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No. 223. Vol. XXVII.

Week Ending January 10th, 1925.

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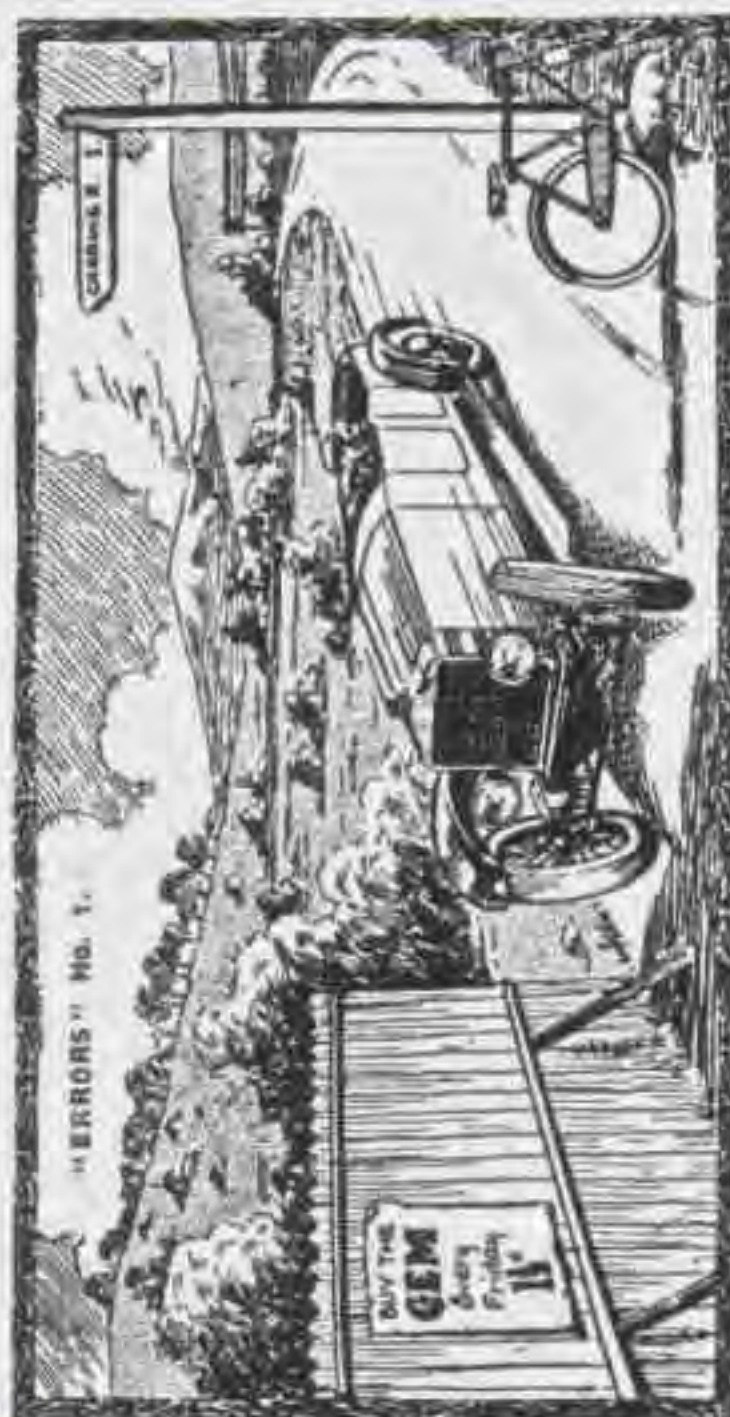
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THE DOWNWARD PATH! Wharton is "going it" with a vengeance; he has lost his old friends, lost the esteem of his Form-master, and finally he loses the captaincy of the Remove. Once the most respected boy in the Remove Harry Wharton is now referred to as—



A Magnificent Extra Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. Told By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Parted Chums!

BOB CHERRY came along the Remove passage with his heavy tread and stopped at the door of Study No. 1.

There he hesitated.

The door of Study No. 1 was closed, and Bob raised his hand to tap, and knocked it again without tapping.

It was not much like Bob to hesitate over anything. Generally he went very straight to the point. But he seemed very dubious now as he stood at the door of Harry Wharton's study.

Two or three fellows in the Remove passage noticed him and grinned. Whinner called out cheerily:

"Going to beard the giddy lion in his den, Cherry?"

Bob coloured a little, but he did not look at Skinner or answer him. He waved his hand again and gave a sharp rap on the door.

Last term at Greyfriars Bob would have thumped on the door of Study No. 1 and hurled it open and tramped in. But matters had changed since the last term at Greyfriars. There was a new man in the Co., and Harry Wharton, captain of the Remove, was no longer the old terms with his old friends. Bob Cherry rapped on the door and waited to be asked in before he entered.

"Come in!"

Harry Wharton's voice called from within Study No. 1.

Bob Cherry entered.

The captain of the Remove was seated at the study table, pen in hand, his back to Bob. It was the hour for evening prep, and all the Remove fellows were supposed to be hard at work in their studies just then.

Wharton looked up and raised his eye-brows in surprise at the sight of Bob Cherry.

His look was not welcoming.

He did not speak; and Bob's honest, rugged face flushed redder as he met a cold glance of inquiry.

He did not utter his usual cheery,

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" He coughed uncomfortably.

"Interrupting you?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I won't keep you a minute or two."

"Well?"

"I've been talking it over with Nugent and Johnny Bell and Inky and Smithy—about the football match to-morrow."

"Yes."

"To-morrow's Saturday, and we play St. Jude's," said Bob.

"I know."

"Of course you do," agreed Bob. "But I suppose you haven't forgotten that you're under detention for to-morrow?"

"No."

"Well, then, we want to know what's going to be done," said Bob rather restively. "I know you don't want to talk to me, Wharton, and I can't say I'm anxious to butt into this study. But football is football. I suppose you haven't forgotten that you're our football captain, whether we speak to one another or not?"

"Not at all."

"Well, then, Mr. Quelch has detained you for to-morrow afternoon. How about the match at St. Jude's?"

"It's simple enough," said Harry quietly. "Smithy is vice-captain. He will captain the team as I can't go."

"That's all very well!" said Bob uneasily.

Wharton dropped his eyes to his work again.

He seemed to regard the matter as finished, and he transferred his attention to prep.

The colour grew deeper and deeper in Bob's rugged face. His eyes glinted as they were fixed on the dark bent head of the captain of the Remove. But he controlled his annoyance. He had not come to Study No. 1 to quarrel with his former friend.

"That's all very well!" he repeated.

"Smithy's a good man, and can skipper the team all right so far as that goes; and he's willing. But it means a new man in the team—"

"Smithy will select a man, as he will be captain for the occasion," said Wharton, without looking up.

"We don't want to play a reserve," said Bob brusquely. "St. Jude's are in great form, and we want our best team. Smithy says so himself. You're captain, and you ought to play, and leave Smithy in his usual place."

Wharton looked up again at that.

"I'm keen enough to play," he said. "But it can't be done, as I'm under detention till five on Saturday."

"Mr. Quelch might let you off."

"He might. It's not likely. He's not said anything about it so far."

Bob breathed hard.

"Do you expect a Form master to come to your study, Wharton, and ask you if you will please kindly accept being let off detention?" he demanded.

Wharton smiled faintly.

"No."

"Well, then—"

"Well, then, there's nothing doing, is there?"

"Yes!" growled Bob. "You can go to Mr. Quelch and ask him to let you off. You've made him waxy, but he's a good sort in the main—and he's always careful not to let detentions interfere with our matches, as you know jolly well!"

Wharton was silent, but a hard, obdurate look came over his face—a look that Bob Cherry knew well.

"Put it to Quelch that we're booked for a rough match to-morrow—a match that counts in our record—and he will go easy with you," said Bob. "You've only got to be civil and ask him decently. He doesn't care a button whether your detention's on Saturday or next Wednesday. Wednesday wouldn't matter—there's no match Wednesday. It's practically certain he will let you off to-morrow if you ask him."

"It's possible."

"Well, then—"

"I'm not asking favours of Mr. Quelch."

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"It's not a question of that!" exclaimed Bob Cherry hotly. "It's a question of the match at St. Jude's. Are you going to risk getting a beating for the team because you can't put your silly pride in your pocket for once?"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders. "I tell you Mr. Quelch would let you off—it's quite certain he would. He wouldn't have detained you to-morrow at all if you hadn't put up his back with your dashed cheek!" exclaimed Bob. Bob was rather forgetting that he had not come to Study No. 1 to quarrel.

"Is that your opinion?" said Wharton, with a touch of sarcasm.

"It's the opinion of every fellow in the Remove."

"And they've elected you spokesman to come and tell me so?" asked the captain of the Remove in the same sarcastic tone.

Bob Cherry breathed hard.

"I don't want to row with you, Wharton. We used to be friends, and there's no reason that I can see why we should be enemies. I'm asking you to do a thing that the whole Form expects of you—a thing that any other fellow would do without being asked."

"You're asking too much, all the same."

"You won't speak to Mr. Quelch?"

"No."

"And the match to-morrow—"

"Smithy will be captain. I leave it to Smithy."

"And that's all you've got to say?"

"That's all."

"Then I can jolly well tell you this!" exclaimed Bob, his eyes flashing. "If you're so jolly willing to hand over the captaincy to somebody else when it suits you, you may have to hand it over when it doesn't suit you, Wharton. We don't want a football captain who puts his own silly airs and graces before football matches."

And with that, Bob Cherry tramped out of the study, and closed the door behind him, with a bang that rang from one end of the Remove passage to the other.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Putting it to Quelch!

"MY esteemed Bob—" murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh, as Bob Cherry came back into his own study, No. 13 in the Remove.

Bob's face was flushed and his eyes gleaming. It was seldom that the good-natured, easy-going Bob looked angry. But he looked very angry now.

Prep was going on in No. 13. Bob had left that important occupation for the still more important business of speaking to the captain of the Remove about the St. Jude's match.

"Oh, blow!" growled Bob.

Mark Linley looked at him quickly.

"You haven't been rowing with Wharton, Bob?"

"No. But I came jolly near it!" growled Bob Cherry. "I never thought, last term, that I should come so jolly near to punching Wharton's head this term. But it was a near thing."

"A miss is as good as a mile," said Mark, smiling. "For goodness' sake, Bob, keep clear of a row. That wouldn't do any good."

"I know. But—"

"The rowfulness with the esteemed and ludicrous Wharton is not the proper caper," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head. "Calmness, my esteemed Bob—calmness!"

THE MARKET LIBRARY.—No. 863.

Remember that the stitch in time is the cracked pitcher that goes longest to the well, as the English proverb says."

Bob Cherry grinned.

His anger never lasted long, and perhaps the nabob's English proverb helped to restore him to good humour.

"But it's rotten!" he said. "Mr. Quelch would let Wharton off at once if he asked him civilly. He's done it before, and he would do it again. I know he will be sorry if he finds out that he's mucked up one of our matches by keeping our skipper in. And Wharton won't ask him."

"I was afraid he wouldn't," said Mark.

"Well, why shouldn't he?" demanded Bob warmly. "Who the thump, after all, is Wharton, that he can't do what any other fellow can do?"

"The esteemed Wharton has his ludicrous back up," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "He has allowed the sun and moon to go down on his wrathfulness."

"After all, we'll beat St. Jude's," said Mark cheerfully. "Smithy's a good skipper, and we've got some good reserves. The Bounder will pick out a good man."

"I know! But a football captain's place is in a football match—not sulking in a Form-room and hugging his silly pride!" growled Bob. "I never expected this sort of thing from Wharton."

"He's changed," said Mark thoughtfully. "But I think it's partly due to worry about his uncle, Colonel Wharton. I don't think there's any doubt that the colonel's life is in danger so long as he is in Russia—"

"And Wharton didn't trouble to say good-bye to him before he went," grunted Bob. "That's what started this trouble. We all thought he ought to go, and he didn't."

"That's on his mind, I think."

"I dare say it is. But is he to blame us because he's ashamed of not having done what we all thought he ought to do?" demanded Bob. "Is that reasonable?"

"The reasonableness is not terrific," remarked Hurree Singh, "but the rowfulness with the excellent and ridiculous Wharton will not set the matter right. Besides, I have a wheezy good idea. Wharton will not ask the worthy Quelch to let him off. But suppose we go to the esteemed Quelch and ask him? I am certainly sure that Mr. Quelch will not let our football match be diddled and dishfully done if he knows the esteemed circumstances."

"That's a good idea," assented Mark.

Bob Cherry's brow cleared.

"Good old Inky!" he said. "Right as rain! If Wharton won't beg himself off, we'll beg him off; and if he doesn't like it, he can lump it—what?"

And Bob Cherry sat down to finish his prep, satisfied with that solution of the difficulty.

Bob did not linger over prep that evening.

From the point of view of Mr. Quelch, who had the doubtful privilege of being master of the Remove, prep was a most important function. From the point of view of the Removeites, football matches outweighed it very considerably in importance. In Bob Cherry's opinion especially, Soccer came first, and Latin verse a very bad second.

Prep done—or left undone—Bob Cherry quitted Study No. 13, and went down to the Rag, where he found Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent. They had finished prep, and were discussing the morrow's match with Vernon-Smith. All three of the juniors agreed at once to the proposed application to Mr. Quelch.

"Won't do any harm, anyhow," said the Bounder.

"Wharton ought to ask him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Well, if he won't, he won't!" said Nugent. "Next best thing is for us to put it to him. Let's!"

"Come on!" said Bob.

The four juniors proceeded to Mr. Quelch's study.

That Wharton was in the Remove master's "black books" now they were only too well aware, and they had no anticipation that Mr. Quelch would be Harry off for his own sake. But for the sake of the Remove football match, it was quite likely that he would relent. As Bob remarked hopefully, Quelch's bark was always worse than his bite, and he wasn't half-bad for a beak.

Bob knocked at the Form master's door, and the deep voice of Mr. Quelch bade him enter.

The Remove master looked slightly surprised as four juniors presented themselves in his study.

"What is it, Cherry?" he asked.

"If you please, sir," said Bob, in his meekest tone, "we're playing St. Jude's at football to-morrow afternoon—"

"Quite so. Well?"

"Our skipper's under detention to-morrow, sir."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch. He frowned a little, guessing what was coming now. The frown was discouraging; but Bob Cherry went on:

"It's a bit of a tough match, sir. St. Jude's are in great form this season. We—we thought, sir, that—that you might be so kind as to let Wharton off to-morrow, sir. We want him badly. Of course, he would take his detention some other half-holiday."

Mr. Quelch pursed his lips.

"We know, sir, that you wouldn't like to spoil one of our fixtures," said Vernon-Smith.

"That is quite correct, Vernon-Smith."

"We'd all take it as a very great favour, sir, if you'd let Wharton come over to St. Jude's with us to-morrow," said Nugent.

"This is a serious matter," said Mr. Quelch slowly. "You must be aware that Wharton has given me a great deal of trouble since the new term began, and that his detention was entirely his own fault."

The juniors were silent. They could not deny that, even if denial would have been judicious, which certainly was not the case.

As a rule, a fellow who was in the Form master's black books was certain of a good deal of sympathy among his Form fellows. But in the present instance that sympathy was rather lacking. Most of the Remove could not help being of opinion that Wharton had fairly asked for trouble—begged and prayed for it, according to Skinner. And a fellow who hunted for trouble with Mr. Quelch was quite certain to find it.

Nevertheless, there were signs of relenting in Mr. Quelch's face, and the juniors, judiciously silent, watched him hopefully.

"Wharton's punishment is just and necessary!" resumed Mr. Quelch. "But most decidedly I do not desire it to fall upon others as well. I should be very sorry indeed to interfere with a football match which my boys regard as important."

"Thank you, sir!" murmured Bob.

"But it is a little singular," said Mr. Quelch, "that you have come to ask me this, and that Wharton has not come. As Wharton is the person concerned, he should have come to me to prefer this request."

Mr. Quelch's eyes searched the rather disarrayed faces of the juniors.

"Why has not Wharton come with you?" he asked.

Bob Cherry stammered a little.

"He—he's at prep, sir!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Quelch, raising his eyebrows.

"I—I spoke to him a—little while ago, sir, and—and he hadn't finished prep," mumbled Bob.

"Is that the only reason why he has not come with you?"

Bob was silent.

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch. "You may tell Wharton that when he has finished his preparation—and he need not hurry—when he has finished he may come to my study. It is a matter of indifference to me whether his detention shall take place on Saturday this week, or Wednesday next week, and I shall not refuse a respectful request."

"Yes, sir!" mumbled Bob hopefully. "But—"

"That will do, Cherry!" said Mr. Quelch. "You may go!"

And the juniors, realising that there was nothing more to be said, filed out of the Remove master's study. In the corridor they looked at one another.

"Quelch's right!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Wharton ought to ask him, as he's the fellow to be let off."

"But he won't!" said Frank.

"We'll jolly well make him!" said the Bounder. "Quelch's jolly decent, but he can't make concessions to a fellow who's too uppish to ask him. It's not to be expected."

Bob Cherry set his lips.

"Wharton's got to ask him," he said. "We'll make the whole team put it to him when he comes down to the Rag. That! He can't refuse."

And the juniors returned to the Rag.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

HARRY WHARTON came out of Study No. 1, and descended the Remove staircase. He nodded cheerily to Russell and sauntered on the stairs, and stopped for a moment or two to speak to Lord Baskerville, on the next landing. Then he sauntered along to the Rag.

The big door of that apartment stood wide open, and there was a buzz of voices within. The fat figure of Billy Master adorned the doorway, and as the captain of the Remove came along Master squeaked:

"I say, you fellows, here he comes!"

Wharton did not heed the Owl of the Remove.

He walked into the Rag, and though he did not look at them, he noticed that the Co. were present—Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Hurree Janset Ram Singh, and Frank Nugent.

Quite regardless of his former friends, the captain of the Remove crossed over to the fire.

His handsome face was impassive.

But although he gave no sign of having observed it, he was quite well aware that something was on. Nearly all the Remove had gathered in the Rag, and the members of the football eleven were a group, in a group with the Co.

Exoner and his friends stood in another group, and they were grinning and whispering, as if in anticipation of entertainment.

There was a general move of the footballers towards Harry Wharton, as he stood with his back to the fire—the Co., and Vernon-Smith, Peter Todd, Mark Lacey, Squiff, Tom Brown, and Pon-son. They were the ten good men and

true who were down to play St. Jude's on the morrow, under the captaincy of Harry Wharton—if his pride did not stand in the way.

Wharton eyed them calmly as they came up. They were all looking serious.

"You go ahead, Smithy," said Bob Cherry, in a low voice. "You put it to him. I might lose my temper."

The Bounder nodded.

"Here we are, Wharton," he said lightly. "We're the giddy team, and we want to point out that we expect our skipper to take command to-morrow."

"Hear, hear!" said the team.

"We've been to see Quelch," went on the Bounder. "We've asked him to let you off detention—"

"You have!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Just that!"

"Like your cheek, I think."

"Do you think so?" asked the Bounder, nettled.

"Yes, I do."

"Opinions may differ on that point. We think that it's a football captain's duty to take his place in a football match."

"We jolly well do!" said Squiff.

"We're all agreed on that," said Tom Brown, "and if you want to sulk in the Form-room instead, Wharton, we sha'n't think any the better of you."

"You can think just what you like."

"The unkindness is not the proper caper, my esteemed ridiculous Wharton!" urged Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Look here—" began Bob Cherry hotly.

"Leave it to Smithy!" whispered

Nugent; and Bob broke off, breathing hard with suppressed wrath.

"We asked Quelch and he refused," went on the Bounder, "but said quite plainly that if you asked him respectfully he would let you off to-morrow, and you could do your detention next Wednesday. Naturally, he expects you to ask him."

"He can expect!"

"It's not like asking a personal favour, Wharton," urged Mark Linley. "It's for the sake of the team."

Wharton's lips set.

"I shall ask Mr. Quelch nothing," he answered.

"You'll let us down over the football match instead?" exclaimed Peter Todd, sharply.

"It's not a question of that. I'm detained to-morrow, and I wouldn't eat humble pie to Mr. Quelch for the sake of all the matches this season," said the captain of the Remove bitterly. "If he's willing to let me off, why doesn't he do it, without my going to him and begging it. I'm going to ask him nothing—nothing!"

"He's expecting you in his study," said Johnny Bull.

"I shall not go."

"We're all asking you," said Bob Cherry. "You can't stand there and refuse the whole eleven, Wharton."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"You refuse?" hooted Johnny Bull.

"Yes."

"You won't go to Quelch, though he's practically promised to say yes if you ask him civilly?"

"No, I won't!"



"Wharton!" rapped Mr. Quelch. "Take your hands out of your pockets!" The junior's hands came out of his pockets at once, but there was an irritatingly sarcastic smile on his face all the same. (See Chapter 4.)

"Then, by gum"—Johnny Bull's face was crimson—"by gum, I think it's about time the Remove elected a new captain."

"Same here," said Squiff.

"Wharton—" urged Mark Linley.

"You can elect a new captain as soon as you jolly well choose," said Harry Wharton disdainfully. "I'm not asking favours of you any more than of Mr. Quelch."

The Remove footballers looked at one another. The Bounder shrugged his shoulders and walked away. The affair was evidently at an end, so far as he was concerned.

"May I make a suggestion, you fellows?" put in Harold Skinner, in a silky voice.

Some of the footballers glanced at him. Skinner was no footballer, and his suggestions in football matters were not likely to be valuable.

"Well, what is it?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"You're not handling this matter properly," explained Skinner. "You don't seem to realise what an important personage you're dealing with. First of all, go down on your knees."

"Wha-at?"

"That's the style for Wharton," went on Skinner blandly. "Go on your knees, and he may relent. If that doesn't do the trick, fall down on your faces. Isn't that what you want, Wharton?"

Wharton flushed, as a laugh came from several different directions in the Rag. Some of the footballers grinned, and some of them looked annoyed.

"Then you ought to address our respected captain more respectfully," pursued the cheerful Skinner. "You should begin: 'May it please your Highness, You left that out.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Snoop and Stott.

"Ha, he, he!" came Bunter's unmusical cackinnation.

Wharton's eyes gleamed at the humorist of the Remove.

"That's enough, Skinner!" he said curtly.

"Have I had the misfortune to offend your Highness?" asked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up, Skinner," said Peter Todd. "Look here, Wharton, the whole crowd wants you to do the decent thing, and ask Mr. Quelch to let you off to-morrow. Will you do it?"

"No!"

"You can't expect us to take this pleasantly," said Peter.

"Take it how you like."

Peter Todd breathed hard. But he said no more, and the crowd broke up. The matter was at an end; and it was settled that Herbert Vernon-Smith was to captain the Remove team on the morrow.

Ten minutes later the football list was posted up in the Rag, in the Bounder's handwriting. Wharton's name was not in it—the name of R. D. Ogilvy had taken its place.

Wharton walked over to the list, and read it down coolly. A good many eyes were upon him, but his impassive face gave no sign. He strolled out of Rag, his hands in his pockets, apparently oblivious to the buzz of excited discussion that he left behind him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Stubborn Will!

MR. QUELCH paused.

He had been chatting with Mr. Hacker, master of the Shell, in the old oak-panelled hall, near the foot of one branch of the big double staircase. Leaving Mr. THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 883.

Hacker, the Remove master, had started to return to his study—having a number of papers to mark that evening before he found his time his own.

Harry Wharton was coming towards him.

The Remove master paused, under the impression that Wharton was coming up to speak to him.

His face had taken on a severe cast, unconsciously, at the sight of the junior; Wharton had sorely troubled and perplexed his Form master of late. Perhaps Wharton noticed it, though certainly he was not looking at Mr. Quelch.

He came on a few more steps; his hands were in his pockets, and his eyes on the floor; he seemed to be thinking. He became aware suddenly of Mr. Quelch standing before him, and stopped.

He had been going across to the stairs on the left of the hall. Now he turned to the other staircase.

Mr. Quelch looked at him.

He had taken it for granted that Wharton was going to speak, and he had no doubt that it was to prefer the request to be let off detention on the morrow, on account of the St. Jude's match.

Evidently he had been mistaken. Wharton did not intend to speak.

Mr. Quelch, in speaking as he had done to Bob Cherry & Co., had intended to let the captain of the Remove down lightly. He would have been only too glad to see an end of Wharton's stubborn opposition—of the arrogant pride that was leading him on further and further to his own undoing. The Form master was prepared to be kind and even conciliatory—to read the junior a little lecture, perhaps, but to postpone his detention till the next half-holiday, perhaps even to cancel it altogether.

Now he realised that Wharton did not intend to ask him: did not intend to speak at all; and Mr. Quelch was conscious of a sudden rush of anger and resentment. The boy was avoiding him—deliberately avoiding his Form master, and had evidently no intention of bending his stubborn will. Mr. Quelch rapped out sharply:

"Wharton!"

The junior stopped.

"Yes, sir!"

"I expected to see you in my study, Wharton."

"Did you send for me, sir? I did not receive any message," said the captain of the Remove.

He spoke quite respectfully, but Mr. Quelch was conscious of an undercurrent of sarcasm. He had a feeling that the junior was mocking him—yet there was nothing tangible upon which he could seize.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"I did not send you a message, Wharton. But I told your friends that if you came to my study, and made a respectful request to be excused detention for the football match to-morrow, I would at least consider the matter."

"Yes, sir," said Wharton indifferently.

"I presume that they told you this, Wharton."

"Yes, sir."

"You did not come to me?"

"No, sir."

"Does that mean, Wharton, that you do not intend to make such a request?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch stood silent, his eye glinting at the captain of the Remove. Wharton waited, with an air of respectful attention, until he should be dismissed.

The Remove master had seldom been so angry. He was all the more angry because it was really impossible to vent his anger on the offender. He could very well punish a junior for not taking to be let off detention.

"You do not care to ask for a concession at my hands, Wharton?" the Remove master said at last.

"No, sir."

"You do not, I presume, expect it to be made unasked?"

"No, sir."

"Very well, Wharton!" Mr. Quelch breathed hard and deep. "I am trying to be patient with you, Wharton, trust that you will not try my patience too far. You will not find stubborn and self-willed obstinacy to your advantage, Wharton."

"No, sir."

Mr. Quelch made a gesture of dismissal; he had a strong desire to beat the junior's ears, and was really afraid that he might yield to that somewhat undignified impulse.

Wharton turned away to the stairs again. He strolled towards the staircase, his hands still in his pockets.

"Wharton!"

The junior looked round again.

"Take your hands out of your pockets."

"Certainly, sir."

The junior's hands came out of his pockets at once. A sarcastic smile flickered on his face for a second.

"You are very well aware, Wharton, that you should not stand with your hands in your pockets, when speaking to your Form master."

"Very well, sir."

"That will do, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch harshly. "You may go."

"Thank you, sir."

Wharton went.

Mr. Quelch continued on his way to the study, his brows knitted, and a pin-point burning in either cheek. He was deeply angry; and conscious, too, that Wharton had had the advantage in the colloquy. In his annoyance he had picked a trifling fault with the junior merely for the sake of reprimanding, and he knew that Wharton was well aware of it—and had no doubt that the sarcastic smile was more pronounced than ever on the junior's face as he went up the stairs. The Form master felt that he had lowered himself a little in the eyes of the junior—a reflection that was exceedingly discomforting. It was quite ten minutes before Mr. Quelch was able to dismiss his exasperating pupil from his mind, and settle down to mark exercises.

Wharton went up the stairs to the Remove passage, and went into his study, and closed the door. He had the room to himself—Bunter, his new study-mate in the place of Frank Nugent, was not there. Since Bunter had learned to his sorrow, that he had no spread to expect in Study No. 1, he had not honoured it very much with his presence. Indeed, excepting for prep Bunter hardly came to his study at all, only when he fancied that his presence would cause annoyance to his study-mate, did the Owl of the Remove turn up there.

Whether Wharton felt the breach with his old chums—whether he missed Frank's cheery, kind face from the study—nobody in the Remove knew, least of all his old friends.

Wharton had never been a fellow to wear his heart on his sleeve; and late he had become more reserved than ever. Whether he liked the present position of affairs or not, he had accepted it calmly and quietly as inevitable; and certainly had no intention of making the

slightest overture towards a reconciliation. He had, indeed, made it clear that he did not welcome any overtures from the other side.

The break-up of the Famous Five had caused discussion enough in the Greyfriars Remove. For days it had been an inexhaustible topic. But the fellows soon became used to it, and almost ceased to comment on it. For whole terms Harry Wharton had spanned with the other four fellows—his term he wasn't speaking to them, and they weren't speaking to him. That was all there was about it.

Along with Wharton's break with his old friends his popularity in the Fives was on the ebb.

There had always been some slight grounds for Skinner's sneers, and his mocking appellations of "His Highness" and "His Magnificence," applied to the captain of the Remove. Many fellows who really liked Wharton had thought that he carried his head a little too high. Fellows who did not like him thought that he carried it a great deal too high, and would have been very pleased to see it brought down a little.

Such faults had been more than outweighed by many sterling qualities; and Wharton had been very popular in the Remove, excepting for a few grouching fellows like Skinner & Co.

But that was changing now. Instead of keeping his pride in check and keeping a wary eye upon what he knew to be his own weaknesses, the captain of the Remove seemed to most of the Lower Fourth fellows to have changed into an extravagance of arrogance.

The episode of that evening gave the matter a finishing touch. If Wharton's swelling pride was to be allowed to interfere with Remove football matches, it was time that something was done, in the opinion of most of the fellows who were excitedly discussing the affair in the Rag.

That Wharton was aware of their move they knew—and that he did not carry a button was the only conclusion they could draw from his manner. That was not very pleasant or flattering to the Removes. Now he had walked off to his study—walked out of the Rag, as Skinner declared, as if he imposed the whole lot of them too thoroughly to care what they thought or what they said.

"It's time we got a new Form captain," said Skinner; and for once the black sheep of the Remove found quite a number of fellows in agreement with him.

Wharton, in Study No. 1, was not thinking about the Remove fellows, as a matter of fact, or about the morrow's football match.

Another thought was in his mind—a thought that was seldom absent from it. His uncle, Colonel Wharton, was in Russia—and no word had come from him since he had set foot in that land of darkness and crime and calamity. No word could come from him; but he had been absent for many weeks now, and only Wharton hoped to hear that he had returned—at least, that he was no longer in the power of the Bolsheviks. What had happened to him since the door had closed behind him? Would he return, or had he already met his fate at savage hands in the frozen North? It was a tormenting doubt to Wharton.

The man who had taken the place of the father whom he scarcely remembered—who had never failed in kindness and patience—he might never see him again. And he had not even hidden his face as he started on that



"I say, Wharton—" began Bunter. "Yarooooop!" The captain of the Remove grasped Bunter by the collar and sat him down—hard. Bump! Wharton walked away under the elms, leaving Bunter sitting on the cold, unsympathetic ground, roaring. (See Chapter 5.)

perilous journey—and his conscience reproached him bitterly. He had neglected the man who had never failed in kindness and duty to him; and perhaps it was too late to make amends—perhaps he would never look on that kind face again.

There was a sudden tap at the door of Study No. 1, and it opened. Wharton's face had been troubled and distressed with his thoughts. He composed it instantly; it was an impressive countenance that he presented to Vernon-Smith, who looked into the study.

"Doron!" said the Bounder, with a curious look at Wharton. "I thought I'd call you. Wingate's waiting, and he doesn't like waiting, you know."

"Is it bed-time?" said Harry. "Thanks, Smithy."

He followed the Bounder from the study.

"You haven't spoken to Quelch?"

"Yes."

"You've asked him—"

"No."

"You don't mean to?"

"No."

They walked along the dormitory passage together. Vernon-Smith hesitated, and then spoke abruptly.

"This won't do, Wharton, you know."

"Won't it?" said Wharton dryly.

"The fellows are getting their backs up."

"Let them," said Wharton indifferently.

"I'm not speaking in my own interests," said the Bounder quietly.

"I'm keen enough to captain the side to-morrow. But—but you ought to be there, Wharton—you're taking a wrong

line altogether. But I suppose it's no use talking."

"None, so far as I can see."

The Bounder compressed his lips and went into the Remove dormitory. A good many rather grim glances were turned on the captain of the Remove as he came in. He did not seem to observe it. After lights out, there was a buzz of talk in the dormitory, mostly on the subject of the St. Jude's match. But Harry Wharton did not join in it.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

News at Last!

"HARRY, old chap—"

Wharton stared at Billy Bunter.

It was the following morning, after second lesson. There was a break of a quarter of an hour before third lesson; the last on Saturdays. Most of the Remove were in the quad; Bob Cherry and his comrades were punting about an old footer. Harry Wharton was sauntering under the elms, with a rather thoughtful face, when the Owl of the Remove rolled up, with a propitiatory grin on his fat face.

Bunter was affable—he was effusive with affability. Which was quite a change, for Bunter made no secret of the fact that he was disgusted with his study-mate, and sorry that he had ever thought of changing out of Study No. 7 at the beginning of the term. Indeed, Bunter would have changed back, but Peter Todd was a lion in his path, so to speak—having once got "shut" of

Bunter, Peter declined to have him back in Study No. 7 at any price.

Bunter, apparently, had expected Study No. 1 to prove a land flowing with milk and honey—and he had been woefully disappointed. Wharton put up with him as a study-mate because he had no choice about it—but that was all. His "tea'd" in Hall, to escape Bunter's company—and supper in Study No. 1 was a thing of the past. Billy Bunter felt that he had a very serious grievance—indeed, he had confided to most of the Remove that he had a jolly good mind to "lick" Wharton. That, according to Bunter, was what the fellow wanted—a jolly good licking. And Bunter had a jolly good mind to give him one. The licking, however, had not yet been administered.

Now there was a great change. Bunter's fat face was smiling and friendly, his fat voice quite affectionate, as he addressed his exasperating study-mate as "Harry, old chap."

Wharton's look, on the other hand, was far from conciliatory. He stared quite grimly at the fat junior.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Wharton resumed his walk under the leafless elms. Bunter rolled along, keeping pace with him.

"I say, Harry—"

"Choose it!" said the captain of the Remove tersely.

"I don't see what you want to keep your back up with me for, old fellow," said Bunter reproachfully. "Haven't we always been pals?"

"Fathead!"

"Haven't I taken pity on you, old chap, and shared your study, when Nugent's turned you down?" urged Bunter.

"Will you ring off?"

"The fact is, old fellow, I'm sticking to you," said Bunter. "Lots of the fellows say you're a stiff-necked ass—"

"You silly owl!"

"Skinner says you're a stuck-up cad—"

"Skinner had better say it to me!" growled Wharton. "Do you want me to kick you, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, old chap—"

"For goodness' sake roll away!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove impatiently. He quickened his pace, and Bunter panted and puffed to keep step with him.

"I don't agree with them, you know," urged Bunter. "The fact is, I stand up for you. I keep on pointing out to the fellows that you're not such a stuck-up chump as they think you, old fellow. I do really. Besides, you can't help it. That's what I say to the chaps—if a chap swanks, he swanks, and he can't help being a swanking ass. See?"

Bunter was being propitiatory; but his words did not somehow seem to propitiate the captain of the Remove. Why he was seeking to propitiate him at all was a mystery which Wharton was not in the slightest degree interested to fathom.

"You're rather mean in the study," went on Bunter. "Well, I dare say you aren't getting much in the way of pocket-money while your uncle's away. Is that it, old chap? I can make allowances. In fact, I was going to offer you a loan, only I've been disappointed about a postal-order."

"You silly ass!"

"But the old scout's bound to shell out when he comes home, isn't he?" said Bunter. "I believe your uncle is fond of you, Wharton. No accounting for tastes, you know. Well, it stands to

reason that as soon as he comes back from Persia, or Russia, or wherever it is, he will stand you a decent tip. Don't you think so?"

Wharton came to a halt.

"Are you going to clear, or shall I kick you, Bunter?" he asked. "Now, then, sharp!"

"I don't call that grateful, Wharton, when I've taken the trouble to bring you your uncle's letter."

"What?"

"It's got a foreign stamp on it," said Bunter. "But he may have put in a cheque. Besides, you can get English postal-orders in France, if you go to Cook's, you know. Owl! Leggo!"

Wharton grasped the Owl of the Remove by the shoulder and shook him.

"Is there a letter for me?"

"Owl! Yee! Leggo!"

"Give it to me, you fat fool!" snarled Wharton.

"Owl! Leggo, you beast!"

Billy Bunter extracted a rather crumpled letter from his pocket, and Wharton almost snatched it from his fat hand.

It was addressed to Harry Wharton, at Greyfriars, in the well-known handwriting of Colonel Wharton, and bore a French stamp and postmark.

The mystery of Bunter's unaccounted affability was elucidated now.

Headless of the Owl of the Remove, Wharton tore open the envelope, his heart beating. His uncle was returning, then. He was already out of Russia, on his homeward way. Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"I say, Harry, old chap, is there a postal-order in it? Stands to reason the old geezer would stand you something. I think, after being away so long. Pretty rotten if he hasn't."

Wharton did not reply. He did not even hear.

"I was looking in the rack for my letter, you know. I'm expecting a postal-order from one of my titled relations," explained Bunter, to deaf ears. "Then I saw yours, and thought I'd bring it to you, old chap. I'd do more than that for a fellow I really like. I say, it can't be less than a pound, considering. What about a spread in the study this afternoon, old fellow? I'll get it ready while you're doing your detention."

Bunter paused, like Brutus, for a reply. No reply was forthcoming. Harry Wharton's eyes were glued upon the letter.

"I say, Wharton! Look here, Harry, old chap! I say, you might listen when a fellow's speaking to you."

Bunter tugged at Wharton's sleeve.

Then the captain of the Remove awoke to his presence, as it were. He reached out and grasped Bunter by the collar, and sat him down—hard.

Bump!

"Owl! Yaroooob!"

Harry Wharton walked away under the elms, leaving Billy Bunter sitting on the cold, unsympathetic ground, roaring. He scrambled up and shook an enraged fist after the captain of the Remove.

"Beast!"

Wharton did not turn his head.

"Yah! I don't believe there's a remittance in the letter at all," howled Bunter. "Your uncle's jolly mean, same as you are. I've a jolly good mind to give you a thumping licking. Yah!"

But for reasons best known to his plump self Billy Bunter decided not to administer the licking just then. He rolled away in a state of great wrath and indignation, unheeded by the captain of the Remove.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

No Excuse!

HARRY WHARTON sat down on one of the old oaken benches under the elms and read through the letter again.

His face was very bright.

He had had long weeks of anxiety, but anxiety was over now. Colonel Wharton had returned safe and sound from his dangerous mission. The letter had been written from Boulogne the day before. That very day the colonel was to be back in England. The disaster that had lain heavily on Wharton for long weeks was lifted at last.

"Hotel Seldil d'Or,

"Boulogne-sur-Mer.

"My dear Harry,—I know you will be glad to get a line from me, and to know that I am homeward bound, my boy. I am staying the night in Boulogne, and taking the boat across to Folkestone to-morrow.

"I have been through a difficult and dangerous time, as you may guess, but fortunately, all has turned out well. My old comrade-in-arms has been released by the Bolsheviks, and I have seen him safe out of Russia. I had hoped to get back by Christmas, but it could not be done. I hope you had a Merry Christmas with your friends.

"Now, my boy, I have to get to London without delay, but I should very much like to see you if possible. I shall not have time to come to Greyfriars, but Folkestone is only an hour's run on the train from Courtfield, and to-morrow (Saturday) is a half-holiday at your school. How would you like to come and meet the boat?

"The boat gets in about three o'clock. I need not tell you how glad I shall be to see you when I come ashore. Ask your Form master's permission, of course, as no doubt Folkestone is out of bounds for you boys. But there will be no difficulty on that score.

"I shall expect to see you when the boat gets in to-morrow.

"Your affectionate uncle,

"JAMES WHARTON."

Harry Wharton's eyes were dancing. News of his uncle, long-expected and hoped for, had arrived at last, and the news was the very best. Colonel Wharton had returned safe and sound, and that very day he would see the kind, old bronzed face again.

He would not fail his uncle this time. He would make all the amends he could for that one thoughtless act he had so bitterly repented.

Bob Cherry and Nugent came along by the elms, and both of them glanced at Wharton, wondering at the brightness in his face and the light in his eyes. In his joy and satisfaction Wharton forgot for the moment the circumstance that he was no longer on friendly terms with his old chums. He spoke out spontaneously without thinking.

"Jolly good news, you chaps!" he said brightly. "My uncle's coming home."

"Good!" said Bob. "Glad to hear it."

Nugent did not speak.

"He's safe and sound, right as rain!" went on the captain of the Remove. "I——" He broke off suddenly, remembering.

"But that won't interest you," he added. And before either of the juniors could make a rejoinder Wharton walked away towards the School House.

Another remembrance had come into his mind. He was detained for that

afternoon. At three o'clock, when the boat came in from Boulogne with Colonel Wharton on board, Harry Wharton was to be sitting in the Remove-room, working at a detention task.

The recollection came as a heavy blow to him.

He had refused to "beg off." He had refused the proffered kindness of his Form master. His refusal had deeply angered Mr. Quelch—justly angered him. Was he likely to relent now? And could Wharton so subdue his stubborn pride as to ask him—eating his own words?

The bell rang for third lesson, and Harry Wharton went into the Form-room with the rest of the Remove.

During the lesson he was thoughtful and abstracted. He could not but think of the dilemma he was in.

He had to go and meet his uncle at Folkestone—that was a settled matter. He was quite resolved upon that. But to ask Mr. Quelch to let him off! All his pride revolted at the thought. But for the happenings of the previous evening he might have done so, but after that—And suppose that his request was refused, as was only too probable in the circumstances?

It was not to be wondered at that Harry Wharton gave little attention to his Form master during that lesson. Neither was it to be wondered at that Mr. Quelch, finding him inattentive, took it for granted that his carelessness was intentional, and was meant as insubordination. A random answer, at last, brought down the Remove master's wrath on Wharton's head, and for several minutes Mr. Quelch scolded him with his tongue, the Remove looking on with subdued smiles, and Wharton—during the infliction with a stony face.

The Lower Fourth were dismissed at last. Wharton was glad enough to escape from the Form-room.

"Wharton's going strong, isn't he?" grinned Skinner in the corridor. "I expected Quelch to pile in with the pointer."

"Well, he asked for it," said Snop. "Blessed if I can understand the chap lately!" said Peter Todd. "He seems simply bent on getting Quelch's rag out."

Harry Wharton had plenty of food for thought in the interval before dinner. He looked out a time-table for his train, and found that he had ample time to get to Folkestone after dinner—if he was allowed to go. That was the question.

At two o'clock he should be taking his train. At that hour Mr. Quelch would be setting him his detention task in the Form-room.

There was nothing for it but to "eat humble pie," and subdue his pride to the extent of asking leave from his Form master. Either that or he would have to disappoint his uncle. It was a bitter draught for the proud-spirited junior to swallow; but his duty to his uncle came first. He had failed once, but he would not fail again. At any cost to his pride, he would obtain an exact for the afternoon. Even an apology to his Form master, bitter enough as it would be, would not be too heavy a price to pay. There was a struggle in Wharton's mind, but his better self prevailed and he made up his mind to it.

At dinner he glanced at Mr. Quelch at the head of the Remove table rather anxiously.

The Remove master took no notice of him. If he passed a remark with any fellow he was careful to avoid speaking to Wharton.

Immediately after dinner there was a buzz of preparation among the fellows who were going over to St. Jude's. At half-past one the brake rolled off with Vernon-Smith and his comrades.

Harry Wharton stood on the steps of the School House and watched them go.

"Best of luck, Smithy!" he called out. The Bounder looked rather grim.

"You won't be helping on the luck, anyhow," he said, and the brake rolled away.

Wharton stood for some minutes after the footballers had gone, thinking. He became aware of the fact that Mr. Quelch was looking out of his study window, and the thought came into his mind that the Form master had suspected him of an intention of going with the footballers, in spite of detention.

Wharton smiled faintly at the thought. Certainly he was not giving much attention to football that afternoon.

Mr. Quelch disappeared from his window. Wharton turned his steps at last in the direction of the Remove master's study. His repugnance to asking a favour of Mr. Quelch was deep and strong, but he had made up his mind to it. Still, his footsteps lagged as he approached the Remove master's door.

He tapped.

"Come in!"

Wharton entered. The Remove master was preparing a paper at his table—probably the detention task which was to occupy Wharton during that afternoon.

"Well?"

Mr. Quelch looked at the junior with an icy glance, and his voice and manner were utterly uncompromising.

Wharton's heart sank a little. The



Colonel Wharton came off the gangway and signalled to his nephew. "Harry, my boy," he said warmly. "Uncle!" Wharton's face was very bright as he grasped the colonel's hand. "Uncle, I'm so jolly glad to see you again." (See Chapter 9.)

colour came into his cheeks as he spoke in a low voice.

"I—I've come to ask you a favour, sir."

"Indeed!" Mr. Quelch's tone was grimly sarcastic. "You have changed your views very considerably, Wharton, since yesterday, it appears."

A bitter reply trembled on Wharton's lips, but he restrained it.

"Yes, sir. Would you be so very kind, sir, as to allow my detention to stand over till Wednesday for a very particular reason?"

"Certainly not!"

Short and sharp was the answer. The two words came almost like pistol-shots from the Remove master.

Wharton breathed quickly.

"If you'll let me explain, sir—"

"You need explain nothing. Yesterday I should have given your request consideration—in fact, I should have acceded to it. You were aware of that, and your only acknowledgment was insolent ingratitude. You need say no more, Wharton. I shall not listen to you."

"But, sir—"

"I repeat, Wharton, that I will not hear you!" said Mr. Quelch, raising his voice a little. "If you regret your insolence and ingratitude I am glad. But I doubt it—I doubt it. Your conduct in the Form-room this morning certainly does not seem to indicate anything of the kind. You may leave my study."

"It's important, sir—if you'll let me tell you—"

"Leave my study!"

"But—"

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet.

"Another word, Wharton, and I shall cane you! Leave my study this instant. You will be in the Form-room at two o'clock, when I shall have your task ready for you. Now go!"

Wharton opened his lips again, his eyes glinting; and Mr. Quelch picked up the cane from his table.

"I have warned you, Wharton—another word and I shall cane you! Leave my study!"

Harry Wharton, his face pale with rage, left the study, and the door closed behind him.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

French Leave!

BILLY BUNTER blinked at Wharton through his big spectacles and grinned.

Wharton had come out of the House in coat and hat—which did not look much like repairing to the Remove-room for detention.

It was turned half-past one, and if Harry was to catch the train at Court-field Junction he had no time to lose.

He intended to catch the train.

Mr. Quelch had refused to listen to him; there was no question now of an appeal. Had the Form master seen Colonel Wharton's letter, doubtless it would have had an effect on him. But Wharton had not been allowed even to mention the letter. Probably Mr. Quelch's impression was that the captain of the Remove desired at the last moment to join the footballers going to St. Jude's.

Wharton would have explained, but he had not been allowed to explain. Like Pharaoh of old, he hardened his heart.

Leave was refused; and he was going without leave! He did not pause for a single moment to reflect about it. He was going—that was settled—and he did not lose a moment.

But he did not head for the gates when he left the House. He did not wish to pass within sight of Mr. Quelch's study window. He skirted the school buildings, intending to cut through the Cloisters, and escape by way of climbing a wall beyond the cloisters. Billy Bunter, loafing about idly in the quad, spotted him and grinned and rolled after him at once. Bunter was not a keen youth, but he was quite keen enough to see what was perfectly obvious—that the captain of the Remove was planning to "cut" detention.

"I say, Wharton!" called out Bunter, rolling after the hurrying junior.

Wharton did not heed, except by quickening his pace. But the Owl of the Remove was not to be denied.

"Wharton!" he bawled.

Harry Wharton hurried on, setting his lips. He was desirous of escaping attention just then; Wingate and Leder of the Sixth could be seen in the distance, and it was possible that the prefects

knew that he was under detention that day. If they were aware of it, certainly they would not allow him to get out of school bounds, once their attention was drawn to him.

"Wharton!" roared Bunter. "I say, Wharton, where are you going? Aren't you detained, old chap?"

Wharton stopped and looked round, his eyes gleaming. Bunter grinned cheerfully. He was quite aware of the power in his fat hands at that moment, and he was bringing the lofty and disdainful captain of the Remove to heel, as he regarded it. A fellow who was cutting detention, and in danger of being collared any moment by the grasp of authority, was not in a position to be cheeky, Bunter considered.

He rolled on, grinning, and joined the captain of the Remove. Wharton's angry eyes gleamed at him.

"What do you want?" he said, between his teeth. "You fat rotter, what do you want?"

"A little civility, to begin with," said Bunter coolly.

Wharton clenched his hands.

"You touch me, old scout, and I'll yell to Wingate!" grinned Bunter. "I jolly well know you're cutting detention. He, he, he!"

"You fat fool!"

"Better language, please!" said Bunter, wagging a fat forefinger at the angry junior. "I don't want any swank, Wharton! I can tell you that I'm fed-up with your swank, like most of the fellows."

"I'm in a hurry!"

"He, he, he! I know! He, he, he!"

Wharton gave the Owl of the Remove a grim look, and went on towards the Cloisters. Bunter rolled by his side, grinning.

"I say, Wharton, don't race along like that—I'm not going to run. Slow down!"

"Clear off, you fat fool!"

"If you want me to call Wingate—"

Wharton slowed down. The captain of Greyfriars was within hearing of a yell from Bunter, and Wharton had no time to lose in an altercation with Wingate of the Sixth. It was better to waste a minute or two upon Bunter than to risk being stopped by the head prefect.

"That's better," said Bunter. "I say, Wharton, it's an awful cheek to cut detention like this. Quelch will be in a royal wax."

"Mind your own business."

"I say, he's as likely as not to come over to St. Jude's after you," said Bunter, with a chuckle.

"What?"

"Ten to one on it," said the Owl of the Remove, trotting along beside Wharton. "You know what a determined beggar he is. Just like him to take the next train over, and collar you on the football-field, and march you off under the eyes of all the St. Jude's lot. He, he, he! How would you like that?"

Wharton laughed angrily. As he was not going anywhere near St. Jude's, it did not matter to him what Mr. Quelch's proceedings might be. He wondered whether Mr. Quelch would share Bunter's misapprehension as to his object in going out of bounds; but he did not care.

"Tain't a laughing matter, you know," said Bunter. "You'll look no end of a silly as before the St. Jude's fellows, if Quelch comes after you. Take my advice and go back."

"You fat idiot!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Shut up and clear off!" snapped Harry.

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"Yah!"

Wharton was entering the Cloisters now, and Bunter rolled on with him. Wingate of the Sixth was out of hearing, and no other prefect was to be seen. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth were sauntering in the Cloisters, but Fourth Form fellows did not matter. Wharton hardly heeded their presence at all.

"I say, Harry, old man—"

Wharton quickened his pace.

"Don't hurry like that, old chap!" gasped Bunter. "I say, old fellow, did I tell you I was expecting a postal-order?"

No answer.

"I've been disappointed," went on Bunter. "It didn't come by the post to-day—only your blessed uncle's letter, and that hadn't any remittance in it, had it?"

"No, um!"

"Jolly mean of him, isn't it?"

"Ass!"

"Well, my postal-order is practically certain to come along by the next post," said Bunter. "I suppose you wouldn't mind handing me the five bob, and taking the postal-order when it comes?"

Wharton put on more speed.

"Hold on, I tell you!" roared Bunter, his fat little legs twinkling in pursuit. "I say, Wharton, if you want me to call Wingate—" It had escaped the Owl's observation that Wingate of the Sixth was now out of sound and sight.

Harry Wharton stopped, and turned on his fat pursuer.

"That's better!" grinned Bunter. "I thought I'd call you to order, you cheeky rotter! Brought to heel—what? Now, about that postal-order, Wharton. Oh—ow—I say—yarooooop!"

Two angry hands grasped the Owl of the Remove, and sat him down forcibly on the stone flags of the Cloisters.

Bump!

"There, you fat rascal!" gasped Wharton. "Sit there, bother you."

"Yooooop!"

Wharton ran on again, and in a minute more he was dropping over a wall. Billy Bunter staggered up, spluttering.

"Wharton! You cheeky rotter! Wingate—I say, Wingate! Ow! Wow! Beast! He's gone! Ow! I say, you fellows!" Bunter blinked at Temple, Dabney & Co., who were strolling up. "I say, Wharton's out detention! He's cleared off!"

"Has he?" said Cecil Reginald Temple. "Well, what business is that of yours, you fat frog?"

"Oh, really, Temple—"

"Good luck to him," said Fry. "Rotten hard cheese to be detained on a match day. I hope he'll get clear."

"Oh, rather," said Dabney.

"I say, where's Wingate? Where's that blessed prefect? I'll jolly well see whether he can bump me down like that! I'll jolly well—I say, you fellows, where's Wingate?"

Cecil Reginald Temple took the Owl of the Remove by the collar.

"Sneakin'—what!" he asked.

"Ow! Leggo!"

"You're goin' to tell a giddy prefect, are you?"

"Ow! Wow!"

"Well, you're not," said Temple, with a grin. "You're goin' to walk with me for a few minutes, Bunter. I'll keep hold of your collar."

"Ow! Leggo, you beast! I—groogh! Don't twist my collar like that, you rotter! You're chook-chook-chooking me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Walk!" said Temple.



Wharton came towards the window, apparently not seeing Bob Cherry & Co. standing there; he looked only at the Bounder. "How did the match go, Smithy?" he asked. "A draw—nil all," said Smithy. "We missed you." "Sorry, it couldn't be done." "You tried to get to the match, I suppose, as you broke detention?" said the Bounder curiously. "Eh! To St. Jude's? No! I went to Folkestone," said Wharton. (See Chapter 12.)

"Sha'n't! Ow! Leggo! Sha'n't!" spluttered Bunter.

"Kick him, Dab!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney. He kicked, and there was a terrific roar from William George Bunter.

"Yarooooop!"

"Have another, old fat bean?" asked Dabney.

"Yow-ow-ow! No! I—I—I'll walk with you, with—with pleasure, you chaps! Ow, ow, ow!"

And for five minutes the Owl of the Remove walked the Cloisters with the Fourth Formers, Temple's hand on his collar. By that time Cecil Reginald Temple considered that Wharton had had a sufficiently good start, and he released the fat junior.

"Dribble him!" said Temple.

"Whoooo!"

And Billy Bunter, yelling, fled for his fat life, with the laughing Fourth-Formers behind him, dribbling him out of the Cloisters. It was not William George Bunter's lucky afternoon.

Meanwhile, Harry Wharton was on the Courthold road, keeping up a steady trot. He scarcely paused for a moment on the way. The express was in the station when he reached that building. The captain of the Remove took his ticket for Folkestone, hurried to the platform, and jumped into the nearest carriage.

The express rolled out of the station.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

MR. QUELCH glanced at the clock on his mantelpiece, and rose from his table. With a paper in his hand he quitted his study, and walked to the Remove Form-room. It was a minute after two. The paper contained a detention task for Wharton, and it was not an easy

task. In his annoyance with the rebellious junior, Mr. Quelch had rather erred on the side of making the task a difficult one, and it really was more suitable for a Fifth Form fellow than a junior in the Lower Fourth.

That task was to keep Wharton hard at work until half-past five. At half-past five Mr. Quelch was to come to the Form-room and release him, if the task was satisfactorily done. If it was otherwise, further detention was the probable fate of the delinquent.

If Mr. Quelch erred on the side of severity now, he was scarcely to be blamed. He had tried kindness and patience with this recalcitrant member of his Form, and he had failed to influence him by kindness or patience, and he had come to the conclusion that only severity was likely to have effect upon the stubborn fellow. He blamed himself, indeed, for having shown too much forbearance; and the rather natural result was that he was prone to make severity a little too severe.

His face was cold and hard as he entered the Form-room.

There he glanced at the desks.

One desk should have been occupied; one junior should have been in the deserted Form-room. Wharton had been distinctly ordered to be there at two o'clock; it was now past two.

He was not there.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips hard.

He laid the detention paper on Wharton's desk, and stood waiting. This was a little more of the rebel's impertinence. He was intentionally late—so it seemed to the Remove master. He did not yet suspect that the rebel did not intend to come in for detention at all.

Minute followed minute, and the Form master still waited, his grim face growing grimmer and grimmer.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 833.

At ten minutes past two he sat down to wait, his eyes on the door, with a dangerous glint in them.

But the expected junior did not enter at the door.

At a quarter-past two Mr. Quelch rose to his feet again, and left the Form-room. It had dawned upon him that Wharton did not intend to come in. With a deep anger in his breast, the Remove master went in search of the truant.

He ascended to the Remove passage and looked into Study No. 1. It was empty.

Skinner was loafing in the Remove passage, and Mr. Quelch called to him.

"Have you seen Wharton, Skinner?"

"No, sir; not since dinner."

"You do not know where he is?"

"I thought he was detained in the Form-room, sir," answered Skinner, with a stare.

"Very well!"

Mr. Quelch went down the Remove staircase again, Skinner staring after him and grinning.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Skinner.

"He's out detention, has he? Phew! I've heard of fellows asking for trouble, but Wharton seems to be fairly yelling out for it. He'll get it!"

And Skinner rushed away in search of his pals, Snoop and Stott, to tell them the entertaining news. Many of the Remove fellows had gone over to St. Jude's with the football team; but those who remained at Greyfriars were soon all in possession of the news that Harry Wharton had cut detention in the teeth of authority. The topic was discussed with breathless interest, and several fellows looked for Mr. Quelch, to keep an eye on him, and ascertain what he would do.

That the Remove master was already very angry with Wharton was no secret. That this last defiance of authority would put him into a "royal wax" was absolutely certain. Skinner opined that it meant a flogging, at least, for the offender; indeed, he declared hopefully that it might even mean the "sack."

"Fancy his Magnificence booted out of Greyfriars!" chuckled Skinner. "Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen! He's asking for it, you know—he's begging for it on his giddy knees! Hallo, there's Quelch!"

"Looks quite wild!" commented Snoop.

"Mad as a hatter!" grinned Skinner.

"Wild as a Hun? I don't think I'd care to be in Wharton's shoes when Quelch sees him again!"

"My hat! No fear!"

Mr. Quelch did not look exactly "wild," but his face was grim and hard-set. The glint in his eyes was indicative of deep wrath and resentment. He was still looking for Wharton; though, by this time, he suspected that the truant was outside the school precincts.

He caught sight of Skinner & Co. in the quad, and came towards them; and the decisive grinning of Skinner & Co. vanished instantly. They wondered uneasily whether their Form master's wrath was to turn upon them—no other victim being at hand. Well they knew that it was necessary to be wary of Mr. Quelch when he was in one of his "tantrums."

Skinner & Co. were looking quite solemn as they waited in trepidation for Mr. Quelch to speak.

"Skinner, you are probably aware of the time fixed for the football match at St. Jude's?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" gasped Skinner in relief. The vials of wrath were not, apparently to be poured upon his head.

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"What is the time?"

"Kick off at two-thirty, sir."

Mr. Quelch glanced at his watch. It was now twenty minutes to three.

"Very good," he said.

He turned back into the House. Two minutes later he emerged again, in coat and hat, and walked down quickly to the gates.

Skinner & Co. looked at one another blissfully.

"He's going over to St. Jude's!" murmured Stott. "My hat! Will he have the nerve to butt into a football match?"

"You bet!" grinned Snoop. "He'll march Wharton off by his ear. What a giddy entertainment for St. Jude's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But has Wharton gone to St. Jude's?" said Skinner doubtfully. "Ogilvy's got his place in the team—nothing was said that I know of about Wharton going on after them—"

"Where else can he have gone?" said Snoop.

"Bliss if I know! But if he's gone to St. Jude's to play footer he's a bigger ass than I supposed. He might have known that Quelch would go after him."

"His giddy Highness doesn't care!" grinned Snoop. "I say, what a come-down for that swanking ass, to be colared on the football field and marched off! Serve him jolly well right, too!"

"Yes, rather!"

Mr. Quelch, at least, had no doubts on the subject. He walked quickly down to Friardale to take his train. His authority had been defied—his detained pupil was, as he supposed, playing football that afternoon, in direct disregard of his commands. The boy had not chosen to ask for leave to go, when leave might have been given. He had chosen to go without leave; defiance of authority was his deliberate choice. And it was Mr. Quelch's fixed intention to stride on the football field at St. Jude's and march off the truant, regardless of the match, regardless of every consideration but the vindication of outraged authority. And it did not occur to him for one moment, as the train hummed on, that he was bound upon a fool's errand.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Out of Bounds!

HARRY WHARTON waved his hand.

From the Chantrel boat, moored in Folkestone Harbour, the passengers were coming off; and the Greyfriars junior stood among the crowd that watched them, and he waved his hand at the sight of a tall, handsome, bronzed gentleman on the gangway.

Colonel Wharton's glance fell upon his nephew, and he made a sign to him and smiled.

A few minutes later he joined the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Harry, my boy!"

"Uncle!" Wharton's face was very bright as he grasped the colonel's hand. "Uncle, I'm so jolly glad to see you again."

The colonel smiled genially.

"I'm sure of that, Harry. Did you bring any of your friends with you?"

"No, I—I came alone, uncle."

Colonel Wharton glanced at his watch.

"You're not taking the train?" asked Harry.

"No; I shall wait for the next. We shall have a little over an hour," said Colonel Wharton. "I'm very glad you were able to come here and meet me, Harry. It would have been a disappointment for me had you not come."

If Harry Wharton had felt any regrets for his escapade those words would have banished it.

"I jolly well meant to come," he said.

"Let us get out of this crowd. We'll get some tea," said his uncle smiling.

"I'd have liked to come on to Greyfriars and had tea in the study; but time doesn't allow. This way, my boy!"

Wharton was conscious of a feeling of relief that his uncle had not been able to come on to Greyfriars. The colonel could scarcely have visited the school without learning a good deal that Wharton was far from desiring him to learn.

Seated at a table in the Folkestone hotel opposite his uncle, Wharton scanned the colonel's face rather anxiously. He could read many signs there of the stress the colonel had been through.

"You've come back well, uncle?"

"Quite, my boy; only a little run down, perhaps, and in need of a rest," said his uncle. "Winter in Russia is hard, and I am not quite so young as I was, you know. I shall finish the winter at Cannes, and take your aunt with me. It was a disappointment to me not to be back in time for Christmas."

"And to me," said Harry.

"What did you do with your Christmas holidays, my boy? Did you stay with Nugent?"

Wharton's face clouded slightly.

"Well, no," he said. "Vernon-Smith, of my Form, was going abroad with his father, and they asked me, so I went."

"Where did you go?"

"To Nice," said Harry. "But I didn't stay, after all; I came back in time for Christmas Day, as it turned out. As it turned out, I didn't seem to pull with Smithy very well."

The colonel gave him a rather penetrating look, but asked no questions, rather to Wharton's relief.

"Then I stayed with some Rookwood chaps," said Harry. "Jimmy Silver asked me to his place, and I stayed there with his party."

"I think I have seen him," said Colonel Wharton, with a nod. "A very decent lad, I think."

"One of the best," said Harry.

"So you had a good time, after all?"

"Oh, yes, quite! I finished the vacation with aunt, in Bournemouth," said Harry.

"A little dull for you, perhaps," said the colonel. "Never mind, we shall make up for it when the Easter vacation comes along."

Wharton munched his cake, and did not speak for a few minutes. His face was a little flushed when he spoke again.

"Uncle, I—"

"Yes, my boy?" said the colonel kindly.

"You remember, before you left for Russia, you sent me a telegram at the school, before the end of last term?" said Harry, his colour deepening. "I—I could have seen you before you left, and I—I didn't! I stayed to play in the Highcliffe match. Uncle, if I'd known you were going to Russia, going into danger—" His voice faltered.

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"I understand, my boy. You did not know; my departure was so sudden. I have not blamed you."

"But I've blamed myself," said Harry remorsefully. "I know I ought to have come at once—I know. I wanted to come, too. It's made me rotten and miserable all the time you've been away to—"

"My dear boy, don't think about it any more," said the colonel. "I quite understand—"

"I felt like a rotter," said Harry. "I—I suppose I acted like a rotter really. But I never meant—"

"I understand, my boy. Say no more about it," said the colonel kindly, and his glance at his nephew was very affectionate.

The old gentleman began to speak of Greyfriars, and the talk ran on cheerily, the minutes passing quickly enough. Colonel Wharton looked at his watch at last.

"I must think of my train now," he said. "It goes at four-fifteen. And your train back, Harry?"

"Four-thirty is the next for me; but I'm in no hurry, anyhow," said Harry.

"Then you shall see me off, as my train goes first. I shall not see you again till Easter, my boy; so I am very, very glad you were able to come here to-day."

The colonel rose.

Harry Wharton stood by the carriage door after his uncle had taken his place in the train. A few more words were exchanged, then a last hand-shake, and the express rolled out of the station with Colonel Wharton.

Wharton stood on the platform and watched the train out of sight. Not for a moment had the colonel suspected the real state of affairs—that his nephew was there without leave, that serious trouble waited for him when he returned to Greyfriars. Not for a moment had it crossed his mind that Harry was in trouble at the school; that he had broken detention and defied authority in order to come to Folkestone that afternoon. Had he guessed—had he known—Wharton wondered what he would have thought. Certainly he would have censured the junior's action—there could not be much doubt of that. The old soldier had severe ideas on the subject of discipline. Yet Wharton had not the slightest regret that he had come—he was glad that he had come.

He turned away at last and went to his own platform. He was quite calm as he took his place in the train for Southfield. What awaited him at Greyfriars he did not know; but whatever it was, he had the courage to face it; he had called the tune, and he did not shrink from paying the piper. Whatever might be the outcome of his escapade, he did not regret it, and he was prepared to take the consequences.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Quelch Butts In!

"A JOLLY tough game!" remarked the Bounder.

Vernon Smith sucked a lemon, breathing hard.

The first half of the match at St. Jude's was over, and the footballers were enjoying a well-earned respite.

Lynn and his merry men were in great fun, there was no doubt about that. A goal had been scored by either side, though both had had narrow escapes. The tussle had been hard from the kick-off, and surely enough had the Greyfriars footballers missed Harry Wharton from their ranks. Ogilvy of the Remove

played up well in his place; he was a good man, and he was doing his best. But the Remove team missed the junior who was the finest forward in the Lower School at Greyfriars.

"The toughness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, who was lumping a little from an accidental kick on the knee. "But we shall beat the esteemed and ridiculous Jolies."

"We'll try, anyhow," said Bob Cherry. "I—I wish—" Bob did not finish expressing his wish.

Johnny Bull gave a grunt. "Wharton ought to be here," he said. "He could have been here if he'd liked, bother him and his silly pride—swank, rather!"

"Well, it can't be helped now," said Frank Nugent.

"He ought to be here. St. Jude's are in better form than we've ever known them before; they're putting up a game like St. Jim's or Rookwood. Wharton knew he was wanted. If we go home licked it will be his fault."

"Well, we won't go home licked if we can help it," said the Bounder cheerfully.

"We're pretty well matched, I think," said Peter Todd. "It's really anybody's game so far."

"All the more reason why Wharton should be here!" growled Johnny Bull. "We want just a little bit more to beat them. Ogilvy's playing up well—"

"Thanks!" said Ogilvy, with a smile.

"But he's not a patch on Wharton in the front line. You know that as well as I do, Oggy!"

"Thanks again!" said the Scottish junior, laughing. "I was thinking that we wanted a bit more beef at back."

Johnny Bull granted—he was right back.

"Look here, you are—" he said.

"Time's up!" said the Bounder.

The footballers went back into the field, and Lynn of St. Jude's came along with his men. Round the field a big crowd of St. Jude's fellows had gathered, and there was a sprinkling of Remove fellows from Greyfriars, who had followed the team on their bicycles. Among the Greyfriars fellows present the chief topic was Wharton—his absence from the game, and how much he was needed to pull off a win. His well-known quality as a footballer added to the intense exasperation caused by his absence. A "dud" would not have been missed.

"If we lose this game," said Bolsover major to a group of Removes behind the goal, "I shall say some jolly plain things to Wharton when I get back!"

"Sums here!" said Russell.

"Leaving it to Smithy!" said Bolsover major, with a snort. "Nice sort of a skipper—I don't think!"

"He's handling the team jolly well," said Vivian.

"He picked out Ogilvy from the reserves," snorted Bolsover major. "I offered, and he turned me down."

Russell grinned. He was Ogilvy's chum, and he had come over chiefly because Robert Donald was playing.

"My dear chap," he said, "if Smithy hadn't turned you down we'd have scalped him."

"What?" roared Bolsover major.

"We're handicapped by Wharton standing out," said Russell. "But Smithy's made the best of a bad job. He couldn't have put you in, old bean. What would be the good of making matters worse?"

"Why, you cheeky ass!"

"There they go again," said Jimmy Vivian. "There goes the whistle. Now look out for goals."

"Look out for rats," growled Bolsover major. "There won't be any goals."

"How's it going?" asked a voice behind the Greyfriars group, and Bolsover major looked round and saw Skinner. Skinner and Snoop and Stott had just arrived.

"It isn't going at all," said Bolsover major. "Nobody's done anything so far but plunge about and gather up mud. What the thump are you doing here, Skinner?" He stared at the black sheep of the Remove. It was quite a surprise to see Skinner at a football match.

"Oh, I've hiked over to see the giddy show," said Skinner. And Snoop and Stott chuckled.

"Not much to see, anyhow. Blessed if I ever expected a slacker like you to take the trouble," said Bolsover major. "You hardly ever turn up on Little Side for a home match, and it's a good step here. Have you got a bet on the game, you outsider?"

"Not at all. Where's Wharton?" Harold Skinner was scanning the players from behind the goal.

Smithy told his men were going hot and strong again, and Lynn & Co. of St. Jude's were playing up hard. There was a good deal of mud about, and two or three of the players were scarcely recognisable. Certainly Harry Wharton was not to be recognised among them.

Bolsover major stared at the question.

"Wharton? Isn't he at Greyfriars?"

"Hasn't he come here?" exclaimed Snoop.

"Here? I haven't seen him, if he has."

"My hat!" said Skinner.

"Not here!" ejaculated Snoop. "Then why the merry thump did he cut detention?"

"Has he cut detention?"

"Ho jolly well has!"

"More fool to do it!" said Bolsover major. "Queelch will be as mad as a hatter when he misses him."

"He missed him at once, and cleared out after him," said Snoop. "We thought Wharton had come over here to play, of course, and came to see the show. Queelch's coming here."

"Great Scott!"

"He came by train, and we rather beat him on the bikes," said Skinner. "But we passed him on the road not a hundred yards from here. He may be here any minute."

"After Wharton!" exclaimed Bolsover major.

"Just that."

"But Wharton isn't here."

"Queelch doesn't know that yet," chuckled Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bolsover major in great merriment. "That's one on Queelch, at any rate."

"We've come over for nothing—there won't be a shindy," grunted Stott. "I thought we were going to see Wharton looked off the field with Queelch's clutch on his giddy ears."

"Well, Queelch's face will be worth seeing when he doesn't find Wharton," said Skinner with a chuckle. "Hallo, there he is!"

The somewhat angular figure of Mr. Quelch came in view, in the direction of the school buildings. He was coming towards the football field at a rapid walk, his face grim.

The rows spread like wildfire among the Greyfriars fellows in the crowd, that Mr. Quelch was there, after Wharton, who had broken detention. Their eyes

(Continued on page 16.)



Supplement No. 200-

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON

Week Ending January 10th, 1925.

FOOTBALL GOSSIP!

By H. VERNON-SMITH.

THE footer season is swinging along in merry style, and the Remove Eleven is showing topping form. We have collected the scalps, so to speak, of Highcliffe and Rookwood; but we got something of a shock on the occasion of our last visit to St. Jim's. The "Saints" sent us home with our tails between our legs, to brood over a 2-1 defeat. Tom Merry & Co. were on top of their form, and our defence had a grumbling time. Frank Nugent scored our solitary point.

THERE is talk of the annual match between the "Greyfriars Herald" and "Billy Bunter's Weekly" being revived. After what happened on former occasions, I should not have thought Bunter would be anxious to revive it! His eleven was not merely licked, but completely overwhelmed and pulverised! But Bunter, like the fat and fabled optimist he is, fondly hopes to turn the tables on the next occasion. We shall see! My own forecast of the score is "twenty-five to nil"—and the twenty-five will NOT come from the boot of William George Bunter!

GOSLING, the porter, tells me that he used to be a great footballer in his youth. "Which I used to keep goal for me native village," says Gosling, "and I 'eld the fort in great style!" Gosling's footballing days are not yet over, for, as the keeper of the gate, he is still a "custodian"!

BULSTRODE of the Remove comes forward with a suggestion that goalposts should be reduced to half their present width and height. But, then, Bulstrode has an axe to grind. He happens to be a goalkeeper! What would the forwards have to say about it, I wonder, if Bulstrode's suggestion were put into force?

DICKY NUGENT is appealing for funds for the Fags' Football Club. He says that the balance-sheet shows a deficit of fourpence-halfpenny on the season's working. If some Good Samaritan will forward this amount to Dicky, he will solemnly undertake not to blow it at the tuckshop!

A correspondent wishes to know which I consider to be the strongest eleven the Remove can put out. Here is my selection: Goal: Bulstrode; Backs: Bull and Brown; Half-backs: Cherry, P. Todd, and Linley; Forwards: Hurree Singh, Nugent, Wharton, Redwing, and

H. VERNON-SMITH.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 385.

THE SNOW FIGHT!

By DICK PENFOLD.



AT Greyfriars, when the sun was low,
We battled in a sea of snow;
And you could see a score or so
Of schoolboys rolling rapidly.

And Greyfriars saw a stirring sight
That wild and windy winter night.
Fellows came flocking to the fight,
To join the rowdy revelry.

In shorts and sweaters all arrayed,
Full many a thrilling charge we made.
"Forward, the gallant 'White' Brigade!
And charge with all your chivalry!"

Loud rings Bob Cherry's battle-cry:
"Rally, Removites! Do or die!
We'll win, or know the reason why!
Pile in with all your energy!"

The air is thick with balls of white,
Faster and fiercer grows the fight.
And foes are falling left and right
Like toy troops in a nursery.

Then Wharton gives a joyous shout:
"We've won the day, without a doubt!
We've put the Upper Fourth to rout
And gained a glorious victory!"

The Head comes striding on the scene.
"Pray, what does this disturbance mean?"
"We've ruffled him, the dear old bean,"
Says Smithy, bolting hastily.

The fighters flee with one accord.
The Head surveys the scattering horde.
A snowball hits his mortar-board,
And sends it rolling rapidly.

Ah, many a shot, at random sent,
Finds mark the armer little meant!
Bull did that deed (without intent),
And now must pay the penalty!

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

WINTER is not nearly so black as it is painted, in my humble opinion. The poets speak of "drear December," and "the winter of our discontent." But, then, poets don't know the joys of snow-fighting and skating and tobogganing. You can't imagine Shakespeare and Milton rolling one another in the snow, or Lord Tennyson coming downhill at breakfast speed in a toboggan.

Winter is no season for the poets. Many of them, including Byron and Shelley, dodged it by going abroad, and settling in "that paradise of exiles—Italy," where blue skies and bright sunshine are the order of the day.

But schoolboys can appreciate winter if poets can't. Look at the grand and varied sports it offers! There's footer to begin with. Then we have the snow-sports I have already mentioned, always provided the clerk of the weather is decent enough to send us snow. We also have hockey and boxing and cross-country running, all of which send the blood coursing through our veins, and make us despise the stuffy study with its roaring fire.

Of course, there are some people who dislike winter, even at Greyfriars. Alonzo Todd calls it the season of ills and chills. Lord Mauleverer bemoans having to turn out of his snug bed on a cold and frosty morning. Billy Bunter hates winter because the cold weather gives him an enormous appetite which he lacks the means of gratifying. And I don't suppose Gosling, the porter, is frightfully keen on winter, either. It touches up his rheumatics "crool bad."

But the average healthy, sport-loving fellow will not listen to any slanders about winter. Some people make it a sort of "grousing season." Well, let them get on with it. They won't catch colds and coughs and chills if they live a healthy, open-air existence.

This is our Winter Sports Number, and it discovers our talented schoolboy journalists at their best. They have worked very hard to make it a rattling good issue, and I feel sure you will agree that they have deserved well of their country.

By the way, I am always keen and eager to read of the winter pursuits of my reader-chums—their footer matches, skating carnivals, and so forth. So write when you like, and as often as you like, knowing that your letters will be as welcome as the flowers in May, or should I say the snowdrops in December, to

HARRY WHARTON,
[Supplement 4]



The Fight for The Cup!

By
DORIS NUGENT.

A thrilling boxing story, written with power, punch & pep.

ST. SAM'S was all agog with excitement! The fags were in a fever; the other fellows were in a ferment; even the Head was nearly off his rocker. The wave of excitement, like a big broom, swept him fairly off his feet!

It was the last day of the grate boxing tournament. And the two fellows who had fought their way to the final were to meet in immortal combat in the gymnasium, in order to decide the destination of the Gold Cup which was being presented by the Governors.

Burleigh of the Sixth, the handsome, popular skipper of St. Sam's, was one of the finalists. The other was Broot major—a big, boodling, bombastick bouncer, who had won all his contests by means of fowl play.

Everybody wanted old Burleigh to win, of course. And nobody was more keen than Burleigh himself. He would soon be leaving St. Sam's, to go into business with his father's firm—the firm of Burleigh, Armstrong, & Sturdee, furniture removers. And it was Burleigh's grate ambition to take the Gold Cup with him when he went.

"If I don't win the Cup," he confided to his pal Swotter, "it will break my heart!"

"Oh, you'll win it all right, old man," said Swotter. "If I'm anything of a proff, you'll administer the knock-out to Broot major in the first round!"

Burleigh looked doubtful.

"Broot's a tuff broof," he said. "Besides, he's a rotten fowler. He beat Harrison by kicking him on the shins, and he licked Jones major by grabbing him round the waist and chucking him over the ropes."

Swotter nodded.

"Thank goodness, the final will be refereed by Mr. Justice, and he will put his foot down on such fowl tatticks. I hope you give Broot a thundering good hiding. He deserves it, for his Broot-ality!"

Swotter's hope was echoed by everybody at St. Sam's.

When the time for the grate fight arrived, the gym was packed to overflowing.

There was a wild burst of cheering when handsome, popular Burleigh strode into the ring. A fine athlete he looked, with his beaming chest, his wopping biceps, and his head thrown back in proud defiance.

"Good old Burleigh!"

"You're the man for us!"

"Hooray!"

Then Broot major, with an evil leer on his hideous face, slunk stealthily into the ring.

"My faw means no fowl; I'll win!" he had just remarked to his second.

There was a chorus of hooting and hissing. Everybody hated Broot major. He looked like a misshapen gorilla, with bare on his arms like claws.

Mr. Justice, the referee, raised his hand for silence. Then, glancing at his watch, he crapped out the dramatick word: "Time!"

Broot major led off with a right swing which came into painful contact with the referee's nose. With a yell of anguish, Mr. Justice hopped back out of range.

The next minute the two fighters were going for each other like wildcats. It was a ding-dong, hammer-and-tongs, give-and-take affair.

Broot major landed home a few rib-crackers, but he had all the worst of that ferce first round. Burleigh stood as firm as a rock, and his right and left shot out relentlessly. He battered his opponent's face with merciless vigour. First he closed Broot major's right eye, then he flattened his nose; then he did him a good turn by removing a couple of front teeth which had overlapped Broot's lower lip. Those prominent teeth had been the chief cause of Broot major's ugliness, so that Burleigh, by removing them, was playing the part of a beauty specialist.

Round One ended in favour of Burleigh, so did Round Two. Ditto Round Three. Likewise Round Four.

And then Broot major considered that the time was ripe for him to interpose a few fowl tatticks. Lowering his head, he rushed at Burleigh in bull-like fashion, and butted him below the belt.

Burleigh crumpled up completely, and went down like a log.

There was a roar from the onlookers.

"Fowl! Fowl!"

"Oh, you Broot!"

"Check him off the field!" shouted a fag, mistaking it for a footer match in his excitement.

No sooner was Burleigh down, than his opponent sprang upon him like a beast of prey, and proceeded to punch and pummel him. But the iron grasp of Mr. Justice descended on Broot major's neck, and he was hauled to his feet.

"You are disqualifed, you cur!" said the Form master sternly. "I have no option but to award the fight to Burleigh."

"Hooray!"

"That's the stuff to give him, sir!"

"Justice without mercy!" remarked a wagg.

Swotter of the Sixth rushed into the ring, and helped Burleigh to his feet, and led him away from that scene of slaughter.

Poor old Burleigh was in such a pickle that his own mother wouldn't have known him. However, he had won the Gold Cup, and that was all that mattered.

But had he? Dark doubts crept into Burleigh's mind when he was summoned to the Head's study after the contest.

"I very much regret to inform you, Burleigh," said the Head, "that the Gold Cup, which was in my custody, has been nicked."

"I beg your pardon, sir—"

"Pinched!" said the Head dramatically.

"Looted! Lifted! Bergled! In my temporary absence just now, some sneak-thief came in and perloined it."

"Oh crumbs!"

It was a bitter blow to Burleigh, who had counted on taking that Gold Cup with him when he left St. Sam's.

Burleigh's burly frame was shaken with sobs as he staggered from the Head's study. Mr. Justice met him in the passidge, and wanted to know what was wrong. Burleigh stifled his sobs, and explained.

Mr. Justice looked very grim as he stepped into the Head's study.

"I hear the Gold Cup has been bergled, sir," he said.

The Head nodded. A guilty flush had come over his face, and he could not look Mr. Justice in the eyes.

"I don't believe a word about the berglar!" said the Form master. "There is something fishy about this, sir, and I think I am entitled to an explanation."

Then the Head confessed. He had a harrowing story to tell. It appeared he was in the clutches of moneylending sharks, and he had been obliged to pawn the Gold Cup in order to pay off the interest on a loan. Then he had told Burleigh that the Cup had been stolen.

"Keep it dark, Justice!" implored the Head.

"I shall lose my job if the Governors get to know about this! Think of the scandal that will arise if it leaks out that the headmaster has had transactions with moneylenders and pawnbrokers! Don't spill on Mr. Justice, there's a good fellow!"

Mr. Justice was awfully decent about it. Being a man of considerable means, he not only paid off the amount of the Head's loans, but he redeemed the Gold Cup, which was afterwards presented to Burleigh in Big Hall.

It was a grate occasion, and the fellows cheered till they were hoarse. But they little knew of the sordid secret which lurked behind the Gold Cup!

THE END.

MY FAVOURITE DINNERS!

BOB CHERRY:

All dinners come alike to me. I've a healthy appetite, and I can tackle "the good roast beef of Old England" with the same avility as I tackle steak-and-kidney pie or Irish stew. The Greyfriars cooks deserve to be congratulated, for most of their dishes are delicious, particularly when one is feeling as hungry as a hunter—or, rather, a Hunter!

BILLY BENTER:

My favorite dinner is roast pork, boiled mutton, Sir Loins of Beef, rabbit pie, fried swaddles, apple dumplings, treacle tart, and blonmunge and custard. Of course, we never get such a dinner at Greyfriars, more's the pity. If we did, I shouldn't be the frail, skinny fellow I am at present. I should begin to put on flesh, and there would no longer be any risk of my going into galloping consumption. I consider the meals at Greyfriars ought to be bigger and better.

DICK PENFOLD:

When two years old—a raw beginner—fresh cow's milk was my favourite dinner. But when I reached the age of six, I rather fancied roasted chicks. And later on, when I was eight, boiled mutton suited me first-rate. Now, when my appetite's a good 'un, I have a liking for "steak pooden." When served with scarlet runner beans, and new potatoes, also greens, it is the very finest dish for which a Greyfriars chap could wish. Man wants but little here below. Steak pudding is my choice. What-ho!

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making signs to one another, as he was only too painfully aware. The Greyfriars boys—who had to meet Mr. Quelch later at Greyfriars—kept up a more respectful attitude, but Mr. Quelch detected more than one mocking glance.

Nobody in the Remove had ever dared to mock him before—but it seemed, for the time, as if his power had broken in his hands—the glory had departed from the house of Israel, so to speak. The august and dreaded Form master was, for the moment, merely an old donkey who had butted into a football match and made a fool of himself!

He could not find his voice. With a crimson, burning face, the hapless Remove master stood and stammered.

"Are you satisfied now, sir?" repeated the Bouncer, more openly sarcastic and derisive as Mr. Quelch stood tongue-tied and confused.

"No—yes—yes. If you give me your word, Vernon-Smith, that—that Wharton has not come here—"

"I've told you so already."

"I—I— Take care, Vernon-Smith!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Can we go on with the game, sir?" asked Bob Cherry, taking pity on the hapless gentleman.

"Yes—certainly—it appears that I was mistaken. I certainly believed that Wharton was here—"

"Will you get off this field?" asked the referee impatiently.

"Oh, certainly! Yes!"

"Shift that old donkey!" shouted a St. Jude's fellow. "What are you fooling about for? What's this game?"

Mr. Quelch stumbled off the football ground.

With a burning face, bitterly conscious of a sea of contemptuous and derisive eyes, he stumbled away. He

was deeply thankful when he was out of sight of St. Jude's.

"Well," said Bolsover major, with a deep breath, when the ball was tossed in, and the play resumed. "Well, did you ever see a man look such a fool?"

"Never!" chuckled Snoop.

"Hardly ever!" grinned Skinner. "I never thought Quelch had a blush left, at his age! But he was all giddy blushes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, I wouldn't like to take Wharton's place after this," remarked Russell. "Quelch will take it out of him, you bet."

"What-ho!" chuckled Skinner. "He's gone home like a giddy tiger hunting for his prey!"

"There they go—on the ball!" roared Bolsover major. "Play up, Greyfriars!"

Attention was concentrated on football again. Mr. Quelch, sitting in the train returning to Friardale, had ample leisure to reflect upon his unfortunate visit to St. Jude's—and his cheeks grew hot as he thought of it. Wharton had not been there—he had broken detention, but he had not gone to St. Jude's. Where had he gone? Had he guessed that the Form master would make such a mistake, and deliberately planned to land him in that ridiculous position—to make a fool of him, and to make him look a fool? It seemed only too probable to Mr. Quelch, in his present estranged and embittered frame of mind.

He longed to get back to Greyfriars—to get back and deal with the offending junior. Doubtless Wharton had returned by this time—laughing in his sleeve! That was an infuriating thought. The train was too slow for Mr. Quelch, and the walk from the station to Greyfriars had never seemed so long. But he reached the school at

last, in the winter dusk—only to learn that Harry Wharton had not yet come in.

Mr. Quelch retired to his study, to wait for the rebel of the Remove to come. He waited in wrath—wrath that was perforce bottled up for want of a victim, and which, like wine, improved with keeping. Wharton had not returned—but he had to return; and when at last he came, the storm would burst on his devoted head.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton's Return!

THE Greyfriars brake rolled homeward in the winter dusk.

Vernon-Smith and his men were returning, after the match, in a rather dissatisfied mood, so far as the football match was concerned. They had drawn with St. Jude's. The game had gone on ding-dong, with plenty of good play and hard play, to the final whistle; but neither side had succeeded in getting through to the net. A draw was better than a defeat, certainly; but it was not very satisfactory, and the teams had been so evenly matched, that a little more weight on the Greyfriars side would have turned the scale. Harry Wharton's presence, in fact, would have made all the difference. That reflection did not make the footballers disposed to forgive the captain of the Remove for his defection, as they regarded it.

The men had played up well. Smithy, as skipper, had handled them well. Ogilvy had done well in Wharton's place. All had been well, in fact, excepting the little circumstance that they had not been quite able to pull it off. And that little circumstance the whole team attributed to Wharton. They agreed that he had let them down.

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But in the returning brake the chief topic was not the drawn game with St. Jude's, but the mysterious proceedings of Harry Wharton, and his probable fate. He had cut detention, and had he done so to come over to St. Jude's to play for his school, as Mr. Quelch had taken for granted, certainly the Remove fellows would not have found fault with him.

But that he had not done. The football match had been interrupted. A Greyfriars master had been made to look ridiculous before a rival school, and Wharton had not been there, where certainly he ought to have been, if he had taken the risk of bolting at all.

"He may have meant to come," said Vernon-Smith, starting a new theory. "He must have meant to come, I think; but when Quelch got after him he was loaded off. That's how it looks to me."

"It's possible," said Bob Cherry. "I suppose it would be like him to refuse to ask leave, and then to take French leave."

"Just like him!" growled Johnny Bull.

"If he'd got there in time, we'd have played him and chanced it," said the Bounder. "Of course, Quelch knew that! Lucky he never turned up, as it happens, with Quelch on the trail! But I think he meant to stand by us, and that makes up for a lot."

And the Bounder's theory was generally adopted by the footballers. It seemed, indeed, the only possible explanation of what Wharton had done. He would not stoop his pride to ask for leave, but he had done his best to join the footballers at the last moment. He had failed, owing apparently to Mr. Quelch's prompt pursuit; but if the intention was there, the Removes felt that they ought to give him the credit for it. He had failed, but he had to pay for the attempt, and he would have to pay high; there was no doubt about that.

The brake arrived at Greyfriars, and the first question the footballers asked when they were in the House, was on the subject of Wharton. But they only learned that he had not come in yet.

Lock-up was early, and at lock-up Harry Wharton had not yet appeared. His continued absence was a puzzle to the Remove fellows, and to the Remove master as well.

Billy Dinter started a suggestion that he had run away from school—a suggestion that was received with laughter in the Rag. Wharton might have been guilty of any obstinacy or wilfulness, but certainly he was not the fellow to "play the goat."

Wingate of the Sixth came into the Rag after tea, and looked over the juniors there.

"Wharton's not here," he said.

"No, Wingate," answered Nugent.

"Anybody seen him?"

Nobody had.

"He seems to have cleared out of Founds this afternoon," said the captain of Greyfriars. "Anybody know where he went?"

Nobody knew.

"Well, he's wanted in his Form master's study when he comes in," said the prefect; and he left the Rag, looking perplexed.

"Blessed if I can make it out!" said Bob Cherry. "Where can the chap be all this time?"

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"It beats me! My hat! Quelch will be fairly boiling, waiting for him like this!"

"Flogging, at least!" said Skinner.

amiably. "Awful come-down for his giddy Highness—what?"

"Oh, shut up, Skinner!" growled Bob Cherry.

"May be the sack!" pursued Skinner, unheeding. "I know that Quelch's awfully fed-up with him. Wharton for the long jump—what?"

Bob Cherry glared at the amiable Skinner. As he was no longer on speaking terms with his old chum, really it should not have mattered to Bob. But Skinner's cheery anticipations seemed to annoy him.

"Are you going to shut up, Skinner, or do you want me to shut you up?" demanded Bob.

Skinner decided to shut up.

Bob Cherry & Co. stood in a rather serious group, by a window of the Rag that looked towards the gates. They had the window open, but it was very dusky in the quad. Only the dim shapes of the gaunt old leafless elms loomed up in the winter gloom.

"I say, shut that window!" bawled Skinner. "Do you want to freeze us all, bother you?"

Skinner was not heeded.

Bob Cherry and his comrades were worried, and they did not conceal the fact from themselves. They had been dimly aware that since Harry Wharton had broken off with them, he had been going down. Already he seemed to differ strangely from the fellow they had always known, and liked, and trusted. Now things seemed to be coming to a climax.

Not only had their erring chum broken detention, he had evidently broken school bounds; and now he was late for lock-up! A more reckless disregard of authority could hardly have been imagined. It was as if he were seeking to pile offence upon offence, till forgiveness was impossible.

It came miserably into Bob's mind that if they had still been upon the old terms with Wharton, this might never have happened—probably never would have happened. This perverse arrogance in his nature certainly never had broken out like this while he was on the old friendly footing with the Co.

If they had been more patient and conciliatory. But could they have been? The trouble, after all, had not started on their side.

But it was a miserable spectacle enough, to see the fellow who had been their friend, going from bad to worse—losing his popularity in his Form, losing the good opinion of his Form master, losing the position he had gained in the school, losing all. And for what? Nothing, so far as they could see, but the indulgence of a perverse pride.

"Was that the bell?" said Nugent suddenly.

"I think so. That will be Wharton."

The juniors strained their eyes through the gloom in the direction of the school gates. They heard the clang of a gate in the distance.

"That will be Wharton," said Vernon-Smith, joining the group at the window.

"I hope so!" muttered Bob. "He's late enough."

"Nearly seven," said the Bounder.

"The lateness is terrific."

A figure came in sight in the darkness, approaching the lighted front of the House. It was Harry Wharton, and the light fell upon his handsome face as he came nearer, passing quite near the open window of the Rag as he headed for the door. He was looking tired and thoughtful. The Bounder leaned from the window.

"Hallo, Wharton?"

The captain of the Removes started and glanced round. He seemed to have

been deep in thought, and had not observed the group of juniors at the window of the Rag.

He came over towards the window. He did not seem to see Bob Cherry and Co. standing there; he looked only at the Bounder.

"How did the match go, Smithy?"

"A draw, nil all," said Smithy. "We missed you!"

"Sorry! It couldn't be done!"

"You tried to get there, I suppose?"

"Eh! To St. Jude's? No!"

"You didn't!" exclaimed the Bounder in surprise.

"No."

"But you cut detention."

Wharton nodded.

"I thought you'd bolted, to get over to St. Jude's to play, if you could," explained the Bounder hotly. "Quelch thought so, too—he came over to St. Jude's and made a regular scene, interrupting the match—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"It was jolly hard to make him believe you weren't there! I thought you'd tried to come, and couldn't work it somehow—"

"Nothing of the kind."

"Then what the thump did you cut detention for?"

"I've been to Folkestone."

"Folkestone?" yelled the Bounder.

"Yes."

There was a crowding of the Remove fellows to the window of the Rag, as soon as they knew that Wharton was there. A dozen fellows heard his amazing reply to the Bounder.

"My only hat!" said Bolsover major. "You took the risk of bolting—and instead of coming on to St. Jude's to back us up, you went on a jaunt to Folkestone! I think you must be potty!"

Wharton glanced at him.

"You can think what you like, Bolsover," he answered coolly. "I'm not answerable to you, that I know of!"

"Well, I think we want a new football captain of the Remove, that's what I think!" bawled Bolsover major. "Jaunting off to the seaside, by gad, while the team's being licked at football!"

"We weren't licked," grunted Bob Cherry.

"Jolly near it, anyhow—and we'd have won if Wharton had been there, you know that!" hooted Bolsover. "Jaunting to Folkestone, by gad! If you want to know what I think, Wharton—"

"I don't!"

"I think it's rotten!" bawled Bolsover major. "That's what I think it is—rotten! Not playing the game, by gad! And I'm jolly glad that Quelch's after your scalp; serves you right!"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"You'd better go in to Mr. Quelch at once, Wharton," said Mark Linder gently. "And for goodness' sake, old fellow, don't cheek him! It's pretty serious already, you know."

"I know," said Harry.

He moved away from the window of the Rag, and was lost to sight as he went on to the big door of the School House.

"Cool!" said Skinner. "Oh, my Aunt Matilda—I should like to see Quelch's face when Wharton tells him that he's had an afternoon by the jolly old seaside! Phew!"

Harry Wharton came into the House. He was moving towards the staircase, when Wingate of the Sixth headed him off.

"So you've come back, Wharton," said the prefect, eyeing him with a sort of grim curiosity.

"Yea, Wingate; I've come back."

"You're to report yourself to Mr. Quelch at once."

"Very well!"

Wharton walked away towards his Form master's study, and a score of fellows who watched him go noted that he carried his head as high as ever.

"Cool as a giddy cucumber!" remarked Skinner. "Quelch will take that out of him, though."

Wharton undoubtedly was cool and composed—if he was riding for a fall, he had the courage to face that fall with steadfast fortitude. It extorted an unwilling admiration even from Skinner & Co.—they were painfully aware that, in Wharton's place, their looks would have been very different—that they would have approached Mr. Quelch's study in fear and trembling.

Certainly there was no sign of fear or trembling about Harry Wharton as he knocked at the Remove master's door with a firm hand.

"Come in!"

Mr. Quelch's deep voice was heard by a good many fellows in the corridor, and it had quite a thrilling effect. Skinner likened it to the growl of the Great Hugs Bear. But it did not seem to have any effect on Wharton.

He opened the door and passed into the study. The curious fellows in the passage had a momentary glimpse of Mr. Quelch—standing by his table, grim and menacing.

Then the door closed behind Harry Wharton.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Facing the Music!

HARRY WHARTON stood before his Form master, silent, in an attitude of respect. He knew that he had to go through it, and he had braced himself to meet the outbreak, and he was perfectly calm. He waited for his Form master to speak, only a slightly obstinate set of his lips indicating the un subdued pride and resistance within.

"So you have returned!"

Mr. Quelch's voice was very deep.

"Yes, sir."

"Where have you been?"

"I have been to Folkestone, sir."

"To—to Folkestone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you have not only broken detention, Wharton, but you have been many miles out of school bounds, without leave."

"Yes, sir."

There was a short silence. Wharton's quiet, matter-of-fact answers seemed rather to perplex the Remove master.

"Have you any excuse to offer, Wharton, for this extraordinary and rebellious outbreak?"

No answer.

Wharton wondered, silently, whether it would have made any difference had he told the Remove master of the object of his visit to Folkestone. He did not think it likely.

Likely or not, he did not intend to explain. With an almost savage pride he was resolved to bear whatever might be inflicted upon him, disdaining to utter a word in his own defence. Once that day Mr. Quelch had refused to listen to him, when he had humbled himself to ask for leave, and had been refused. He would have spoken then—now he would not speak. Right or wrong, he would not speak.

"You disregarded the order for your detention, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch after another pause.

"Yes, sir."



"You will now be punished, Wharton, for your insolence and disobedience," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "You need not doubt that your punishment will be severe." "I don't doubt it, sir," said Wharton bitterly. "I do not expect justice from you, Mr. Quelch!" (See Chapter 13.)

The reply was calm and matter-of-fact, as if Mr. Quelch had asked him whether he had done his preparation, or whether he had had his tea. The Remove master's eyes glinted at him. Deeply as he was angered, he was perplexed almost as much.

"You deliberately left the school, knowing that I was coming to the Form-room with a detention task for you."

"Yes, sir."

"It might have been possible to make some slight allowances for your disobedience had you yielded to the temptation to join your Form-fellows in the football match. But you did not go to St. Jude's."

"No, sir."

"You went to a town many miles out of school bounds—and you have the effrontery to tell me so."

"You asked me, sir."

"Do not add to your offences by being insolent, Wharton. I warn you that insolence will not serve you now."

"Very good, sir."

"I do not understand this—this brazen hardihood," said Mr. Quelch. "I have been greatly deceived in you, Wharton."

"Indeed, sir."

"You understand, of course, that you will be severely punished for this wilful defiance of authority."

"Certainly, sir."

"Hitherto, Wharton, you have been captain of your Form. I have always believed, until of late, that you were

well-chosen for that position. I have now altered my opinion."

No answer.

"The position carries responsibility with it," resumed Mr. Quelch. "I shall place a paper on the notice-board tomorrow, Wharton, announcing that your captaincy of the Form is cancelled."

Wharton started a little. For a moment the Remove master had succeeded in shaking him out of his arrogant calm.

Mr. Quelch went on grimly.

"I shall order a new election in the Remove. You will not be allowed to stand for re-election, Wharton."

The captain of the Remove compressed his lips. Hard and sullen lines were settling in his face. He did not speak; but his look, his whole attitude, was expressive of resistance, of un subdued defiance.

"The Remove will, I hope, elect a worthier leader," resumed Mr. Quelch. "You must realise, Wharton, that he who commands must learn to obey—you are unfit for the position you hold, and I therefore remove you from it. Perhaps, by making amends for your present conduct, you may earn my confidence again—I trust so."

Wharton's lip curled slightly.

Mr. Quelch, breathing hard, turned to his table, where a cane lay ready—a stout cane, selected for the special occasion. His grasp closed almost convulsively on the cane.

"You will now be punished, Wharton, for your insolence and disobedience. I have considered whether to report you to the Head for a flogging; but I have decided to punish you myself. You need not doubt that your punishment will be severe."

"I don't doubt it, sir," said Wharton bitterly. "I do not expect justice from you, Mr. Quelch."

"What! What! How dare you say so!" exclaimed the Remove master, really startled and shocked. "You, who stand before me an unrepentant offender."

"I expected to be caned," said Wharton stubbornly. "But you've no right to cancel my election as captain of the Form."

"No right!" repeated Mr. Quelch fiercely.

"No."

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch.

He lowered the cane, and stood gazing at the captain of the Remove.

"I'm ready!" said Wharton sullenly.

"I shall waste no further words on you, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, his voice trembling with anger. "You are incorrigible—you are, I fear, too hardened in self-will and obstinate pride for any words of mine to have influence upon you. I shall trust that punishment will have more effect. Hold out your hand!"

Swish!

The cane came down with a lash that was heard in the corridor outside, almost like a pistol-shot.

The juniors gathered breathlessly outside the study door exchanged awed glances.

"Mr. hat! He's laying it on!" muttered Skinner.

"Putting on steam, and no mistake!"

said Snoop. "I say, Wharton hasn't made a cent!"

"He's tough," murmured Skinner. "Hark!"

Swish!

No sound came from Harry Wharton as the cane lashed his palms. Mr. Quelch was undoubtedly "putting steam on." He had never in his career as a schoolmaster caned a junior so hard before.

But the dogged defiance in the junior's face exasperated him to a very unusual pitch of anger. All that he had been through that day was present in his mind—his waiting in the Form-room, his fool's errand to St. Jude's, and the ridiculous figure he had cut there before a crowd of derisive eyes. And now, as a climax, the cool, bitter insolence of the offender, unrepentant, defiant. It really was no wonder that Mr. Quelch lost his temper and inflicted a punishment which perhaps, had he been cooler, he would not have inflicted.

Swish, swish! Swish, swish!

The cane rang and rang again.

Still no sound came from Harry Wharton, as first one palm and then the other bore the stinging lashes of the cane. His face was pale—it grew white. His lips were set hard, and his eyes gleamed. He clenched his teeth to keep back a cry, and he kept it back.

Swish, swish!

It seemed that Mr. Quelch would keep on the lashing of the cane until he succeeded in wringing some word, at least, from the junior's obstinate lips. But the white lips remained shut hard over the set teeth. At that moment Harry Wharton would have died rather than have uttered a cry.

Mr. Quelch seemed to take himself suddenly in hand, as it were, and check the anger that was leading him too far.

He lowered the cane, and laid it on the table, and pointed to the door.

"You may go, Wharton."

Still silent, still composed, with head still erect, Harry Wharton quitted the study.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Notice!

"WHARTON!"

Half the Remove, or more, seemed to be gathered in the wide corridor outside Mr. Quelch's study door.

The juniors were serious, almost scared. They had heard the lashing of the cane—such a lashing as had never before been heard in a Greyfriar master's study. They knew that Wharton had been through it, as no Remove fellow had ever been through it before.

Bob Cherry and his friends were there, and as Wharton came out Bob made a step towards him. Bob's rugged face was pale and miserable—the sharp lashes of the cane had struck him almost as hard as they had struck his former friend. He had forgotten now, that that friendship was a thing of the past, as Wharton came out with a white, tormented face. He started impulsively towards the captain of the Remove.

"Wharton old man—"

"Harry—" muttered Nugent.

Wharton looked neither to the right nor the left as he walked on. The Remove fellows made way for him.

He did not seem aware of the existence of his former pals. Not a word not a glance he gave them as he passed.

"Stiff-necked as ever!" said Skinner with a sneering grin. "A few more licks like that, though, and— Oh, you rotter!"

(Continued on page 27.)

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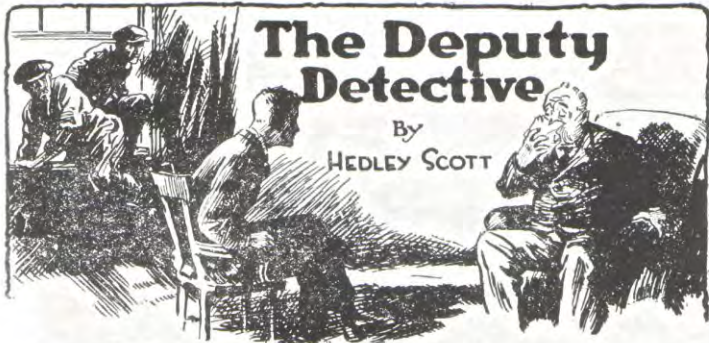
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DON'T DELAY—BUY TO-DAY!

FERRERS LOCKE'S ASSISTANT! Young Jack Drake—handling his first case—is out to lay the notorious motor bandits by the heels. Danger peeps out at him at every turn, but Drake revels in danger. Read how he falls into the "soup" and scrambles out again—still smiling!

The Deputy Detective

By
HEDLEY SCOTT



The Clue of the Signet Ring!

"PAPER!"
Through the open window of the study in Ferrers Locke's chambers, at Baker Street, floated the raucous notes of a passing newsboy. Jack Drake, the world-famous detective's clever young assistant, turned a moody face from the blazing fire and shivered.

"Paper! Special! Death of a—"
The ominous word stirred the thoughts passing through Drake's mind, and he shivered still more. He had watched the clock on the mantel drag its weary, mechanical way from nine o'clock that same morning until now—six o'clock. With the passing of the hours had been born the dread premonition of something untoward having happened to his beloved master.

At twelve o'clock it had been arranged that Ferrers Locke should phone his assistant that all was well with him, for Ferrers Locke had been engaged upon a case of imminent peril to himself that carried a risk with it every hour of the day. But no call had come through.

And it was now six o'clock!
No wonder Drake shivered. No blazing heat from a log fire could suppress the fear of missing the promised telephone call. Jack Drake had possessed his soul in patience, a prey to dread misgivings.

"Paper! Death of a famous detective!"
An inarticulate cry forced itself through Drake's dry lips as he started to his feet. Next moment he was scampering down the steps to the street below, utterly regardless of the fact that he was scurrying a broken arm or leg. He almost leaped over a passer-by in his haste to buy a paper. With shaking hand he presented a piece of silver, and astonished the newsboy by not waiting for any change.

"Oh, heavens!"
Breathless, his face pale as death, Drake reached the study again, almost afraid to look at the newspaper he had been so anxious to obtain. One look he gave it, then a cry like that of some stricken animal brought Sing-Sing, the death-faithful Chinese servant, rushing to the spot.

"Look!" said Drake hoarsely. "I look at that paper!"

It showed Drake's stress of mind at the moment, for Sing-Sing could not read a word of English.

"Pullee self together, Mistle Drake!" said Sing-Sing, who had garnered a fair knowledge of pidgeon English. "What's the jolly matter?"

"The master!" gasped Drake, the colour returning slowly to his cheeks. "He's been murdered—"

"For once the impassive face of the faithful Chinese became expressive.

"Listen!" continued Drake. "I—I'll read it out to you!"

His hands shook a trifle as he spread the paper, then he took command of himself. A bold headline ran across the top of the first page:

"FAMOUS BAKER STREET DETECTIVE FOUND DEAD!"

"At three o'clock this afternoon a Thames boatman discovered the body of a man that had been washed into the Kingston Lock. A doctor was immediately summoned, who pronounced life extinct. The body was taken to the mortuary, where Inspector Pycroft, of Scotland Yard—a close friend of the deceased—identified the body as that of his friend Ferrers Locke, the famous criminologist.

"Certain papers found upon the body of the deceased also point to his identity, although the features were unrecognisable.

"It will be recalled that Ferrers Locke was engaged upon hunting down the mysterious and well-organised body of motor bandits who have been pestering the residents of Surrey—"

Drake broke off sharply as there came a loud and insistent ring at the outer doorbell. Sing-Sing, in response to the youth's nod, softly padded out of the study. He returned a moment later with Inspector Pycroft, of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard. The burly official seemed uncomfortable and distressed as he paused upon the threshold.

"I—I have bad news for you, Drake," he began. Then, seeing the newspaper in Jack's hand, he forced down something that rose in his throat, strode across the carpeted floor, and placed a

protective arm around the youth's shoulders.

"I see you know already," he said. And Drake marvelled at the kindness in his tone.

"You've seen him?" queried Drake, a catch in his voice.

"Yes," came the slow and reluctant reply. "They were going to send for you, my lad; but as I happened to be around I thought I would spare you the shock. It's horrible! It's—"

The inspector was deeply moved, and at such times he resorted to profane expressions. But Drake understood.

"His features unrecognisable?" Drake found himself uttering the words unconsciously. "Is—is that so, Pycroft?"

"The C.I.D. man nodded.
"Yes," He was more reluctant than ever. "Our old friend's features had been damaged by vitriol."

Drake shuddered, but the man in him overcame the growing horror of the day's events. He had the future to think of—the assassin of his best friend to hunt down. He seemed to have aged considerably when he looked at Pycroft again.

"Go on," he said. "Tell me what papers enabled you to identify him."

Pycroft explained, and rendered the identification more positive by describing the suit of clothes Ferrers Locke had worn that same morning.

"And you will be required at the coroner's inquest to-morrow, my lad," he added kindly. "Of course, if you'd rather not go—"

But Drake was no coward.
"I shall go!" he said firmly. "But tell me, Pycroft, whom do you think has done—"

"The motor-car bandits," grunted the C.I.D. man, instinctively interpreting Drake's unfinished query. "Of course, it's their confounded work. Hasn't Locke received a threatening letter from them every day since he started on the case? He received one this morning, I'm wagger."

"He did," Drake's reply was instantaneous. "I asked him to throw up the case. They had made three attempts on his life before to-day—"

Again Drake was interrupted, (this time by the sound of a door opening.)
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time by the whirring of the telephone-bell. With a word to Pycroft he crossed over to the little pedestal in the corner and took up the receiver.

"Hold on!" Pycroft heard him say. "Yes, Inspector Pycroft is here."

The C.I.D. man walked across to the instrument, and was soon in conversation. When he returned to Drake there was a look of annoyance in his hard-bitten features.

"Confound the bandits and all their works!" he said savagely. "Another Surrey house broken into. Chief up at the Yard wants me at once. He knew I intended calling here. You must excuse me, my boy."

In quick-fence sentences Pycroft jerked out the words and reached for his hat. Then, with many expressions of sympathetic concern and offers of help, he took farewell of his young friend.

Drake heard his ponderous footsteps die away, and then he sank down into the big armchair to reflect, to evolve schemes cunning enough to beat down those of the scoundrels who had brought about the death of his chief. A fear coursed down either cheek as he sat staring into the blazing fire.

He was still staring absently into the fire two hours later when once more the outer doorbell twirled its imperious note. But Drake was oblivious of it. He became conscious of Sing-Sing standing beside him when the old servant gently placed him by the shoulder.

"What is it?"

"A gentleman to see you, Mistle Drake," said Sing-Sing softly. "About Mistle Locke."

It was on the tip of Drake's tongue to refuse to see the visitor, but at mention of Ferrers Locke's name he jumped to the not unnatural conclusion that the visitor had some important news to impart concerning the tragic end of his master.

"Show him in, Sing-Sing!"

"Velly good."

The servant softly retreated, leaving Drake in an agony of suspense until he reappeared with the visitor at his back.

"Will you sit down?"

Drake indicated a chair to the visitor, motioned to Sing-Sing to withdraw, and seated himself.

"You are Jack Drake?" The visitor smiled a greeting to the sleuth's clever boy assistant as he made himself comfortable, and Drake, quick to receive impressions, found himself studying the tall, well-knit figure before him.

He saw a middle-aged man, whose hair was just reaching the iron-grey stage, and whose moustache and beard were obviously dyed a deep red. Drake noticed that fact and pondered over it. A second stealthily appraising glance revealed eyebrows of yet another colour, contrasting strangely with the iron-grey hair and the red beard and moustache.

"I am Jack Drake," was the lad's reply. "What can I do for you?"

"My business was really with Ferrers Locke, your master," smiled the visitor, noting the pained expression that crossed the lad's face, a reflection of which seemed to settle in his own countenance.

"But I see he is not at home."

It was obvious that the newcomer had no information to impart of the kind Drake most needed to hear. Perhaps it would be wise to allow this peculiar-looking gentleman to explain his business without informing him that Ferrers Locke would never be "At home" any more.

"You can speak quite freely in front of me," said Drake, his eyes suddenly glued on the right hand of his visitor.

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"I always act for Mr. Locke in his absence."

"I see!"

The visitor seemed reluctant to continue.

Drake's eyes still gazed fascinated at his visitor's right hand. The light from the chandelier above played strongly upon a signet-ring, in the centre of which was set a small ruby. The more Drake looked at the ring, the more excited he became. Then, seeing the disapproving glances of his visitor, he forced a smile.

Engaging the fellow in conversation Locke's young assistant rose from his chair.

"No—no," he said genially, as the man began to light up. "Don't smoke a cigarette. Mr. Locke always insisted—I mean, insists—upon his clients favouring him with an opinion of a particular brand of Havana he smokes himself. You will humour this weakness of his—yes? Excuse me!"

Still smiling, the youth crossed to the small sideboard, and took from it a box of cigars. Then, seeing in the mirror of the sideboard the reflected back of his visitor, he hastily opened a drawer, and silently withdrew a small automatic pistol. Pocketing the latter, he crossed the room and proffered the box of cigars.

"Aha, Mr. Locke knows a good cigar when he sees one!" was the visitor's smiling comment as he selected a weed.

"Yes!" Drake's answer was tense and dramatic. "And his assistant knows a rogue when he sees one! Put 'em up!"

To the visitor's astonishment, he found himself gazing into the barrel of a deadly-looking automatic. The cigar dropped from his fingers and rolled to the floor. Almost mechanically his arms shot above his head.

"Thank you, my friend!" said Drake grimly, seating himself in the chair opposite. "I can talk better with you like that!"

"But—but," began the visitor, with justifiable indignation, "how dare you! I will call the police! I will have you arrested! I will—"

"Keep your hands where they are and answer me a few questions!" rapped Drake grimly. "Now then, Mr. Visitor, what the deuce do you mean by strolling into a detective's office wearing the signet-ring of a man who was found dead at three o'clock this afternoon?"

The visitor wilted beneath that fierce glance, and allowed himself to be relieved of the ring in question.

"Yes, it's Ferrers Locke's ring, right enough," said Drake, examining the piece of gold, without, however, losing sight of his prisoner.

"But—but—"

The visitor's vocabulary was, apparently, limited.

"And what the devil do you mean by wearing a false beard that is obvious to anyone with eyes in his head?" was Drake's next grim comment.

"Ow!"

That was the visitor's contribution to the little drama as the youth plucked savagely at the beard. To Drake's satisfaction it came away in his hand.

"And what the thump is the game with this false moustache, Mr. Visitor?"

Once more the lad's disengaged hand sought the visitor's face. Strong fingers wrenched at the red moustache.

"Ow!"

The wall parted company with the visitor's throat and the moustache took a simultaneous farewell of his upper lip.

"And again, do you think it's clever to walk about London with a wig on like that?" snapped Drake, beginning to

enjoy the situation. "Do you think—"

He began to repeat himself as the wig, false as its other hairy associates had been, parted company, but the words died away in his throat, and he staggered back.

"You!" he gasped, eyes and mouth agape.

For the visitor's face, now stripped of all its make-up, bore an extraordinary likeness to the features of a man who had been found floating about in the water at Kingston Lock.

"Yes." The reply of the visitor was uttered softly, kindly. No triumph took place in it. "Sssh, Drake, my lad!"

"The guv'nor!" Drake tried to shout the words, but his parched throat failed him.

"Yes, my poor old boy," said the visitor in a whisper. "Sssh, Jack! Ferrers Locke has returned to life!"

An Explanation!

"WELL, I'm—"

Jack Drake passed a hand over his face, and sank back into the armchair. Events, he felt, were moving too fast for him. He was rendered speechless—temporarily, at any rate.

"I'm sorry, my boy," said Locke, walking over to his assistant, "the I should have to deceive you so cruelly! And yet the motive demands such a course. I have got to die, you understand. In fact, I am dead!"

"Yes, yes!" Drake's senses were returning to him. He felt an overwhelming joy consume him as he looked upon the living face of the man he respected more than anyone else in the wide world. And yet the shock of the discovery still tingled every nerve in his body.

"I am confoundedly sorry, my lad!" repeated Ferrers Locke softly. "But I had to do it. Had you known that I was alive and well at, say, four o'clock this afternoon you would have spoiled my masquerade should anyone from the enemy camp happened to have seen you. Even poor old Pycroft had to be deceived."

"But why, guv'nor?" said Drake reproachfully.

"Simply this, my boy," replied Locke earnestly. "The Home Office sent for me this morning. I am required to proceed forthwith to the Balkan States on a highly delicate and dangerous mission. Should word leak out that Ferrers Locke, the detective, had been chosen for the task, then all would be U P with the stake at issue. On behalf of Britain, my boy, I had to die. In fact, Sir Percival Banstead, the Home Secretary, suggested the course himself, and provided the means for my demise."

"Oh!" Drake's eyes grew wide in wonder. "But how?"

"Without touching on gruesome details, my lad," continued Locke, "you can piece things together yourself, when I tell you that a well-known scientist who died yesterday as a result of an accident whilst experimenting with vitriol, gave his body to the cause of medical science. Well, then, that martyr to scientific research was a relation of the Home Secretary himself. The said scientist laid it down in his will that, after life was pronounced extinct, he was to be inoculated with a preparation of his own concoction that would when the body had been immersed in water for two hours, restore to its original shape the outline of any features damaged by vitriol."

"It was a test the medical world were looking forward to. Well, my lad, the result is a failure. For the inoculation was carried out to-day, the body was placed in Kingston Lock at a favourable moment—clad in my clothes—and the features were still unrecognisable after the test."

"This scientist, then," broke in Drake, "served a double purpose."

"Indeed he did," said Locke gravely.

The doctor who examined the body on behalf of the Medical Association was in the service of the Government. Naturally, he was sworn to secrecy. He had no lies to utter. All he did was to pronounce life extinct—as indeed it was—and report later to his Association that the test had been a failure. No connection between the sudden exit of Mr. Ferrers Locke and Montague Bandhead would be raised in the most suspicious mind. Two parties were satisfied—the Medical Association and the Motor Bandits—

"The motor-car bandits?" echoed Drake wonderingly.

"Yes," smiled Ferrers Locke. "Now that I am going away you must take over the case, my lad. With me out of the way for keeps—as they will imagine—these bandits will, no doubt, become more daring in their exploits. That being so, more clues will be waiting to be picked up. They won't expect much danger from a youth like you."

"He added," "They don't know Jack Drake as I do—eh?"

"Oh, my hat!" chuckled Drake. "This is prime. "But why?"

"I came here in this absurd disguise," smiled Locke, anticipating the question entering on his assistant's lips, "finally testing you. I felt ashamed of myself when I looked upon your face—I saw how upset you were."

"Oh, that's all right, guv'nor!" grinned Drake a trifle sheepishly. "You can't know how relieved I am, though, to see you alive!"

"But you were quicker than I anticipated you would be," said Locke, patting his assistant on the back. "You can spot a wrong 'un quick enough."

And so what promised to be a day of misery for Drake finally turned out to be a day of joy. Ferrers Locke and his assistant chatted away until the clock on the mantel struck the hour of midnight. Full instructions were given to Drake as to the "winding up" of Locke's affairs. Drake listened carefully to the man he had to play.

"And, on my return from the Balkan States," concluded Locke, "I hope to warn that you have run the motor-car bandits to earth. This is your first case on your own, my boy—an exceedingly difficult case at that. For the official police admit themselves baffled. But where they have failed and still as Jack Drake will succeed."

"Jove, guv'nor!" exclaimed the youth. "You do me honour indeed!"

"No more than your due," was the serious detective's reply. "And now, my lad, au revoir! I will keep you posted as to my welfare in the name of Samson—don't be shocked at the ludicrous compositions of my correspondence. I cannot be too careful. Remember, then—Samson."

"I shall not forget," returned Drake gravely. "I am looking forward to the day I have to play, and I shall not disappoint you, sir, believe me!"

"Of course you won't!" smiled Locke. As he spoke the famous detective pulled out a wig and moustache from an overcoat pocket, and proceeded to tuck them with deft hands.



As the wig came away in Drake's hand he started back with a cry of amazement. "Mr. Locke!" he gasped, eyes and mouth agape. "Yes, Jack, Ferrers Locke has returned to life!" (See page 22.)

"You don't think I walked through the streets with the daffy of hair you pulled off my chivvy, do you, my boy?" he asked, dabbing the spirit-gum on his face. "Not likely. I decorated myself with that little lot while Sing-Sing was informing you of the visitor waiting below."

"Very cute," agreed Drake. "Then you will leave this place exactly as you came in!"

"Yes. You can keep the iron-grey wig, the red moustache, and whiskers, and you can hang on to my signet ring. The latter will help in the deceptive role you have to play—i.e., as commercial folk have it—the heart-broken assistant of a clever detective gone the way of all flesh."

And thus Ferrers Locke, tall of stature, mighty of intellect, wizard of detectives, handed over his business affairs to the boyish figure of his assistant, Jack Drake.

"Good-bye, guv'nor!" said Drake. "And good luck!"

"Good-bye, my lad!" was the earnest response. "And good luck!"

They parted, each to run his separate course, the one having reached the pinnacle of fame in his profession, the other, still a boy, ambitious and clever enough to jump from something near obscurity on the ladder of fame to a position several rungs higher at one single bound.

And while a small outside world mourned the loss of the cleverest detective it had ever known, and yet another, more self-centred, triumphed over his reported fate, the man who occupied a prominent position in these two worlds passed unrecognised down Baker Street, entered a taxicab, listened to the voluble driver's description of "what a gent that there Ferrers Locke

was," tipped him a handsome amount, and passed, unrecognised, on his way.

Caught Napping I

JACK DRAKE awoke the next morning, with a feeling of elation running through his youthful veins.

The future looked rosy indeed. Adventure awaited him on the doorstep, as it were, and Jack thrived on adventure.

Up in the heavens glittered a great red ball of fire, its scintillating rays piercing the drawn blind of Drake's bedroom.

"Heigho!"

Drake scrambled out of bed with alacrity and drew up the blind. For some moments he gazed at the brilliant winter sun fascinated.

"That's an omen of good luck," he told himself. "Never seen the sun so red before."

He was to be reminded of his remark at a later hour in the day with full significance. Humming a tune, he made tracks for the bath-room, and mingled with the tune thereafter came the vigorous splashing of water.

He was still humming when Sing-Sing brought in the breakfast—much to the Chinese servant's disapproval. He was humming more blithely still when Inspector Pycroft, of the C.I.D., was shown in.

"What do you do Monday, what do you do Tuesday, Ma-a-ry, what do you do—"

Drake's murderous rendering of the popular dince tune died an unnatural death as Pycroft's horrified gaze was bent upon him.

And then suddenly the lad realised the part he had to play.

"Oh, I shall go off my head if I don't sing!" he said despairingly.

And there was truth in his statement. It satisfied Pycroft, at any rate, for, with a kindly gesture, he hurried forward and gripped Drake's hand warmly. "Poor old boy!" he commiserated. "I know how you feel!"

"I'll bet you don't!" was Drake's quick retort; and he had the greatest difficulty to restrain his mirth. "But why have you come round so early?"

"Ahem!" coughed the Scotland Yarder. "I—I thought perhaps, on consideration, you'd rather not go to the inquest, and I—"

"You're willing to go instead?" broke in Drake eagerly. "That's—that's exceedingly kind of you."

"Tut, tut!" smiled the C.I.D. man indulgently. "These things are better left to hardened sinners like me."

"Yes, I think you're right," agreed Drake slowly. "I don't relish the job a bit."

"Right—ho! Don't you worry, my lad! I'll be off now!"

Pycroft picked up his cap and departed. The moment he had gone Drake broke into a hearty laugh.

"Poor old Pycroft!" he said. "He's a bit dense, but his heart is in the right place."

For the next two hours Locke's young assistant worked assiduously. There were heaps of instruction left by Ferrers Locke to be dealt with. He only paused in his work when there came the sound of a muffled bump against the outer wall of the house. Looking up Drake soon satisfied himself that all was well, for two ladders passed before the window, and a moment later two workmen, clad in overalls, clambered up them.

The lad heard them commence their task of repainting the front of the house, and then continued with his own work.

Two more hours seemed to fly by until Sing-Sing announced that lunch was ready. A hastily snatched meal and Drake was busy sorting out the pile of papers he had turned out of the bureau.

Sing-Sing showed his inscrutable features round the edge of the door for a moment.

"Oh, I forgot! It's your afternoon off, Sing-Sing," said Drake, pausing in his labours. "You get along, there's a good chap. Don't worry about me. I shall be all right."

"Velly good, Mistle Drake! I will be back at jolly old five."

Drake heard the outer door slam as the Chinese took his departure; and then, with a light chuckle, the lad sank down into an armchair.

"This is a go and no mistake!" he muttered. "Expect the gov'nor's on the seas by now."

He became thoughtful as fits mind dwelt upon the absence of his chief, but not for long. Ambitious youth scarcely brooks depression for any length of time.

Whir!

As Drake rose to his feet the bell sounded from below. Remembering that Sing-Sing had gone out for the afternoon the lad looked into a mirror, satisfied himself as to his appearance, and answered the summons himself.

"Ah! I am talking to Mr. Drake?"

The visitor's opening remark was uttered in a pleasant, educated voice.

"Right first time," answered the lad briskly. "And I am talking to—"

"My name is Matthews. Here is my card."

The visitor fumbled with a card. The MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 863.

case and extracted a piece of pasteboard. On it was inscribed:

"RANDOLPH MATTHEWS,
The Lodge, Woking,
Surrey."

"Will you step this way, sir?" said Drake in a businesslike manner. And he ushered the visitor into the consulting-room.

There was no need for Drake to offer Mr. Matthews a seat, for that gentleman selected the cosiest armchair in the room and plumped his fourteen stone into it.

Drake had time to take stock of his visitor as he did so.

Mr. Matthews was well in the "fifties," if one could judge by looks. A well-filled waistcoat, across which glittered a massive gold chain, was in turn "wrapped up" in a tight-fitting frock-coat that threatened to burst at any moment. The rolls of fat that sagged over the gentleman's collar gave Drake the immediate impression that Mr. Matthews was a man to whom food and drink came first and foremost in the day's work. His semi-bald head was bullet-shaped and somewhat repulsive, but the twinkling eyes were innocent and fascinating at a glance.

Drake felt himself in the presence of a strange personality.

"I have, of course, read the report of Mr. Ferrers Locke's tragic end," began Mr. Matthews. "And I am truly sorry. I—"

"Yes, yes!" broke in Drake. "But your business, Mr. Matthews—"

"My business!" Two gloved hands were raised deploringly, and the visitor shook his head sadly. "Oh, I am but another victim the motor-car bandits have added to their list—"

"You have been injured?"

"My house was broken into early this morning. I have been relieved of ten thousand pounds' worth of jewellery! Dear, dear!" The visitor rocked himself as he thought of his loss. "Dear, dear!"

"But why have you come here?"

"I have come here, my young friend," said Matthews earnestly, "because I want you to hunt these criminals down. I know that you are only a boy," he added hastily. "But in that lies your safety. They certainly will never suspect any danger from you! Ah, they have not heard of your fame, like I have. We shall surprise these motor-car bandits yet! Dear, dear!"

"You are very flattering, sir," said Drake, somewhat mystified by his visitor's manner.

"No, no; not at all! You are the one person, I feel sure, capable of tracing these bandits to their lair. But, of course, you have already made up your mind to get on your trail, eh? Dear, dear! Ferrers Locke's assistant would never let slide the work his master had started. Of course, you've taken up the reins now, eh? Dear, dear! I'd wager ten thousand pounds that you'll be the first detective in England to get these scoundrels!"

"You're not far wrong there," said Drake proudly. "I'll get 'em, right enough. I'm on their trail to-day!"

"Bravo, my young friend! Very creditable indeed! Dear, dear!"

The visitor relapsed into a thoughtful attitude, and then, to Drake's astonishment and discomfort:

"Attechoooooo!"

Matthews was shaken by a violent sneeze.

"Excuse me!" he made haste to apologise. "Beastly cold! Age, you know! Dear, dear!"

Drake looked sharply at his visitor and seemed to note a sudden change that had come over him. His years had fallen away from all his intents and purposes. Mr. Randolph Matthews would no longer be taken for fifty. From his visitor's face Drake's eyes wandered to the floor. Horror of horrors! Like two big beasts of prey were reflected on the polished floor the shadows of two men, bent almost at the double, ready for a spring. Even as Drake stared at them, fascinated, paralysed, they moved nearer. Then:

Thud!

Something whizzed through the air, missing the lad's head by a fraction of an inch as he wheeled sharply. He saw his assailant stagger, as the sandbag in his hand met nothing more vulnerable than the air. Then, with a fierce cry, Locke's young assistant had closed.

"Dear, dear!" purred the gentleman in the armchair. "The young cub has more spirit than I thought! Look sharp, you two bunglers!"

The "two bunglers" were none other than the workmen Drake had observed painting the exterior of the house. As the lad fought for his freedom he saw the open window in front of him, and close at hand, the outline of a ladder. No need to ponder further. He staged the whole plot himself, even as he landed out with two clenched fists.

Smack!

One of the workmen reeled under a heavy drive to the chin.

"Dear, dear, Watson!" came Matthews' voice again. "You really asked for that, you know! Now, Thomas, that's better!"—as the second "workman" pinned Drake's arms behind his back. "But beware of his boots. Drake takes a fairly large size in footwear, I think!"

He took large enough a size to carry a hefty kick in all conscience, for it was Thomas' turn to utter a stifled howl of pain, as a lashing foot caught his shin. But Watson, his companion, was returning to the attack—and Watson had a grievance. He clenched his fist, took careful aim, and returned the compliment Drake had paid him—only with interest!

As the plucky youth felt his senses reeling he tried to shout, but his move was anticipated. A dirty, rugged hand closed over his mouth, and the yell faded away down his throat. Another blow, and Drake lay limp in his captors' grasp. And when that had been accomplished Matthews rose from the armchair, walked across to the sideboard, selected a choice Havana, and calmly lit it.

Between puffing smoke-rings to the ceiling he issued orders that Drake should be bound and gagged—a task quickly carried out.

"A little troublesome, eh?" he jerked out. And gone was the smooth oily voice. "Confound the little fool! I was rather hoping that he had no intention of following our trail, but I pumped him, and he's a keen as mustard. Do you know, boys, I'm more afraid of this brat than all the police at Scotland Yard!"

"E don't look much like a 'tee'!" sniffed Watson snily.

"That just shows your ignorance, my lad!" said Matthews scathingly. "This brat has had more fingers in criminal pies than any other man with Detective-Inspector before his name. Didn't he help Locke track that Tiger Sleek merchant who was after the wireless ray Mornington Hardacre had invented? Didn't he show to advantage in the case of Mark Cherton, the Yellow Claw? Didn't—"

"Loe", is this 'ere the bloke?" gasped Watson incredulously.

"That is the bloke, as you remark, Watson!" snapped the man who called himself Matthews. "A bloke what's learnt his crime stuff under Ferrers Locke," he added, sarcastically. "Locke's understudy, in other words, you do it! Don't stand there like a durned fool! One of you get back to your job on the ladders. We shall have the police inquiring here in a minute!"

Watson, paint-pot and brush in hand, clambered over the sill and recommenced his task of painting the front of the house. From this point of vantage he was able to see what was going on along the busy thoroughfare below.

Meanwhile Drake's late visitor was turning out stacks of papers from the bureau. But he discovered there nothing apparently that was of any value to himself, for, with a muttered imprecation, he turned again to Thomas. The second "workman" had mounted guard over Drake's prostrate form, having first pressed a chloroformed pad over the lad's nostrils.

But Drake was not to be caught so easily. He had just returned to consciousness as the pad was pressed over his nostrils; but, with a prodigious effort, he held his breath until it was taken away. Eyes closed, in well-feigned sleep, he heard every word that went on.

"What would you suggest doing with this little toad?" came Matthews' voice. "Out 'im, chief!" growled Thomas. "Dead men tell no tales!" "Charitable fellow!" was Drake's silent contribution.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the chief witheringly. "How crude! Thomas, you are a mental paper—you have no finer instincts, no imagination. Now, why shouldn't we send him to China for a new long trip. Wo Sang, at Canton, will look after him until it's safe for us to see him back in England again. Yes, China it will be," he added meditatively. "The van should be here now, Thomas."

"Ay, it should." "Chief"—Watson's head peered over the window-sill—"the van's arrived!"

The Crimson Cross I

THE bell pealed out from below, and Thomas, in response to a nod from his chief, answered the summons. He reappeared a moment or so later accompanied by two burly men who had "furniture removers" written all over their massive frames and green-baize aprons.

"Which room first, guv'nor?" they asked the chief.

"Any one you like," came the response. "Thomas, you will superintend the removal."

It was characteristic of the man that he should hit on a scheme like this. To remove the complete house furniture from the rooms of the cleverest detective of the age, despite the fact that the sleuth was dead, appealed to his vanity. Added to which was the pleasant thought that Ferrers Locke's furniture, collected over a period of many years, was exceedingly valuable. Antiques abounded everywhere, and antiques fetched good money! It was a daring scheme, and its very daring gave it success.

People passing in the street below saw the contents of Locke's rooms being carted to the van, and stood round in interested groups. Most of them knew that Ferrers Locke lived there, or had lived there. And, after all, it was perfectly natural that his goods should be disposed of after his death. Even his nearest neighbours reckoned thus.

The removers went about their task without a qualm. They had handled more dangerous jobs than this. Even the painters gave a hand with the work, a proceeding that raised a cheer from the crowd beginning to collect below.

Pictures, bric-a-brac—everything gradually found its way out of the chambers, until Drake, bound and gagged, was the only "old familiar" to remain. The chief stood gazing down at his prostrate form for some moments wrapped in deep thought. Unconsciously he slipped off his right glove and stood scratching his chin reflectively. From eyelids almost closed Drake watched him, saw what he hadn't observed before, that the man was most cleverly dis-

guised. Even those rolls of fat that sagged over his collar were skillfully faked with a plant skin-coloured rubber. And Drake reckoned a few cushions padded that massive waistcoat. But the hand—

Drake was tempted to open his eyes wider as he stared at that silent figure. For slowly, imperceptibly at first, but gaining in strength with every passing second, there appeared on the man's right hand a peculiar crimson rash, fashioned after the shape of a cross. Yes, there was no mistake. Drake's eyes were not playing him false. The rash had reached the zenith of its power, as crimson as had been the sun that same morning when Drake had looked from his window. And clearly, well defined, there stood out against the white flesh a flaming, crimson cross.

The man moved, and Drake was quick enough to close his eyes. But he had seen "Matthews" glance down at that crimson flash on his right hand, had heard him utter a startled ejaculation, had seen him pull on his glove with feverish haste.

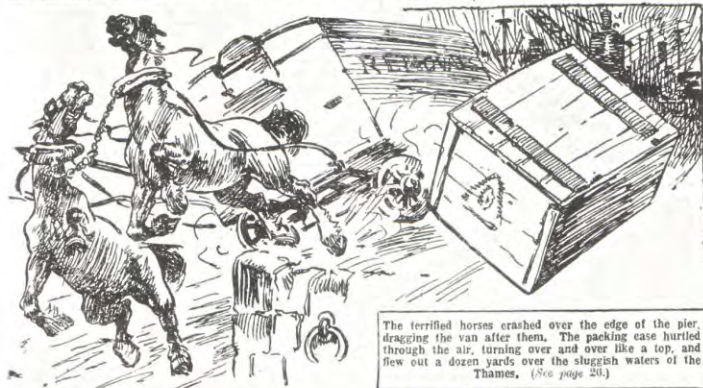
To Drake's quick-witted brain a clue presented itself. That peculiar crimson cross was no ordinary rash that came by accidental blood pressure. It was a brand of some sort. How else could be explained Matthews' sudden alarm at seeing it there and his obvious desire to cover it with his glove?

"Ho ho!" thought Drake. "I have seen something the chief of the motor-car bandits would give half his wealth for me not to have seen, I'll wager. The man with the crimson cross. Jack, my boy, we're on the trail!"

There was another meaning to his unspoken thought that he did not appreciate, for he found himself being lifted in strong hands and placed into what he felt to be a packing-case.

A lid was nailed down, allowing him the freedom of keeping his eyes open, but profling him nothing, for it was pitch dark inside the box. He heard grunts, felt the box tilt slightly, and knew that he was being hoisted shoulder-high.

And in this fashion did Ferrers



The terrified horses crashed over the edge of the pier, dragging the van after them. The packing case hurtled through the air, turning over and over like a top, and flew out a dozen yards over the sluggish waters of the Thames. (See page 26.)

Locke's young assistant depart from No. 370A, Baker Street. More tilting, the packing-case was being placed on the top platform of the van.

From his uncomfortable position Drake heard the hoarse cries of the "moving" men as they fastened up the door at the back of the van, heard also the gruff tones of a policeman ordering the driver to get a move on as he was obstructing the traffic.

And naturally enough he got a "move on." The horses, two of them, broke into a walk, the whip lashed over them, and they lumbered into a trot. And Drake, tightly squeezed in the packing-case on the top of the van, felt himself being rocked and bumped, bound he knew not whither.

"That's the bloomin' lot, mate!"

It was an hour and a half later that Drake heard the bellowing voice of the driver. The van had pulled up somewhere, and by the noise from below it was easy for Drake to understand that the furniture had been taken out of the van. He naturally supposed that it had been carted into a warehouse near the river, for there was a strong stench of tar and oil in the air, and the hundred and one unpleasant odours that pollute the atmosphere of a riverside wharf or warehouse.

The pain in his head had subsided; he was actually interested in his position. The novelty of it appealed to him. To the danger of it all he gave not the slightest thought. Fear and Jack Drake were absolute strangers. He was curious—frantically curious. Where the deuce exactly was he?

The lad gave up trying to solve that difficult question. His eyes stared unseeing into the darkness above him—a darkness that now allowed stray, tiny pin points of light to penetrate the cracks in the case.

"That's the blooming lot!" came another voice. "And thank goodness!"

"There's the packing-case!" roared the first voice Drake had heard. "Lor, I'd nearly forgotten it!"

There was a coarse bellow of laughter from the men below—laughter that died away suddenly.

Booom!

"Eavings! The horses!"

The dull roar of a nearby explosion almost drowned the wild cries of the driver. Jack Drake, every nerve a-tingle, felt a sudden wrench at the van, upon which the packing-case was lying, that jolted it to the edge of the boarding. Next moment hoarse shouts and the pounding of horses' hoofs greeted his ears. Instinctively he guessed what had taken place. The horses, startled by the explosion, had bolted.

"Stop 'em!"

On all sides rose the frantic yells of workmen hurrying to the scene. A policeman left his beat and dashed out into the middle of the road in an endeavour to stop the runaways. The maddened animals swerved violently to pass him, and with a thunder of hoofs they were past.

Suddenly a dock labourer darted from the pavement and sprang at the head of the nearside horse. His clutching hands gripped the head harness of the horse, his dead weight forced the animal to slacken its pace. But only for a second or two. The animal on the off-side was galloping with redoubled energy and terror, and to the horror of the sightseers the dock labourer was seen to fall into the road—luckily out of reach of the wheels of the van—a broken tangle of harness in his hand.

"They're heading for the river!"

Drake was not so excited now. The river. What would that mean? He dared not ponder long on that question.

He found himself being rocked from side to side as the van plunged madly on. He heard the terrified squeals of the horses as they strained with all their maddened strength to free themselves of the cumbersome van behind. Then—

Crash!

The van had crashed over the bank of the river, breaking through a wooden pier as if it were match-boarding. On all sides rose shrieks and wild cries. The packing-case hurtled through the air, turning over and over like a top—none in the crowd that had congregated knew that a human being was imprisoned in it—and flew out a dozen yards over the sluggish waters of the Thames.

Bump!

Sick and dizzy, Drake felt himself plunge full into something soft and yielding after that mad flight through the air.

He could not, of course, know that he had landed on a barge with a cargo of sand that had passed beneath the falling case at the crucial moment, nor did he know that the barge was one of three—the rear one—that rolled in the wake of a tug, or that no one on board the tug had noticed the extra "cargo."

The attention of most people at that moment was drawn to the madly struggling van horses in the river. Helping hands were going out to the rescue of the dumb animals, while a human being lay helplessly in a packing-case being rapidly drawn away he knew not whither.

(What lies in store for the plucky boy sleuth. Will he live to follow the trail of these desperate motor-bandits, or will he remain a helpless prisoner in the packing-case until starvation and the want of an adequate supply of fresh air claim him as their victim? Next week's grand instalment will tell you, boys. Look out for it!)



OUR FIGHTING FLEET!

A chatty article about the subject of this week's splendid Free Plate,
H.M.S. ROYAL OAK.

By "JACKSTAFF"
(The well-known Naval writer).

H. M.S. ROYAL OAK, although a new ship, bears a name famous in our naval history. There have been many Royal Oaks; the battle honours of the name make a long list which goes back for high upon three hundred years. The fine battleship shown in our PRESENTATION PLATE this week is one of the five newest battleships on the active list of the British Navy. All of them are now serving in our Mediterranean Fleet, to which they were transferred shortly after the naval review held in July last. All points considered, the Royal Oak and her "sisters" are in the front line of the world's capital ships for all-round efficiency. Their construction was begun

half-way through the War, but the vessels did not come into service until hostilities had ended. They displace 29,750 tons, are 620 feet long, 102 feet wide, and have engines of 40,000 horse-power, which give them a speed of some twenty-four miles an hour. At first they were a little faster, but bulges have been fired to their sides as a protection against torpedo attack, and that has decreased the speed of the ships. In comparison with the forty miles an hour of some of the smaller craft, the twenty-four miles an hour of the Royal Oak may seem pretty slow. It must, however, be remembered that high speed is not considered a prime essential in a battleship. Her function is to "lie in the line" and bear the brunt of a fight.

so that capacity to stand a good hammering is of more consequence to her than ability to run fast away.

For that reason they are equipped with great hitting power and protected by stout armour. The Royal Oak has eight 15-inch guns mounted in four pairs, each pair being in a stoutly armoured gunhouse. Next in importance come her fourteen 6-inch guns, which are so discernible in the circular bulges betwixt the gunhouses. The 6-inch guns are mounted in the ship's sides. Fifteen 4-inch and 6-inch alike are director-controlled by the system which was explained in connection with the Queen Elizabeth. Of smaller guns for fighting aircraft, etc., the Royal Oak has a number. She also carries four under-water tubes for firing 21-inch torpedoes. Her protective armour varies from thirteen inches in thickness on her gunhouses and along her sides to an inch on the funnel uptakes.

Giving adequate protection to a battleship is one of the most difficult problems that a naval architect has to deal with. In a ship like the Royal Oak there is an electric installation almost equal in power to that of many small towns; hundreds of miles of wiring, communication tubes, and so on. All of these have to be protected so that the risk of a shell "putting them out" shall be minimised as far as possible. The coming of aircraft has also made it necessary to strengthen the hulls and drop the masts in the air. Every additional pound allowed for armour has to be obtained by taking away a pound from something else, as the total weight of the ship must not be exceeded, no matter how that weight may be distributed. Every new weapon she has to face, every new thing added to her fighting equipment, adds to the perplexity confronting the designer. A battleship such as the Royal Oak is one of the most remarkable productions of man's ingenuity.

The Rebel of the Remove!

(Continued from page 20.)

Bob Cherry's open hand smote Skinner and drove the sneering grin from his face. Bob stalked away savagely, leaving Skinner to rub an aching mouth and mutter threats of vengeance.

Harry Wharton did not glance back, whether he knew or not that the eyes of his former comrades followed him well. He ascended the stairs to the Remove passage, silent, calm, only a covering in his white face telling of real suffering. Lord Manservant met him in the Remove passage, and nodded to him cheerily.

"Oh, Wharton, old man, you've been through it—"

"Oh, it's nothing!"

"Sorry, old man," said Manly softly.

Wharton nodded and went into Study No. 1. Not till the door was closed and strong eyes shut out, did his iron composure break. Then he sank into the chair, pressing his tortured hands together, quivering with pain.

Wharton uttered no sound as he sat there; he suffered, but he steeled himself to suffer in silence. Footsteps passed and repassed the door of Study No. 1, but no one came in; that was a good sign. He could bear what he had to bear so long as he was left alone—solitude was what he wanted. Suffering, however, anger, fierce resentment—such were the feelings of the rebel of the Remove. And he did not guess—how was he to guess?—that Mr. Quelch, pacing slowly in painful thought, was already weary of having administered so severe a punishment, grieved to it as he had been—regretful, yet feeling the impossibility of expressing his regret to the silent, rebellious junior.

Wharton did not guess it—did not think of guessing it. He thought of his former master as a tyrant, who had the power in his hands, and used it ruthlessly to crush opposition.

Footsteps passed and repassed. If only he was left alone—left alone till he had got over this! A querulous, squeaking voice came to his ears from outside.

"Leggo, you beast! It's my study, isn't it? I'm jolly well going into my study if I jolly well choose, Bob Cherry! Mind your own business, you fat rotter!"

"Get out of it, you fat rotter!"

"I tell you—"

"Get out!"

There was a howl in the passage, followed by silence. Apparently Billy Bunter had relinquished his right to go into his own study if he wanted to!

The door did not open.

Harry Wharton was left alone—left to himself. Till the tumult of pain and suffering had subsided, and he was able to see curious eyes, with an outward calm that masked all within. His face was a little white, but quite composed, when he came up to the Remove dormitory at bed-time; and he said "Good-night!" quite cheerily to Lord Manservant and some other fellows.

But it was long, long before he slept that night.

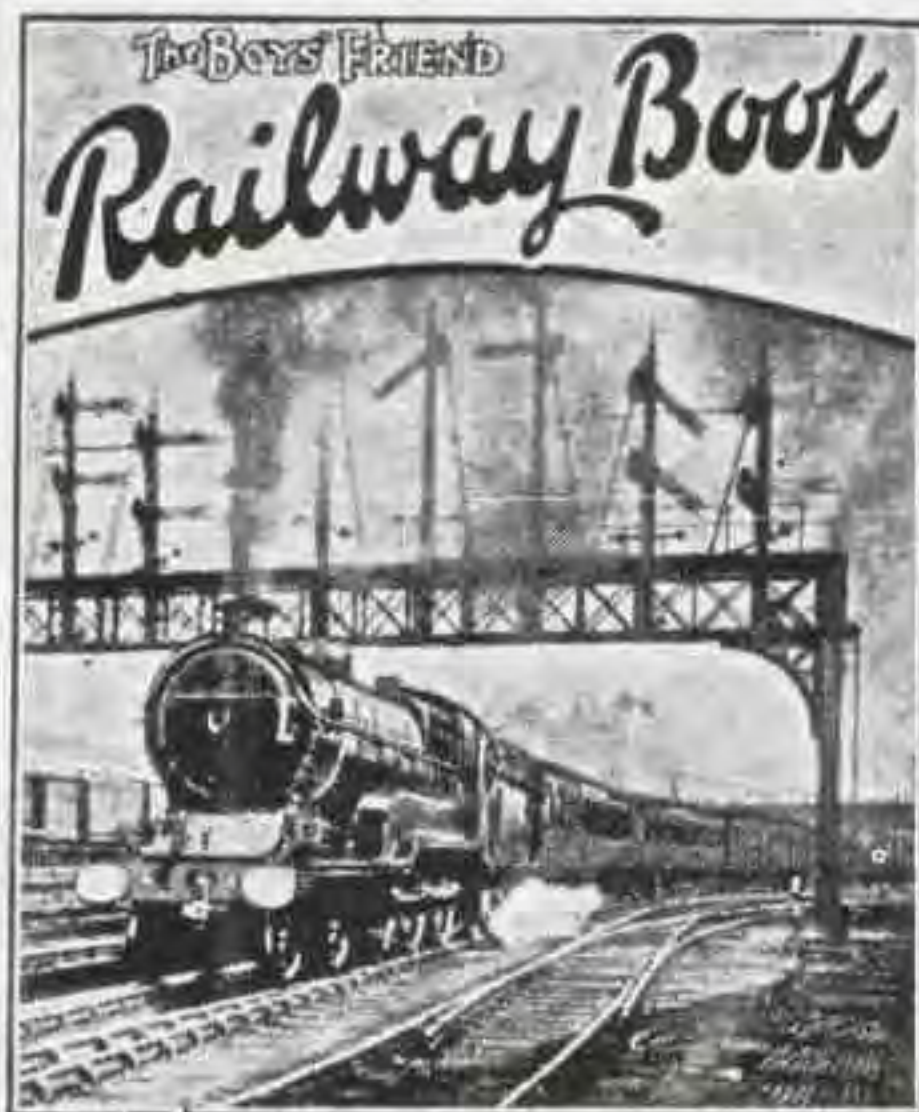
The next morning there was a surprise in the Remove fellows.

Billy Bunter was the first to "spot" a new notice on the board in Mr. Quelch's "fat." Bunter spread the news around, and there was a rush of Remove fellows to read.

"Sacked from the captaincy!" said Bunter, with a whistle. "Phew!

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Sacked from the school next, I expect, what?”

“Shouldn’t wonder,” said Bolsover major.

“Rotten!” said Bob Cherry, rather distastefully, as he read the paper; and Harroo Janset Ram Singh remarked that the rottenness was terrific.

It was a brief notice; it stated that Harry Wharton, hitherto captain of the Remove, had been deprived of that position as unfit to hold it, that a new election would be held on a date to be fixed later, and that Wharton would not be permitted to offer himself for re-election.

It was brief, but it was very much to the point. The Bunder read it and lifted his eyebrows.

“I told him he was ridin’ for a fall,” he remarked. “Now he’s got it! He asked for it. I’m sorry, all the same.”

“Chance for you, Smiley,” said Skinner.

The Bunder walked away without replying.

A crowd of Remove fellows buzzed before the board. There was a sudden exclamation from Russell.

“Here comes Wharton!”

The captain of the Remove—no longer captain—sauntered up, his hands in his pockets. If he was still feeling the effects of the severe caning of the previous evening he gave no sign of it. The juniors made way for him, watching him breathlessly.

Harry Wharton read the paper, and his lip curled contemptuously. He made no remark; he shrugged his shoulders and walked away, carelessly, humming a tune.

THE END.

(Don’t miss next week’s amazing story of the Greyfriars drama. The Remove is plunged into an election, and the name of the successful candidate comes as a big surprise to everybody. You’ll enjoy every word of “Shocker—And Captain!”)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 283.



"SLACKER—AND CAPTAIN!"

That is the title of the next long, complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. Now that Wharton has lost the captaincy of the Remove, such leading spirits as Bob Cherry, Peter Todd, Vernon Smith, and Billy Hunter, are keen to fill the coveted position of skipper. On the face of things it is obvious that Hunter's chances are nil, although the fat and fatuous junior thinks otherwise. But between the Boulder and Bob Cherry a close fight is naturally anticipated. Then, at the last moment, Lord Mauleverer is nominated.

To say that his nomination causes a stir amongst the Remove is to put it mildly. But there is more in this nomination of the biggest slacker in the Remove than meets the eye.

BACKED BY HARRY WHARTON.

Although deposed, Harry Wharton has still a strong following in the Form, and when the ex-skipper openly states that he considers Mauly to be the very man for the captaincy, these followers at once

decide to put the "X" against Lord Mauleverer's name.

MAULY, THE SKIPPER.

Mauly gets in all right with a strong majority, and then the fun starts. The schoolboy earl has as much idea of running Remove affairs as a Friar's Dale tramp. He makes a complete "muck" of things, and in desperation calls upon Harry Wharton to help him out. Here we see the novel position of a deposed captain acting as Mauly's adviser. In short, Wharton is still skipper, although nominally that position is filled by Lord Mauleverer. What this leads to you will learn next Monday. Don't miss this wonderful story, chums.

H.M.S. EREBUS.

Next week's gorgeous Presentation Art Plate completes our series of Twelve Free Gifts. It shows to advantage the lines of one of the latest monitors in the Royal Navy. If you miss this gorgeous photographic plate your collection will be spoiled. Take the tip, boys, and order next week's MAGNET now.

"THE DEPUTY DETECTIVE!"

There is another long and powerful instalment of this grand new detective serial for next week. In it we see young Jack Drake closely following the trail of the notorious motor-bandits. The quietest Pyecraft of Scotland Yard, an old friend of yours, comes into the picture, and with his silver things begins to "hum." They are "humming" unpleasantly for Pyecraft at a certain stage of the story, and but for the arrival of Jack Drake a shining light would be lost to the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard for ever. Look out for the next instalment of this brilliant story. It's packed with thrills.

"JAPING."

Harry Wharton & Co. of the "Greyfriars Herald" have hit on the subject for their next supplement. As you are all aware of the high quality of the Remove japing, you can look forward to something extra good in next week's Special Number. 'Nuff said!

THE "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"

I would like to point out that only a few copies remain on sale of this famous Annual, and it behoves those readers who have yet to secure a copy to "lock slipper." For the modest price of six shillings the "Holiday Annual" presents the finest shopping bargain of the year. It's packed with rollicking stories of Harry Wharton & Co., Tom Merry & Co., and Jimmy Silver & Co., to say nothing of a host of powerful adventure yarns, how-to-make articles, tricks, puzzles, and gorgeous coloured plates. Step along to your newsagent to-day and ask him to show you a copy.



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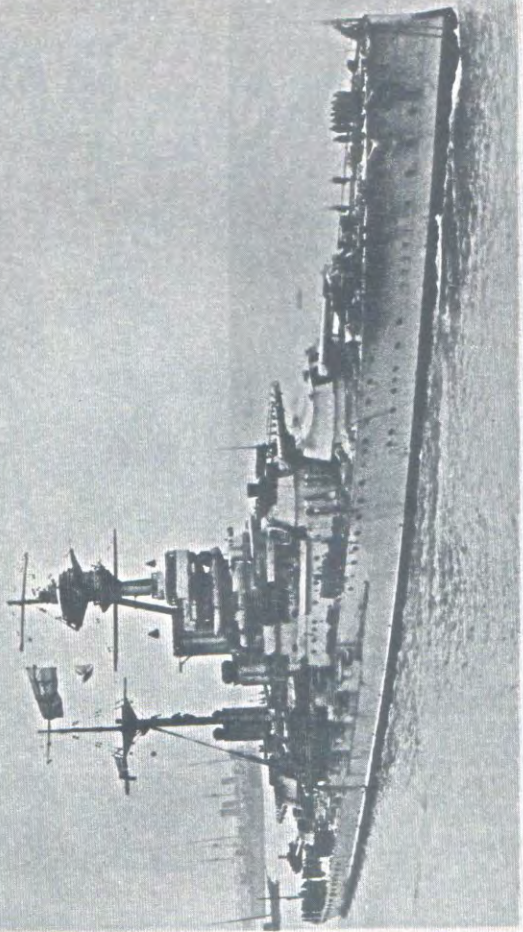
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