

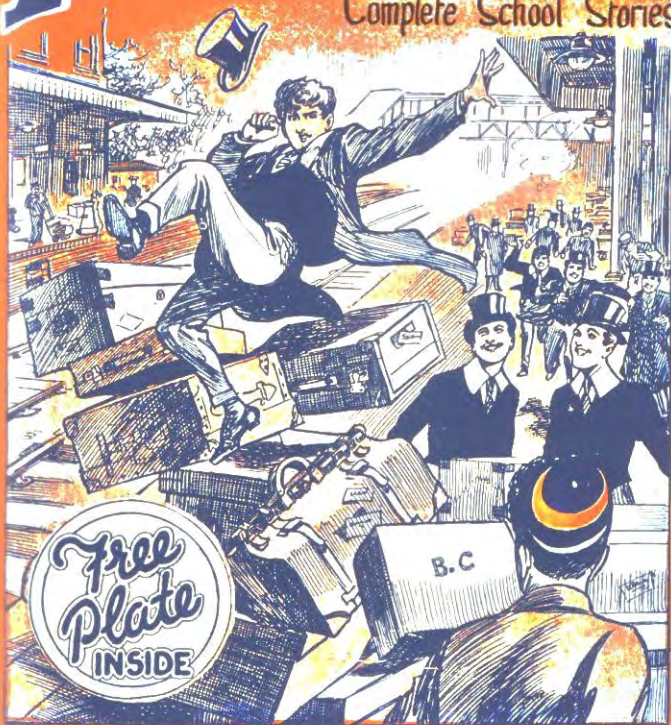
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No. 582. Vol. XXVII. Week Ending January 3rd, 1925.

The Magnet 2^d

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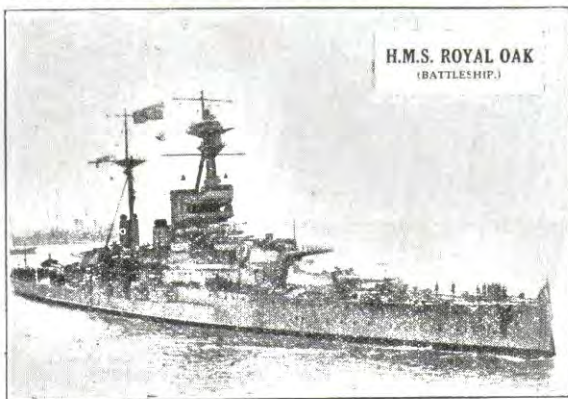
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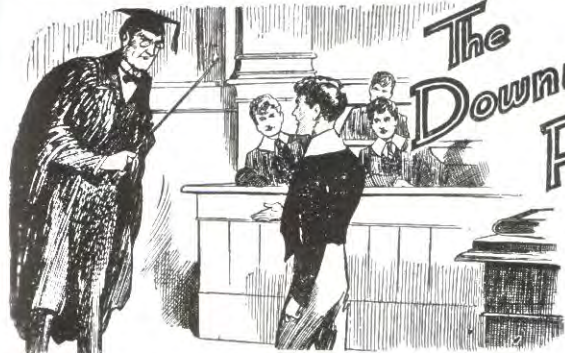


Featuring Harry Wharto, & Co. of Greyfriars.

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A BAD START FOR THE NEW YEAR! Harry Wharton, of the Greyfriars Remove, seems bent on starting the New Year with a whole parcel of trouble. Mr. Queeb, the Remove master, is amazed to find his most promising pupil fast developing into the most unruly member of his Form. What has wrought this sudden change?



The Downward Path!

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Long Complete Story
of Harry Wharton &
Co. of Greyfriars told
by Famous
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Back to the Old School!

"**H**ALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"I say, you fellows—"
"Here we are again!"
The platform at Courtfield station was swarming with Greyfriars boys, and the buzz of voices was constant.

The Greyfriars crowd were coming back to the old school for the new term. A hundred or more fellows were waiting for the local train to take them on to Courtfield, the station for Greyfriars, and in the meantime their cheery voices nobbed every echo.

Bob Cherry of the Remove bawled greetings to his friends from one end of the platform to the other. Bob had a powerful voice, and he seemed to like using it exercise. Bob was standing on top of an immense stack of luggage, from which coign of vantage he greeted the fellows as he spotted them, in stentorian tones—in tones, indeed, which the celebrated Stentor of ancient times might have heard with admiration and envy.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That you, agent? Hallo, Inky! This way, many Bull! Can't you see an old pal, many?"

"You get down off of there, you!" bawled a Courtfield porter.

He waved excited hands at the junior standing on top of the luggage. The stack of trunks, boxes, and bags did not seem any too safe, with Bob Cherry mounted on its summit.

Bob turned a deaf ear to the porter. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Is that you, beer, old bean? What have you come back in a Guy Fawkes mask for, beer?" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Coker of the Fifth, towering head and shoulders over the crowd, glared up at the cheery Removeite. Coker of the Fifth was a great man, and not to be sneered in this familiar way by a mere member of the Lower Fourth.

"You cheeky fag!" roared Coker. "You haven't answered my question," bawled Bob, grinning down at him

cheerily. "What are you wearing that Guy Fawkes mask for, Coker?"
"Eh! What do you mean?" Coker's powerful brain never worked quickly. "I'm not wearing a mask, you young ass!"

"My mistake: it's only your features!" said Bob. "Natural mistake, Coker—what!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"The resemblance is terrific, my esteemed Coker," grinned Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Horace Coker snorted with indignation, and strode on with Potter and Greene of the Fifth. Potter and Greene were grinning; Coker saw nothing to grin at.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Wingate!" George Wingate of the Sixth, captain of Greyfriars, came along with Gwynne, the mob of juniors making way for the two great men. "Glad to see you again, old kid!"

Wingate glanced up at Bob, and smiled.

"Mind you don't tumble down, you young duffer!" he said.

"Hallo, Temple!" roared Bob, as Temple of the Fourth appeared, lounging elegantly with Dabney and Fry, resplendent in a silk hat that gleamed back the wintry sunshine. "Still swanking, old bean?"

Temple of the Fourth affected not to hear.

"Is that you, Dabney?"

Dabney looked up.

"Yes, ass. Don't you know me again?"

"Hardly," said Bob, staring down at him. "You've washed during the vac, haven't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a howl of laughter from the Removeites, and Dabney of the Fourth turned crimson.

"And that's you, Fry, old man," continued Bob. "I know you all right—you haven't washed?"

Fry glared.

"Come on, you fellows," said Cecil Reginald Temple. "Don't bandy words with these cheeky fags."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. The three Fourth-Formers walked on loftily.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's old Mauly!" Bob Cherry hailed Lord Mauleverer of the Remove. "Hallo, Mauly! Have you been asleep all through the vac, Mauly?"
"Yass-I mean no!" yawned Lord Mauleverer.

"I say, you fellows—"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's Bunter! Fat as ever, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"
"Fatter, I think!" said Bob, grinning down cheerily at the Owl of the Remove. "Jolly good exercise for a fellow to walk round you, Bunter!"

"Yah!"
"Still expecting a postal-order, old fat man?"

"Beast!"
"How did you leave Lord de Bunter and the Duke de Bunter and the jolly old Marquis Bunter de Bunter" inquired Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Hallo, Smithy!" bawled Bob, as Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bouncer of Greyfriars, showed up in the throng.

"Hallo, fathead!" returned the Bouncer genially.

"Did you break the bank at Monte Carlo, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith grinned, but did not answer the question. The Bouncer's vacation had been spent in the sunny South of France, and some of his amusements had probably been of a kind which it was judicious not to mention at Greyfriars.

He stopped and looked up at Bob.

"Is Wharton back?" he asked.

Bob Cherry's merry face became less merry for a moment.

"Haven't seen him!" he answered.

"Wasn't he with you fellows for the Christmas holidays?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Nunno!"
The Bouncer grinned.

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"More trouble in the happy family—what?" he inquired.

"Hem!"
Vernon-Smith glanced at Frank Nugent and Hurree Singh and Johnny Bull. The chums of the Remove looked rather uncomfortable.

Tom Redwing came pushing through the crowd.

"Here we are again, Smithy!"

The Bouncer turned away to greet his chum, rather to the relief of Bob Cherry & Co. Questions on the subject of Harry Wharton came awkwardly, now that there was a rift in the late and the captain of the Remove was no longer on speaking terms with his old friends.

Billy Bunter rolled after Smithy, and pulled at his sleeve as he was chatting with Tom Redwing. The Bouncer glanced at the fat face of the Owl of the Remove.

"Hallo! Who are you?" he asked.
"Eh!" Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles. "You jolly well know me again, I suppose, Smithy!"

"I believe I've seen you before," said the Bouncer thoughtfully. "You're the prize fat man I saw at the circus—what?"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"
"My mistake," said the Bouncer genially. "I remember you now. I saw you at the Zoo. What are you doing outside?"

"You jolly well know me, you cheeky beast!" howled Bunter. "I saw, Smithy, did you have a good time in France? Won't do to tell Quelch about your little games there—what?"

"Fathead!"
"I say, you had a row with Wharton, didn't you?" chuckled Bunter. "I knew he went abroad with you for the vac, and he turned up suddenly at Nugent's place just before Christmas. I was there, you know—Nugent begged me to come—but I wasn't able to stay long; too many claims on me, you know."

"Did Nugent kick you out?"
"Oh, really, Smithy! It was a blow to him when I left—spoiled his Christmas, in fact. But what was a fellow to do?" argued Bunter. "When a chap's sought after like I am, he has to ration his friends, you know—that's how it is. I have to portion out my time in a vacation so many friends, you know; liable to get jealous of one another."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I say, Wharton came butting in, and he had a row with Nugent—they scuffled, you know. You should have seen Nugent's face afterwards! He, he, he! A regular picture!"

Bunter chuckled.
"You think that's funny, do you?" growled Tom Redwing.

"He, he, he! Yes, rather! His nose—"

"Oh, sit down!" said the Bouncer.
"Yarooooo!"

Billy Bunter sat down under a heavy hand, and roared. Quite a large number of fellows trod on him before he succeeded in scrambling to his feet again.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" Bob Cherry's powerful voice boomed over the crowded platform. "Is that you, Hobby? Hallo, Hobson! I hear that your Form-master's fed-up with you, and you're to be put in the Second Form! Is that so, Hobby?"

Hobson of the Shell gave Bob Cherry a ferocious glare, while the juniors around him howled with merriment. Hobson of the Shell was not a bright scholar; and it was well known that

Mr. Hacker, his Form-master, was fed-up with Hobson in class. But certainly Hobson was in no danger of being put back into the Second Form. That was only Bob's little joke.

"You cheeky fag!" bawled Hobson.
"Too bad, old chap!" said Bob sympathetically, grinning down from the top of the stack of luggage. "But you'll find some nice little chaps in the Second—there's Nugent minor, and Sammy Bunter, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Nugent will ask his minor to be kind to you, won't you, Franky?"

"Certainly!" chuckled Frank Nugent.
"And you'll find Caesar ever so much easier than Livy," went on Bob comfortably. "You'll begin again with 'Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres.' Did you know that all Gaul was divided in three parts, Hobby?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Remove fellows.
Hobson made a sign to his chum Hoskins of the Shell.

The two Shell fellows made a sudden rush at the pile of luggage, on the top of which Bob Cherry stood rather precariously.

"Shove!" said Hobson.
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Look out!"
"Mind what you're at!"
"Oh, scissers!"
"Look out!"
"Plew!"

Crash, crash! Bump! Crash!
The stack of luggage went swaying and tumbling. Boxes and bags rolled right and left.

Bob Cherry suddenly disappeared from his elevated position.

He hardly knew what was happening, but the next minute he knew that he was sprawling on the platform, amid tumbled luggage, in a breathless state, with a considerable number of aches collected in his person.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Hobson.
"Oh, my hat!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Hobson and Hoskins walked on, roaring with laughter, leaving Bob Cherry to sort himself out.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Chums Divided!

HARRY WHARTON came out of a waiting-room as the local train steamed in, to take the Greyfriars crowd on to Friar-
dale.

The captain of the Remove had not joined the merry throng on the platform.

Bob Cherry's booming voice had reached his ears—it had reached all ears in and about Courtfield Junction. From the window Wharton had seen his old friends, Bob and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

But he had not approached them—he had not thought of greeting them.

The Famous Five of the Remove, once so happily united, were divided now—between Harry Wharton and his old friends there was a great gulf fixed.

Wharton hardly knew whether he regretted it or not.

Certainly, it was strange enough, painful enough, to come back to Greyfriars after a vacation, without exchanging a word or a glance with the fellows he had always chummed with.

But there was resentment on both sides; and the die was cast. There had been a split in the Co. when the school

broke up for Christmas—and the unfortunate happenings of the Christmas vacation had widened it beyond healing.

Wharton, if he felt the separation, was at least determined to show no sign of the feeling. His pride—perhaps too stubborn a pride—upheld him. His face was calm, even cheerful, as he crossed the platform towards the train—across changing nods of recognition with mass fellows, but carefully ignoring the presence of his former chums.

"There's Wharton!" Bob Cherry whispered to his comrades. And all the Co. glanced at the captain of the Remove, Frank Nugent with a flush in his cheeks.

Wharton did not seem to see them. Bob Cherry made a step towards him, and paused; and his face flushed. In the trouble between Nugent and Wharton the Co. had unreservedly taken Nugent's side, and doubtless they had been right. Nugent, known as the most peaceable and placable fellow in the Greyfriars Remove, was, as he had said, fed-up; he was done with Wharton, and so long as Nugent remained implacable, his friends could scarcely make overtures of friendship towards Wharton.

Wharton's look showed clearly enough that he would not welcome any overtures that might be thoughtlessly made. Certainly he saw the Co. in the throng of juniors; but he did not seem to see them. He looked straight before him as he walked to the train. He stopped at a carriage, still apparently unconscious of their existence.

Bob set his lips hard.
"Well, he doesn't want us!" he muttered.

"All the same if he did!" said Frank Nugent quietly. "You fellows can go with Wharton this term, if you choose. I shall not."

"He doesn't look pally!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"The palfulness does not seem to me," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh ruefully. "The sorrowfulness of the esteemed and ridiculous self is very great."

Nugent shrugged his shoulders.
"There's a limit," he said.

"That's so," agreed Bob. "But—ha! Frank, old man, we're bound to make some allowances for Wharton."

"We've made too many, I think."

"Well, yes, in a way. But you know his uncle is out in Russia, among the Bolsheviks, and Wharton's very anxious about him. That accounts for a lot of his temper, I fancy."

"There's a limit," repeated Nugent doggedly. "I've had enough of his temper. You fellows can have all the same, you're not fed-up—I'm not scolding you."

"Oh, rot!" said Bob meanly.
"Here, let's get in—those Fourth Form bouncers are hugging the seats."

And the Co. joined in a rush for the train, hurling Temple, Dabney & Co. right and left—much to their indignation. A good many of the Greyfriars crowd had to wait for the second train, and the Co. did not mean to be among those that waited. Cecil Regina, Temple, in great wrath, went plunging among a sea of boots after his beautiful silk hat, which was not so beautiful when he recovered it.

Harry Wharton dropped into a corner seat, and Billy Bunter squeezed in beside him. Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing were in the carriage, and so were Todd, and Squiff, and Residence, and Skinner and Snoop, and Stott, and Brown, and several more fellows.



There was a frantic rush to catch the first train. In the scrimmage to secure seats Cecil Reginald Temple of the Upper Fourth went plunging among a sea of boots to retrieve his beautiful silk hat—which was not so beautiful when he recovered it. (See Chapter 2.)

cramped in like sardines in a tin, as the Bounder described it.

The train rolled out of Courtfield Junction, the windows crowded with schoolboys who hurled shouts and cat-calls at the swarm left on the platform. Among them towered Coker of the Fifth, with a crimson, wrathful face, who had actually been hurled from the train by a crowd of Shell fellows, and tumbled on the platform—an act of "monkey" that was almost past belief. It really was time for the skies to fall, when such a thing happened. But the heavy skies remained where they were; and Coker of the Fifth raged in helpless wrath, and shook an infuriated but ineffectual fist after the crowded train as it rolled away.

Coker's left!" chuckled the Bounder. "Hello, Temple's found his hat! What hat? Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, give a chap a hand," gasped Bunter. "Can't you get your hands into the corner, Wharton?"

"No!"

"You're shoving me, Skinner."

"Am I?" asked Harold Skinner calmly.

"You, you beast! Stop it!"

"You're too fat for an ordinary carcase—old top," smiled Skinner. "You seem to have chartered a special goods train."

"Beast! Stop shoving!" roared Bunter. "Careful," chuckled Squiff. "Don't let him, Skinner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Wharton, I think you might help," gasped Bunter. "Stand up by the window, there's a good chap."

"No!" said Wharton.

"I never saw such a selfish chap. I did, really," said Bunter. "After all, it's done for you, too. I say, you

had a pretty rotten Christmas, didn't you, Wharton?"

"Mind your own business."

"Hee, hee, hee!"

"You had Christmas with Nugent, didn't you, Wharton?" asked Hazeldene, with a rather curious look at the captain of the Remove. A good many of the fellows had noted that Wharton and his former friends had not greeted one another on the platform.

"No," said Harry.

"I heard you were going ahead with Smithy," said Skinner.

"Did you?"

Wharton evidently did not intend to discuss his Christmas holiday. Skinner winked at Snoop and Stott. When there was an opportunity to make some fellow uncomfortable Harold Skinner was never slow to take advantage of it.

"Had a good time in jolly old France, Smithy?" he asked.

"Oh, topping!" said the Bounder.

"Didn't Wharton come out with you after all?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't he stay on?"

"He got fed up," said the Bounder calmly. "Same as I'm feeling with you, Skinner, at the present moment."

But Skinner was not to be rebuffed. Having got on to a topic that produced discomfort, he was exceedingly loth to let it go. Indeed, he proceeded to worry it like a dog with a bone.

"Same old Smithy!" he said cheerfully. "Same old good manners! The Froggies are said to be a very polite nation—you must have given them a shock, Smithy. So Wharton chuckled you, did he?"

"Exactly!" said the Bounder unmoved.

"Why did you chuck Smithy, Wharton?"

"Find out!"

"That's what I'm trying to do, old bean," said Skinner amicably. "You see, you being such a big gun, you're a sort of public property. We're all interested, ain't we, you chaps?"

"We are!" grinned Snoop.

"Horrid to think of our respected Form captain, greatest man at Greyfriars, hanging about with nowhere to go at Christmas!" said Skinner. "Nobody would have thought it, considering how he fills up the limelight at Greyfriars. Were there really no takers, Wharton?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorled Stott.

Wharton sat silent, with a set face. He did not want to begin the new term by punching Skinner on the way to the school if he could help it. But Skinner seemed determined to ask for it.

"You should have gone to Bunter Court!" went on Skinner. "Must have been great doings at Bunter Court—immense throngs of the nobility and gentry, and all that, not to mention the broker's man—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You beast, Skinner!" howled Bunter. "I wouldn't have had Wharton home for Christmas, either—not a bit of my class. A fellow has to be a bit particular about the chaps he takes home for Christmas."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Besides, you weren't at home, were you?" smiled Skinner. "You were butting in somewhere—what? Where did you butt in, Bunter?"

"I had about a dozen invitations—fifteen, to be exact," said Billy Bunter. "I managed to give Nugent a few days."

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I couldn't spare more. He fairly begged me to stay on."

"Yes, I can see him doing it."

"His sisters cried when I went."

"What did they cry—'stop thief' or something like that?" asked Skinner.

"Did you take the turkey with you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter gave Skinner a glare that almost cracked his spectacles, while the carriage echoed with laughter.

"But Wharton didn't come there—what?" asked Skinner.

"He jolly well did, and Nugent turned him down," said Bunter. "They had a fight. Didn't you, Wharton?"

"Wharton did not speak."

"No end of a scrap," said Bunter. "Nugent's face was a regular picture for days afterwards. He never let on whom he had been scrapping with, but he couldn't pull the wool over my eyes, you know. He, he, he!"

"Dear me!" said Skinner. "What awful trouble in the happy family! You ought to have taken Wharton home with you, Bunter, when Nugent kicked you both out."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Snoop.

Harry Wharton turned a grim look on Skinner. He half rose in his seat, and Skinner felt an inward tremor, wishing that he had not been quite so funny. But just then the train clattered to a stop.

"Friarale! Alight here for Greyfriars!" Friarale!"

And the Greyfriars crowd poured out of the train, and Skinner's nose was saved. It had had a narrow escape.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Changing Out!

"FRANKY, old man—"

Bob Cherry hesitated.

The winter dusk was thick on Greyfriars School; lights gleamed from the old windows on the dusky quadrangle. Greyfriars, long silent while its wonted inhabitants were scattered to the four corners of the kingdom, was throbbing with life again.

The Head had greeted the school in Big Hall with the same speech that he always made at the beginning of the term—scarcely a syllable changed from the first time that Wingate of the Sixth had heard it as a fog in the Second Form.

Form masters had called over their forms, medical certificates had been handed in, bags and boxes claimed and sorted out, illicit cargoes of sweetstuffs discovered by the House dame and confiscated, or dealt out to the rueful owners with a sparing hand, studies had been claimed, or "jumped," or scrapped for, passages thronged and buzzed with fellows talking about the "hols," discussing the festivities of the Christmas that was past and gone, the prospects of the coming football matches, changes in the time-table, and so forth.

In the Remove passages voices were loudest—the Remove never failed to make plenty of noise. The Remove fellows had an astonishing number of topics to discuss, and they discussed them half a dozen at a time, seldom waiting for answers to their remarks.

The "row" between Wharton and his friends—whether Wharton would keep the captaincy of the Form now that he was at loggerheads with some of the chief members—whether Mr. Quelch would be as savage this term as last—whether Skinner would be found out and sacked—whether Billy Bunter was fatter than ever—whether Lord Mauleverer really

had slept all through the vacation, and only woke up in time to come back to Greyfriars—all sorts of topics had to be discussed, amid laughter, and chuckles, and general excitement and good humour.

Most of the fellows "lagged" the studies they had had last term, but as that was not a fixed law there were some arguments and disputes. Billy Bunter, for instance, was forcibly ejected from several studies, of which he had taken possession one after another. First of all, the Owl of the Remove camped out with Lord Mauleverer in No. 12, his lordship being the wealthiest fellow in the Remove, and a most desirable study-mate from Bunter's point of view. His easy-going lordship might have tolerated the intruder—Mauly had wonderful powers of toleration—but Sir Jimmy Vivian, a case of a dozen of No. 12, brought the study poker into intimate contact with William George Bunter, and W. G. B. roared and travelled.

Then Billy Bunter sailed in on Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing, but had no time to come to anchor, so to speak. The Bouncer's boot settled the question before it was raised—and, to judge by the fiendish yell that echoed along the Remove passage, it almost settled Billy Bunter.

Hazeldene and Tom Brown, in Study No. 2, were next hounded; and as their methods were milder than Smithy's, Bunter stayed to argue the point. But Tom Brown, losing patience, introduced a fives bat into the conversation, and once more William George Bunter departed hurriedly and wrathfully.

Peter Todd and Tom Dutton, in Study No. 7, wished Bunter the best of luck in his quest—for if he failed he would be landed, as before, in Study No. 7. But Bunter did not seem likely to have any luck. Fascinating fellow as he was, nobody seemed to want W. G. Bunter for a study-mate.

And when he pointed out to any fellow that, at the beginning of the term, he had as much right in the study as any other fellow, the other fellow would admit it, but would nevertheless introduce a boat, a fives bat, or a poker, into the discussion, with painful results to Bunter, who was driven into the abandonment of his just rights, and of the study at the same time.

Indeed, in the Greyfriars Remove they followed, to some extent:

"The good old law, the simple plan—That they should take who have the power, And they should keep who can!"

Still, the fellows sorted themselves out in a more or less generally satisfactory way; and if a fellow was left "on the beach," it was probably owing to some unpleasant characteristics of his own—as in the case of William George Bunter.

A more important member of the Remove than Bunter, however, was in doubt about his study. Frank Nugent had been accustomed to "dig" with Harry Wharton in Study No. 1. This term he intended to change out.

As he was no longer on friendly terms with the fellow who had always been his best chum, certainly it would have been very awkward to share a study with him.

Whether Wharton thought of changing out or not Nugent did not know—he had not exchanged a word with the captain of the Remove. He thought it unlikely, however, knowing

the strain of grim obstinacy that existed in Wharton's nature. It added to Frank's feeling of resentment to know that he was to yield ground of more—to change out and leave Wharton in possession. He had come to Greyfriars before Wharton, long ago. Study No. 1 had been his study before Harry had ever seen the old school. It was therefore up to Wharton to change out. But anything was better than risk being landed together in the study for the whole term.

It was upon this subject that Bob Cherry had come along to speak to Nugent. He found Frank standing at the end window in the Remove passage, looking thoughtful and a little nervous and undecided.

Nugent glanced at him and smiled faintly.

"About my study—" he said.

"You said something about changing out."

"Yes; I mean it."

"It's really up to Wharton, isn't it?"

Frank's lip curled.

"Catch him yielding a pound, right or wrong," he said.

"Well, I suppose not," said Nugent slowly. "I-I suppose it could be possible for you to dig with Wharton, in the gaily circumstances."

"Impossible," said Frank tersely.

"It's beastly, old man! I-I wish we could begin this term as I began last—all merry and bright."

"Not much good wishing that."

"Well, no. If Wharton doesn't change out I suppose you must; you can't share a study never speaking at always glaring at one another," said Bob, with a rueful grin.

"So you'd better come along to Study No. 13—a study."

"I'd jolly well like to," said Frank. "But you're four already—you and Lippy and Inky, and little Wun Loo, I can't crowd you out."

"Oh, we can make room," said Bob. Frank shook his head.

"Thanks, old chap, but it's too much of a crowd, and I don't suppose Quelch would let us go five to a study, either. Some of the rooms have only two chairs, and I'll wedge into one of those."

"You jolly well won't," Frank chimed in Johnny Bull, coming along the passage. "There's only three of us in Study No. 14, and you'll make four."

Nugent considered.

"That's a good idea," concurred Bob Cherry. "Let's keep the merry family together as much as we can."

"Good for you, Johnny," said Frank. "If your study-mates are agreeable—"

"Squiff will be jolly glad—I've asked him."

"What about Fishy?"

"Fishy doesn't count."

Nugent laughed.

"All serene! It's a go."

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh helped Nugent to carry his possessions into Study No. 14. Samson Squiff, Hilfield, called for short Squiff, greeted him hospitably. The Australian jumbo liked Nugent, as most of the Remove fellows did. The juniors were putting Nugent's things in their place, while Fisher T. Fish came into the study.

"Nugent's digging here this term, Fishy," remarked Johnny Bull carelessly. Possibly Fishy had a right to be consulted; but, as Johnny had marked, Fishy didn't count.

"Eh!" said Fishy.

"You don't mind, I hope!" asked Frank politely.

It did not matter much whether Fisher T. Fish minded or not; but Frank was always civil.

"That's all very well," said Fisher T. Fish warmly. "But we're three in here already, I guess; and Johnny Bull's feet take up room enough for four. Why ain't you digging with Wharton this term?"

"Well, I'm not."

"There's only two in Study No. 2—Eazel and Browney," said Fish. "I guess you'd better hustle along there, agent."

"Guess again!" suggested Bob Jerry.

"This ain't your affair, you galoots—don't belong to this study," said Peter T. Fish. "You go and chop wood! You walk round the corner and yourself a jay! Sorry, Nugent, but guess I'm not taking in any lodgers. Here's the door."

"Go hon!"

"I mean it," said Fishy. "Three's enough—four's a crowd! Absquatulate, shut the door after you!"

Nugent glanced at Johnny Bull.

"After all, if Fishy doesn't want—"

he began.

Johnny Bull chuckled.

"He does!" he answered.

"I guess not!" said Fisher T. Fish automatically.

"Sure?" asked Johnny Bull.

"Yep!"

"Think again!" suggested Johnny.

"I guess—Yarooohoo! Let up!"

Fisher T. Fish, as the sturdy

agent grasped him and up-ended him

in the study floor.

"Think again!" repeated Johnny Bull

sternly.

"I guess I'll make shavings of you!"

roared Fisher T. Fish, wriggling in Johnny

Bull's hefty grasp. "Ow! Stop tapping

my cabeza on the floor, you mug-

wump—Yaroooh! I guess I'll make

scrappings of you! Yoop!"

"Bang! Bang!"

"Ba, ha, ha!"

"Whooooooop!"

Fisher T. Fish's bullet head smote the

floor in a series of postman's

knocks.

The yells of Fisher T. Fish rang from

end of the Remove passage, and

came up to the box-rooms.

"Thought it over yet?" inquired

Johnny Bull, while his comrades howled

with laughter.

"Yaroooh!"

"Bang! Bang!"

"Why when?" said Johnny Bull

sternly.

"Yoop! I—I—I guess—Yaroooh!"

roared Fisher T. Fish, wriggling in Johnny

Bull's hefty grasp. "Ow! Stop tapping

my cabeza on the floor, you mug-

wump—Yaroooh! I guess I'll make

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"Bang! Bang!"

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"Bang! Bang!"

"Why when?" said Johnny Bull

sternly.

"Yaroooh!"

roared Fisher T. Fish, wriggling in Johnny

Bull's hefty grasp. "Ow! Stop tapping

my cabeza on the floor, you mug-

lean jaws worked incessantly, while he told Johnny Bull what he thought of him. After that, Squiff took a cushion to him, and the remainder of Fisher Tarleton Fish's thoughts remained unuttered.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Not Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON came up to the Remove passage, and he was conscious of many curious glances turned on him from the fellows gathered there.

The split in the Famous Five was the chief topic in the Remove, and most of the fellows had already decided how to apportion the blame.

The fact that the Co. backed up Nugent—that four of the five kept together, and that the captain of the Remove was "odd man out"—settled the matter for most of the juniors.

If Wharton knew that he was blamed in the Form, and if he cared for the blame, his face gave no sign of it.

His look was quite impassive.

He went into Study No. 1, and turned on the light. Perhaps he had wondered whether he should find Nugent there.

He had given the other fellows plenty of time to settle down before coming to

the Remove quarters. He, as well as Frank, was aware that it would be impossible for the two to "dig" together as of old. If Frank chose to take the study, to which he really had a prior right, Wharton expected him to be in possession by that time—in which case Harry's intention was to leave him in possession, and go further along the passage.

But the study was empty, and there was no sign of any of Nugent's belongings in the room.

Wharton's brow clouded as he glanced round.

In spite of his determination to have done with the old friendship, to regard Frank Nugent as if he had never existed, he could not help feeling a pang.

He had decided that they could not dig together, yet somehow it was a blow to realise that Nugent, for his part, had come to the same decision. It showed that the breach was complete—that Nugent, naturally so kind and easy-going was equally determined that there should be no healing of the breach.

Wharton stopped to the door again and looked out. Frank Nugent was not to be seen in the passage, nor any member of the Co.

"You fellows seen Nugent?" Wharton called out casually.



"I guess I'll make shavings of you!" roared Fisher T. Fish, wriggling in Johnny Bull's hefty grasp. "Ow! Stop tapping my cabeza on the floor, you mugwump—" Bang! Bang! "Whooooo!" Fishy's head smote the study floor in a series of postman's knocks. (See Chapter 3.)

There was a general movement of interest among the Remove fellows. Skinner had a quite disappointed look. He feared, for a moment, that there was not such a bitter dispute in progress as he had hoped. Wharton was asking after Nugent, just as if the two were as friendly as ever. But the amiable Skinner was to be reassured.

"Nugent!" said Hazeldene. "He went into Squiff's study a quarter of an hour ago."

"Thanks!" said Harry Wharton walked along the Remove passage, seemingly unconscious of the intensely interested gaze of the Removites.

"I say, you fellows," squeaked Billy Bunter, in great excitement, "he's going to scrap with Nugent!"

"Fathend!" said Peter Todd.

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Is it really true that they scrapped in the vac?" asked Hazeldene.

"Yes, rather! You should have seen Nugent's face afterwards!" chuckled Bunter. "Pink and blue and green—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Toddy.

"I really thought he'd bring a black eye back to Greyfriars with him, if not two!" said Bunter.

"Well, he hasn't," said Tom Brown sceptically. "I daresay it's all one of Bunter's yarns."

"Oh, really, Brownie—"

"Rats!"

Harry Wharton appeared to be deaf as he walked along to the other end of the passage. At all events, he gave no regard to the tattle of the Owl of the Remove, or the comments of the other fellows. He reached the door of No. 14, and knocked.

"Come in!" sang out Squiff.

Wharton opened the door and looked in. There were six fellows in the study—Squiff and the four chums, and Fisher. T. Fish, the latter occupied in rubbing his head, which seemed to have sustained some recent damage.

"Oh, Wharton! Trot in, old man!" said the Australian junior, rather dubiously, with a glance at Bob Cherry & Co.

The Co. looked elaborately unconscious of Wharton's arrival.

Harry Wharton stood in the doorway, with a slightly sarcastic expression on his face.

"I heard that Nugent was here," he said. "I came along to speak to him."

Nugent looked at him quickly, flushing.

"Only about the study," said Wharton, in the same quiet tone, and with the same slight look of sarcasm, which somehow had an irritating effect on all the fellows in Study No. 14.

"Well!"

"I suppose it's agreed that we're not digging together this term?"

"Yes."

"If you want the study you can have it."

"Oh," said Frank, taken aback.

"You were at Greyfriars before me. It's your study," said the captain of the Remove. "If you stay in, I change out. Which is it?"

"I've changed out already," said Frank.

"Very good; that settles it, then. I thought I ought to make you the offer, as it was your study before it was mine."

"Thanks!"

"Not at all!"

Wharton nodded to Squiff, and turned and walked away. The juniors in Study No. 14 exchanged looks, but made no comment. Nugent quietly went on arranging his possessions in his new study.

Harry Wharton walked back to Study No. 1. He noticed that some of the Remove fellows, near the door of that study, were grinning; but he took no heed. He discovered the cause of their grinning when he went in.

Billy Bunter was seated in the armchair in the study.

The fat junior gave Wharton a nod.

"Going to help me unpack?" he asked.

"Unpack?" repeated Harry.

"Yes, old chap."

"You're not unpacking here?"

"I jolly well am!" said Bunter. "I'm in this study for the term, you know. I've turned down Toddy."

Wharton gave the Owl of the Remove a grim look.

He had wondered whether he would keep the study to himself, or ask another Remove fellow to share it with him for the term. Certainly it had not crossed his mind to make a study-mate of William George Bunter. Equally certainly he did not intend to allow the Owl of the Remove to instal his fat person there.

"Can't stand Toddy, you know," said

Bunter. "Not really my class—a poor beast of a solicitor's son, you know."

"You silly owl!"

"And that deaf ass, Dutton—I'm fed up with him," went on Bunter, unheeding. "I don't see why I should starve him this term—what?"

"Well, he stood you last term," said Harry, "and as he's deaf, it's better for him than anybody else, as he can't hear your tattle."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Outside!" said the captain of the Remove briefly.

"You're jolly bad-tempered, you know, Wharton!"

"There's the door!"

"If you're going to be as jolly bad-tempered this term as you were last, you'll land in trouble. I can tell you," said Bunter, wagging a fat forefinger at the captain of the Remove warningly.

"Fellows won't stand it, you know."

"Are you going?"

"No. Even Nugent won't stand it, and he's a jolly good-tempered chap," said Bunter. "But he's kicked at it, hasn't he, and turned you down?"

"I ought to be jolly glad that I'm going to share a study with you—taking you on your really."

"I'm not glad, all the same. Are you waiting for me to sling you out on a fat neck?"

"You can't expect to keep a study yourself for the term—the best study the Remove has," argued Bunter. "I used to be in this study once, Wharton, we were study-mates. Well, I've got back."

"I give you one minute."

"Look here, Wharton—"

"Hasn't you better go while you're going's good?" inquired the captain of the Remove.

"I'm not going. A chap has a right to pick his study at the beginning of a term, as you know jolly well."

Bunter warmly. "Well, I've picked my study—see?"

"I see. The minute's up," said Wharton. "Get a move on."

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Last time of asking. Are you going?"

"No," howled Bunter desperately.

The captain of the Remove wasted no further words on him. He collared the fat junior, and, in spite of Bunter's very considerable weight, shifted him out of the armchair with a swing of his strong arms.

"Varoooh!" roared Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the passage. By that time Bunter's adventurous quest of a new study had attracted general attention, and was regarded by the Removites as a merry jest.

"I say, you fellows, lend me a hand," howled Bunter.

"Outside!"

"Beast! Leggo!" roared Bunter.

"Come and lend Bunter a hand, Toddy!" shouted Skinner. "Wharton's booting him out. You'll have him in your study if you don't lend him a hand!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter landed in the Remove passage with a roar, amid howls of laughter from the Removites.

Bunter howled, too—though not with laughter. The humour of the incident was totally lost on William George Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, back me up—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wharton, you cheeky rotter—"

Slam!

The door of Study No. 1 closed his

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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Toeing the Line!

HARRY WHARTON proceeded to unpack his books and other belongings, and arrange them in the study, with an impassive face. Whether he was thinking of Frank Nugent or not, certainly he was not thinking of Billy Bunter. He had done with Nugent—but, as a matter of fact, he had not done with Bunter. There was still an arrow in Bunter's quiver, so to speak, and there was rather a surprise in store for the captain of the Remove, who disliked Bunter too much to waste a thought on him.

Tap!
The door opened.
Wharton glanced round, and was rather surprised to see Mr. Quelch, his form master, in the doorway.

Behind the lean form of the Remove master was the fat figure of Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was grinning.

Behind Bunter there were a good many of the Remove fellows, looking on with keen interest. The amiable Skinner had whispered that his Magnificence, as he called Wharton, was going to have a fall—and there were quite a number of the Removites not at all averse from seeing Wharton take his "fall."

Mr. Quelch's severe face was somewhat grim in expression.

"Wharton?"

"Yes, sir?"

"Who is sharing this study with you at the term?"

"No one, sir."

"Has Nugent changed his study?"

"Yes, sir."

"You cannot expect to have a study to yourself, Wharton, when some of the ladies have as many as four boys in term," said the Remove master severely.

Wharton coloured a little.

"I don't expect it, sir," he answered.

"I was going to ask one of the other boys—"

Bunter has requested me to allow me to enter this study. It is a reasonable request, as you are alone here," said the master of the Remove. Bunter tells me that No. 7 is somewhat crowded, with three—and certainly is a smaller study than this. I have given Bunter permission to share this study, Wharton."

"Oh?"

"Really, Wharton, I did not expect you to display selfishness," said Mr. Quelch. "You have many faults, Wharton, but I had not observed selfishness to be one of them."

"Thank you, sir," said Wharton, with sarcastic intonation that made Mr. Quelch glance at him very sharply.

"Wharton! Is that intended for impudence?"

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all."

"I am glad it is not, Wharton! I could be sorry to commence the new term by caning the head boy of my school."

"Yes, sir," said Wharton indifferently. "Bunter will share this study with Wharton."

"Very well, sir."

"That is settled," said Mr. Quelch, turning away, evidently displeased with the captain of the Remove.

"I—I say, sir!" squeaked Bunter.

"Well?"

"I—I say, you tell Wharton that he's not to kick me when you're gone, sir!" roared Bunter.

"What—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites, silence! Bunter, Wharton is scarcely to oppose my direct commands, I



"Bunter will share this study with you, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch. "Very well, sir," replied Wharton indifferently. "I—I—I say, sir," squeaked Billy Bunter. "You tell Wharton that he's not to kick me when you're gone, sir." "What, what?" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors in the doorway. (See Chapter 5.)

imagines. Wharton, you will understand that you are not to seek in any manner to coerce Bunter into giving up this study."

Wharton did not answer.

"You hear me, Wharton?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly remember what I have said, then."

"I have a good memory, sir," said Wharton impassively.

Mr. Quelch fixed a long, penetrating look upon him. The Remove master was a little perplexed, and considerably annoyed. Wharton bore his inspection without moving a muscle. His manner was respectfully attentive, with just a hint of boredom.

"Very well!" said Mr. Quelch at last; and he turned away and rustled down the Remove staircase.

Billy Bunter winked at the fellows in the passage.

"How are the mighty fallen!" sighed Skinner. "Even the great and magnificent have to toe the line when jolly old Quelch gets his respected wool off! Touchin', ain't it?"

"Pride goes before a fall—what!" sniggered Snop.

Harry Wharton, apparently deaf, turned back into the study and went on arranging his books. Billy Bunter rolled in.

"Brought to look—what?" he chuckled.

Wharton did not answer.

"I'm jolly well digging in this study, this term!" said Bunter. "See?"

"I see," said Harry, unmoved.

"If you don't jolly well like it, you can jolly well jump it!" pursued Bunter vigorously. "Got that?"

"Yes."

"Can't back up against old Quelch—what?" chorried Bunter.

"No."

"You didn't expect me to bring old Quelch on the scene—eh?"

"No."

"Had to climb down—what?"

"Yes."

Bunter blinked at him. Even the obtuse Owl of the Remove was conscious of some change in Wharton, which had struck the Remove master very clearly and perplexed him a little.

"Can't you say anything but 'Yes' and 'No'?" demanded the fat junior.

No reply.

"Getting deaf, Wharton?"

Apparently that was so. At all events, Wharton did not heed or answer. He went on arranging his books quietly and sedately.

"I say, old chap, you needn't sulks about my being in this study," said Bunter after a pause. "We'll get on all right. I'm backing you up, you know. I never thought much of Nugent. A bit of a milkop, what?"

"You fat fool!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Hold your silly tongue."

"Shan't!"

Wharton moved away to the door, Bunter blinked after him.

"I say, Wharton, what about a little supper in the study? Ever so much better than that scramble in Hall—what? Can't you answer, you beast? Look here, I'm going to stand the supper—at least, you stand it, and I'll settle to-morrow. I'm expecting a postal-order—You cheeky rotter, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you."

But Wharton had walked away.

Bunter snorted with wrath.

He had gained his point, he was installed in Wharton's study. But it seemed that there was to be no study supper, and in a very short time William George Bunter abandoned his new possession, and rowled up and down the Remove passage like a lion seeking what he might devour.

On the first night of term there was no prep, and there were many hilarious supper-parties in the studies. But to none of them did William George Bunter obtain access, and he was driven at last to join in what he had disdainfully called the scramble in Hall. And

his only consolation was to see Wharton there, too, apparently left out of the jolly supper-parties, even like unto William George Bunter.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Beginning of Trouble!

ON the following day, the Greyfriars fellows were shaking down into their places for the new term. Studies had been selected and settled in, new boys asked their names and told what mooning duffers they were; Form-masters had informed their Forms that they expected better work this term than last, and their Forms had, inaudibly, replied that they wished those Form-masters might get what they expected.

Coker of the Fifth had had his first row with Potter and Greene—Coker, of course, always began a term with a row. The great men of the Sixth had selected their fags from the Third, and in the Third Form-room the fags had told one another in whispers thrilling with ferocity what they thought of the great men of the Sixth. Already the old school was settling down into the accustomed even tenor of its way, and masters, overwhelmed with work and worry at the beginning of the term, were "taking it out" of the fellows in class—or so the fellows regarded it.

Mr. Quelch, of the Remove, was rather tartaric; Mr. Capper, of the Fourth, absent-minded and nervous; Mr. Hacker, of the Shell, impatient and sardonic; Mr. Prout, of the Fifth, fat and pompous as of old, but not so genial; only the Head, superior and stately, went on his lofty way unmoved and untouched by common human emotions.

Perhaps it was the sharpness of Mr. Quelch's temper, owing to the pressure on his time and patience the first day of term, and perhaps it was the subtle change that had come over Wharton's mental attitude, that led to trouble in the Remove Form-room—perhaps it was both. Wharton was a minute late for third lesson, and Mr. Quelch was the soul of punctuality—especially when he was cross. Wharton was late, as a matter of fact, because Hobson of the Shell had captured his cap and thrown it over the elms. The recovery of the cap accounted for the delay. Wharton, therefore, was not to blame, but his Form-master did not give him a chance to say so.

"You are late, Wharton!" he snapped.

"Yes, sir! I—"

Mr. Quelch sharply, raising his hand. "I require punctuality in this class. That is all. Do not let it occur again, Wharton."

With that, the matter closed, so far as Mr. Quelch was concerned. Wharton should have gone to his place in silence.

But he did not do so.

"That doesn't quite depend on me, sir!" he said respectfully, but with cheerful calmness and indifference.

Mr. Quelch spun round at him.

"What? What did you say?"

"I said that that doesn't depend on me, sir."

Mr. Quelch stared at him.

So did all the Remove. Wharton's manner was respectful, but it was clear to all the Remove that he was "checking" Mr. Quelch. Unfortunately, it was equally clear to the Remove master.

"Do I hear aright, Wharton?" ejaculated the Form-master.

"I hope so, sir."

"What? What?"

"I hope so. I tried to speak distinctly, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Skinner to Snop. "He's asking for it, isn't he?"

"Let's hope he'll get it!" murmured Snop charitably.

Bob Cherry cast an anxious glance at Wharton.

Mr. Quelch looked at the captain of the Remove, and came a step nearer to him. His face was grim and a little flushed.

"You are impertinent, Wharton."

"I hope not, sir."

"I have directed you to be punctual, Wharton, and you have replied that it does not depend on you. What do you mean by that?"

"A fellow threw my cap over the trees, sir," said Wharton calmly. "I had to get it back. It depends on him whether it occurs again."

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath.

"Was that the reason why you were unpunctual, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is an excuse for your unpunctuality. But it is no excuse for your impertinence," said the Remove master.

"I warn you, Wharton, that this will not do. I am warning you for your own good."

"That is very kind of you, sir."

The Form-master breathed hard again.

"My intention is to be kind, Wharton," he said. "I shall, however, maintain discipline in this Form-room. Another impertinent word, and I shall cane you. You hear me?"

"I am not deaf, sir."

"What? What?"

"I hear you quite distinctly, sir."

Some of the Removites grinned. Mr. Quelch did not even smile. He stepped to his desk and picked up his cane.

"Hold out your hand, Wharton."

"Certainly, sir."

Swish!

"Now go to your place."

"Very well, sir."

Wharton sat down, and Mr. Quelch's glance followed him, puzzled and doubtful. He had thought that he knew his head boy pretty thoroughly; but he failed to understand him now.

However, he laid down the cane, and the lesson proceeded.

There was a good deal of nudging and whispering in the Remove; the little incident had made rather a sensation in the Form. "Check" to Mr. Quelch was not generally approved of, and was far too dangerous to be ventured upon except by very reckless fellows.

The Bounder sometimes, in one of his wayward moods, "showed off" a little to his Form-fellows by twisting the tiger's tail, as he called it. But it was quite a new departure on the part of Harry Wharton—quite unlike him. Somehow or other, the Wharton who had come back to Greyfriars for the new term seemed a different fellow from the Wharton who had left at breaking-up.

After class that day, when the Remove were going out, Mr. Quelch signed to Wharton to stay. With an impassive face, the captain of the Remove lifted by the Form-master's desk.

Mr. Quelch eyed his almost expressionless face with keen eyes—eyes which his pupils often compared to gimlets, on account of their penetrating qualities. But the gimlet-eyes failed to penetrate Wharton's thoughts just then.

"Wharton," said Mr. Quelch at last. "I have been observing you to-day."

"Indeed, sir."

"I have noticed that you do not seem on friendly terms with the boys who were, I understand, your fast friends."

"Have you, sir?"

"Is that the case, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is it possible that you have quarrelled with no fewer than four of your friends at the same time?"

"Quite possible, sir."

Mr. Quelch set his lips.

"I do not desire, Wharton, to interfere in matters outside my sphere as master of the Remove," he said. "But I am very sorry to see this."

"You are very kind, sir."

"Surely there is no serious cause of dispute among you?" asked the Remove master, gently enough.

Wharton was silent.

"It has always been my object, Wharton, to be a friend as well as an instructor to my boys. Do you not aim to confide in me?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Quelch breathed very hard.

Certainly, he could not cane a school boy for declining to confide in private affairs to him. But never had the Remove master been so powerfully moved to cane any fellow.

But he controlled his annoyance and indignation.

"Very well," he said. "In that case, Wharton, there is nothing further to be said, and you may go. But one moment—stay!"

Wharton waited, still impassive.

"Last term," said Mr. Quelch, "you were one of my best pupils—a credit to your Form. You were—and are still—a head boy in the Remove. I have always been somewhat interested in you, Wharton, because you are a boy with a strong and very decided character, whether for good or for evil. In your nature the good predominates—I am sure of that. But you must be very careful, Wharton. You are liable to be hasty, hot-headed, self-willed, and having recklessly taken the wrong path, to persevere in it from sheer wilful obstinacy. This is a peril you have to guard against."

"Indeed, sir."

"I am speaking for your own good, Wharton, and for the good of the Form you belong to. A boy of your character will always have followers—you will always have influence. It is for you to see that you use your influence for good, and not for evil. It is for you to correct the faults in your character, or at least to keep them in check."

Wharton was silent. The kindness of the Form-master, who looked so severe, was not lost on him, and the hard look on his face relaxed. He was on the point of asking Mr. Quelch's pardon, when the Form-master went on:

"As a first step, I recommend you to make up this quarrel with your friends. I am sure that, upon reflection, you will realise that the fault is mainly, if not wholly, upon your side."

Wharton's face set obstinately.

"That is all, Wharton."

The captain of the Remove left the Form-room without another word.

Mr. Quelch glanced after him, and shook his head, his expression very dubious. There were several members of his form with whom Mr. Quelch expected to have more or less trouble, as a matter of course—slackers like Snop and Stott and Bunter—doubtful characters like Skinner—and perhaps the Bounder. But upon Wharton he had always been able to place reliance. It occurred to him now that Wharton

too, might give trouble—and certainly, if his mind was bent that way, he was able to give more trouble than all the rest of the malcontents put together. Which was not a happy anticipation for a hard-worked Form-master.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Bunter's Farewell!

"**R**OTTEN! Oh, rotten!" Thus William George Bunter, Skinner & Co., to whom the fat junior was confiding his griefs and woes in the Remove passage, grinned.

Possibly they sympathised. But they did not look sympathetic. They seemed entertained.

"The fellow's a rotter," said Bunter, blinking at Skinner & Co. through his big spectacles.

"He is—he are!" agreed Skinner.

"Really, a cad, you know," said Bunter.

"Hee, hee!" concurred Snoop.

"We've been back at Greyfriars over a week!" went on the Owl of the Remove. "Would you believe it—in all that time, Wharton hasn't once stood a feed in the study."

"And have you?" inquired Stott.

Bunter did not seem to hear that inquiry.

"Not a supper—not even a tea—not anything!" he said. "I'm jolly sorry now that I consented to dig with Wharton this term."

"Consented!" ejaculated Snoop.

"Yes—he was keen on it!"

"My hat!"

"I—I mean—well, I consented. You see, I used to dig with Wharton in Study No. 1 when he first came to Greyfriars, some time ago. He was a jolly bad-tempered chap then; but I befriended him—stood by him, you know, and all that—protected him, in fact. You remember, Skinner—you were here then."

"I don't seem to remember all that!" chuckled Skinner. "I've got rather a good memory, too."

"Perhaps that was about the time you were sacked—"

"Eh?"

"You remember you were sacked once and the Head let you come back afterwards, when you begged—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"You haven't forgotten that, Skinner, have you?"

"Dry up, you silly fat owl!" growled Snoop. Snoop and Stott were grinning, but Skinner, apparently, did not seem being reminded of that episode in his career.

"Well, as I was saying, I befriended Wharton when he was a new chap here—stood by him nobly," said Bunter. "Nobly is the word, you know. And he's covered with all his friends, and I've turned him down. I took pity on him, and consented to share his study with him—rather than leave him alone, you know, to—to mope. This is my reward!"

Bunter spoke with bitterness, though there was more in sorrow than in anger. Skinner & Co. chortled.

Perhaps they considered that Bunter's reward was strictly according to Wharton's merits.

"This is my reward!" repeated the Owl of the Remove sorrowfully. "The rotter—the rank outsider, you know—hasn't stood a single spread all week, although he's got a good mope!"

"You wouldn't be sharing his study if you didn't, would you?" asked Skinner.

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"What a giddy disappointment! You bunged yourself in on Wharton for the jolly old loaves and fishes, and there ain't any loaves and fishes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do you call it decent?" demanded Bunter. "Why, the brute actually goes down to tea in Hall—never tea in the study—just to get out of standing me something when I happen to be short of cash. Of course, a fellow is sometimes short of ready money, especially when he's been disappointed about a postal-order. Wharton hasn't 'tea'd' in the study once—not once since we came back."

"Perhaps he doesn't like feeding with the pigs!" suggested Skinner, with an air of reflection. "That may be it!"

"Oh, really, you rotter!"

"Poor old Bunter!" grinned Snoop.

"You'd have done better to stick to Study No. 7. Toddy used to feed you."

Bunter nodded lugubriously.

"I feel that!" he said. "Toddy was a mean beast—I never had enough to eat in Study No. 7 last term. But it was better than this. Toddy was mean; but Wharton's a regular miser. I'm going

RESULT OF "MAGNET" "CHARACTERS" COMPETITION (Montague Newland).

In this competition a prize of a Gent's "Royal Enfield" Bicycle has been awarded to:

C. BOVINGDON,

66, Colville Road,

Acton,

London, W 3,

for the following line:

"EXAMPLE TO 'GENTILE'-MEN."

to turn him down, and go back to Study No. 7. I'm going to tell him what I think of him."

"Look out for his left," said Snoop.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm going to call him a stingy cad, and a crawling worm, and things like that. I shan't make any mistake about my opinion of him," said Bunter determinedly.

"I can see you calling Wharton names like that!" chuckled Skinner. "I don't think!"

"Of course, I don't want a vulgar row with the fellow—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall leave a message in the study," said Bunter, "and if you fellows don't believe me, you can see me write it out now."

"Good!"

Skinner & Co. followed Bunter into Study No. 1—that study which was now Bunter's, but which had proved such a disappointment to him. The Owl of the Remove had apparently expected that study to be like unto a land flowing with milk and honey; but he had found it, so to speak, an arid desert. Like Moses of old, he had viewed the

Promised Land from afar, but had never been able to reach that entrancing territory.

As Wharton seemed to have plenty of money, there was no reason, so far as Bunter could see, why his study-mate shouldn't occasionally cash a postal-order for him—in advance. But not a single postal-order had been cashed in advance since Bunter had butted so successfully into Study No. 1. Certainly, there had not been any postal-orders actually on the scene. But Bunter was expecting some—his usual state.

Any decent fellow, Bunter considered, would be willing to hand over ten bob to his own study-mate, a fellow who was prepared to chum with him, and wait a day or two for the postal-order to arrive.

Billy Bunter had great and dreaded skill as a borrower. It was said that he had even borrowed a shilling once from Fisher T. Fish. A wonderful feat, Orpheus, with his lute, drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek; but that was an easy task compared with drawing hard cash from Fisher T. Fish. In that apparently impossible task Bunter had been successful. Yet he had failed to draw his study-mate. Wharton had accepted Bunter as a study-mate because there was no help for it. But he had, as Bunter had indignantly declared, closed up like an oyster.

And that was not the worst. Every fellow at Greyfriars who had cash in hand "tea'd" in his own study as a matter of course. Wharton had dropped that immemorial custom and went down to Hall to tea, obviously to keep clear of Bunter's fascinating society. For a whole week there had been no tea and no supper in Study No. 1, a state of affairs that moved Bunter to the deepest indignation.

It was no wonder that the Owl of the Remove was fed-up, and that he regretted the study he had left.

Peter Todd might be a mean beast; he might grouse occasionally when sponged upon without ruth or mercy. But Peter, at least, had never refused Bunter a seat at the study tea-table.

So Bunter had made up his mind to go back to his old quarters, and he had also made up his mind to tell the captain of the Remove plainly what he thought of him. There was to be no mistake on that point.

Skinner & Co. watched Bunter with grinning faces as he prepared his farewell message.

Wharton being, as Bunter remarked, such an ill-tempered beast, it was obviously more judicious to leave a written farewell in this strain than to make his opinion known by word of mouth.

Billy Bunter dipped the pen into the ink and started on a sheet of impet paper, wrinkling his fat brows over the composition of a telling epistle.

"**ROTTER!**"

"I refuse to share this studdy with you any longer. I'm fed-up with you and disgusted. I look on you as a mean beast, and despise you accordingly. No good coming and asking me to come back, because I deking to have anything near to doo with you. A fellow who dun't stand a single toe in a hole week is not a fellow I can be friendly with."

"Beast!"

"Yores kontemptuously."

"W. G. Bunter."

"P.S.—Snoogey beast!"

"P.P.S.—Meen myser!"

"I fancy that will make him sit up and take notice, what?" said Bunter, eyeing that composition complacently.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Skinner & Co.

"Hither neat, what?" said Bunter.

"Oh, ripping!"

"Top-hole! Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter placed the inkpot on the paper by way of a paper-weight, leaving his farewell epistle prominently on the table to catch Wharton's eye when he came to the study.

Then he rolled out with Skinner & Co., rather anxious not to be present when the captain of the Remove found his letter, and learned Bunter's flattering opinion of him.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Not a Welcome Home!

PETER TODD was opening a tin of sardines for tea, in Study No. 7, and Tom Dutton was slicing bread-and-butter. Study No. 7 certainly was nothing like a land flowing with milk and honey, but there was always something for tea. A fat face and a big pair of spectacles glimmered in at the door, and Billy Bunter smiled his most ingratiating smile. Peter Todd glanced round at him.

"Hallo! Is that you, Bunter? Roll on!"

"I say, Peter——"

"Roll away, old barrel!"

"I—I suppose you've missed me a lot, Peter, since I left this study?"

"Why the thump should you suppose that, Bunter?" asked Peter, in surprise.

"Oh, really, Toddy——"

"I sha'n't miss you if you come in, old fat man," said Peter, picking up the empty sardine-tin. "I'm a good shot."

"He, he, he!"

"Bunter, old man, if you want to go off like a cheap alarm-clock, can't you roll along the passage first? It's not really musical, you know."

Bunter grunted. This was not a flattering reception. Indeed, had not Bunter known so well what a really fine fellow he was, and how desirable he was as a pal, he might have doubted whether Peter Todd was disposed to welcome him back to the study at all.

He eyed Peter rather dolefully and rolled inside the study.

"Easy, Peter, I've come back."

"I can see that. Now go away again."

"I mean, I've come back for good."

"It wouldn't be for good if you came back, old fat man. It would be jolly bad," said Peter, shaking his head.

"Good-bye!"

"I mean it, Peter."

"So do I!" said Peter Todd grimly.

"I—I say, old chap——"

"Grub short in Study No. 11?" asked Toddy sympathetically.

"Short?" said Bunter, with a sniff.

"Short isn't the word! Wharton's a mean rotter! Why, you're generous compared with him, Peter."

"Only compared with him?" smiled Peter.

"Yes. He's stingy!" said Bunter.

"Of course, you're stingy, too; but you're not such an absolute miser as he is. So I'm coming back here. I'm really sorry I left."

"You'll be sorrier still if you come back," said Peter cheerily. "You see, I stood you while I had to stand you. Now I've been let off I'm not taking it on again. See?"

"Oh, really, Peter——"

"Didn't you tell me that you couldn't put up with a poor devil of a solicitor's son?" asked Peter genially.

The Magnet Library.—No. 882.

"I—I can, though, Peter. I can, really," said Bunter eagerly. "I—I can stand you, Peter."

"Unlucky that I can't stand you, then, isn't it?" said Toddy agreeably. "Shut the door after you, Bunter."

"I've come back."

"Your little mistake, old bean. You haven't."

"Look here, Peter Todd, if you don't want me in this study——"

"I don't!"

"He, he, he! I can take a joke, Peter, old chap."

"I'm not joking," said Peter. "Never more jolly serious in my life. Sober as a judge, old man."

Billy Bunter blinked at him. Always in the back of his fat mind, he had thought of Study No. 7 as a reserve, as something he could fall back upon if he chose. Now it appeared that he was under a slight misapprehension. Amazing at it was, considering Bunter's fascinating ways, his former study-mate did not want him back, and evidently didn't intend to take him back.

"Look here, Peter Todd, don't you be cheeky!" exclaimed Bunter warmly.

"This is Dutton's study as well as yours, and he can have me back if he likes—see?"

Peter nodded.

"Ask him," he said. "If Dutton says 'Yes,' I won't say 'No.' That's a fair offer."

Billy Bunter turned his attention to Tom Dutton. Tom was looking from one to the other of them in a rather suspicious way. Being deaf, Tom had not heard what was said, but the sight of Bunter inside the study doorway did not seem to have pleased him.

Bunter turned his ingratiating grin upon Dutton. All depended on the deaf junior now.

"I say, Dutton——"

"Eh?"

"I'm coming back."

"Whose back?"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Do you mean my back? What's the matter with my back?" asked Tom Dutton, staring at Bunter.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Rubbish! Is there anything on my back, Peter?"

Peter Todd grinned and shook his head.

"Don't be a silly ass, Bunter," said Dutton. "You can't pull my leg—a fat duffer like you! What do you mean by saying there's a hat on my back?"

"Oh dear! I didn't!" shrieked Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I said I'm coming back!" roared Bunter. "I'm coming back to this study, see—I'm sticking to you, old fellow!"

"You've come back here to lick me——"

"Oh dear!"

"Licking me!" repeated Dutton.

"Well, my hat! Why, you couldn't lick my little finger if I was tied up."

"I didn't say—I never—I mean——"

"You can begin as soon as you jolly well like," said Dutton contemptuously.

"Why, I'd burst you with one punch. Licking me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

"I didn't say licking!" yelled Bunter.

"I said sticking—sticking to you. Stick—not lick—stick——"

"Stick!" repeated Dutton. "Let me catch you trying to lick me with a stick. I'll give you stick!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"What have I done to you, anyhow?" demanded Dutton warmly. "I was jolly glad you cleared out of the study, certainly. If you don't like that you can lump it, and you can begin the licking as soon as you like."

"I'm not leaving the study, after all," raved Bunter.

"Eh?"

"I'm going to be your study-mate again."

"I don't see what you would gain. You wouldn't gain anything by trying to lick me with a stick, except a jolly good hiding. If that's what you want, just come on, stick and all!" Tom Dutton pushed back his cuffs.

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter.

"Go it," said Peter Todd encouragingly.

"I say, Peter, you shout at the deaf idiot. You've got a voice like a megaphone——"

"Well, are you coming on, Bunter?" asked Dutton. "If you mean business I'm ready. If not, get out. I don't like you hanging about this study, now that you don't belong here."

"I tell you——" bellowed Bunter.

"Don't yell at me, Bunter, as if I were deaf. I'm a little hard of hearing, but I can hear you when you don't mumble. You needn't yell."

Billy Bunter rolled closer to Dutton and yelled, in spite of the warning—putting all his beef into it.

"I'm fed-up with Wharton! I'm coming back to this study. I'm going to stay here. See?"

Tom Dutton heard that. Indeed, Bunter's desperate roar was heard at the end of the Remove passage.

"You're coming back here, are you?" said Dutton. "First you say you're going to lick me with a stick, and then you say you're coming back here! I don't think! Look here, Toddy, you've asked Bunter to come back here, you and I are going to have a row. I'm not going to stand it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter. "There you are, Bunter—straight from the horse's mouth."

"We'll see whether that fat rotter's going to plant himself in this study again!" said Dutton warmly. "Here—out you go!"

"Yarooooh!"

Billy Bunter roared as Tom collared him. He clung to the study table, but Dutton's sturdy grasp swept him down-ward.

"Yow-ow! Leggo! I say, Peter, lend a chap a hand!"

"A foot, if that will do," said Peter.

"Beast! Yarooooh! Oh, scissors!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter sat down in the Remove passage.

"Whooooop!"

Tom Dutton glared at him, and shut the door of No. 7.

The Owl of the Remove sat and blinked at the shut door, and gasped for breath. There was a howl of laughter along the passage, where Skinner & Co. were watching Bunter's sudden and emphatic exit from his old quarters.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear! Ow!"

Billy Bunter picked himself up and glared wrathfully at the hilarious Removes.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not going back to No. 7," said Bunter, gasping.

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY PRICE 2

"I sort of fancied you wouldn't!" chuckled Skinner.

"I decline to have anything to do with the cads there," said Hunter. "Toddy's a low beast, you know, and as for that deaf idiot Dutton, I can't stand him at any price. I'm turning them down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you what, Skinner, I'll come to your study—"

"Do!" said Skinner cordially. "Bag a place in the hospital first. You'll need it."

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter rolled back dismally to Study No. 1. Arid desert as that study now was, it was a case of any port in a storm. The Owl of the Remove rolled, hoping fervently that Wharton had not yet come up and found his farewell message. And his fat face fell dismally as he saw the captain of the Remove standing by the study table with the paper in his hand.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Worm Turns!

HARRY WHARTON looked at the previous epistle, and looked at the fat figure of William George Bunter in the doorway.

There was a lurking smile on his face, a glint caused by Billy Bunter's systematic orthography. Certainly Bunter's thing might have made a stone image of him.

"I—I say, Wharton—" gasped Bunter.

"You left this for me?" asked Harry.

"Oh! No! Yes! Only a joke, you know."

Wharton nodded.

"All serene! If you're tired of the old Bunter, you can change out, and come."

"I—I—I'm not tired of it, old chap. I like you too much, you know," said Bunter.

"That—that—that's a joke. I—I don't really think you're a stingy beast, Wharton."

The captain of the Remove glanced at the paper again.

"You say here that you're fed-up with me," he remarked.

"Nupno!"

"You refuse to share the study with any longer?"

"N-n-not at all."

"It's no good my asking you to come back, because you decline to have anything more to do with me!" continued Wharton.

"Only a—a—a joke!" gasped Bunter.

"I—I hope you can take a joke, old chap. He, he, he!"

It was a dismal exclamation.

"Well, I won't ask you to come back," said Wharton. "Don't worry about that."

"I—I say, old fellow—"

"Anything more to say before you go?"

"I—I'm not going!" gasped Bunter.

"It's all a joke! It—it was Skinner's idea, you know—I'll tell you what, old fellow. If you like to lick Skinner, hold your jacket."

There was a sound of retreating footsteps in the Remove passage. Harold Skinner seemed to have decided that it was time to stroll away.

Billy Bunter eyed the captain of the Remove anxiously. He rolled a pace or so into the study, and rolled back again. He realised that he had asked for a licking, and that it was safer for him to go outside Study No. 1. At the same time it was necessary to make it clear that No. 1 was still his study, and that



Wharton reached across the table for a ruler. Bunter gave that article a rather uneasy blink. "I—I say, old fellow, what—what's that for?" he asked. "To rap your silly head if you don't shut up while I'm doing my lines," grunted Wharton. "Oh, really—yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as the ruler tapped on his bullet head. (See Chapter 9.)

he wasn't going. Really, it was a difficult position for the hapless Owl of the Remove.

"I—I say, Harry, old chap," he gasped. "D-d-don't be waxy, you know. I'm going to stand supper in the study this evening. I—I'm expecting a postal order—"

Wharton burst into a laugh.

Billy Bunter chuckled feebly, only too relieved to see the face of the captain of the Remove relax.

Wharton crumpled the precious epistle in his hand, and threw it into the fire. Then he sat down at the study table and drew his books towards him. He had lines to do.

Bunter blinked at him uneasily.

"I—I say, Harry, old fellow—" "Shut up!"

"C-c-can I come in, old chap?" asked Bunter desperately. "You—you—you're not going to pitch into me, are you?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Dry up! I've got a hundred lines to do!"

Bunter rolled into the study, immensely relieved. For some moments he had feared that he was going to be a homeless outcast, with no study to call his own, and no armchair in which to lay his weary head. Wharton, apparently had not taken offence at the stinging epithets in Bunter's epistle, and Bunter wondered why—being very far from realising that he was regarded as a negligible duffer.

"I say, Wharton, you're not really such a bad-tempered beast as the fellows make out," said Bunter, quite genially.

"Fathead!"

"I'm sticking to you, old chap. That beast Toddy has been begging me to go back. I've refused."

"Ass!"

"I can't stand him—not my class, you know," said Bunter. "I—I say, old fellow, what about tea?"

"I've had my tea."

"I haven't had mine!" said Bunter dismally.

"You'd better huck up, then. Tea will be over in half pretty soon," said Harry.

"I—I say—" "I've got lines to do! Will you shut up?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove impatiently.

"I'll do them for you," said Bunter, with reckless generosity. "There! I'll do your lines, old chap, while you—while you fetch the stuff for tea. What?"

Wharton reached across the table for a ruler. Bunter gave that article a rather uneasy blink.

"I—I say, old fellow, what—what's that for?" he asked.

"To rap you if you don't shut up while I'm doing my lines!"

"Oh, really, Wharton— Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter as the ruler tapped on his bullet head.

The fat junior rolled out of the study, and Wharton was left to his lines. Ho

(Continued on page 16.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 882.



Supplement No. 205.

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON

Week Ending January 3rd, 1925.



A Screamingly
Funny Story of St. Sam's.
By DICKY NUGENT.

WHEN the St. Sam's fellows came back after the Christmas Vack, they brought with them their luggage and their New Year rezzertutions.

Nearly everybody had made a rezzertution. Jack Jolly of the Fourth said he was going to give up smoking. (He's never smoked in his life, so that won't be any hard-lop!) His chum Merry said he was going to abstain from strong bokers. (He's never sampled anything stronger than ginger-wine!) And Bright said he was not going to keep late hours. (The offishul bedtime is nine o'clock, so he won't be able to break his rezzertution!)

But the most surprising rezzertution of all was the Head's.

The St. Sam's fellows were not only astonished, but delighted, to see the following announcement on the school notice-board, in the Head's skollery hand:

"MY NEW YEAR REZZERTUTION!"

"I hereby give notice that I am not going to cane any boys in the New Year. This rezzertution will be faithfully adheered to.

(Signed) I, BIRCHEMALL,
"Headmaster."

Jack Jolly & Co. were awfully hucked. "No more canings!" chorled Merry. "That's the finest rezzertution the Head could have made!"

"It—it seems too good to be true!" gasped Bright.

"It's true enuff!" said Jack Jolly. "The Head's a man of his word. He's often broken a cane in the past when wallejng his victims, but he never breaks a promise. This means that we can do as we jolly well like in future, without fear of a tanning."

"Yes, rather! We shall be able to get up to all sorts of mischief," said Merry. "By way of a start, I suggest that we go and stand outside the Head's study window, and make faces at him. Come on!"

The young raskals of the Fourth hurried out into the quad. The Head happened to be standing at his window, taking the air.

Jack Jolly & Co. walked boldly up to the window, and stood in a row, and put out their tongues at the Head. They also put their fingers to their noses in a rood manner.

The Head fairly danced with rage. "How dare you!" he roared. "How dare you stand there and mock me in that impudent fashion!"

"Ratts!" said Jack Jolly.

"Go and eat coke!" said Merry.

"We regard you as a silly old buffer!" said Bright. "And you daren't cane us for our cheek, or you'll be breaking your New Year rezzertution. That's where we've got you, old bean! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Head was foaming at the mouth by this time. He looked like going into an apple-pieotic fit. He pressed a button, and the pageboy appeared.

"Find Boreleigh of the Sixth, and tell him to order a General Assembly at once!" spluttered the Head.

Shortly afterwards, St. Sam's assembled in Big Hall.

Jack Jolly & Co. weren't a bit scared. They knew that the Head could not break his New Year rezzertution without lowering his prestidge in the eyes of the school.

When the Head, mounted in awful majesty on the platform, called the delinkwents out, they trotted out gleefully from their places. But the next moment they had the shock of their lives.

"These young raskals have treated me with abominable roodness!" said the Head. "I cannot cane them for their conduct, bekwase my New Year rezzertution is that I am not going to cane any boys; but I can lurch 'em all!" added Dr. Birchmall grimly.

And he sent the porter for the birch and block.

We will draw a veil over the painful scene which followed. We will not dwell upon that terrible scene of torcher. Suffice it to say that Jack Jolly & Co. got it in the neck—a little lower down, to be precise—and they felt far from happy on the subject of the Head's New Year rezzertution!

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR to all our readers!

The Old Year is still with us while I write, but very shortly the bells will be ringing the Old Year out and the New Year in. 1924 will totter off the stage of time, and 1925 will enter with a flourish of trumpets. Let us greet the newcomer with a cheer!

I have no quarrel with the year that is just dying. Taken all round, it has been a jolly good year for Greyfriars. We had a splendid cricket season, and the footer season looks like being equally successful. The "Greyfriars Herald" has flourished, too, and won many new friends all the world over. The Clerk of the Weather did his best to spoil the 1924 summer by turning on the water-tap too often. Let us hope he will be more kindly disposed towards us in the coming year.

Many of the Greyfriars fellows are busy making New Year resolutions. Soon they will be busy breaking them.

Billy Bunter's New Year motto is "Eat Less Tuck." A very worthy resolve, but I'm willing to wager that Bunter has a bilious attack on New Year's Day!

Bob Cherry's maxim for the New Year is "Keep Smiling." And this is one of the few resolutions which will be faithfully kept. It was unnecessary for Bob to make it, really, because smiles come naturally to his sunny face. The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, plus all the ills that flesh is heir to, cannot quench Bob's smile.

Lord Mauleverer has resolved not to sleep so much. Bolsover major has resolved to be less of a bully. Skinner, of all people, has resolved to do at least one good turn a day, and Colker of the Fifth has resolved never to exceed a speed of twenty miles an hour on his motor-bike. Without doubting the sincerity of these resolutions, I am inclined to think that most of them will "go West!"

My own New Year resolution is to make the "Greyfriars Herald" better and brighter than ever, and my industrious staff of sub-editors, have resolved to back me up. We have planned some really tip-top numbers for 1925, and I am confident that they will maintain the high reputation of our merry little schoolboy journal.

That 1925 may prove a year of peace and plenty and prosperity is the ardent wish of your friend and editor,

HARRY WHARTON.

[Supplement 4]



Some New Year! Resolutions!

Anticipated
by our
Tame
Humorist,
Tom Brown

GERALD LODER:

I have resolved never again to raise my ashplant in anger against a frail, feeble fag. I mean to cut out bullying altogether. I shudder with shame when I call my many savage acts of brutality committed in 1924. Henceforth I shall be kind and gentle to all my little playmates. I have broken my ashplant to pieces, and fed them to the flames; and cricket-stumps will in future be used for their ordained purpose—and not as instruments of torture! If I carry out this resolution, I can picture my grateful fag putting me out to his pals, and singing "Kind, kind and gentle is he!"

LEONZO TODD:

Having made the alarming discovery that I am the frailest fellow in the Form, I have resolved to acquire great muscular strength. I shall take up boxing in earnest, and I have already challenged that burly brute, Bolsover, to a twenty-round contest, with or without gloves. I shall feed on body-building foods, and by the end of the

year I hope my physical proportions will resemble those of Billy Bunter! I am bent on becoming the Hercules of the Remove, as well as the boxing champion, the wrestling champion, and the weight-lifting champion!

BILLY BUNTER:

When I last visited the frennologist—the man who reads your bumps—he told me that my bump of gluttony was over-developed. I admit that I've been too partial to the good things of the table. In 1924, according to my diary, I consumed 4,390 jam-tarts, which works out at a dozen a day. In 1925, I shall only consume 4,379! This will require a grudgeful deal of self-discipline and self-denial, but once I make a resolution I always carry it out. I shall also cut down the amount of grub I eat in the dining-hall. Instead of having six big helpings of dinner, I shall content myself with a dozen small ones! In addition, I have resolved to work very hard this coming year; and I've no doubt that by so doing I shall become the idle of the school!

HORACE COKER:

In 1924 I was known as "the mad motor-cyclist," and was considered the biggest speed-merchant in the district. I had lots of crashes and calamities in consequence. Goodness knows how many pigs and fowls perished under my front wheel! Once, on Courtfield Common, I was jolly nearly arrested for driving to the "common" danger! All this has got to stop. In future I shall simply crawl along, at a tortoise-like pace. Fellows will no longer be afraid to ride in my side-car. They will clamour to do so. "Safety First" is my motto for 1925!

LORD MAULEVERER:

At present I am known as the slacker of the Remove. But there's goin' to be no slackin' in 1925, begad! Each mornin' I shall rise with the lark, an' I shall keep active an' alert all day. No snoozin' in the Form-room durin' lessons; no "forty winks" on my study sofa; no dozin' an' dawdlin' an' dallyin'. From the energetic standpoint, I shall out-Cherry Cherry! I mean to astonish the natives by my amazin' vigour an' vitality. An' now, havin' got this resolution off my chest, I think I'll just take a short siesta on my sofa!

WILLIAM GOSLING:

I don't see as 'ow an overworked gateporter can be expected to make new resolutions. I've no time, for one thing, to think 'em out. But I would suggest that those young himps of the Remove make a resolution not to worrit the life out of yer humble in the New Year!

BILLY BUNTER'S DREAM!

(On New Year's Eve, 1940.)

By DICK PENFOLD

THIS many a year since I left
England's shore,
In a far-distant country to
roam;
Was dreaming to-night, with a thrill
of delight,
Was back with the old folks at home,
Engaged once more with the comrades
of yore,
With Cherry and Wharton and Todd;
Increased them with glee, and they
worbed over me,
And somehow it didn't seem odd;
Saw the old tuckshop, and faces I
loved,
Saw all the pastries and pies;
And I piled in with joy, as I did when
a boy,
To the tarts that Dame Mimble
supplies,
The fire was burning brightly,
As I sat there and squandered my
"tin";
Saw the bells were ringing the Old
Year out
And the New Year in!

Saw Dr. Locke, and old Quolchy as
well,
Saw Capper and Lascelles and Twigg;
Mother murmured, "Alack! Billy
Bunter's come back;
Might we were rid of that pig!"
[supplement it.]

I wandered around the familiar ground
Where the fellows played footer of
yore;
And I saw the old dorm where I lay snug
and warm,
Awaking the school with my snore!

I saw the old tuckshop, and faces I
loved,
Young Sammy was there—he looked
fine!
And I blined half-a-quid, as I did when
a kid,
On that old-fashioned brother of
mine,
The fire was burning brightly,
And Sammy tucked in with a grin,
While the bells were ringing the Old
Year out
And the New Year in!

I saw the old study, ablaze with its
lights,
The fellows were doing their prep,
Then Fishy walked in, with a gratified
grin,
And cried, "Is it Bunter? Why, yep!
I guess it's a treat, thus to suddenly
meet
An old comrade—I feel I could sob.
But have you forgotten—yon memory's
rotten—
The fact that you owe me a bob?"

I saw the old tuckshop, and faces I
loved,
And the stool where I frequently
sat;
I took it once more—it collapsed to the
floor,
And I came to grief on the mat!
The fire was burning brightly—
Then I woke! In my ears came the
din
Of the bells that were ringing the Old
Year out
And the New Year in!

NEW YEAR HONOURS AT GREYFRIARS!

GEORGE TUBB, the lanky-faced and lanky-fingered, has been given the Order of the Bath!

IN reward of his wonderful gastronomic achievements, SAMUEL BUNTER has been presented with the Freedom of the Kitchen.

LODER of the Sixth having chastised Lord Mauleverer with a belt, Mauley is now a belted earl!

Dicky Nugent's latest story figures in the New Year Honours. It has been given a title!

EVEN the fishing-jetty at Pegg has not been overlooked. It is going to be made a "Pier"!

HAROLD SKINNER, the cad of the Remove, has been granted the O.B.E. (Order of the Boot Everywhere!)

IN a burst of hilarity, induced by drinking strong gingerale, Gosling, the porter, told our representative that he was going to be knighted. But it wasn't the "sober" truth!

FISHER T. FISH, who is always being kicked out of other fellows' studies, complains that the only Orders he is likely to receive in the New Year are marching ones!

COKER of the Fifth is banking after a B.A. But it is common knowledge that he is a Blithering Ass already!

ANYONE requiring a New Year Honour should apply to Dame Mimble at the tuckshop. The honour he will receive will be a Maid-of-Honour!

THE MARKET LIBRARY.—No. 882.



(Continued from page 15.)

was just in time for tea in Hall; and having disposed of enough for three or four fellows, Bunter rolled out again, feeling the keen edge of his appetite taken off. Tea in Hall was all very well for Wharton; but it was really not much use to Bunter. It was really only a sort of foundation, upon which to build a superstructure of several more teas—as many, in fact, as could be bagged by hook or by crook.

Bunter came back to Study No. 1, with a faint hope lingering in his fat breast. The captain of the Remove was finishing his lines. Bunter blinked at him as he wrote the last, and rose from the table, with a rather weary look.

"I'll take them to Quelch for you, if you like, old chap," said Bunter.

"Rot!"

"If you call that grateful, Wharton—"

"Cheese it!"

"Look here, old chap, will you lend me—"

Wharton left the study without heeding the sheets of impot paper in his hand. Bunter rolled after him.

"I say, old chap— Look here, Wharton, be a pal, you know. I'm expecting a postal order—honest Injun, you know—from one of my titled relations—Don't buzz off while a fellow's talking—"

It was a sort of accompaniment to Wharton in his progress to the Remove master's study downstairs.

He did not seem to hear.

He tapped at Mr. Quelch's door and opened it, with Bunter still at his heels.

"My lines, sir! Oh!"

Mr. Quelch was not there. Just then he was in Mr. Hacker's study, chatting with the master of the Shell.

Wharton dropped into the room, and laid his imposition upon Mr. Quelch's writing-table. It had to be handed in before six; and it was now a quarter to the hour, and it was customary with the Remove fellows to leave their impositions on Mr. Quelch's table when he was not present to receive them at the appointed time.

"I say, Wharton—"

The captain of the Remove came out and closed Mr. Quelch's door after him, and passed Bunter without heeding.

"Look here, old chap—"

Wharton walked on.

"Beast!" howled Bunter.

The captain of the Remove disappeared by the door into the quadrangle. Billy Bunter glowered after him. Evidently his study-mate was determined to remain deaf to the voice of the charmer.

Bunter glared after him, and then turned to Mr. Quelch's door. Then he stopped and blinked cautiously and uneasily up and down the corridor. There was no one in sight.

"He jolly well wants a licking!" murmured Bunter. "I—I'd jolly well lick him myself, only—only a fellow doesn't want to get mixed up in an—an undignified row. But if Quelch licks him—"

Another cautious blink up and down the corridor.

Then Bunter opened the Remove master's door, and rolled hurriedly into the study. He was in the room only a few seconds, and when he came out Wharton's imposition was rolled up and hidden under his jacket.

Bunter closed the door softly and hurried away.

A few minutes later the fire was stirred in Study No. 1—consuming closely-written sheets of foolscap. Billy Bunter grinned over the ashes as he stirred them together.

There was no doubt—in Bunter's fat mind—that Wharton wanted a licking. And, in the circumstances, there was very little doubt that he was going to get one.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Vials of Wrath!

MR. QUELCH came back to his study a few minutes before six.

He turned up his light, and glanced at his table. He had not forgotten that Wharton had an imposition to hand in. Mr. Quelch never forgot an impost. There was no sign on the table of Wharton's lines, however, and Mr. Quelch, after a glance at the clock, sat down.

His brow was very thoughtful.

As a matter of fact, he was thinking about Wharton—though Harry was far from supposing that his Form master wasted much time or reflection upon him.

The term was only a week old; but in that short time Wharton had, as a matter of fact, given the Remove master a good deal of food for thought. Last term Wharton had been one of his most promising pupils. He was nothing of a "swot"—but he did the Form work carefully and conscientiously; his construe was always up to the mark; in the French class he satisfied Monsieur Charpentier; in the maths "set" he won the approbation of Mr. Lascelles. He was not likely to achieve distinction in scholarships, like Mark Linley for instance, but he was good and sound and reliable—quite a credit to his Form. That was Wharton of the last term; but this term he was a different fellow.

Of the haunting anxiety that troubled Wharton, of his deep concern for his uncle in Russia, Mr. Quelch naturally knew nothing. Neither, of course, was he aware that Wharton had, for once, failed in dutiful respect to his uncle, on the eve of the old colonel's departure; or of the bitter remorse it had caused to a sensitive mind. Of all this Mr. Quelch knew nothing; but he knew that Wharton was no longer on speaking terms with the four fellows who had been his last friends the term before; and he knew that there was discussion in the Remove concerning Wharton's impatience and his arrogant temper.

He had had high hopes of Wharton, but he had always known that there was evil mixed with good in the boy's character. The good predominated, he was sure of that, but there was no telling where a headstrong and passionate temper might lead. This term, it seemed to Mr. Quelch that Wharton had somehow slipped into a wrong path, and was following it with headstrong obstinacy, and was sulkily keeping his friends at arm's length, at a time when he needed their kind friendship and healthy influence.

He had made one attempt to gain the boy's confidence, and he had been rebuffed. He could not make another; but he was uneasy and anxious about him,

and his good opinion of the junior was slipping away.

In the Form-room, Wharton was not his old self. So far as Mr. Quelch could see, he had not been hard or unjust. Certainly, on the first night of the term, he had ordered Wharton to admit Bunter to his study; but that was not unjust. It was a perfectly ordinary and reasonable thing.

Wharton had resented it, he knew—his conduct in the Form-room the following day had shown. That was arrogant and unreasonable; yet the boy was sound at heart. Bunter was a brilliant fellow, who could have been bullied to any extent; but Mr. Quelch, who had kept a keen eye open, was aware that Wharton had not wreaked his resentment on the fat junior in the very least. He knew only too well how Skinner or Bessy major would have acted in similar circumstances.

There was a change in Wharton. The arrogance in his character, held in check by his good sense hitherto, seemed to have gained the upper hand and mastered him.

He resented being called to order to the slightest degree. He expressed contrition for faults; he accepted punishment with an air of sulky endurance. From his head boy the Form master expected support in the Form-room; influence on the side of law and order. Since the new term had started, Wharton's influence seemed rather to have been exerted the other way. He seemed to be setting himself up against his Form master, in a quiet, seemingly respectful, and yet unmistakable manner.

Mr. Quelch's lips set hard as he thought of that.

In his Form-room he was master, and stubborn wills that would not bend had to break.

Only that afternoon there had been such an incident. Wharton had been five minutes late for class.

Mr. Quelch, with unusual patience, had waited for an explanation or an excuse. None had been forthcoming.

He had imposed a hundred lines as a penalty; and Wharton had received the order with a sarcastic smile—a smile that had irritated Mr. Quelch deeply, but which he had affected not to observe.

The Remove master sighed.

The Remove gave him plenty to do, and if sullen opposition from his head boy was to be looked for, his task became harder. But if kindness failed, severity could bring the recalcitrant to his senses; the reckless junior would have to learn that he was revolting against an irresistible power.

Six o'clock struck.

Mr. Quelch expected a knock at his study door, and to see Wharton with his lines.

But there was no knock.

The Remove master sat down at his table, with his pen, and proceeded to correct exercises. Every now and then he glanced at the clock.

His anger was growing.

Wharton had been bidden to bring his lines to the study by six. He had had ample time to write them out. There was not even football to draw him out of doors, as it was dark so early. It seemed to Mr. Quelch that this was an act of deliberate defiance.

At half-past six he had finished the exercises, and laid down his pen. Wharton had not come.

With compressed lips and a glint in his eyes—a glint that the Remove fellow knew only too well—Mr. Quelch left his study. He ascended the stairs to the Remove passage.

Study No. 1 was empty and dark.

Perhaps Mr. Quelch had expected, even hoped, to find Wharton there, hard at work on his lines, trying to make up for lost time. In such a case, he would certainly have dealt kindly with him. But the study was untenanted.

With a grimmer expression than ever upon his face, the Remove master turned away, and beckoned to Russell, who was in the passage. Dick Russell came up rather warily. He had not lost the glint in the Form master's eye.

"Do you know where Wharton is, Russell?"

"Oh, Wharton! Yes, sir, in Hazeldene's study!"

"Thank you!"

Mr. Quelch moved along to Study No. 2, tapped at the door, and opened it. There were three juniors in the room—Hazeldene and Tom Brown, to whom the study belonged, and Harry Wharton. Mr. Quelch caught a couple of words—"corner" and "dribble"—the three juniors were talking football. They ceased at once, and rose respectfully to their feet, as they saw the Remove master in the doorway.

Hazeldene, catching the glinting eyes, fairly trembled with the knowledge that there was a cigarette in his pocket. He almost credited Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes with the power to see it there. But it was upon Wharton that the Remove master's penetrating eyes were fixed.

"Wharton?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have spoken to you more than once, Wharton, on the subject of this new defiance of authority in which you seem determined to indulge. Now I am forced to speak again."

Tom Brown and Hazeldene stood silent and still, glad that they were not the delinquents. Wharton stared at the Remove master for a moment, and then his face set hard.

"What have I done now, sir?" he asked, with a stress on the word "now," which brought a grim look to Mr. Quelch's face.

"I ordered you to bring your lines to my study at six o'clock!" said Mr. Quelch harshly. "You have not forgotten that, Wharton?"

"No, sir."

"Very good! The imposition is doubled."

"What?"

"You will write two hundred lines instead of one, Wharton."

Wharton looked at him blankly.

"You will be detained on Saturday afternoon," continued Mr. Quelch. "You will remain in the Form-room from two o'clock till five. If this should interfere with your football activities, I am sorry; but you have brought it upon yourself, Wharton."

"I—I—"

"That is all, for the present. But I warn you, Wharton, to take care!" said Mr. Quelch impressively. "You seem determined, since this term began, to set yourself up against authority; to give me all the trouble you can, instead of the support I have a right to expect from my head boy. If you keep on like this you cannot remain head of the class, and I shall have to consider very seriously whether to request the Head to cancel your captaincy of the Remove."

Wharton stood rooted to the floor. He was utterly amazed by this outburst of anger, and a sense of bitter injustice lay strong upon him.

"That is all!" said Mr. Quelch. Reflect upon it, my boy, before it is too late!"

And the Remove master rustled out of the study.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Up Against It!

HARRY WHARTON stood staring at the door after it had closed behind the Remove master. He was angry, but he was more amazed than angry. There was silence in the room for a full minute; Hazel broke it with a low whistle.

"His rag's out, and no mistake!" he said.

"Never saw him in such a giddy wax!" commented Tom Brown. "Wharton, old man, you'd better go a bit slow. Quelch's dangerous when he gets going!"

The captain of the Remove burst into an angry laugh.

"What do I care?" he snapped.

The New Zealand junior looked at him very seriously.

"I should care," he said, "and you ought to care, old man. Quelch's a bit of a Tartar; but he's not a bad sort. He does his duty; and it's bad form to cheek a master. You always agreed on that up to now, too. You never liked the Bouncer pulling his leg in class!"

"When father says turn, we all turn!" grinned Hazel. "Wharton expects the whole Form to change if he takes it into his head to change. But it won't wash, you know."

Wharton gave the two juniors a gloomy look. Hazel was mocking, but Tom Brown was serious and concerned.

"Do you know why Mr. Quelch has jumped on me this time, Brown?" asked the captain of the Remove quietly.

Tom Brown stared.

"Because you haven't done your lines, of course. We all heard him tell you to take them in by six."

"I took them in at a quarter to six."

"Eh?"

Hazel winked at the ceiling.

"I left them on his study table, as he was not there," said Harry very quietly, but with a gleam in his eyes at Hazeldene. "If you don't take my word, Hazel—"

"Well, Quelch didn't look as if he'd found them there!" grinned Hazel.

"I suppose he's overlooked them from what he said!" answered Harry. "I was so taken aback when he was talking to me, I didn't think of it then. I thought he was just ragging because he's bad-tempered. But come to think of it, I suppose he hasn't found them yet."

Hazel grinned again, but his grin died away as he noted the expression on Wharton's face. The captain of the Remove looked in a rather dangerous mood.

"Well, if you say so, of course," said Hazel, shrugging his shoulders. "No bizney of mine, anyhow."

Tom Brown looked perplexed.

"It's jolly odd," he said. "I suppose you put the impot where it could be seen, Wharton?"

Tom Brown, being a strictly veracious fellow himself—as Hazel was not—had no doubt of Wharton's statement.

"Of course I did!" said Harry. "We always lay the lines on his table if he's not there. I put them in the usual place, right under his nose if he sat down."

"Then it's jolly queer that he missed them," said Brown. "Perhaps something's got chucked over them. He might have brought in a newspaper in his hand, and laid it down, or something. It's jolly clear that he doesn't know that you've done your lines."

Wharton set his lips.

"He ought to know. He ought to make sure before he jumps on a fellow. It's his duty."

"Well, perhaps he wouldn't be quite so sharp if you hadn't bothered him a bit lately, old son. You have, you know."

Wharton's look was bitter.

"I've done my impot, and it's doubled," he said. "I'm detained for a half-holiday for nothing! I've a jolly good mind to appeal to the Head."

"I wouldn't!"

"We've a right to appeal to the Head," said Wharton. "If we get injustice, Dr. Locke's bound to set it right. Do you call it just to jump on a fellow who's done nothing?"

"It's not injustice—it's a mistake," said Tom Brown quietly. "Quelch will be sorry enough when he finds out his mistake, and he will say so. He means to be just. It will make him look an awful fool to the Head if it comes out that he's given you detention owing to a mistake of his own."

"Serve him right."

"Well, if that's how you look at it, I won't say any more," said Tom Brown. "It's your own business. Let's get back to Soccer. What about that new dodge of dribbling from the corner kick?"

THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG HERE, SURELY?



£25 IN PRIZES. See the great "Errors" Competition in this week's issue of "THE GEM LIBRARY."

It was not easy for Wharton, quivering with resentment and a sense of injustice, to get back to Soccer; but he controlled himself, and the two juniors plunged into football jaw again. Hazel-dene strolled from the study. To his unthinking mind, the incident was a rather entertaining one, and a topic for the Remove passage. He went out to look for fellows to whom to relate it, with a graphic description of Mr. Quelch's tantrums, and of Wharton's wrathful threat to appeal to the Head.

When Harry Wharton came away from Study No. 2, about a quarter of an hour later, several fellows in the passage glanced at him, and some of them smiled, and he guessed that Hazel had already spread the story through the Form.

"Going down to the Head now, Wharton?" called out Skinner.

"Put some exercise books in your bags first," grinned Snoop. "The beak's not likely to swallow your yarn, you know."

Harry Wharton went into his study without troubling to reply. He could easily have taken Skinner and Snoop by the collars, and knocked their heads together. Certainly the two woody slackers combined would not have stopped him. But his scornful disregard enraged Skinner & Co. even more than the knocking of their heads could have done.

"We're not worth wasting a giddy reliable on," said Skinner, in a low voice, through his teeth. "Proud as a jolly old Lucifer, you know!"

"Jolly old Lucifer came a cropper, with all his giddy pride. We got that in Milton in Sunday class!" grinned Snoop. "I fancy Wharton's looking out for a cropper, too."

"And the sooner the better," said Skinner.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled up. "Has Quelch been after Wharton? Has he been licked?"

"Not licked. His impot's doubled, according to Hazel," said Skinner. "I'm jolly glad, for one."

Bunter snorted.

"Why the thump didn't he lick him? I thought he'd be licked! I'd lick the rotter myself, only—only—"

"Only you couldn't lick a hair on his head," sneered Skinner. "Don't be a goat, Bunter!"

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter eyed Wharton rather uneasily when he rolled into Study No. 1 for prep. But the captain of the Remove evidently had not the slightest suspicion of the trick Bunter had played on him, and the fat Owl was relieved.

Wharton, in fact, was expecting to hear from Mr. Quelch, and anticipating rather grimly the awkwardness the Remove master would feel in admitting that he had made a very unpleasant mistake.

The impot, so far as Wharton knew, must still be where he had left it, and where Mr. Quelch had overlooked it. The Remove master always had work to do in his study of an evening, and it was impossible that the lines could remain overlooked. It was really extraordinary that they had been overlooked at all.

But no message came from Mr. Quelch.

Wharton finished his prep and went down to the Rag. Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent, Hurree Singh, and Johnny Bull, were there. They did not glance at Wharton, and he did not glance at them. The estrangement could not have been more complete. Vernon Smith was listening to Hazel-dene, apparently receiving an account of the episode in Study No. 2.

The Bounder left Hazel, and came over to Harry, as the latter stood rather moodily by the fire.

"You seem to be up against it," said Smithy.

Wharton nodded without speaking.

"You really did take your impot to Quelch's study?"

"I've said so."

"All serene, old top? Don't bite a fellow's head off," said the Bounder, with a laugh. "Look here, Wharton, why don't you go to Quelch and tell him, and let him look for the dashed lines and find them? That will clear the matter up all right, and get you off Saturday's detention."

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"I'm not going! He must have found the lines already. He couldn't overlook them all this time, working at the very table I put them on."

"It seems queer. All the same, he'd have sent for you if he'd found the lines, to tell you the detention was off."

"Would he?" said Wharton bitterly.

"Dash it all, of course he would! Quelch's a giddy Tartar, but he's not an ogre."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not going to say a word," he said icily. "If he chooses to be down on me for nothing, he's got the power, and he can do as he jolly well chooses. I shall get my own back somehow."

The Bounder whistled, and walked away. He had given good advice, but if it was not acted upon it was no concern of his.

At half-past nine, when Wingate of the Sixth shepherded the Remove off to their dormitory, Mr. Quelch came out of his study, and stopped by the staircase to speak to the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton!"

"Here, sir!" said Harry. He supposed that it was coming at last—the Form-master's admission that he had made a mistake, and a formal rescinding of his sentence.

But it was not that that came. Mr. Quelch was still in blissful ignorance of the fact that the impot had been handed in at all.

His face was severe and uncompromising.

"You have two hundred lines of Virgil to write out, Wharton. I shall expect them to-morrow by six o'clock."

Wharton started.

It was absolutely impossible, if the impot was on Mr. Quelch's table, that it should have been still overlooked. And Wharton had left it on Mr. Quelch's table.

His face hardened.

"Do you mean that, sir?" he asked.

"What—what? What did you say, Wharton?"

"I asked you whether you meant that, sir," said Harry quietly.

"You should know me well enough by this time, Wharton, to know that I mean what I say!" rasped Mr. Quelch. "Are you attempting to be impertinent?"

"Not at all, sir. I only wanted to know," said Wharton evenly.

Mr. Quelch looked at him with eyes that seemed more like gimlets than ever. The Remove halted on the staircase, stood like statues, almost breathless. Wharton's eyes met his Form-master's fearlessly—it was like a duel of glances and wills. Wingate's glance dwelt curiously on Wharton for a moment, and then turned away.

"I fail to understand you, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, in his grimmest tone. "I gave you an imposition in the Form-room to-day, and you did not bring it to me as directed. It is doubled, and you will write out two hundred lines instead of one hundred. I can only

construe your present attitude into deliberate insolence."

Wharton drew a deep breath.

Mr. Quelch, then, had still overlooked the impot on his study table, impossible as it seemed. Or was it possible—so suspicious had bitterness made the angry junior—was it possible that he had only affected to overlook the lines, in order to persist in an unjust punishment rather than admit that he had made a mistake?

"I warn you, Wharton, to take care!" rumbled Mr. Quelch. "I warn you very seriously to take care!"

Wharton's lip curled.

He could have told the Form-master that the lines were there, duly handed in before the appointed time. But his lips were sealed by pride and deep resentment. If Mr. Quelch was still in a mistake, he could be left to find it out for himself; if he was persisting in injustice, let him persist in it! That was Wharton's sullen thought.

Mr. Quelch gave the dark-looking junior a last long look, and then turned away. The Remove marched on to their dormitory.

Wingate of the Sixth, when he came to turn the lights out, stopped by Wharton's bed.

"You seem to be in your Form-master's black books lately, Wharton," he said, kindly enough.

"It seems so," said Harry.

"Get your lines done in good time to-morrow, kid—mind you're not late with them," said the prefect good-naturedly.

Wharton breathed quickly.

"I'm not doing the lines," he answered.

"What?" ejaculated Wingate.

"I'm not going to do the lines."

"Don't be a young idiot!" said the captain of Greyfriars gruffly; and he turned out the light and left the dormitory.

He left the Remove in a buzz of excitement. But from Harry Wharton's bed came no word.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Rebel!

THERE was excitement in the Greyfriars Remove the following day.

Every fellow shared in it to some extent; even the placid Lord Maulverer sat up and took notice, so to speak.

Skinner & Co. almost openly rejoiced. Harry Wharton's friends were troubled.

His former friends—friends no longer—were observed to have very serious faces. Bob Cherry wore a worried look; Frank Nugent's face was clouded. Johnny Bull was more silent than usual. Hurree Janset Ram Singh showed distress in all his dusky features.

The Bounder, careless and cynical as he usually was, took the trouble to give Wharton a hint to be careful. In the Bounder's opinion, Wharton was riding for a fall, and the fall was bound to be a "cropper." The Bounder, always less more or less at heart, had a native sympathy for any fellow bent on kicking over the traces, and perhaps that was why he interested himself in Wharton.

"Backing up against the giddy beak is all very well, old scout," said the Bounder sagely. "It's entertainin', and I like it as a game. But there's a limit—you don't want to get the cropper."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"If you don't do the lines, old man, it's a bit serious—serious enough to go before the Head," urged the Bounder. "Quelch can't possibly back down—his giddy prestige is at stake."

"That's not my bizney."
 "When you're going for a chap, old scout, always leave him a line of retreat open," said the Bounder wisely. "Even a rat will fight in a corner. Never crowd a man so that he can't get away."

Wharton laughed.
 "You see, right or wrong, Quelch can't give in," said Vernon-Smith. "Take my tip, and do the lines, and go for Quelch on some other trail."

"I'm not going to do the lines."
 "What's an impot, after all?" said Smithy. "Dash it all, I'll help you if you like! I can make my fist near enough to yours."

"It isn't that. It's the injustice!"
 "The jolly old universe is simply stacked with injustice," said the Bounder, in his cynical way. "We only see our own little twopenny injustices, and howl about them. I heard a Labour orator once talking about the injustice of asking a man to work more than eight hours a day—right enough, no; I shouldn't like it myself. But I wondered whether that Johnny's wife at home got through in eight hours. No, ten or twelve, I imagine—and I don't worry that Johnny at all."

"Look at the giddy Irish patriots, howling about the injustice of their country being governed by us against its will—right as rain, I dare say. And yet they're free they want to collar Caesar and govern it against its will! Well, man, we're told in the Good Book to take the beam out of our own eye while we worry about the mote in the other fellow's. That's a tip."

Wharton did not answer.
 "So never mind the giddy injustice—see it smiling," said the Bounder. "You mayn't be the perfect model of advice yourself, you know."

"Thanks!"
 "Not at all," said the Bounder importantly. "Toss the line, old scout, see it can't be helped, and get your own back when your chance comes along. That's my way."

"It's not mine!"
 The Bounder nodded and walked away. He had done his best, and if Wharton chose to ride for a fall, it was his own look-out if he came a cropper.

Mr. Quelch was quite aware of suppressed excitement in his Form that day, though he was not aware of the cause.

That Harry Wharton had declared his intention of refusing to do the lines imposed upon him, and that he had thereby entered into a contest with authority, was not likely to occur to the Remove master.

Skinner & Co. averred in the Rag that Wharton would eat his words when it came to the test. But they did not really believe so; and other fellows were quite certain that the captain of the Remove would make his words good.

What would come of it was impossible to say. Wharton was not a fellow to back down, and Mr. Quelch, undoubtedly, was not the man to surrender an inch to a notorious schoolboy. Trouble, and more trouble; punishment, and more punishment; rebellion and judgment, and the shadow of a terrible fall in the estimate; expulsion from the school, in the long run, if the rebel's stubborn will would not bend. It was a matter for marvellous discussion in the Remove.

After classes, Harry Wharton went into the dusky quad, with many eyes turned up for tea in Hall was usual, merely to keep an eye on Wharton—the fellow who was "up against" his Form master, and who was undoubtedly was "for it" in con-



"You have not brought your lines to my study, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch icily. "No, sir!" was the reply. "Boy, what does this mean?" Wharton drew a deep breath. "It means that I'm not going to do the imposition, sir, because it is unjust." Mr. Quelch stood and gazed at the junior before him, bereft of speech. (See Chapter 12.)

sequence. Wharton's look was impassive; nothing of his thoughts could be read in his face.

Towards six o'clock the excitement in the Remove was positively oppressive.

Just before six Mr. Quelch was seen to go into his study; Skinner had been watching, and he brought the news up to the Remove passage.

Bolover major strolled along to Study No. 1 and looked in.

Harry Wharton was there, reading. "Done your lines?" asked Bolover major.

Wharton looked up. "No!"

"It's just on six."

"I know that."

"Then you mean business—what?"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders, and Bolover major backed into the crowded passage, with the exciting news that Wharton undoubtedly "meant business."

Billy Bunter rolled unasily into Study No. 1. He stood and blinked at the captain of the Remove for a minute or two.

Bunter was feeling uneasy.

To his obtuse mind, it had seemed quite a good idea to get Wharton "licked" by his Form-master. A fellow who never stood Bunter tea in the study deserved a licking, if any fellow ever did! But now that the matter had

become so serious, Bunter was troubled with qualms. His fat conscience did not trouble him very much, as a rule; indeed, the Remove fellows would have been surprised to learn that Bunter had a conscience at all. But he had, in his own fat way.

"I say, Wharton," mumbled the Owl of the Remove.

"Don't bother!"

"I—I say, hadn't you better do your lines, old chap. I—I—I'll help you, if you like," gasped Bunter.

Wharton gave him a rather curious look. But he shook his head, and resumed his reading.

Bob Cherry passed the study, and glanced in at the open door, and paused a second. But he passed on.

Six o'clock sounded from the clock-tower.

A few minutes later Snoop squeaked from the staircase:

"He's coming!"

"Now for the giddy fireworks!" murmured Skinner.

In breathless excitement, the Removes watched Mr. Quelch mount the stairs and rustle towards Wharton's study. The Remove master's face was set and grim. He did not seem to observe the eager crowd of juniors. He passed into Study No. 1, and behind him the mob of Removes closed in like

the waves of the sea, eager to see and hear.

"Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove rose to his feet.

"You have not brought your two hundred lines to my study, Wharton."

"No, sir."

"Have you written them, Wharton?"

"No, sir!"

"Boy! What does this mean?"

Wharton drew a deep, steady breath.

"It means that I am not going to do the imposition, sir, because it is unjust."

There was a faint murmur in the passage. The Removites had expected to know Wharton as they did, but now that they heard it, it thunderstruck them. Mr. Quelch stood and gazed at the junior before him, bereft of speech. It was almost a full minute before he found his voice.

"Wharton! Are you in your right senses?"

"I hope so, sir."

"You directly refuse to obey my command!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You accuse me—your Form-master—of injustice!"

"Yes, sir."

A pin might have been heard to fall in the Remove passage now. Again Mr. Quelch seemed bereft of speech. For many a long year Mr. Quelch had been a Form-master, but this was a new experience for him.

"Wharton!" he said at last. He was almost gasping. "Wharton! Do you imagine for one moment that I shall tolerate this?"

Wharton did not reply.

"I shall report this to the headmaster, Wharton. Any punishment I can administer is not adequate. I shall request Dr. Locke to administer a public flogging, in the presence of all Greyfriars."

"You will do as you think best, sir."

"Enough!"

The Remove master turned and left the study. Immediately he was gone, the doorway was crammed with eager, excited faces.

Harry Wharton sat down and picked up his book. Under the amazed eyes of the Removites, he resumed his reading, unconscious, to all seeming, of the wild excitement that reigned in the Remove.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bob Cherry Takes a Hand!

BOB CHERRY tapped at Mr. Quelch's door.

"Come in!"

Mr. Quelch was pacing his study, very much disturbed. He was thinking over this amazing occurrence, so new in his long experience. That the matter should be reported to the Head, that the insolent junior should be flogged, he was determined upon. But he was perplexed and troubled, and when the knock came at his door, he turned, fully expecting to see Wharton, contrite.

But it was Bob Cherry who came in. Mr. Quelch frowned at him.

"What is it? What do you want, Cherry?"

"I—I'd like to speak to you, sir, if—if I may!" blurted out Bob, his face growing very red. "It—it's about Wharton, sir—"

"You can have nothing to say to me on that subject. Has Wharton asked you to come here?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, no, sir—he doesn't know. We're not friends now," said Bob.

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"Then what—?"

"It's about those lines, sir," said Bob, scared but determined. "I—I thought you ought to know, sir. Wharton brought his lines here yesterday when you were out, and left them here, sir, on—"

"He did nothing of the kind, Cherry."

"But—but he did, sir, all the Remove fellows know he did," said Bob. "That's why he's backing up now. I—I know it's cheeky, sir. I can't understand Wharton acting like this, really, but that's why, sir. He thinks it's unjust, because he really did his lines yesterday, and brought them here before sir."

"If Wharton had brought his lines here, Cherry, I should have found them here."

"Well, they must be here, sir," said Bob. "I'm not friendly with Wharton now, but I know jolly well he'd cut his hand off before he'd tell lies. He told the fellows he had done his lines and brought them here, and so he did, sir, if he says so."

Mr. Quelch's eyes seemed almost to bore into Bob; and the hapless Robert Cherry waited, his eyes on the floor, for the thunderstorm to burst on his devoted head.

But it did not burst.

It was some moments before Mr. Quelch spoke, and when he did his voice was unexpectedly calm.

"I place the same faith in Wharton's sense of honour as you do, Cherry. I am assured that he would not lie. But if the imposition was here, what has become of it?"

"I—I don't know, sir," Bob glanced helplessly round the study. "It—it may have got lost, or something—"

"It could not get lost, Cherry."

"I know Wharton did the lines, sir, as he says so!" said Bob. He did not undertake to explain the mystery of the missing impost, but he stuck loyally to his point.

"It is possible—barely possible—that something may have happened to the imposition: a careless maid may have entered the study, or—or some boy may have played a trick," said Mr. Quelch, perhaps with some recollection of a former experience. "I am prepared to take Wharton's word on the point. But why has he not told me that he did the lines? He is very well aware that I was under the impression that he had not done them."

Bob did not answer that. It was useless to explain to the Remove master that it was wrong-headed obstinacy that was at the bottom of the matter.

There was a pause.

"Send Wharton here!" said the Remove master, at last.

"Yes, sir!" said Bob.

And he left the study, glad to get away.

Mr. Quelch paced to and fro, with a corrugated brow. He ceased his walk and faced the door as Harry Wharton appeared there.

"Come in, Wharton."

Harry came in.

"It appears," said Mr. Quelch quietly, "that there is some mistake in this matter, Wharton. I hear from Cherry, of your Form, that you stated that you had written your lines yesterday, and placed them in my study before six o'clock. Is that the case?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have not seen the lines, and I cannot account for their disappearance," said Mr. Quelch. "In spite of that, Wharton, I am prepared to accept your word."

"Thank you, sir."

"Had I known this, I should not have

doubled the imposition," said Mr. Quelch. "You know that, Wharton."

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"Why did you not tell me?"

Wharton did not answer.

"Did you doubt that I should take your word, Wharton, although the lines could not be produced?"

"No, sir."

"You knew that I was in ignorance of the facts. You allowed me to inflict an undeserved punishment, and did not utter a word to set me right. Why do you not speak?"

No answer.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips. "I can only conclude, Wharton, that you remained silent deliberately to leave me in error, in order to hug to yourself a sense of injustice, in order to have a pretext for sulkiness and disobedience."

Wharton started.

"In the circumstances, I shall overlook your disobedience and insolence," said Mr. Quelch. "I shall make allowances. The second imposition was, find, undeserved. I shall, therefore, rescind you for not having written it, and I rescind it, here and now. That matter is closed."

"Very well, sir."

"Your detention for Saturday remains in force. That is a just punishment for having practically deceived me by—"

"I never deceived you, sir."

"You allowed me to deceive myself, which comes to the same thing. You have acted very badly, Wharton. But for Cherry's intervention you would certainly have been flogged—unjustly, as it now appears. You would have placed me in an intolerable position, should be glad to hear some expression of contrition from you, Wharton."

No word came from the captain of the Remove. Mr. Quelch's firm jaw shut like a vice.

"Very well! You are detained for Saturday afternoon, Wharton. I trust that, upon reflection, you will make some attempt to amend your conduct, that you will realise more what is due to your Form-master, and to your own position in the Form. You may go."

Wharton went.

His face was hard and dark as he returned to the Remove passage. The passage was thronged with excited Removites.

"When's the flogging coming off?" called out Skinner.

Wharton's lip curled.

"Sorry to disappoint you, it's not coming off at all," he said.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Squill.

Wharton glanced round, and stepped towards Bob Cherry, who was in the crowd with his friends.

"You hurried into this affair, Cherry," said the captain of the Remove. "I never asked you to, that I know of."

"No need to ask," answered Bob.

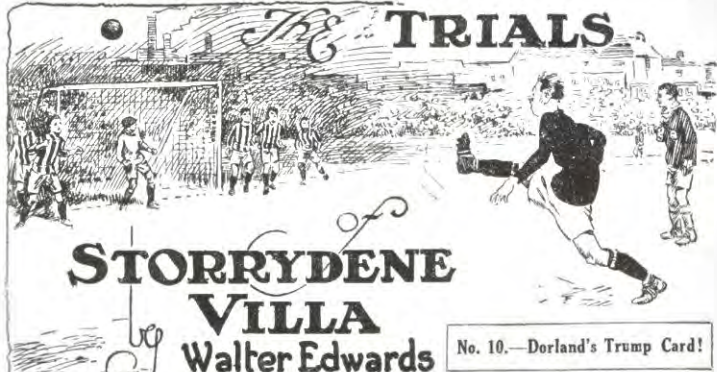
"And no need for anyone to butt in. I can take care of myself, and I prefer other fellows to mind their own business."

With that, Harry Wharton went into his study and shut the door. Bob Cherry stood quite still for a moment, his face crimson. Then he made a step towards Study No. 1, and there was a thrill of eager expectation in the Remove. But Bob took only one step towards Wharton's door. Then, quietly, he turned and walked away to his own study.

THE END.

(Into what further trouble does the arrogant and unreasonable spirit of Harry Wharton lead him? Next week's yarn, "The Rebel of the Remove!" will tell you. Don't miss it!)

THE MYSTERY MAN! A man goes into the witness-box at Storrydene Police Court, gives certain evidence, and gives Sir Aubrey Allen the shock of his life at the same time. Who is that man?



The Return of Hoppy Hawkins!

A SPRIGHTLY young man with birdlike features, a big Homburg hat, and a wooden leg hopped across the broad cinder-track, and made for a vacant goal, and forty thousand Storrydene "fans" raised their deutorian voices and gave the little gaffe a thunderous reception.

There were no half measures about the Villa supporters, and the noise they made threatened to lift the corrugated roof off the grand-stand.

"Op along, 'Oppy!"

Good old Hoppy!"

Hoppy's the boy for us!"

"Cheerin', 'Awkins!"

Hoppy Hawkins had been out of the game for a week or so, having fallen victim to a nasty chill, and it was only the threat of physical violence that had kept the little fellow between the sheets. But now he was back again, as sprightly as ever, his bright eyes shining and his lips twisted into his wistful, whimsical smile.

Reaching the goal, he removed his big Homburg hat with a flourish, and bowed gravely to the yelling fans.

"I thank you, my masters!" he cried, in a deep voice booming round the ground. "I thank you from the bottom of my heart! I blush. I am overcome with salt tears, my masters."

Producing an enormous handkerchief, he dabbed his eyes, and his tears were very real, for the wonderful reception had touched him.

"Thank you, my masters!"

Peter Voyce, the youthful centre-forward, put in a roaring, snorting shout that looked unstoppable, but Hoppy Hawkins was on the spot in a bound, and the ball was pushed round the post.

Good old 'Oppy!"

That's the stuff, son!"

Storrydene Villa had put a full team on the field against Gatestown United, and most of the players were singled out in a cheery word, Hefty Hebble, the skipper, coming in for a good deal of stuff.

"How's the Glaxo baby to-day?" roared a score of anxious voices. And Hefty grinned his own brand of grin and shook a leg-o'-mutton fist at his playful tormentors.

Gatestown United did not keep the crowd waiting, and they also received a rousing welcome, especially from their own supporters, who numbered fully a thousand.

A petulant blast of the whistle summoned Hebble and Gabriel to the centre, and the luck of the toss went to the visiting skipper. There could be no two opinions about the choice of ends, for a stiff breeze was blowing straight down the ground.

Less than a minute found the players in position. The teams were:

Storrydene Villa (black jerseys, white knickers).

Goal: Hawkins; backs: Grace, Hebble; half-backs: Denning, Thirlby, Craye; forwards: Sceptre, Coyne, Voyce, Noyle, Battle.

Gatestown United (claret and blue jerseys, white knickers).

Goal: Gabriel; backs: Witherington, Noyes; half-backs: Jackson, Tibble, Mitre; forwards: Burstowe, Dippy, Glaum, Clarke, Evans.

The din died down as the referee gave a final glance round the ground and



DETECTIVE-INSPECTOR DORLAND.

placed the whistle to his lips, and only the shrill cries of "Chocklits! Programme!" broke the sudden hush.

Phoop!

Receiving a pass from Peter Voyce, Noyle thrust his way past Clarke, and pushed the ball out to Battle, and the diminutive winger lost no time in tricking Mitre and setting off down the touchline.

It was a dramatic start, and the local fans found their voices at once.

"Off you go!"

"Right through, son!"

All went well with Battle until he came up against Noyes, who weighed something like eighteen stone, and the grinning giant made short work of the winger. Thrusting out a mighty leg, he calmly took possession of the ball, and Battle, annoyed at the liberty, swung round and hurled the whole of his eight stone two at the burly fellow, only to rebound like a tennis-ball from a brick wall.

Still grinning, Noyes lifted the leather out to Burstowe, on the opposite wing, and in less than a minute the home goal was being bombarded in a determined manner that made the home team's supporters hold their breath in suspense.

The attack was truly fierce, Dippy, Glaum, and Clarke slamming in shots from almost impossible angles, yet Hoppy Hawkins, with his Homburg tilted at a rakish angle, seemed to have not the slightest difficulty in being in three or four places at the same time. The manner in which he darted from one side of the goal to the other was a revelation in the art of "keeping," and he was still wearing his wistful, whimsical smile when Hebble, with a terrific overhead kick, succeeded in easing the pressure.

And the Storrydene fans breathed again.

Trapping the ball, Coyne made half a dozen yards, and then passed to Peter Voyce, and Peter, in characteristic fashion, swung round on his heel and made a beeline for the Gatestown goal.

There was something about that break-away that told the Storrydene folk that the brown-haired youngster was going

to put his side ahead, for about the only thing that could stop him when once he got going was a battery of light artillery. But Witherington and Noyes knew nothing of this, of course, and they were taking things very casually as Peter bore down upon them, his brown eyes smiling, his hair flowing in the wind.

It was Noyes who advanced, leaving his partner in reserve, and he received a severe shock to the system when the flying youngster hooked the ball clean over his head with a tricky flick of the toe. It was unbelievable, seemingly impossible, yet it happened right enough. The wild roaring of the crowd proved it.

Darting round the big fellow, Peter fastened on to the leather just as Witherington was about to balloon it over the stand, and the mighty kick wasting itself upon unresisting air, Witherington fell flat upon his broad back and blinked up at the puffs of white cloud that were scudding across the leaden sky.

Gabriel, between the sticks, looked anything but joyous at that moment, and it is only fair to state that he had nothing about which to feel particularly jubilant.

Peter Voyce, his eyes upon the goal, looked uncommonly like a bearer of bad news.

The whole universe seemed to stand still as the youngster kicked in his stride; and it was a sixth sense that prompted the custodian to leap across the goal-mouth. But it was too late.

The ball was already in the net.

"Goal!"

"Go-a-a-i!"

"Well done, young 'un!"

"Set 'em alight, Villa!"

Even the fans from Galesdown cheered Peter Voyce as he turned and made his way up the field, whilst Hoppy hopped out of his goal and shook the flushed youngster by the hand.

"Wonderful, young sir!" boomed the whimsical little fellow, his bright eyes twinkling. "Even I could not have saved that shot. I have spoken."

This was praise indeed!

The players were still grinning as they lined up once more, and the referee was just about to place the whistle to his lips when a shout came from the direction of the clubhouse.

"Half a mo'!" cried "Spudge" Dixon, the lean-limbed trainer, and all eyes were upon him as he sped across the turf.

"There's an important note for Voyce, sir," said Spudge, addressing the frowning referee, who was worrying about the light.

"Give it to him!" said the official. "But hurry!"

It was a very puzzled youngster who took the envelope from Dixon, and no sooner did he extract the note and glance at the message than his handsome face paled, and a tragic light dawned in his brown eyes.

He turned to the referee.

"My father has had a stroke," he said, his voice low and husky. "I must go to him! It's urgent!"

The official looked grave.

"Very well, my boy," he said, all trace of annoyance vanishing. "I hope things aren't so bad as you think. I am very sorry for you!"

The vast crowd realised that their idol had received bad news, and cries of sympathy and good cheer came from all parts of the ground as the youngster walked across the field, his brown eyes

gazing into space, his ears deaf to everything.

His father was dying.

"Tell Me His Name!"

SIR AUBREY ALLEN, chairman of Storydene Villa, was standing on the touchline as Peter Voyce walked blindly from the field, and he placed a comforting arm round the youngster's sturdy shoulders, and led him along the draughty corridor into the dressing-room.

"I fear you have had bad news, my boy," said the baronet, his fleshy features twisted into a mask of sympathy, his throaty voice tearful.

Peter scarcely heard the words, but he understood their meaning.

"It's—it's my father; he has had a stroke. He may not live for more than a few hours. He may be dead—"

Peter faltered, his fine eyes moist, his lower lip quivering, for he was still a boy.

"Poor boy—poor boy!" said Sir Aubrey. "But you mustn't look upon the dark side, you know! Troubles are seldom so black as they seem. I knew your father, very slightly, a few years ago, and he struck me as being a robust type of man. So don't give up hope, my dear boy. Keep a stiff upper lip! He patted the youngster's shoulder. "My car is outside, so I'll tell Joyce to drive you home. Don't wait to change. Slip your overcoat over your football things. That's right. Come along!"

Peter was like a person in a trance as he allowed the baronet to help him into the fifteen hundred pound car.

"Remember me to your father, my boy," said Ailen, closing the door. "And if there is anything I can do—"

His throaty voice trailed away, but his smile left no doubt as to his meaning.

Peter's brain was still numbed when the handsome car purred up to the modest little house in Park Villas; but he told himself that Sir Aubrey wasn't such a bad fellow, after all.

Nodding duly to Joyce, Peter passed along the garden path, and opened the door with his key. He found his mother waiting for him in the little hall. A handsome woman of forty, she seemed to have aged incredibly during the last hour or so since breakfast; yet she smiled bravely as she looked up into her

son's anxious face. There were little lines about her brown eyes that Peter had not seen there before, and her cheeks were drawn and pale.

"What is it, mother?" asked the youngster, placing a strong arm round her waist. "Is it very bad? What has happened? Tell me everything! Is the guy no—"

"I will tell you the truth, my son," said Mrs. Voyce. "There is little hope for your father. As you know, he has been very worried of late, so worried that he has not had a proper night's sleep for months, and now Nature has rebelled. He needs a complete change and a rest, and Dr. Verney says there is no hope for him unless he can go away at once—immediately."

"He is a physical and mental wreck and nothing but six months under a specialist in the South of France will pull him through." A bitter little smile flitted across the pale features. "Dr. Verney says it might be done on five hundred pounds." She spoke very slowly. "Five hundred pounds!"

Peter's finely-chiselled features were set and hard as he looked down into his mother's swimming eyes.

"Five hundred pounds!" he repeated. "Five hundred pounds will save the life of the whitest man who ever breathed—your husband; mother; my father! I'll—I'll get that money, mother! I swear I will!" His face softened in expression, and he smiled. "And now I'll go upstairs and see the guy!"

"That's right," said Mrs. Voyce; "but you mustn't excite him. He has recovered from the stroke, but the doctors say that another might—might be dangerous. He has been asking for you all the morning."

Kissing his mother, the youngster ran lightly up the stairs, and a weak voice came to his ears.

"Is that you, Peter?" asked his father. "Come inside, my boy! Come in! I want to have a talk with you!"

Chalmers Voyce was a mere shell of the magnificent man who taught Peter to ride and shoot, for the clean-cut features were waxen and drawn, and the sensitive hands that rested lightly on the cheap coverlet were almost transparent. The dark shadows under the intelligent eyes spoke of sleepless nights, and much physical pain.

But the invalid smiled bravely, as his broad-shouldered son swung into the room.

"Hallo, guv'nor!" cried Peter, seating himself beside the bed. "How are you feeling?"

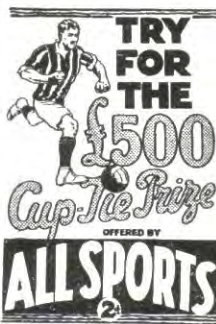
"Splendid, now!" smiled Chalmers Voyce, his eyes resting upon his visitor's tanned face. "You see, I was afraid you might be too late!"

"Rot, guv'nor!" scoffed Peter. "Old Verney's been trying to put the wind up you! I'll punch his fat head when I see him! All you need is a change and a rest, and I'm going to see that you get it. You're a bit used up for the time being; that's the long and short of it!"

"Perhaps so," said the man. "But there is something I want to tell you, in case— You understand?"

No Voyce had ever faked facing a fact or a fighter, so Peter nodded.

"Don't interrupt me," continued Chalmers Voyce. "Just let me explain matters in my own way." He paused for a moment, and then ran on: "There are many things that you don't understand—things which must have puzzled you during the last year or so, yet you have questioned neither me nor your mother. For that restraint, I thank you, my boy. It was the act of a sportsman. You have doubtless wondered why I took you away from Rundle's when



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Scarcely had the door closed than a masked figure stepped out from a curtained alcove behind the baronet's chair. A weighted stick descended on Sir Aubrey's head with savage force, and without a cry he dropped to the floor in a limp heap.

(See page 24.)

"I were on the point of going up to Mr. Varsity; you have doubtless wondered why we moved from the Hall, and now to live in this tiny cottage of a cottage; you have doubtless wondered why we don't live in the old style. Yes, you have wondered, my boy, but you have asked no questions. But you must know we are poor—miserably poor—and we probably wonder why."

"I allowed you to become a professional footballer, but it went against the grain as he read something in his son's eyes—"not that I've anything to say against professional footballers, my boy."

But the whole thing seemed unreal. You don't follow me, but you can understand in a moment, perhaps."

"We had to move out of the Hall—a house that had been in our family for over a hundred years—on account of an unfortunate speculation on my part. I am wholly to blame. I met a man, somewhat well-known in the world of business, and he interested me in a scheme that was to make a fortune for me and the opportunity seemed too good to miss. The War, as you know, was very hard, and I jumped at the chance of refilling our depleted coffers."

Chalmers Voyce paused, and the smile faded from his brown eyes.

"I put everything I possessed into the venture—my capital, my hopes, and my faith, and the man I trusted implicitly let me down! He was a scoundrel, a cheat, a robber, yet he was on the right side of the law! What was I legal; I had no case to take against him. I had dabbled in a speculation before, and that scoundrel—who posed as my friend—meant that I should lose my fortune, almost every penny I had in the world, found its way into his pockets! And he is a man who is well

known throughout the country, who receives honours, who is looked upon as a great philanthropist and a great sportsman! Yet he is a thief—callous, cold-blooded—"

The man's frail body was trembling as his husky voice trailed away.

"Don't upset yourself, guv'nor!" said Peter, placing his arm round the thin shoulders. The youngster's fine face was pale and as hard as granite. "Don't tell me any more; I've heard enough!"

He soothed his father, and waited until the trembling fit had passed, and then he spoke again:

"There's just one thing, perhaps," he said. "Who was it? Tell me his name!"

"The man was Sir Aubrey Ailen," put in Chalmers Voyce, and he dropped back upon the pillow—exhausted.

The Interview!

IT was Saturday evening, and Sir Aubrey Ailen had finished a capital dinner, and was enjoying a big cigar. The portly baronet looked well-fed and contented, in a porcine kind of way, and an oily grin creased his bloated features as something appealed to his sense of humour.

"I hope the young pup gave him my love!" he chuckled, swallowing a glass of rare old brandy at a gulp. "I would have given a tanner to have been there!"

A sedate knock came at the door, and Ailen jammed his monocle into position and glared across the room.

"Come in, you old imbecile!" he shouted.

And Meadows, a butler of the old school, opened the door noiselessly, and entered the room, grave, dignified, and bald, the fine old man bowed to his master.

"What is it?" snapped Ailen. "I

don't pay you to stand about like a tongue-tied owl!"

The butler coughed—discreetly—behind his hand.

"There is a young gentleman to see you, sir!" announced Meadows. "Mr. Peter Voyce!"

The name made Ailen start slightly, but his thick lips stretched in an ugly grin.

"You've made a mistake, haven't you?" asked the baronet. "Voyce is a professional footballer—not a gentleman! But show him up, and keep your eye on the silver!"

Ailen was still grinning when Peter was ushered into the dining-room, and one glance at the youngster's set features should have warned the baronet to tread warily.

"An unexpected pleasure, my dear boy!" cried Sir Aubrey. "Pray be seated!"

"I'll stand up!" said Peter, fixing his steady eyes upon the bloated features of his host.

Ailen shrugged.

"Can I offer you anything?" he asked. "A little wine, perhaps? A cigar? I suppose you don't run to luxuries down at—er—Park Villas?"

"No, we don't," returned the youngster. "We run to honesty and straight dealing!"

"How interesting!" murmured Sir Aubrey. "But honesty and straight dealing never got a man very far! How is your respected father, by the way?"

"My respected father," said Peter, his lean jaw tightening, "is very dangerously ill—and the doctor says that his days are numbered unless he can get away to the South of France for six months. He is exhausted, mentally and

physically, and his collapse has been brought about by an unfortunate speculation; he fell into the hands of an unscrupulous rogue, who robbed him of every penny he had in the world!"

"How very unfortunate!" murmured Sir Aubrey. "Go on, my dear boy; I am interested!"

"I thought you might be!" grunted the youngster. "Five hundred pounds will save my father's life, and I want that five hundred pounds to-night—now, at this moment!"

Peter took a step towards the table as he uttered the words; his fine face was almost ghastly in its pallor.

"And what has this got to do with me?" asked the baronet, mildly amused by the outburst.

"Everything!" breathed Peter. "You pretended to be my father's friend, and robbed him, and now I demand five hundred—"

"Demand?"

Sir Aubrey raised his eyebrows.

"No; I'll take that back," said Peter. "I'll ask you to lend me five hundred pounds—the price of a life!"

"On what security?" asked Ailen. "I suppose you'll give me your word of honour—or something equally worthless?"

A wave of angry blood overspread the youngster's face, but he managed to keep his rising passion in check. He would have given much to have sent his fist crashing into those greasy features; but he was willing to put up with any insults if only he could raise enough money to get his father into the life-giving warmth of the South.

"You wouldn't miss five hundred," he said. "You're practically a millionaire."

"I'm certainly not hard up for a pound or so," confessed Sir Aubrey, taking a bulging wallet from his pocket. "Look here!" He opened the wallet and tipped a fat wad of banknotes on to the tablecloth. "Roughly, there's about a

thousand pounds there! No, I'm not hard up, as you say!"

"Then you'll lend me—" began the youngster eagerly, taking another step across the carpet, his eyes upon the notes.

"Lend you! Lend you!" snarled the baronet, with a sudden change of tone. "I wouldn't lend you a rouble if you were starving in the gutter! I hate your father and I hate you, you puppy, for your father once thrashed me! D'you hear that? He laid his dirty paws on me! That was many years ago, but I swore that I'd get even with him! And I've kept my word! I always do keep my word! And now clear out, before I have you kicked out!" His white-hot rage died down with startling suddenness, leaving him smug and smiling. "I'll promise you one thing, though," he said. "I'll send a handsome wreath!"

This was the last straw, and Peter was about to leap at Ailen when the door opened noiselessly and Meadows gave a discreet cough.

"You want me, sir?" he asked, as impassive as a Sphinx.

"Yes," answered Ailen, "I did ring for you."

He saw a look of surprise cross Peter's face, and his grin broadened. "There's a bell-push under the table, my dear boy," he explained. "I can't afford to take chances with the type of desperate person who occasionally inflicts his company upon me!" He turned to Meadows, "I want you to take a good look at my young friend," he said, "and I also want you to observe that I have a large wad of notes before me. There is about a thousand pounds there. Should anything happen either to me or the money it will not be unreasonable on your part if you suspect Mr. Peter Voyce of robbery with violence. Understand!"

The butler bowed.

"Perfectly, sir," he answered; and he padded silently from the room and closed the door.

Peter's rage had vanished, and he was

smiling as he looked into the baronet's close-set eyes.

"That chatty young fellow saved me from something neat and grand in the way of a hiding, my lad," he observed. "And now I think I'll toddle along."

"So soon?" asked the baronet.

"Yes," nodded the youngster. "I want to get a breath of fresh air. You pollute the atmosphere! Good-night!"

"Good-night, my dear boy!" grimaced the baronet. "I trust your next wish for money will fall on more charitable ears than my own!"

The insult hit home, and Peter's hands were clenched as he glared across at the gross figure in the chair.

"I won't soil my hands on you, you rotter!" breathed the youngster. And he turned abruptly and left the room. Scarcely had the door closed than a masked figure stepped out from a recessed alcove behind the baronet's chair and used a weighted stick with vicious force. Sir Aubrey, crumpling up, toppled sideways from his chair and dropped to the carpet in a heap.

A moment later the masked figure had vanished, and with the masked figure went the wad of notes.

The Arrest!

IT was on the stroke of ten o'clock when a police-inspector knocked at the door of a modest house in Pavé Villas and told Mrs. Voyce that he wished to have a word with her son, Peter.

Thoroughly startled, Peter's mother recognised the burly police-officer, but she could not see the face of the portly figure in the shadows.

"What is it, Mr. Gridley?" she asked, an anxious note in her voice. "Nothing serious!"

"I don't know—yet," said Gridley. "But I do!" snarled the throaty voice of Sir Aubrey Ailen. "Your son, a scoundrel of a son tried to murder me in cold blood—"

OUR FIGHTING FLEET!

A chatty article about the subject of this week's splendid Free Plate, H.M. SUBMARINE M 1.

By "JACKSTAFF"

(The well-known Naval writer).



THE queer looking warship pictured in this week's Free Plate is Submarine M 1, the first of three submarine monitors built for the British Navy. They are the only craft of their kind in the world, and there are not likely to be any more constructed, since the Washington Agreement for limiting naval armaments expressly forbids any country to build submarines armed with twelve-inch guns in future. That is the size of weapon M 1 carries. Until she was designed twelve-inch guns were confined to battleships. Potting them into submarines was so revolutionary a change that when M 1 first appeared she was regarded as an eighth wonder of the world. And she really is a remarkable product of the naval architects' brain, for she

can fire her big gun whilst she herself is fathoms deep under water.

If you were watching the boat in action, here is an outline of what you would see. Having sighted her enemy, M 1 would load her gun, and raise its barrel almost straight up in the air. Then she herself would sink slowly down into the sea until the only indication of her presence would be the muzzle of her gun sticking out of the water a few inches.

You would notice the muzzle moving about in a seemingly erratic fashion, this being due to the fact that the gunlayers twenty feet below the surface were bringing their weapon to bear upon the enemy, whom they could see through the periscopes quite as well as if they were on the surface instead of a long way below it.

As soon as they had got "on to the target" there would come a mighty flash, a deafening roar, and an 850 lbs. shell would go screaming towards the enemy. It would seem especially to the unlucky enemy, as though this deadly missile had been vomited up from the sea. Not until the shot had got home, and she wanted to make ready for another, would M 1 show herself. Then she would come heaving up from the depths, reload her gun, disappear again, and bring another shell into her foe, keeping up the process until the enemy ship had gone under.

Now, however far-fetched and fantastic this description may appear, it merely pictures a fact. Even a master of marvels such as Jules Verne never imagined any sea story of so extraordinary a character as would be one in which M 1 took part.

Her opponent could make no reply to the blows she received, since she would not know where they were coming from; for the muzzle of a twelve-inch gun, being only about the size of a dinner-plate, could not be seen at any distance, as it would be almost on a level with the surface of the water. It is because the twelve-inch-gunned submarine monitor is so deadly an engine of war that she has been banned by international agreement.

M 1 is 305 feet long, displaces 1,600 tons, and can travel at about eighteen miles an hour. When submerged she is much heavier, and her speed is reduced by a half. In addition to a twelve-inch gun, she has a three-inch gun and four torpedo-tubes, so that she would be a nasty antagonist for any ship to encounter, either at long range or close quarters. Incidentally, one of her "sisters" is the only submarine fitted with a revolving turret that can be seen by "listening in" to "broadcast" whilst they are lying at the bottom of the sea.

Next Week:
H.M.S. ROYAL OAK.

"Who are you?" demanded Sir Aubrey of the man in the witness-box. Scarcely had his words echoed through the police court than "Meadows" removed his wig and facial disguise, revealing the hard features of Inspector Dorland of the Storydene Police. (See page 27.)



"Kindly control yourself, Sir Aubrey," begged the inspector. "Leave this to me."

"Come inside!" said Mrs. Voyce. "Peter is in the sitting-room."

Meadows and Ailen found the brown-eyed youngster reading before the fire, and Peter jumped to his feet when his suspected visitors walked into the room.

"What's happened to you, my lad?" asked, smiling across at the baronet.

"Somebody parted your hair with a razor!"

"Sir Aubrey, whose head was bandaged, came a snarl.

"Buff won't save you, you young rascal!" he rasped, an ugly red light in his little eyes. "You've gone too far this time, and you can thank your lucky stars that you won't swing for this job!"

"I thought myself mighty clever—coming back through the window, but—"

"At the moment—one moment!" put in the soft-voiced inspector. "I want you to understand, once and for all, that I am in charge of this case, Sir Aubrey!"

"But I'm a magistrate—" blustered the baronet, swinging round upon the inspector.

"I can't help that. This is my job. I want you to be quiet, or I shall request you to leave the room."

"My smile had vanished, and he looked unusually pale as he turned his back to the hard-bitten face of Inspector Gridley.

"What is it, sir?" he asked, feeling uneasy.

"I want to ask you a few questions," said Gridley, "for Sir Aubrey has brought a very serious charge against you. He accuses you of robbery with violence."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," said the youngster.

"Don't understand, you young—"

It was the rasping voice of Sir Aubrey Ailen that echoed through the room.

"Hold your tongue, sir!" snapped Gridley, who was a short-tempered man at any time. "I shan't warn you again."

It was obvious that he meant what he said, so Sir Aubrey subsided.

"Now," said the inspector, fixing his steely eyes upon Peter, "tell me where you were at half-past eight this evening."

"I was with Ailen," came the ready answer.

"Did you call by appointment?" Peter shook his head.

"What was your business?" asked Gridley.

"Private," answered the youngster.

"You'll find that it will pay to tell me everything!" snapped Gridley. "But you can please yourself. You went to Sir Aubrey Ailen for money?"

Again Peter nodded.

"You demanded money?" pressed Gridley, his face very near Peter's.

It was an accusation rather than a question, and the youngster, for the first time perhaps, realised how awkward was his position.

"I certainly asked Sir Aubrey for a loan," he confessed, "and I may have threatened to punch his head when he insulted me. I admit that."

"I see," said Gridley. "And did you get the loan?"

"Not a bean," said Peter.

"And what time did you leave the house?"

"At about nine o'clock."

"Did Sir Aubrey produce any money in your presence?"

Again Peter nodded.

"About a thousand pounds in notes."

"That money has vanished," announced the inspector briskly, "and Sir Aubrey was found unconscious in the dining-room a few seconds after you left."

—at five past nine, to be accurate. You have admitted enough to assure me that I am justified in arresting you on suspicion of having robbed Sir Aubrey Ailen with violence. I advise you not to make a statement at the moment, as anything you say may be taken down and used in evidence against you. Put your coat on. We must get along at once."

Mrs. Voyce was dry-eyed as Peter took her into his strong young arms.

"There's a mistake, a big mistake, mother," whispered Peter. "You know that. Ailen's at the bottom of the whole thing, but I bet he'll come a cropper. Don't worry too much. I shall be all right. And don't tell the gov'nor."

The smiling youngster was almost incoherent as he whispered good cheer, but his heart was heavy when he left the house with Inspector Gridley, and set off for the police-station.

Robbery with violence!

Sensation In Court!

NEWS, especially sensational news, travels through a provincial town with the mysterious speed of hush telegraph, and Sunday morning found Storydene pulsing with the news of Peter's arrest. It quickly became known that the youngster was to be brought up before the magistrates on Monday morning, so the narrow streets in the vicinity of the courthouse were packed with excited footer fans from an early hour on the day in question. Only a handful of well-wishers managed to get into the public gallery, but Boffy Hebble and the rest of the Villa players were of the number.

It was on the stroke of ten-thirty when Peter, pale and smiling, was placed in the dock. The clerk read the charge over to him, and he pleaded "Not guilty!"

Then, having taken the oath, Inspector Gridley opened the case.

He mentioned how, on Saturday night, at twenty minutes past nine, a phone call had come through from Sir Aubrey

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Allen's house, and how he had hurriedly answered the call. Reaching Dene Lodge at half-past nine, he was taken straight to the dining-room, where he found Sir Aubrey in a state of collapse. Dr. Jennifer was dressing a wound—a deep scab wound made by a blunt instrument. There were no signs of a scuffle, and everything pointed to the fact that Sir Aubrey had been struck down in cold blood whilst he sat in his chair at the head of the table. Sir Aubrey would tell the court how a masked figure climbed through the window and committed a murderous assault.

The inspector continued: "Sir Aubrey accuses Voyce of the crime. He recognised his assailant as Voyce—"

"You say the intruder was masked?" put in one of the magistrates, a mild-looking gentleman with an apologetic air.

"Yes," answered the police-officer. He then touched upon Peter's visit to the baronet, and described what had taken place when Allen refused to hand over the sum of five hundred pounds; and the end of his dispassionate recital found matters looking very black against the tight-lipped youngster in the dock.

Sir Aubrey Allen followed Gridley into the witness-box. A little thing like perjury did not trouble him in the least, and he drew liberally upon his imagination. He declared that Peter had threatened him with violence if he did not part with the money.

"I could see murder in his eyes," continued the baronet, "and I have no doubt that a terrible assault would have been committed on the spot, had I not had the presence of mind to ring for Meadows, my faithful old butler. I told Meadows that Voyce had threatened to harm an injury if I did not submit to his blackmailing demand. Realising that I had been too clever for him, Voyce left the house, vowing vengeance, and you can imagine my horror when, a few minutes later, the window curtains were thrust aside, and a masked figure rushed at me. I had no time in which to raise the alarm or defend myself, but in those fleeting seconds I recognised Voyce. Darting across the

carpet, he snatched at the pile of bank-notes, and turned upon me like a madman, and I knew no more until I found myself being treated by Dr. Jennifer. The next morning my fall, had rushed into the room, and I am glad to say that she didn't lose her head. She phoned for the doctor and the police."

"And where was Meadows, Sir Aubrey?" asked Mr. Barrow, the mild-voiced magistrate.

"It seems that he was busy in another part of the house," answered the baronet. "I believe he was in the cellar."

The magistrate nodded, and turned to Peter Voyce.

"Is there anything you wish to say at this stage of the proceedings?" he asked.

"I should like to call Meadows as a witness, sir," said Peter. "I see that he is in court."

The magistrate conferred with his colleague and the clerk.

"Very well," he said, "call Meadows."

The butler, who was in the well of the court, rose with much dignity, and took Sir Aubrey's place in the witness-box.

"I want to put one or two questions to you, Mr. Meadows," said Peter, when the old fellow had been sworn in. "Tell me, did you actually hear me threaten Sir Aubrey with violence?"

"Of course he did!" cried the baronet, glaring up from the solicitor's table.

"You said you'd do me in!" "Sir Aubrey!" snapped Mr. Barrow, mild no longer. "You forget yourself! You will remain quiet, sir!"

"But my position!" blustered Allen; and he started violently when a burly constable tapped him none too gently on the shoulder.

"Shut up!" growled the constable; and the gruff admonition made the baronet swell up like a puff-adder.

Peter repeated his question.

"Did you hear me threaten this person with violence?" he asked, nodding towards the scowling Allen.

Meadows shook his head.

"No, sir," he declared emphatically, "I did not!"

"You lying old rascal!" fumed Allen, jumping up and shaking a pudgy fist.

"Sir Aubrey!" snapped Mr. Barrow, his eyes as hard as flint. "I shall not

warn you again, sir! There is such a thing as contempt of court, you know!"

The infuriated baronet sat down quickly, his smouldering gaze fixed upon the cool youngster in the dock.

Peter was smiling as he ran on.

"And now a word about this notorious masked robber who attacked Sir Aubrey," he said. "Did you see the fellow, Mr. Meadows?"

"Yes, sir, I did see him," answered the old butler, without hesitation, as a stir ran through the court. All eyes turned upon Sir Aubrey, who was making ineffectual attempts to jam his monocle into position. He made a thought to speak, caught the burly constable's baneful eye, and speedily changed his mind.

He remained silent and scowling.

"Perhaps," suggested Mr. Barrow, "it will be as well if you tell us all you know about this affair, Meadows. It is all very conflicting. Take your time; there is no hurry!"

The butler inclined his head.

"Thank you, your worship!" he said.

"It was about nine o'clock on Saturday night when I opened the door for Mr. Voyce, and watched him walk off down the drive, and, having closed the door, I made my way back to the dining-room to see if Sir Aubrey required anything. Hearing a strange sound within the room, I opened the door, and was just in time to see a blow struck by a masked man, and the next instant the man turned and made for the open window."

"Was the masked man built on the same slim lines as the accused?" asked Mr. Barrow, nodding towards Peter Voyce.

"No, sir," answered Meadows. "He was rather stout and ungainly, and had a thick neck. He was something like Sir Aubrey, your worship!"

The innocent remark sent a titter round the court, and even the magistrates had the utmost difficulty in retaining their owl-like solemnity.

"And what did you do when you saw the masked man jump out of the window?" asked Mr. Barrow.

"I ran down the stairs, opened the front door, and crept round the house, and I was just in time to see a shadowy figure darting through the coppice. Guided by sound, I followed, until I heard the fellow halt in the black shadow of the wall, and a little later I saw his head and shoulders silhouetted against the sky. I guessed that he was using a rope ladder. Waiting until he had dropped out of sight, I also used the ladder—which he left behind, by the way—and I followed him as he made a wide detour to Little Smith Street, in the Ditches. It did not occur to him that he might be followed, and he did not even glance round as he disappeared into a public-house called the Marquis of Gandy."

Meadows paused, his eyes upon Sir Aubrey Allen. "A short conversation I had with 'Scan' Merritt, the proprietor, led to a police raid upon the premises."

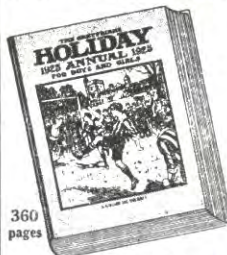
The story had all the elements of melodrama, and there were many people in court who believed that Meadows was not responsible for what he was saying.

"Go on, Meadows!" said Mr. Barrow.

"The raid," continued the old man, "was most successful, for the police captured most of the notorious Starlight Boys, and their leader."

Meadows looked straight into Sir Aubrey Allen's dark eyes as he made

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the startling statement, and a little while twisted his thin lips as he watched the colour ebb from the baronet's flat features.

"It's—it's a lie! The old fool's mad!" roared Ailen, in a husky whisper. He's not responsible for what he's saying!"

"Silence!" barked the burly constable.

The Starlight Boys and their leader were to be charged in this court this morning," said Mr. Meadows, and the air was drunched with excitement—tense, expectant.

"And—who is their leader?" demanded Sir Aubrey.

"Nugent Beasley Ailen, your son," returned Meadows. "Nugent Beasley Ailen, the masked man who struck you men in cold blood on Saturday night."

The baronet was obviously on the verge of collapse, and he swayed unsteadily as he staggered to his feet and gazed up at the aged figure in the judge's box.

"Then—who are you?" he gasped.

Scarcely had the words echoed through the court than Meadows removed his eye and neat side-whiskers, afterwards showing his face muscles to relax and become normal. The transformation was startling, extraordinary, and nobody failed to recognise the hard-bitten features of Detective-Inspector John Scotland, of the Storrydene Police.

Nugent Beasley Ailen and the other Starlight Boys were sent for trial on numerous counts, but Detective-Inspector Scotland was unable to bring any real charge against Sir Aubrey.

Even the charge of perjury was ruled out, for in offering a handsome apology Peter Voyce the baronet declared that he had been so frightened by the masked men that his eyes must have tricked him.

Dorland had suspected the baronet for months past, and it was in order to get evidence that he had disguised himself and become the faithful Meadows. But Ailen had been too clever to leave anything of an incriminating nature lying about at Dorland Lodge.

A rogue himself, he did not trust anybody.

So Dorland had to be satisfied with the capture of the Starlight Boys, but he was sure that he would beat Ailen in the long run.

"It is to be a fight to the finish," he growled, "and I shall win!"

As for Sir Aubrey, he was not altogether happy about his business transaction with Chalmers Voyce, for he knew quite well that Peter would not let the matter rest. He would try to get to the root of the affair.

Two days morning found a letter beside the youngster's plate.

"My dear boy," wrote the baronet. My London manager tells me that the sum of ten thousand pounds is standing to your father's credit over the deal we did together, so I enclose a cheque for your amount.

I trust your father will benefit by his gift to the South.

"Very sincerely yours,

"AUBREY AILEN."

A whimsical little smile flitted across Peter's tanned face as he glanced at the cheque.

Ailen wouldn't give anybody a grain of gold even if he owned the Sahara, so it was proof positive that he muddled the

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governor over those shares," he mused. He rose, thinking pleasantly of the surprise that was in store for his parents.

"Aubrey, my son, you've admitted your guilt in the affair of my father's speculation, and we'll cry quits. Time enough for you to see the inside of a prison-cell when Dorland gets a line on you. Heigho!" he added, half regretfully. "This is the end of pro days with the Storrydene club."

It was not the sudden return to affluence that prompted the reflection. Peter knew that his father was keen upon his finishing his studies as a barrister. And where his father's wishes were concerned Peter never offered any objections.

It leaked out that Storrydene the following Saturday that Peter was playing in the villa columns for the last time. Sir Aubrey, pleased and unhappy in turn, thought of the "draw" he was losing in Peter Voyce, and yet he had anticipated such a contingency when he had despatched the cheque. There was consolation in the record gate of that afternoon, however, accompanied by a feeling in his heart that he had done the right thing. Strange for a man like Sir Aubrey Ailen to reflect thuswise. He laughed at his own weakness, but he admitted to his better self that his conscience was considerably the fighter now

that he had paid full compensation for the "business swindle" he had worked on Chalmers Voyce.

And Peter was playing the game of his life. Three times he broke away from a knot of players and went through the defence on his own. Three times his right foot swung back, three times a desperate goalkeeper made a savage leap to intercept the whizzing sphere, and three times the referee blew a shrill blast on his whistle and pointed grimly to the centre.

When the final whistle blew the excited "fans" swarmed on to the pitch and hoisted Peter aloft. Those few moments were likely to live in his memory for all time.

Storrydene were indubitably sorry to lose Peter as a playing member, but every week-end his lusty voice bellows encouragement from the grand-stand. Unless Sir Aubrey's return to honesty was but a temporary affair it marked the end of the Trials of Storrydene Villa.

THE END.

(Now look out for the brilliant detective story that starts in next week's bumper issue of this paper, entitled "The Deputy Detective!")

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 552

To and From Your Editor!

GREETINGS!

THIS issue of your favourite paper marks the advent of 1925, and I take this opportunity of wishing my chums the world over a happy and prosperous New Year.

At this season it is customary to make good resolutions, and your Editor has fallen into line with the rest. His new resolution takes the ambitious form of doubling the present circulation of the MAGNET—a colossal task, as readers will readily admit, but one which it is possible to accomplish, providing every single MAGNET reader puts his shoulder to the wheel and helps.

Your Editor's part will consist of providing the very best stories it is possible to get, the very best artists, the steepest of competitions, etc. Already the MAGNET is known all over the world as the finest twopennyworth of literary fare on the market. Well, with a little loyal help from my thousands of chums, this wonderful seventeen-year-old story-paper is going to rise to a position absolutely unassailable by any of its younger contemporaries.

THE BEST AND ONLY THE BEST!

That has always been the hall mark of the MAGNET. And that reputation is going to be maintained throughout 1925. We are going to continue our own brilliant record. Surely some of my chums know a few pals who are at present non-readers of the MAGNET? Well, then, these non-reader pals must be introduced to your favourite paper. They must see for themselves what a ripping little paper it is. That they'll appreciate the clean, wholesome stories appearing in it goes without saying—once a MAGNET reader always a MAGNET reader! And that's what we want. The more my chums endeavour to help the circulation along the more I can "spread myself" in the

matter of handsome prizes for Competitions, Free Gifts, Presentation Plates, etc. Let this be your good resolution for the New Year, boys—I mean to introduce a new chum to the MAGNET every week of 1925. If you carry out that part of our little bargain, I'll rise to the occasion in a fashion that will fully compensate for the trouble you have been put to. Not idle words these, boys, but a promise to return the compliment from my end of the MAGNET.

GRAND NEW SERIAL!

Next Monday's number contains the opening chapters of Hedley Scott's brilliant new detective story, featuring the boy assistant of Peppers Locke—the world-famous scientific investigator—handling a case on his lonesome. All warrant Magnetites will be dying to get on with instalment two the moment they have finished reading instalment one—that's the way Hedley Scott holds his onion audience. I won't plunge into the theme of the story at this juncture; you'll learn that for yourselves when this amazing yarn

STARTS NEXT WEEK!

I would advise all my chums to trot round to the newsagent at once and give an order for their favourite paper. Next Monday's rush to secure it will mean disappointment for some of you if you don't act on this little piece of advice.

FINE ART PLATE—FREE!

With every copy of next week's issue will be given away Free a superb photographic Art Plate of H.M.S. Royal Oak—Battleship. This is an excellent picture, boys, and one that will add glory to your collection. From letters before me I see that hundreds of my chums have decorated the walls of their dens with these beautiful art plates, and in each case comes a word of praise from

the writer as to the magnificence of these Free Gifts. I've always said that Magnetites constitute the most appreciative body of readers in the world, and your mail proves my words. Bravo, chums!

"THE REBEL OF THE REMOVE!"

That's the title of next week's splendid, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. As will be guessed the rebel of the Remove is none other than Harry Wharton. The captain of the Remove is set upon building a trouble for himself. One begins to wonder what the outcome of it all will be, for Wharton is rapidly going from bad to worse. That this sudden change in the character of his one-time most promising pupil disturbs Mr. Quelch goes without saying. One can almost visualize his grim lips tightening, his gim-eyes becoming more piercing, as he learns of Wharton's further indiscretions. You'll enjoy this story from the pen of Mr. Frank Richards right from the first word. You'll feel sorry for Wharton, too—he is still a very much misunderstood youth—and you'll spare a line sympathy for Mr. Henry Quelch, the Form master. Don't miss

"THE REBEL OF THE REMOVE!"

whatever you do. It shows your favourite author kicking off the New Year in better form than ever.

"WINTER SPORTS!"

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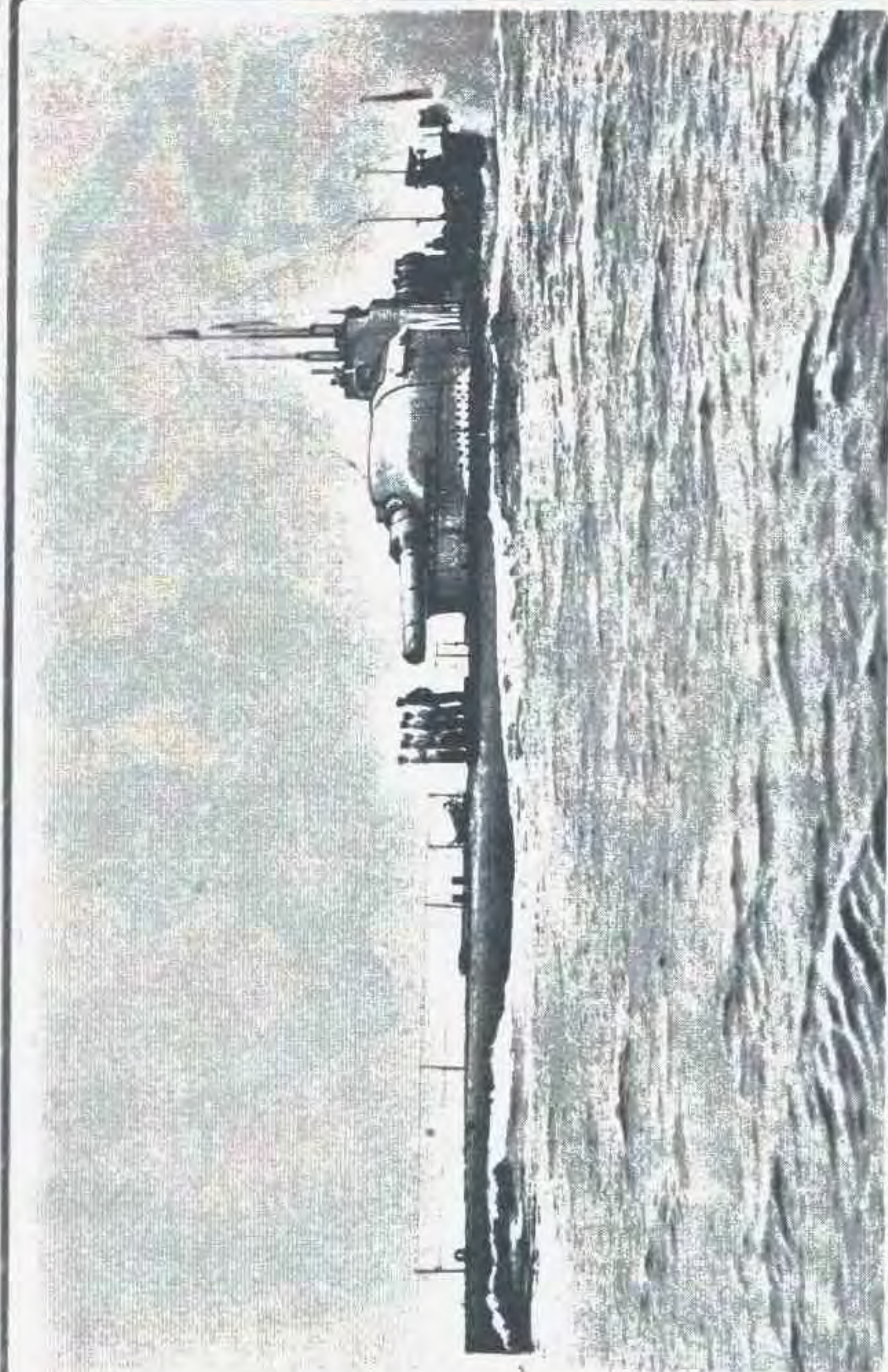
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