing out across a sea of faces to the box directly opposite. In it were two men. Long and earnestly George looked into that box, and then he suddenly plucked Matthew by the arm.

"Say, old boy," he whispered, "do you see who's in that box opposite?"

Matthew gave one swift glance, and then he turned to George.

"Sure!" he exclaimed. "It's Anton Moreno—the heavyweight champion of the world—the Mexican half-breed the papers are yelling about!"

"Thought I wasn't mistaken!" muttered George. "He looks all they say of him, doesn't he, Matthew?"

"All that and more!" granted Matthew, frowning. "Conceit is written all over his ugly dial!"

Matthew spoke correctly. The dusky-faced fellow sitting opposite was a type unto himself. Arrogance, conceit, and brutality seemed to fight for supremacy in his battered features, and conceit easily came out on top. The only redeeming feature about Anton Moreno was his natural gift as a fighter. For two years now he had held the world's title, beating, usually on knock-outs, all the opponents sent against him. American heavyweights, French, German, British—representatives from every boxing country, had fallen ingloriously before that arrogant Mexican half-breed. So easy were Anton's conquests, that, like many another coloured man who has achieved fame and fortune in the ring, he began to believe himself the first person in the world.

"What's he doing over here?" asked Matthew, gazing scornfully into the dusky face opposite.

"Why, he's meeting Johnny Cavendish in five days' time at Belcher's," said George.

"Thought you knew."

"Oh, great Scott!" exclaimed Matthew.

"He'll knock spots off Cavendish!"

"I rather think he will!" said George thoughtfully. "Cavendish, if I know him rightly, is fighting for the purse—not the glory of beating this dusky-faced merchant. Gee! I'd give something to take Johnny's place on the big day. I—"

"Thought you had packed up the ring and its rascality," said Matthew.

"So I had," replied George slowly. "But do you know, Matthew, the sight of that fellow opposite has fired my blood again. I feel it in my bones that I could beat him. That's not conceit," he hastened to add. "I—could—beat—him!"

"I believe you could, too," said Matthew stoutly. "Is this coming fight a championship affair?"

"Yes. And the Mexican will stroll away with the fight," answered his brother.

"Haven't we a white hope anywhere in the country?" asked Matthew, glancing scornfully at the coloured man opposite.

"Crumbs! British boxing prestige has fallen low."

"It has," came George's answer. "As low as it has ever been since the time Jack Johnson carried all before him."

The brothers dismissed the Mexican half-breed from their minds, and returned their attention to the play. The curtain rang down to the accompaniment of a storm of cheers, and the Meltons, gathering their coats and hats, streamed out of the theatre.

"What about a little refreshment?" piped Dicky suddenly. "I'm feeling a bit peckish."

"Same here!" chimed in Marcus.

George turned to the twins in amazement.

"Good lord!" he exclaimed. "You kids are regular Bunters! Remember the fat chap at Greyfriars I told you about? Well, you're nearly as bad as he is!"

"Oh, blow Grunter, or Blunter, or whatever his silly name is," said Dicky. "Let's have a snack at the Criterion."

"Right!"

George winked at Matthew, and then hailed a passing taxicab. The Meltons piled into it, and were swiftly driven away to the Criterion Restaurant. They entered the place, and selected a spot away from the rest of the crowd. Inside five minutes the twins were "piling in." Matthew and George contented themselves with two coffees, filling in the time by gazing at the mixed crowd around them. Suddenly George leaned over to Matthew.

"There's that Moreno merchant!" he muttered, indicating a table to his left. "Looks as if there's going to be trouble shortly."

Even as he spoke, the heavyweight champion of the world laughed uproariously. His coarse and ungentelemanly behaviour drew the attention of the crowd upon him. One well-dressed lady, who had the misfortune to be sitting at the next table, glanced at him contemptuously. Then, unable to stand the insolent glare Moreno returned, she gathered up her belongings and moved over to a table farther away.

The incident sent the coarse laughter out of the champion's face. His dusky features grew livid with wrath. Not since the obscure days when he had been a waiter in a cafe at New York had he stood such "insolence." He rose to his feet, and, throwing off the detaining hands of his friends, who foresaw trouble, and wished to avoid it, Anton Moreno swaggered away from his table, and approached the lady who had offended him.

Unconsciously George, a few tables away, clenched his big fists, and rose to his feet. He saw the champion make some leering and insulting remark to the well-dressed lady, saw her eyes flash scorn and contempt, as she pulled in her garments as though to keep this coloured man at a distance; saw her lips move quickly as she rebuked him.

Still gripping those big fists of his, George approached the scene. Within striking distance he paused. The champion was speaking. The torrent of abusive words he gave utterance to sent the hot blood coursing through George's veins.

He jumped forward, and gripping the Mexican by his sleeve, swung him round fiercely.

"You vile scum!" ground out George, his face as hard in expression as stone. "How dare you speak to a lady like that! If you don't apologise I'll take you by the scruff of your dirty neck and pitch you into the roadway."

"What?" The Mexican half-breed shot the question contemptuously. Was he not the champion heavy-weight boxer of the world? "You putta me in the roadway! Ha, ha!"

And, advancing a pace, he snapped his fingers under George's nose. In an instant George had lashed out with his fist. It took the champion full between the eyes. Down he went, clutching at a table as he fell, dragging with him a small pile of crockery and silver. People were on their feet now; waiters were hovering at a safe distance, urging George to "quit."

"He's Anton Moreno!" whispered the head waiter nervously. "He'll kill you!"

George laughed easily.

"I don't care if he's the Crown Prince of Prussia!" he replied. "No man offends a lady in my hearing like this cur did." He bent over the astonished figure of Anton Moreno. "Are you going to apologise, you scoundrel?" he growled.

"Certainly not!" gasped the champion. "I make you sorry for that, my bantam. I'll change that baby face of yours! I'll—"

His words ended in a yell of rage, for George, with scant ceremony, reached down, gripped the half-breed by the collar, and jerked him to his feet. Then, to the cheers of the Britishers present, George trundled the champion out of the restaurant, half carrying him, half pushing him. He reached the pavement, and saw that the road was clear, and then, swinging back his right foot, planted it on the seat of the Mexican's trousers.

Crash!

Anton Moreno, uttering a wild string of invectives, sailed out through space, and finally landed in a sprawling heap in a pool of water. As he sat there, gasping for breath, the cheers of the Criterion patrons floated out after him.

(Look out for next week's thrilling instalment of this powerful serial, chums. There's a punch in every line of it!)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 871.

SIR HILTON'S NEPHEW!

(Continued from page 22.)

was Sir Hilton Popper's nephew, as I strongly suspect you were aware, Wharton."

"Oh, sir?"

"The boy, as you know, was injured—happily not seriously," said the Head quietly. "He has confessed all—not only his responsibility for the fire, but in regard to the poaching in the woods with air-guns. Other boys, not connected with this school, I understand, whose names Sir Hilton Popper's nephew refuses to divulge, were concerned also. That is all we know, Wharton. I am, however, convinced that you two boys can clear up several extraordinary features of the affair. I wish you to tell me all you know, and especially why you entered the woods last night, and your reasons for not denying the charge, or attempting to defend yourselves last evening. I am waiting, Wharton."

The juniors were staggered. Their hearts were filled with joy and relief. But there was no earthly reason for concealment now, and the next moment Harry was telling the story.

He finished at last, and the Head exchanged a glance with Sir Hilton. He was obviously amazed, but still puzzled.

"One more question, Wharton," he said, eyeing both juniors closely. "You

have not yet told me what puzzles me exceedingly. Why did you not tell me all this last evening? Why did you refuse to defend or excuse yourselves?"

Both juniors flushed red, and it was some moments before Harry answered. Then his voice was low.

"We—we heard Sir Hilton sack Robinson," he stammered. "We—we felt sorry for him. We—we thought—"

"Good gad!"

Sir Hilton Popper was thunderstruck. The Head gasped.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "You mean to tell me that you were willing to risk what you must have known to mean severe punishment in order to save a man who was practically unknown to you, Wharton?"

"We—we—we—" the junior stammered and stopped, his face crimson.

Sir Hilton Popper crashed his fist on the table.

"Of course they did!" he hooted. "By gad! And dashed fine fellows they are, Locke! I'm a crusty old stick—I know it! But I'm not such an old fool as to fail to recognise and appreciate a dashed act of generous unselfishness when I see one. By gad, Locke! You were talking of punishing them for breaking bounds last night! I won't hear of it—I tell you I won't hear of it!"

"Sir Hilton—"

"They saved the life of my confounded head-keeper's son, and never breathed a word of it! They came to my rescue last night like the gallant fellows they

are," went on the baronet excitedly. "I have forgiven the young rascals—I have forgiven my own nephew, Locke. You will forgive them, of course, Locke?"

The Head's face broke into a smile.

He rose to his feet, and grasped the juniors by the hand in turn.

"We will not discuss punishments at this moment at all events," he said, smiling. "I am proud of you, boys—proud to know that boys of mine are capable of such an act of generous unselfishness. I will say no more now. I must hasten to cancel my order for a General Assembly. You may go, my boys!"

Harry's chums heard the news with amazement and joy, and the faces of the Famous Five were bright as they entered the Form-room that morning. The clouds had rolled away, and even lessons were a joy and a delight to Harry and Frank, so great was their relief. Only Harold Skinner spent an anxious hour until Harry told him that he was safe.

And, little as they deserved it, Ponsonby & Co. were safe, too. Gerald Popper bore all the blame of the affair himself. The feud between Harry Wharton & Co. and Gerald Popper was ended, and for the remainder of his stay at Popper Court, Gerald Popper was firm friends with the Chums of the Remove.

THE END.

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