

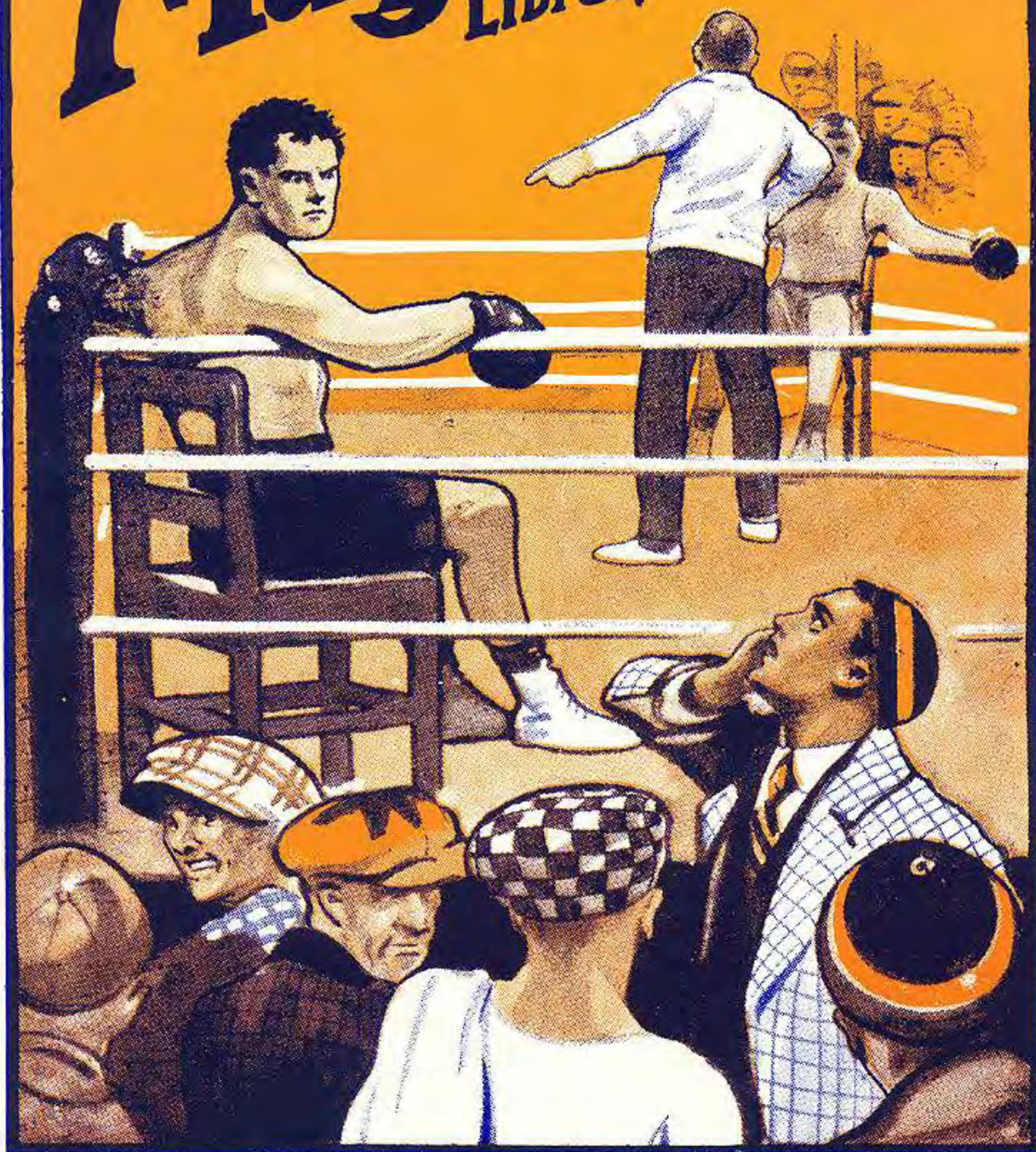
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Week Ending January 29th, 1927.

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HE DOESN'T WEAR A HAT!

FROM Newport comes a ripping letter in support of the MAGNET. "It's the finest paper in the world," declares my enthusiastic correspondent, "and all my chums are making a point of giving a regular order for it to their newsagent." Bravo, Newport! Isn't it wonderful what a little recommendation will do? Having said heaps of other nice things about his favourite paper my Newport chum goes on to say that he doesn't wear a hat; that he has never worn a hat for years. "Is it harmful to be out in the open these cold days without a hat?" he asks. Not if you are accustomed to it, my chum. You would have found out if any ill effects were coming your way as a result of going out into the open air without a cap long before this. The next little confession my correspondent makes is that his hair is always untidy. It's curly, he says, and although he keeps it "cropped," somehow or other it always seems to be "all over the place." Don't worry about such a trifle at your age, my chum. If your hair is curly, if you keep it "cropped," as you put it, it can't really look too bad. After all, boys are not expected to walk about looking like an oil painting. And I feel certain that you spend umpteen hours with a brush and comb trying to make that rebellious hair of yours lie down when occasion demands that it should be extra tidy. As I said before, don't worry. Curly hair looks tidy at any time of the day providing it is kept short.

WHY?

Between you and me, chums, I've got a headache now. I've just waded through a lengthy letter from a "Disgruntled" reader, who asks me at least a score of questions. Not that I mind answering questions. But these really—well, here's a specimen. "Why does Bob Cherry possess large feet?" Can any of you answer that? Here's another. "Why doesn't Wingate of the Sixth go into the Army?" Thirdly, "Why isn't Mr. Prout headmaster of Greyfriars?" And there's a whole heap more of similar queries—most of them of the unanswerable variety. I rather fancy that "Disgruntled" is having me on a bit of string. If such is the case I'll forgive him for this headache. If he's really serious I recommend him to take certain things for granted in this world, otherwise he will be asking me why I'm not a Chinaman or something, or why his pet dog isn't a pet lamb!

Next Monday's Programme:

"THE CALL OF THE RING!"

This is the final story in the remarkable series Frank Richards has given us, chronicling the adventures of Dick Dury, better known as the Game Kid. You'll enjoy every word of it, take it from me, boys!

"THE MYSTERY OF FLYING V. RANCH!"

Look out, too, for another fine long instalment of this sensational Wild West detective yarn. Ferrers Locke is in the thick of things next week, and the plundering career of the mysterious Wolf is destined to come to a sudden end.

"THE TRIUMPH OF JUSTISS!"

By Dicky Nugent.

This "shocker" concludes the barring-out series in which Jack Jolly & Co., of St. Sam's, have been figuring. You will laugh until your sides ache over this youthful "masterpiece." Don't miss it, whatever you do!

Cheerio, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

FEET OF CLAY! The bottom is knocked out of the Game Kid's little world when he realises that Cedric Hilton, whom he has idolised, is a wrong 'un! But even then the Game Kid stands by the shady Fifth-Former!



Loyal to the Last!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars, introducing the "Game Kid."

By
Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Good Advice Not Wanted!

"**H**ALLO, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life?"

Bob Cherry's cheery voice indicated that he, at least, was enjoying life; as he generally was.

But Dick Dury, the new fellow in the Greyfriars Remove, certainly looked as if he was not.

Bob came on him standing at the window at the end of the Remove passage, staring out into the darkening quad.

Dury's face was darkly clouded, and he seemed to be buried in deep and gloomy thought, when Bob's powerful voice startled him, and he turned round quickly.

Bob Cherry gave him a cheery grin. "What's the jolly old trouble?" he asked.

"Trouble?" repeated Dury.

"Thinking of the merry past, and finding it rather tame at Greyfriars after being a boxer in the Ring?" asked Bob.

"Oh, no!" said Dury.

"Queelch been ragging you?"

Dury shook his head.

"No. Mr. Queelch is very kind to a bloke these days," he said.

"No trouble in the study?"

Again Dury shook his head.

"I get on better with Russell and Ogilvy than I did," he answered.

"They ain't bad coveys. I dessay they found me a bit rough at first. 'Tain't that."

"I needn't ask you if anybody's been licking you?" said Bob, with a chuckle.

Dury grinned.

"No."

"Is it 'hie, haec, and hoc'?" asked Bob. "I suppose Latin grammar is rather a change from knocking out boxers in Huggins' Ring, what?"

"It is, rather," assented Dury, "and I can't say I take to it very kindly.

But I'm doin' my best. I'd like the 'Ead to know I'm grateful for his kindness in bringing me to Greyfriars." He sighed. "But I wish I hadn't never come 'ere, all the same."

Bob Cherry's cheery face became serious.

Dick Dury, once the Game Kid of Huggins' Ring, had not made himself popular in his Form at Greyfriars. But fellows were getting used to him, and they liked him better when they knew him better. The Kid had been extremely rough-and-ready; but he had toned down a good deal. If he still regarded the Remove fellows as "soft," he no longer told them so, at all events.

There was real trouble now in his thoughtful, clouded face, and Bob was sympathetic. He knew there were sterling qualities under the Game Kid's rough exterior, and he rather liked the new junior, queer as he was in many ways. And Bob would have extended a helping hand to friend or foe in distress.

"Look here, old scout, give it a name," he said. "Is there anything a chap can do? You've had rather a rough time here, and it was partly your own fault, you know."

"I know," assented Dury.

"But you're getting on," said Bob. "What's making you feel fed-up with Greyfriars now?"

"'Tain't exactly that," said the Kid.

"But—" He paused. "You're a decent chap, you are," he said slowly.

"One of the best!" assented Bob gravely.

"You go easy with a bloke," said the Kid. "I crowed over you when you couldn't stand up to me, and it was rotten; but you ain't the feller to bear a grudge. You know I had a rough training, and you made allowances for a covey like me. I understand a lot of things better now."

Bob smiled.

"That's all right," he said. "I want you to show me that trick with your

left some time. But I shall have to go into training a bit before I have the gloves on with you."

"You're a decent cove," said the Kid. "I 'spose if you knowed what the trouble was with me—" He paused.

"Look on me as your Uncle Robert, and tell me all about it," said Bob. "I'll give you my very best advice. No charge."

"'Spose a bloke made a promise," said the Kid. "'Spose he couldn't keep it arterwards?"

Bob's face became very grave.

"No good supposing that," he said. "A fellow who makes a promise is bound to keep it."

"I knowed you'd say that."

"A decent chap could hardly say anything else."

"Yes. But—"

"Look here, Dury, old man," said Bob. "I know you've promised your Form master to have nothing more to do with that man Huggins, that boozy old boxer, who is still hanging about in the neighbourhood for some reason or other. That must be the promise you're speaking of."

The Kid was silent.

"The man has no claim on you," said Bob. "You've left Huggins' Ring to come to Greyfriars, and chuck up that sort of life. If he had been a respectable man, the Head wouldn't object to your keeping on friendly terms with him. But when you chucked him, he had been sent to prison for being drunk and disorderly. Dash it all, Kid, that isn't the kind of man for a Greyfriars fellow to want to speak to."

"I don't want to speak to him," said the Kid, with a sigh. "I'd rather never see his mug again. But—"

"Well, then, give him a wide berth."

"I—I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because—"

The Kid broke off, his rugged face more darkly clouded than before.

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"Because what?"

"Tain't any good talking," said the Kid. "You wouldn't understand."

"I think I do understand, all the same," said Bob Cherry, very quietly. "You've got into association with a senior fellow since you've been here, Dury, and that's never a good thing for a junior. Hilton, of the Fifth, is no end of a swell, and I dare say he seems a magnificent fellow to you. But he's a bad hat, all the same, and if the Head knew what a lot of fellows could tell him about Hilton, there would jolly soon be a vacancy in the Fifth Form."

The Kid's face set doggedly.

"He's been kind to me," he said.

"I believe he's a good-natured fellow in his own way," said Bob. "But he's a rank bad egg, and the prefects have an eye on him. Wharton thinks it was Hilton who sent you out of bounds that night, when you bagged a flogging. I think he's right."

The Kid did not answer.

"I'm pretty sure that Hilton of the Fifth is hand-in-glove with that shady mob at the Three Fishers," said Bob. "I know you've been there with him and Price. And that man Huggins is there now. Look here, Kid, it's that Fifth Form rotter who's putting you in touch with Huggins again. I can see that. For goodness' sake don't play the goat. The fellow is only making use of you, and he'd throw you over like a shot if it suited him. Keep to your own Form when you're making friends."

"You wouldn't understand," muttered the Kid.

"I understand that you're heading for bad trouble, if you keep on with that outsider of the Fifth," said Bob earnestly. "Give him a miss."

"Don't you say a word agin Master Hilton," said Dury. "It's kind of him to take any notice at all of a bloke like me."

Bob smiled faintly.

He could easily understand how the rough, untutored Kid had been "bucked" by the notice taken of him by the dandy of the Fifth; he could understand that in the hapless Kid's eyes, the superb sportsman of the Fifth was a magnificent fellow who could do no wrong.

But he knew that the Fifth Form sportsman's influence had been the cause of the more serious troubles that had fallen to the Kid's lot at Greyfriars.

Hilton, of the Fifth, was good-natured and easy-going, kind and generous in a careless way; but he was as Bob said, a "bad hat," and certainly not a fellow with whom a junior schoolboy should have had any association.

Bob was not likely to be able to make the Game Kid see that, however. But he tried.

"Think a bit, old bean," he urged. "You're up against breaking your promise to Mr. Quelch now. You don't want to break it. Apart from its being a dirty thing to break your word, it means bad trouble if you're bowled out."

"I know that."

"And but for Hilton of the Fifth, you wouldn't be thinking of breaking your word at all."

The Kid was silent.

"Doesn't that show you that the fellow is a bad egg?" said Bob. "For goodness' sake, keep clear of him! It's bad form, anyhow, for juniors to mix with seniors. Give him a miss!"

"He ain't a bad egg," said the Kid sullenly, "and I don't want to 'ear you say anything agin him. Chuck it!"

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"Look here, Dury——"

"Oh, chuck it!" said the Kid angrily. And he walked away without giving Bob time to reply.

Bob Cherry breathed hard as he looked after him. He took a friendly interest in the new fellow who was so strangely out of place at Greyfriars. But the Kid was not a fellow whom it was easy to help.

Harry Wharton looked out of Study No. 1.

"Tea!" he called out.

And Bob dismissed the Game Kid from his mind, and went cheerily into Study No. 1 to tea with the Co.

— — —

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Sportsmen of the Fifth!

CEDRIC HILTON, of the Fifth Form, moved restlessly about his study. There was a frown on his brow, and he held an unlighted cigarette in his slim fingers. Price, his study-mate, sat in an armchair with a sullen face.

The two Fifth-Formers were waiting—and they had been waiting for some time. And they were waiting for Dury of the Remove—it was a mere fag of the Lower Fourth who was keeping the two sportsmen of the Fifth on tenter-hooks of anxiety.

"He's lettin' us down!" said Price at last, setting his lips.

"Rot!" muttered Hilton.

"He's never been keen on it, and he's lettin' us down, now we're for it, and it's too late," growled Price. "By gad, I'll——"

"I know he's not keen on it, but he's not lettin' us down. I tell you Dury will do anythin' for me," said Hilton. "Didn't he save our necks at the Three Fishers the other day—knockin' out Wingate of the Sixth? If Wingate had seen him an' recognised him, what would have happened to him? Well, a kid who will take a risk like that, won't let us down."

There was a step in the passage.

"And here he comes!" added Hilton, in a tone of relief which showed that, in spite of his words, he had begun to share his companion's doubts.

There was a knock at the study door, and it opened. But it was not Richard Dury of the Remove who presented himself. The newcomer was Wingate of the Sixth, the captain of Greyfriars.

Hilton started, and gnawed his lip. The cigarette disappeared from sight as if by magic.

Wingate stepped into the study. The Greyfriars captain's face still showed the signs of the blow he had received from an unknown hand, nearly a couple of weeks ago. It was still a mystery at Greyfriars, who had knocked out the captain of the school; the blow had been struck in the dark, and Wingate had not seen his assailant. Hilton and Price of the Fifth could have told him; so could Dury of the Remove. No one else knew—though Harry Wharton suspected.

The Sixth-Former's manner was friendly enough now. Hilton and Price did their best to look as if the visit was welcome. They could not afford to be on unfriendly terms with the captain of the school, if they could avoid it.

"You men busy?" said Wingate cheerily.

"No, we haven't started prep yet," said Hilton. "Take a pew."

He had been anxious for the arrival of Dick Dury. Now he hoped fervently that the Kid would not arrive while the

captain of the school was there. It was very important to keep from Wingate's knowledge the fact that the Fifth Form men had "taken up" the new junior.

Wingate sat down. His manner was genial, and it surprised the two Fifth-Formers. They knew very well that quite recently Wingate had been deeply suspicious of them to the extent of keeping them under observation. Something had apparently occurred to change the estimation in which George Wingate held the precious pair.

"About the football," said Wingate. "Oh!"

"We're playing Lantham Ramblers next Wednesday. I want you in the team, Hilton."

"Oh!" repeated Hilton.

His eyes glinted with suspicion. Wednesday was a date reserved by the Fifth Form sportsman for an affair which most assuredly he could not mention to the captain of the school.

It was on Cedric Hilton's lips to refuse. But he caught an expressive glance from Price.

To refuse a place in the First Eleven was a little too unusual. And it would be a pretty clear indication that something of very unusual importance had been already arranged for the date.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Price. "That's top-hole! You don't happen to want me, too, Wingate?"

Wingate smiled.

"I'm afraid you're not up to the form we want for that match, Price."

"Then I'll stand around and cheer," said Price, with a laugh. "Hilton's in toppin' form."

Hilton stared at his comrade. It was true that he was a good winger, and he had been assiduous at football practice of late—for the sole purpose of throwing dust in the eyes of the prefects. Certainly, he had not the slightest intention of playing football on Wednesday.

"The fact is," went on Wingate, "I'm rather sorry for some things I've thought about you, Hilton. You know there have been rumours of a Greyfriars man being seen at a shady place up the river, where the boxing men meet. I told you that you had come under suspicion. I warned you to take care. Well, it seems that I was on the wrong track, and so I'm naturally sorry."

"Oh!" ejaculated Hilton.

"Some Greyfriars man has been disgracing his school," went on Wingate. "There seems to be no doubt about that. But I'm quite in the dark about it. I mean to get to the bottom of it, I can assure you; the Head has put it up to me, and I'm going to see it through."

"Wish you luck," said Price cordially.

"I may as well tell you," went on Wingate, "that that day I went up to the Three Fishers I suspected that you were there, Hilton. A lot of little circumstances seemed to point to it."

Hilton breathed hard.

"Some Greyfriars man was there, I'm certain, and I jolly nearly ran him down. But, as you know, I was knocked senseless in the dark by some boxing man, and that ended the chase." He passed his hand over his brow. "I've still got the marks. But I made some inquiries afterwards, and I found that you two fellows had been at a scientific lecture in Courtfield at the time. Well, as I'd made a mistake, I don't mind owning up. It was somebody else."

"Glad you can see it," gasped Hilton.

"I don't want to say anythin' offensive," remarked Price, "but I must say



Tap! The study door opened and Dick Dury appeared in the doorway. "Master Hilton—" he began, and then he broke off as the surprised glance of Wingate turned on him. "What do you want?" snapped Hilton. "I—I—I—" stammered Dury, realising that his presence in a Fifth Form study would have to be explained. "Oh, cut off!" growled Hilton. (See Chapter 3.)

I think you'll find the man in the Sixth, Wingate, not in the Fifth."

"I've begun to think so myself. I'm sorry, especially as I've noticed the way you've been shaping at footer lately, Hilton. Now, you know that it isn't all beer and skittles to be head prefect; Dr. Locke gave me a pretty unpleasant duty to do, and I had to do it. If I suspected the wrong party, it couldn't be helped; I hope there's no grudge on the subject."

"None at all," said Hilton. "I—I'd help you if I could. But I'm sure that the man you want isn't in the Fifth."

"Then, it's settled about Wednesday," said Wingate, rising. "I'm putting you in as outside-right, Hilton, and I'm sure you'll give a good account of yourself against the Ramblers."

"Hilton's jolly glad of the chance," said Price. "If I were a bettin' man, I'd lay two to one on Greyfriars, with my pal in the eleven."

Tap!

The study door opened again, and Dick Dury appeared in the doorway.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

To Fight or Not to Fight!

"MASTER HILTON—"

Dury broke off, as the surprised glance of the captain of Greyfriars turned on him. He had not noticed Wingate for the moment.

Hilton gave him a furious look.

Nothing could have been more unlucky than the arrival of the Kid while Wingate was in the study.

"What do you want?" snapped Hilton.

"I—I—I—" the Kid stammered.

"Oh, cut off and don't bother!" said Hilton.

"Yes, Master Hilton," said the Kid humbly.

"Hold on," said Price. Stephen Price had a much more level head than his associate. "I dare say the fag's come to return the book you lent him, Hilton. Give him a chance to speak."

Hilton took the cue at once.

"Oh, if it's that—" he said.

"I—I—I—" stuttered the Kid, quite taken aback and nonplussed.

Hilton recovered his self-control at once.

"I didn't mean to snap at you, kid," he said good-temperedly. "But you shouldn't butt into a man's study like that. If you've brought back the book, chuck it on the shelf and clear."

"I—I ain't got the book, sir," stammered the Kid. Dury realised that his visit had to be explained to Wingate somehow. "I—I was goin' to ask you, sir, if you'd let me keep it till to-morrow—"

"Of course! You needn't have come here to ask me that. Shut the door after you."

And the Game Kid withdrew from the study and closed the door. The Fifth-Formers were greatly relieved to see him go, anxious as they had been for his arrival a quarter of an hour earlier.

"You're not goin' yet, Wingate," said Price amicably. "Now that little trouble you spoke of has blown over, give us ten minutes of your valuable time, old bean. Don't keep it all for the Sixth."

Wingate laughed and sat down again.

"That's a queer little cuss," said Price. "I suppose you've noticed him, Wingate—young Dury."

"Yes, rather!" said the Greyfriars captain. "A bit unique for Greyfriars; but I believe he's a decent little kid in his way."

"I've heard that he knocked out some of the Remove when he was first here, and was looked on as a sort of holy terror," smiled Price. "He seems to have got a lot of limelight for a new kid in the Lower Fourth. Queer his bein' here at all."

"Queer, and no mistake," agreed Wingate. "But it seems that he was brought to Greyfriars as a sort of reward; he did some service for the Head in the vacation, after Christmas. Dr. Locke was set on by a gang of foot-pads, and that kid came along and helped him. I understand that he was

a boxer with an old pug named Huggins at the time."

"Well, I suppose the Head knows what he's about; but that young merchant is rather a queer character for a school like this. But about the Lantham match—"

And Price led the talk to the subject of football.

A quarter of an hour later Wingate of the Sixth left the study, after what had been—to him—an agreeable chat with the two Fifth Form men.

As soon as the door had closed behind the captain of the school, the smile dropped from Cedric Hilton's face like a mask. He turned an angry and moody stare on his chum.

"What the thump do you mean, Price?" he granted. "You know jolly well I can't play for School on Wednesday, as it's the date of the fight at the 'Three Fishers.'"

Price smiled. "I know that Wingate's suspicions have gone to sleep, but that they would wake up again fast enough if you refused a place in the first eleven, you ass!" he answered.

"But I can't play, I tell you!"

"Time enough to tell him that next Wednesday," said Price coolly. "You've got to stick to games practice hard till then; and on Tuesday you get crocked. Easy enough if Coker's at practice; any fellow's liable to get crocked with Coker bargain' about."

Hilton laughed. "I suppose that's the best way," he said.

"Of course it is; leave it to me. Ain't I your guide, philosopher, and friend?" grinned Price. "Who fixed up that lecture at Courtfield—all ready for dear old Wingate to make his inquiries? It was unlucky the Kid buttin' in when Wingate was here; but we've pulled the wool over his eyes. Wingate's not a suspicious fellow, though he goes it rather when he fancies he's on the track of a bad egg! I suppose Dury will have sense enough to come back now he's gone."

"Better wait."

It was half an hour later that a timid tap came at the door of Hilton's study, and the Kid came in.

"Shut the door," said Price hastily.

Dury shut the door. "You wanted to see me, Master Hilton?" he said.

"Yes; but for goodness' sake take care not to butt in when there's a pre-lect on the scene."

"I never knowed—"

"It's all right. We were waiting for you," said Hilton. "Have you seen old Huggins yet?"

"I saw him last Saturday," said the Kid, with a clouded face.

"Good!"

"But—but it wasn't as you wanted, Master Hilton. Old Huggins had been pushing back too much whisky, and he went for Mr. Quelch in the lane. I chimed in and gave him my left."

"Oh gad!"

"You young fool!" exclaimed Price. Richard Dury's face became dogged.

"I wasn't going to see him 'andling my Form master," he said. "When the Old 'Un has been drinking, he's liable to do some damage, I can tell you. I laid 'im out, and serve him right."

"It won't improve matters," said Hilton. "But I dare say Huggins will put business first. I know he's anxious to take you in hand again, Dury, and put you in the ring against the Banbury Pet."

Dury's face was deeply distressed.

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"It can't be done, Master Hilton. It can't, really."

"The arrangements are all made," said Hilton coldly. "I suppose you're not going to let me down at the last moment?"

"I—I told you, sir, that I'd promised my Form master and the 'Ead, too, to keep clear of the Old 'Un," said Dury. "What would they think, sir, if they knowed that I took on a match in the ring, me a Greyfriars feller now?"

"They won't know."

"But ain't it taking them in, sir? Ain't it as bad as telling them lies?" muttered the Kid.

"Did you learn to be so particular as a bruiser in Huggins' Ring?" sneered Price.

The Kid flushed, and gave Price of the Fifth a fierce look.

"Don't you give me any of your sneering, Price!" he said. "I ain't taking any lip from you! You ain't Master Hilton."

"Why, you cheeky young cub—" began Price savagely.

He made a step towards Dury. The Game Kid eyed him grimly.

"You lay a finger on me," he said. "You'll want a bed in the 'ospital arterwards. I'd spin you across the room as soon as look at you!"

"Keep your temper, Price," said Hilton. "Look here, Kid, you simply can't let me down. I'm relying on you. Everything's fixed for the fight to take place on Wednesday afternoon. Cobb is managing for the Banbury Pet, and Huggins is taking you in hand. I've made bets on the fight already; I'm backing you for all I'm worth."

"Oh, sir!" said the Kid miserably.

"Is it a case of funk?" asked Hilton. "Cold feet? Are you afraid to face the Pet?"

The Kid's eyes flashed.

"Me afraid!" he exclaimed.

"You've told me you're certain you can beat him."

"I know I could beat him," said Dury. "I've watched him fighting, and I know he ain't my class. I've got to stall him off for four or five rounds, and then it's my fight for the askin'."

"Nobody else thinks so," said Hilton. "We can get long odds against you from the sporting men at the Three Fishers."

"I know what I'm talkin' about."

"I believe you," said Hilton. "It's a big thing for us, and I'm sure you can pull it off. So far as I've been able to find out, nobody at that show knows what a hefty little terror you are, and we shall simply rake it in. You stand in for a share."

"I don't want nothing."

"Then what's the matter with you?" exclaimed Hilton irritably. "Are you goin' to let me down for nothin'?"

The Kid was silent.

"I should have thought you were keen on a fight, after being out of the ring so long."

"So I am keen, sir. I'd like it like anything," said the Kid.

"Then what's the trouble?"

"The 'Ead brought me 'ere, sir, to be a Greyfriars feller," said Dury. "He thinks I've chucked it all up. I've promised to 'ave nothing more to do with it. I s'pose a gentleman like you, sir, wouldn't think that a promise mattered much to the likes of me?" added the Kid with a sigh.

Hilton felt a twinge.

"It's only for the one occasion," he said. "I understand how you feel. But it's only this once, and nobody will know. Dash it all, Dury, is it decent to let a man down like this? You can't do it. You've said more than once

that you'd do anythin' I asked of you. That's a sort of promise, isn't it? One promise is as good as another."

"Quite," said Price.

The Kid gave Price no heed, save for a quick look of dislike.

"Play up this once, Dury," said Hilton. "I tell you, you can't let me down at this stage. I'm relyin' on you."

Dury drew a deep breath.

"I'll do what you want, Master Hilton."

"That's right," said Hilton, with a smile. "I knew you'd be a sport. And you'll make something jolly handsome for yourself if you beat the Banbury Pet."

"I wouldn't touch it, sir!" said the Kid. "I'll fight the Pet, and beat him, because you ask me to, sir. That's all."

"Just as you like, of course. Then it's settled?"

"Yes, sir," said the Kid heavily.

And he left the study with that. His loyal devotion to Hilton of the Fifth had been put to a severe strain, and perhaps it had weakened. In spite of his determination to see no wrong in the dandy of the Fifth, to believe that whatever "Master Hilton" did was somehow right, the Kid's faith in his superb friend in the Fifth had received a shock. But what dark and troubled thoughts were passing in the schoolboy boxer's mind did not affect Cedric Hilton. The Game Kid would play up, and that was all that concerned him.

"All serene, Price," he said, when the Kid was gone.

Price nodded.

"Nobody knows the Kid's form," said Hilton, his eyes glistening. "It will be a regular harvest for us."

"Looks like it," agreed Price. "But after Wednesday, Hilton, for goodness' sake drop that rugged little ruffian. He won't be of any more use to us, and I'm fed-up with him."

"I'm not keepin' on with him for the pleasure of his society," said Hilton sarcastically. "After Wednesday he can go and eat coke!"

Which would not have been pleasant hearing for Richard Dury of the Remove had he heard it.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton & Co. on the Warpath.

"I SAY, you fellows—"

"Kick him!"

"But I say—"

"You've got the biggest feet, Bob," said Frank Nugent. "It's up to you."

"Turn round, Bunter."

Billy Bunter did not turn round. He had sampled Bob Cherry's boot before, and he did not want any more samples. He backed into the Remove passage.

"Look here, you beast!" he exclaimed, blinking wrathfully into No. 1 Study through his big spectacles. "I know there's something on."

"Travel!" rapped out Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Hook it, Bunter! You're dead in this act," said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, old chap—"

Slam!

The door of Study No. 1 closed suddenly, and Bunter jumped back just in time to save his fat little nose.

"Beasts!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a meeting in Study No. 1 in the Remove, and Bunter was assured that there was something "on."



"Groooooogh! Hooogh! Wooooogh!" spluttered Coker. He sat up on the carpet and glared at Potter and Greene who were regarding him with smiles. "Groooooh! Oooouch! Why didn't you back me up?" "My dear chap, you didn't want our help to handle a dozen Remove fags," said Potter blandly. "Grooooooogh!" gasped Coker. (See Chapter 5.)

Naturally, Bunter wanted to know. As it did not concern him in the least, the Owl of the Remove was very keen to learn what was on.

The Famous Five were all there, and Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing had joined them, and Ogilvy and Russell, and Peter Todd and Squiff. Study No. 1 was fairly full when all the meeting had gathered there. There were no signs of a feed; besides, it was just after tea. But there was "something" on, and Bunter did not want to be left out. If it was a secret, he was prepared to swear secrecy—as a preliminary to retailing it up and down the Lower Fourth studies.

"Now that fat bounder's gone, let's get to business," said Bob Cherry.

"What's the game?" asked the Bounder. "We've come here, but I for one don't know what's up."

"Raid on the Fourth?" asked Ogilvy.

"More trouble with Coker of the Fifth?" inquired Russell.

"Give it a name," said Peter Todd, settling himself on the corner of the study table. "But first of all, is it a secret?"

"Not exactly a secret," said Harry Wharton. "But we don't want it talked up and down Greyfriars."

"In that case I should suggest opening the door, and kicking Bunter to the

other end of the passage. He's at the keyhole—if I know him."

"I ain't!" howled Bunter. "I can't hear a word you fellows are saying. I—I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter's fat ear was evidently at the keyhole.

Bob Cherry jerked the study door open, and Billy Bunter fled for his life. There was a slam as the door of Study No. 7 closed, up the passage, and the key turned in the lock there.

"He's gone!" grinned Bob, coming back into Study No. 1.

"Now to business," said Squiff. "Go it, skipper!"

"It's really Bob's wheeze, but I approve of it all along the line," said Harry Wharton. "It's about that young ass Dury."

"Ragging him?"

"No, fathead!" said the captain of the Remove. "The fact is, we're going to look after him a bit."

"Oh, my hat! I should think that giddy prize-fighter could look after himself, without our help," said the Bounder. "He could knock out any two of us, and not half try."

"It's not a matter of fisticuffs," said the captain of the Remove. "In that line Dury doesn't want any help. He's quite able to take care of himself—a little too much so, in fact."

"The too muchfulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Mean to say you've brought us here to bother about that young ruffian?" exclaimed Russell warmly.

"Well, he's a bit of a ruffian, perhaps," admitted Wharton. "He's got on the wrong side of a good many chaps. But he's new here—he doesn't know the ropes, and, in his own way, he's not a bad sort."

"In his own way!" said Russell with a sniff. "I don't like his ways, in my study."

"Same here," agreed Ogilvy. "As you're so fond of him, Wharton, you can have him in your study, if you like. We'll hand him over."

"With pleasure!" said Russell.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"I'm not fond of him, and you can keep him!" he said. "But though he hasn't made himself popular, all you chaps will agree that he ought to have fair play."

"That's all right, of course," said Squiff.

"Well, he's made a friend in the Fifth Form," said Harry. "I needn't tell you chaps that Hilton of the Fifth is a bad hat. You know that."

"We do—rather!" said Peter Todd.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"Fifth Form men don't take up junior

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kids for any good reason," went on the captain of the Remove, "and Hilton's making use of that young ass. I'm practically certain that it was Hilton who sent him out of bounds the night he bagged a flogging. And I know that Hilton and Price took him one afternoon with them to the Three Fishers."

"Dingy little beast!" said Ogilvy.

"Well, his early training was a bit queer," said Wharton. "He must have been in all sorts of queer and shady places before he came to Greyfriars. That's all the more reason why he shouldn't fall into bad company here. The long and short of it is that he's got in with a blackguard in the Fifth Form, and it's rotten all round. The way he's going, under the influence of that cad Hilton, leads to the sack for him."

"Which wouldn't be quite a disaster for Greyfriars!" commented Russell.

"It's not fair on the kid," said Wharton. "Naturally, a rough little beggar like that thinks Hilton of the Fifth no end of a swell. It's not surprising that he's under his influence, as Hilton has taken the trouble to take notice of him. But we don't want the Remove disgraced by a Remove man getting expelled to please a shady cad in a senior Form!"

"Hear, hear!"

All the meeting were in accord with the captain of the Remove on that point. That was clear.

"Dury's got some queer ways, and he's not exactly popular," continued Wharton. "But I'd stand up for any Remove man in the same circus—a fool like Bunter, a rotter like Skinner, or a young ruffian like Dury; I don't care who. It's not good enough, and I think it ought to stop. It's no good talking to Dury—we've done that. Bob's idea is to talk to Hilton of the Fifth, and I'm backing him up, and I want you fellows to do the same."

"Fat lot of good talking to Hilton!" said Vernon-Smith. "He wouldn't even listen!"

"When I say talking to him, I mean something rather emphatic—such as 'shipping' his study."

"Oh!"

"Good egg!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the wheeze," said Bob Cherry. "Now, there's a meeting of the senior debating society on this evening, and Hilton and Price will be there. Just the time to call on their study."

"Jolly good idea!" said Peter Todd. "It will be a tip to them to leave Remove men alone."

"Of course, we don't want a lot of talk about it," said Harry Wharton. "It's no bizney of ours to give Hilton away to the beaks, and we don't want to risk getting Dury into trouble. We just want to tip Hilton to leave our Form alone. If he wants to send messages to the Cross Keys or to get smokes smuggled into the school, he can manage it without a Remove man to help him. The fact that Dury is willing makes no difference. Hilton's got to let him alone. We'll give him the tip—a plain tip—and see what comes of it."

"It's a pretty serious business ragging a senior study," said Ogilvy.

"I don't think Hilton will make a fuss about it; he won't want the beaks to inquire why we did it."

"Oh! That's so, too."

"Anyhow, that's the stunt!" said the captain of the Remove. "Hilton's got to drop Dury before he leads the silly

kid into some real harm. Are you fellows backing up?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Passed unanimously!" said Redwing.

A quarter of an hour later Harry Wharton & Co. marched into the Fifth Form passage on the warpath!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

"Shipping" a Study!

HORACE COKER of the Fifth glanced out of his study doorway. The brow of Horace Coker wore a portentous frown.

"What do you fags want here?" he demanded.

Coker was surprised, and he was annoyed. Juniors were not supposed to congregate in the Fifth Form passage, and here were no fewer than eleven members of the Lower Fourth marching along the passage as if it belonged to them.

Coker, who had a short way with fags, felt called upon to chip in. Horace Coker often felt called upon to chip into matters that did not concern him. Sometimes the results had been quite painful for Coker.

"What do you want here?" he demanded. "Cut off!"

"My esteemed Coker—" began Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Coker waved a lofty hand.

"No back-chat! Just hook it!"

"Dear old Coker!" said Bob Cherry. "Coker really imagines we're going to hook it because he tells us to! What an imagination!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you want me to boot you along the passage—" roared Coker.

"We do!" said Bob cheerily.

"We does!" chuckled Squiff.

"Come on, Coker!"

"The bootfulness will be a shoe on the other foot!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Forth from his study doorway, like a lion from his lair, rushed Coker of the Fifth. Coker never counted odds.

But the odds were there!

Coker, as he had often done before, woke up a hornet's nest. The heroes of the Remove were not booted along the passage as Horace Coker intended. Coker, instead of being the booter, was the bootee, so to speak. Before he knew what was happening, Coker of the Fifth was sprawling on the passage floor, and eleven boots were making rapid and energetic play on his bulky person. Coker felt like an ill-used football by the time he rolled into his study in a breathless and bewildered state.

"Good-bye, Horace!" said Bob Cherry sweetly.

And he drew Coker's door shut, and the Removites scudded up the passage and swarmed into Cedric Hilton's study.

"Grooogh! Hooh! Woooooogh!" spluttered Coker.

He sat up on the carpet and glared at Potter and Greene of the Fifth, who were regarding him with smiles from the table where they sat at work.

"Grooogh! Ooooh! Why didn't you back me up?" roared Coker.

"My dear chap, you don't want our help to handle a dozen fags!" said Potter blandly.

"Grooogh!"

Coker staggered to his feet.

"I'll smash them! I'll pulverise them! I'll spifficate them! I—I—I'll—"

Coker tore the door open and rushed into the passage.

But the Fifth Form passage was empty.

"They're gone!" said Coker.

"Lucky for you!" murmured Greene.

"What?"

"I mean, lucky for them, of course!" said Greene hastily.

"Cheeky little scoundrels!" said Coker, coming back into the study. "They knew better than to wait! I'd have smashed the lot of them! I've a jolly good mind to follow them back to their passage—only I—I won't!"

And Coker slammed the study door, and proceeded to set his collar straight, and to tie his tie, and dust his clothes, which needed it.

Meanwhile, the Remove raiders, far from having scudded back to the Remove passage as Coker supposed, were swarming in Hilton's study. The door was closed, to prevent general observation of their proceedings. Hilton of the Fifth was fairly well known in his Form as a "bad hat," and the Fifth did not approve of him or of his manners and customs. But they would never have allowed a fag raid on a Fifth Form man's study if they could have stopped it. It was judicious for the Removites to proceed with caution.

"Not too much row!" said Bob Cherry. "If you break anything, break it quietly!"

"The quietness will be great, but the breakfulness will be terrific!" grinned Hurree Singh.

"Pile in!" said Wharton.

"Lots of time," said Johnny Bull. "Hilton and Price are safe for half-an-hour at least, with the senior debating society. Still, let's make the most of the time."

And the raiders proceeded to make the most of it.

"Shipping" a study was not a new experience to the heroes of the Lower Fourth; they had shipped studies before. But the shipping of Cedric Hilton's study was rather a record.

The dandy of the Fifth was an elegant and expensive fellow, and he spent a good deal of money on the adornment of his quarters. It was probable that he would have to spend a good deal more, when his visitors had finished.

Crash!

The study table went over into the fender, and a volley of books and papers shot in all directions, with pens and maps and an inkpot.

"Quiet!" grinned Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The expensive carpet was jerked up, and draped over the table-legs, and several bottles of ink and gum upended over it. A handsome pair of window curtains were jerked down and added; and three of the Removites seized the bookcase and brought it down upon the pile.

The bookcase had glass doors. There was not much glass left in the doors as it sprawled over the table-legs.

Bob Cherry picked up Hilton's marble clock from the mantelpiece.

"Seems a pity," he remarked. "But clocks were made to go."

And the clock went—with a crash!

Chairs and other articles were piled on the stack. Crockery was sorted out of the study cupboard, and tossed on the pile, in innumerable fragments. Books were added, and pictures, and hassocks, and all the ink that the raiders could discover.

A quarter of an hour made a marvellous difference in the aspect of Cedric Hilton's study.

When the Removites had arrived

would want to know what it meant. Would you like to tell him?"

"What do you mean?" snarled Hilton. "Is there any harm in speakin' to a junior kid?"

"That depends," said Price dryly. "That impudent young cad, Wharton, takes the view that you're doin' Dury no good. He thinks you sent the kid out of bounds, that time he was flogged. Do you want him to tell the Head he thinks so?"

Hilton gritted his teeth.

"There's no proof; and Dury would never peach. It's safe enough."

"Dury might let it out if he was questioned by the Head, and asked the question point-blank. We don't know how much those young cads know; but, whatever it is, how much or how little, we don't want them telling it to the Head. We don't want Dr. Locke to have it explained to him that our study was shipped by a gang of the Remove, because they fancied that one of their Form was being led into mischief by a Fifth Form man. Don't be a fool, Hilton—we can't afford to face an inquiry, and those young villains know it, or they'd never have dared to handle our study like this."

"Rot!"

Stephen Price shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, go to the Head, if you like. Let him have Wharton and that gang up before him, and let them tell all they know or suspect. It will be a rosy prospect for next Wednesday."

Cedric Hilton bit his lip.

"I'm not goin' to the Head," he said sullenly. "But we can't stand this sort of thing."

"We can take it out of the cheeky young rascals in one way or another," answered Price. "But we can't afford an inquiry, and you know it, and they know it, too. What's the good of foolin'? They're in the right, and the Head would jolly soon see it, too. Dury's heading for the sack, the way he's goin'—and he's goin' that way because we've taken him up. Is that what you want Dr. Locke to know? Are you tired of bein' at Greyfriars?"

"Oh, don't be a silly idiot!" growled Hilton. "Are we goin' to sit down under this sort of thing?"

"No choice in the matter, so long as we keep up with Dury of the Remove,"

answered Price. "After Wednesday we shall have done with him, and he can go and eat coke. The less we see of him after that the better. He's a cheeky cub, anyhow. Drop him like a hot brick when he's outlived his usefulness. But till Wednesday, take it smilin'."

Hilton of the Fifth grunted, but he could see that Price was right, and he gave in. The way of the transgressor is hard. Any other Fifth Form man whose study had been "shipped" by the Remove would have had the satisfaction of seeing the ragers flogged for their exploit. But the other Fifth Form men had no guilty secrets to keep.

Hilton's influence over the Game Kid was doing the junior harm and leading him into evil. Harry Wharton & Co. knew it; and Hilton did not want the Head of Greyfriars to know it.

So nothing was said outside the study of the Remove rag; the two luckless sportsmen set their study to rights as well as they could, and Mr. Prout never knew what had happened.

In the Remove studies a good many juniors were wondering whether they were to be called on the carpet.

But nothing transpired.

In the Remove dormitory that evening, however, Billy Bunter had news.

"I say, you fellows, there's been a rag in the Fifth!" said Bunter.

"Not really!" exclaimed Bob Cherry in astonishment.

"Gammon!" said Peter Todd.

"Where did you hear that, Bunter?" inquired the Bounder gravely.

"I get to know things, you know," said Bunter, blinking at the Removites.

"You fellows never hear anything. I heard Blundell of the Fifth telling Potter. He went in to speak to Hilton, and found the study fairly up-ended, so he said."

Dick Dury looked round quickly.

"Hilton's study?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; your pal in the Fifth," grinned Bunter. "According to Blundell, somebody's been shipping Hilton's study in record style. But the queer thing is, that Hilton isn't complaining about it."

"That's very queer," said Harry Wharton seriously.

"The queerfulness is terrific."

"Yes. Blundell couldn't make it out," said Bunter. "Hilton's a good-tempered chap, as a rule; but shipping a man's study, you know—"

"Who did it?" asked Bob Cherry with the gravity of an owl.

"Nobody knows. If Hilton knows, he didn't tell Blundell. Blundell told Potter that he offered to report it to Mr. Prout, and get the fellows flogged, whoever they were; but Hilton said he didn't want a fuss."

"Now, I wonder why he didn't want a fuss," said Bob Cherry, very thoughtfully.

"Price, too," said Bunter. "Price isn't a good-tempered chap at all, you know, but he's taking it like a lamb—just like Hilton. I say, you fellows, I fancy it was some Shell chaps did it. Hobson's gang, very likely."

"I wonder," said Bob.

The next morning, when Harry Wharton & Co. walked out in the quad after breakfast, they came on Hilton and Price. The black looks they received from the Fifth Form sportsmen showed that the two seniors were in no doubt about the identity of the ragers.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" bawled Bob Cherry. "I hear that your study's been shipped, Hilton."

Hilton scowled.

"And I hear that it's likely to happen

again, if you don't leave Remove men alone!" added Bob cheerily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Remove walked cheerily away, leaving the two Fifth-Formers scowling. Evidently there was to be no trouble as a result of the shipping of the Fifth Form study. The sportsmen of the Fifth were taking it like lambs.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

For It!

THE Game Kid had given in.

But in the days that followed, although he said nothing to Hilton on the subject, there was sore trouble on the Kid's mind.

In fact, he saw very little of Hilton in the following days.

The sportsman of the Fifth gave him a hint to keep clear of the Fifth Form passage, and in the quad Hilton never heeded him any more than any other junior.

The shipping of Hilton's study had been a strong hint from the Remove, and Hilton had taken the hint.

So far as Harry Wharton & Co. were able to observe, all association had dropped between Hilton of the Fifth and Dury of the Remove.

When it was necessary for them to speak, to discuss the arrangements for the fight on Wednesday at the Three Fishers, they met in some secluded spot in the cloisters or outside the school walls. Hilton realised how necessary it was to be very careful. The bare thought of anything going wrong with the arrangements for the fight on Wednesday was dismaying.

So the heroes of the Remove were pretty well satisfied that their emphatic demonstration had had the required effect.

In the meanwhile the Kid was sorely troubled. So far as the fight itself was concerned, he was quite keen on it. More than once he had wondered whether he had acted wisely in accepting the Head's generous offer to place him at Greyfriars. Many a time he had missed the excitement of his old life—missed it keenly. Greyfriars offered him better prospects in life, but nothing in exchange for the excitement of the ring, the thrill of the strenuous combat, the glow of victory, the sheer joy of cheers ringing in his ears. The Game Kid would have given much to be allowed to change back to his old life for once.

But he knew that it was impossible.

The Head would have been shocked and grieved had he known that the boy even desired it. But apart from that, the thing was unthinkable. Dury was a Greyfriars fellow now, and the boxing-ring was gone for ever. His old associations were considered a disgrace among his new associations. The Kid was no fool, and he understood his new position clearly enough—he knew that he could not run with the hare and hunt with the hounds.

Left to himself, he would have put the thought from his mind with a sigh, perhaps, but quite resolutely. He had promised his Form master, and he would never have dreamed of breaking that promise on his own account. The influence of Hilton had done him more harm than Harry Wharton & Co. suspected.

For the promise was broken now.

The Kid had slipped out of the school to meet Mr. Bobby Huggins, and he had done so more than once.

Mr. Huggins, with an eye to business, had forgotten—or affected to have forgotten—that the Kid had given him his

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"left" a week or two before. Indeed, he was glad to have the boxer in his hands again that he was quite prepared to forget and forgive. He welcomed the Game Kid like a lamb returning to the fold.

The Kid was extremely careful in these excursions, and he was in little danger of discovery. Mr. Quelch trusted him now, and no longer turned a suspicious eye upon him.

Safety was not everything, however. Dury would almost have preferred his Form master to distrust him and watch him. It would have made his conduct seem less deceitful in his own eyes. To outwit a suspicious master was not so bad as to deceive one who trusted him.

The Kid was not happy in these days, though, at the same time, when his conscience forgot to trouble him, he found himself looking forward with zest to the fight with the Banbury Pet.

Having made up his mind that he could not refuse what Cedric Hilton demanded of him, the Kid kept to his resolution, though with a troubled mind. Once the fight was over he would be free again; it was, as Hilton had said, for the one occasion only.

After that, no more deception, no more trickery, no more surreptitious meetings with old associates outside the school. Hilton ought never to have asked this of him; but though the Kid knew it well, he would not acknowledge it to his own mind. Whatever other fellows might think, to the loyal Kid the dandy of the Fifth was still the personification of all that was admirable. When a doubt forced itself into the Kid's mind, he drove it passionately away.

Hilton himself, the Kid thought, would never do anything dishonourable—not really dishonourable, for the Kid made generous allowance for the reckless sporting proclivities of the Fifth-Former. Breaking bounds, betting and gambling—these were natural, the Kid considered, to a high-spirited young gentleman impatient of control. High and honourable himself, Hilton did not realise that a promise meant anything to a rough and rugged fellow like the Game Kid.

That was how Dury looked at it, or forced himself to look at it. He could not allow himself to realise that Hilton was acting basely, without losing his faith in his idol. And that faith, that loyal devotion, was the bright spot in his existence at Greyfriars.

It was a couple of days before the date fixed for the fight that the Kid had a gleam of hope. He found a number of fellows gathered round the school notices on Monday, and found that they were looking at the list the captain of Greyfriars had put up of the players in the match with the Lantham Ramblers. A good many voices commented on the fact that the name of "C. Hilton" appeared in the football list.

The Kid's face brightened.

The Lantham match was on Wednesday afternoon; it would be taking place at the same time as the fight at the Three Fishers. If Hilton was playing in the match, he certainly could not be at the inn up the river; and it looked as if he had thrown up the idea. Unless Hilton wanted him to fight the Banbury Pet, the Kid certainly did not intend to fight. He had no compunction in throwing over the "Old 'Un" and Stephen Price; neither of them mattered to him. And surely, if Hilton was still keen on the fight, he must intend to be present, and he could not be present if he was playing Soccer in Wingate's team.

"Putting in Hilton?" Coker of the Fifth remarked, with a snort. "I told Wingate I'd play if he wanted me. You heard me, Potter."

"I did, old chap," smiled Potter. "And he's playing that dressed-up dandy, when he might have had me!" said Coker.

"Hilton can play footer, when he likes!" remarked Greene.

"Not like me, I suppose?" rapped Coker.

"Oh, my hat! No; not like you, Coker," assented Greene, at once. "He wouldn't be in the First Eleven if he did."

"What?" roared Coker.

"I—I mean—"

"You silly ass!"

Coker strode away in wrath, leaving Potter and Greene smiling. Blundell,

on, and Harry Wharton & Co., who were looking at the notice, smiled at one another. Bland was evidently rather sore at being left out of the team to make room for Cedric Hilton. But the Famous Five knew—if Bland did not—that Hilton of the Fifth was a brilliant winger when he was in the mood, at least.

"All the same, I'd rather play Bland if I were football captain," said Bob Cherry thoughtfully. "He's not so showy as Hilton; but he's a jolly good deal more reliable. Hilton's the kind of man to let a football team down if he felt like that."

"That ain't true!" broke in Dury fiercely.

The chums of the Remove glanced round; they had not observed the Kid standing behind them.

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the captain of the Fifth, gave a nod of approval as he read Hilton's name.

"Good!" he said. "Hilton's a jolly good winger. And he's been sticking to games practice like glue."

"My name isn't there," granted Bland, who was the chum of the captain of the Fifth.

"Well, I agree there's not enough of the Fifth in the first eleven," assented Blundell. "I could suggest a few changes for the better. Still, it's a good team; and you'll admit, old chap, that Hilton's got more pace—"

"I don't admit anything of the sort," said Bland. "He ties his necktie better than I do, if that's anything in Soccer. I admit he's always turned out better for church parade. Wingate's an ass!"

The great men of the Fifth walked

"I didn't know you were there, Dury," said Bob Cherry quietly. "and you can stand up for Hilton, or anybody else if you like; but you mustn't talk like that, my lad. If you don't agree with a fellow, you don't call him a liar—not in the best circles."

Dury coloured.

"Sorry!" he blurted. "I didn't mean to do that, not at all. But you ain't right about Hilton. He wouldn't let anybody down."

"That's better," said Bob. "Differences of opinion are allowed, old bean. We'll agree to differ about it."

"If there's any betting men here, I'll give two to one that Hilton doesn't play on Wednesday," said Skinner of the Remove, with a chuckle.

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"How's that?" asked Wharton.

"Because I've heard from a Highcliffe chap that there's a fight on at the Three Fishers that day," grinned Skinner. "Hilton will be there, if he can dodge the beaks. And all the more chance of dodging them, with most of the prefects fixed up at footer."

"But his name's down to play," said Nugent.

"Well, you'll see," answered Skinner. "I know the merchant. Two to one in dough-nuts that he drops out before Wednesday."

The Game Kid walked away, the brightness gone from his face. He could willingly have punched Skinner for what he had said; but Skinner's mocking words found an echo in his own thoughts. Hilton's name in the list for the football match was a blind—he knew it now. The Fifth-Former did not intend to play football on Wednesday.

He knew the truth beyond doubt the next day. Wingate's eleven were at practice with a team picked from the Sixth and Fifth, and in the course of practice Hilton was barged over. He limped away, and Price of the Fifth helped him back to the House. Apparently Hilton had damaged his knee.

After the practice, Wingate of the Sixth dropped into Hilton's study. He found Hilton seated in an armchair, with his leg resting across another chair.

"Bad?" he asked.

"Oh, nothin' to make a song about," said Hilton. "But I'm a bit uneasy about to-morrow, Wingate. My knee's pretty crocky. It's too absolutely rotten, after you've given me a chance to play for School."

The disappointment and chagrin in Hilton's face were quite artistically rendered.

"Well, it's rotten," said Wingate unsuspiciously. "Rotten luck for you, Hilton, and no mistake."

"No good me offerin' to take Hilton's place, I suppose?" said Price amicably.

"Hem! No; thanks all the same. I shall have to play Bland after all. He's a good man, anyhow."

And Wingate went along to see Bland, and tell him that he would be wanted, much to that youth's satisfaction. And that evening the name of C. Hilton disappeared from the football list, and "B. Bland" took its place. And—what was very unusual in such circumstances—the change was satisfactory to both the fellows concerned. Skinner brought the news to the Remove passage with a cynical grin on his face. And the Game Kid, when he heard it, realised that the matter was settled and that he was "for it."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

At the Three Fishers!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were among the swarm of juniors who had decided to honour the Lantham match with their presence on Wednesday afternoon. When they had no match of their own on, the heroes of the Remove were quite ready to encourage the seniors by looking on and cheering. The Lantham match was quite a big affair in the senior list, and fellows of all Forms intended to line up and watch the game.

A crowd was already beginning to gather on Big Side when Hilton walked out with Price—still limping a little. His disappointment, apparently, made Hilton unwilling to be a spectator at the

match in which he could not play. As for Price, he never cared about games. But in the swarm of Greyfriars fellows the absence of the two Fifth-Formers was not likely to be specially noted. Still less was the absence of Richard Dury of the Remove likely to attract any attention.

Outside Greyfriars, Cedric Hilton ceased to limp, and walked on quite briskly with Price.

Both the sportsmen were in very cheery spirits.

With the Lantham match going on that afternoon, there was little to be feared from the vigilance of the Sixth Form prefects; even if Hilton's recent devotion to Soccer had not thrown the dust in the eyes of George Wingate so successfully.

But they proceeded cautiously.

By a roundabout route they reached the tow-path a good distance up the Sark, and slipped in at the gate of the Three Fishers after cautious glances up and down.

Within the gate, Dick Dury awaited them.

Hilton gave him a nod and a smile.

The Game Kid looked very fit, and he seemed in a cheerful mood. Now that he was "for it," the Kid had driven other considerations from his mind, and was thinking only of the coming fight. And there was a glow of anticipation in his face. He had never felt so strongly the call of the ring.

"Feelin' fit?" asked Hilton.

"What-ho, sir!" said the Kid, with a grin. "Fit as a fiddle!"

"That's good!"

"I've had a look at the Pet while I was waitin' for you, sir," said Dury. "He thinks he's on to a sure thing. Old Cobb and his friends are backing him."

"Let them," said Hilton, with a smile. "The more the merrier. Sure you weren't seen comin' here, Dury?"

"I was jolly careful, sir."

"If the Pet damages you, you'll have to spin a yarn about a scrap with a bargee," said Price.

The Kid's face clouded for a moment.

"I know!" he said curtly.

"Do you think he'll damage you much?" asked Hilton.

"Well, he's a good man," said the Kid. "I'm pretty certain that I shall walk over him; for bless you, sir, I've stood up in the ring often enough to know my business. I fancy seven rounds will do for him. But in the first two or three he will punch me a bit."

"You know all about it," grinned Hilton.

"Well, course I know something about it, sir, being as it was my business, and I lived on it when I was with the Old 'Un," said the Kid cheerily. "The Old 'Un's here, sir, but he ain't so merry and bright as he was about it."

Hilton, who was moving on, paused.

"Why's that?" he asked. "Huggins doesn't think you're going to be beaten, does he?"

The Kid chuckled.

"He knows I ain't," he answered.

"Then why—"

"He's been laying money, of course," said Dury. "But he can't get the odds he was expecting. You see, I ain't known in this part of the country. Huggins' Ring never travelled this way."

The Pet bein' older and bigger, the blokes 'ere naturally fancy him, especially as they know his style. If nobody here knowed me, it would be pie for the Old 'Un. But it turns out that a man's here, after all, who's seen me box."

"Oh!" said Hilton.

"A book-makin' bloke named Banks, sir," said the Kid. "He's puttin' money on me, same as the Old 'Un—you see, he knows me. And that has rather cooled off Cobb's crowd—they're beginning to think they've hit up agin a dark horse in me." And the Kid chuckled.

Hilton frowned.

"That means we sha'n't get long odds," said Price.

"You're safe at even money," said Dury. "If I don't beat the Pet, you can use me for a punch-ball!"

Price grunted.

Hilton made the Kid a sign to go, and Dury went into the big zinc shed where the boxing was to take place. A good many men were gathering now, round about the shed, and there was a buzz of voices and a smell of cigar smoke.

"Confound Banks!" muttered Hilton. "His buttin'-in may spoil the whole show!"

The two Fifth-Formers mingled in the crowd, nodding to three or four Highcliffe seniors whom they recognised.

They found Mr. Banks, a fat gentleman, with a silk hat and a big cigar, whom they had met before. Mr. Joseph Banks sometimes honoured the Cross Keys at Friardale with a visit.

The fat man gave them a genial nod and a grin.

Mr. Banks was making a book on the fight, as coolly and unconcernedly as if he were upon the racecourse. Races, League football, and boxing contests were all one to Joseph Banks; all was grist that came to his mill. Only he had to exercise more or less caution, according to the scene of his activities.

Hilton and Price exchanged a few words with Banks, and then went into Mr. Bobby Huggins' room in the big zinc building.

They found the Old 'Un with a somewhat gloomy expression on his rubicund face.

His hopes had been dashed, as those of the Fifth Form sportsmen were beginning to be.

"Ard luck!" said Mr. Huggins, shaking his head.

"The Kid's all right?"

"Right as rain."

"He'll win?" said Hilton.

"No doubt about that. Almost wish there was!" sighed Bobby Huggins. "You see, the Kid bein' a dark horse, in a manner of speaking, I thought I was on to a good thing 'ere. But some of the coveys turn out to 'ave seen him and remember him, and now this 'ere Banks comes along and puts the lid on. Even Cobb's crowd are crying off the Pet. If you want to back the Kid, you'll have to put the money on, at very short odds, sir."

"That isn't what we expected," said Hilton, biting his lip.

"But it's what's going to 'appen," said Bobby Huggins. "Why, that man Banks offers four to one against the Banbury man. He's had to make the odds longer and longer to book any bets at all. The Banbury man can't last; and the coveys have got on to it, you see. You'll have to put up four quids agin one if you want to back the Game Kid. Bigger price still if you leave it till they're in the ring."

And Mr. Bobby Huggins shook his bullet head sadly.

ANSWERS
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Hilton and Price moved away. The handsome face of the dandy of the Fifth was dark and gloomy now. The "chance of a lifetime" was not turning out as expected.

He broke into a bitter laugh. "I suppose it was too good to be true, really," he said; "and we've raised all we could, and come here well-heeled—only to be let down like this. If we've got to put up four quids to win one, we don't stand to bag anythin' decent—the game's not worth the candle."

Price nodded and gnawed his lip. The fat voice of Mr. Joseph Banks was heard behind them.

"Five to one agin the Banbury man." The two seniors moved farther off.

"Sickenin'!" muttered Hilton. "We're let in, Pricey. We've raised twenty pounds each to back the Kid—puttin' it all on at that figure means nettin' four quid apiece—the game's not worth the candle. And there's always the risk of losin'."

Price's hard face grew harder. "But puttin' it on at five to one, if the Banbury man pulled it off, and we backed him, that means a cool hundred each," he muttered.

"The Banbury man can't win. Think that blackguard Banks doesn't know!" growled Hilton.

"He might." Price's voice, sunk to a whisper, was so significant in tone, that Hilton started and stared at him.

"What do you mean, Price?" "Fights have been squared before now," muttered Price. "You've told me that that brat Dury will do anythin' you tell him."

"I know he will. But—" Hilton's face was white now.

"Tell him to lose." "Price!" "He can stay through a few rounds to give the thing colour. Tell him to lose the fight."

"You awful rotter, Price!" Price made a fierce gesture. "Are we goin' to be particular among these dingy blackguards who would skin us down to the socks if they could? Don't be a fool!"

"It's too utterly rotten!" muttered Hilton with white lips.

"It's the chance of a lifetime. We were ready to take two to one. We can get five to one if we back the Banbury man."

"But—but—" "Dury will do as you tell him. He's at your orders."

"I know that. I've no doubt about that. But I can't tell him—I can't—"

"Will you ever get such a chance again?"

"No. But—" "Come and speak to Banks, then." Hilton hesitated.

It is well said that he who hesitates is lost. Five minutes later the Fifth Form sportsmen had completed their dealings with Mr. Joseph Banks. The die was cast.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Fighting to Win!

"DURY!" "Yes, Master Hilton!" said the Kid brightly.

Cedric Hilton had drawn the Game Kid aside in his dressing-room in the zinc building.

Blackguard as he was, low as he had fallen, Hilton found some difficulty in telling the Kid what he was to do.

Not that he had any doubt of Dury's



"I ain't a thief and a swindler, Master Hilton," said the Game Kid in a low voice, "and that's what you are!" "You—you dare—" Hilton's rage overcame him. He moved forward and struck the junior full in the face. "Take that!" he cried. "Now go—get out of my sight! I've done with you!" (See Chapter 10.)

obedience. It did not cross his mind for a moment to doubt.

Dury was devoted to him. For his sake the junior had deceived his Form master and headmaster, had broken his promise, had taken a flogging, and risked expulsion from the school. By his presence here, in these very moments, he was risking the "sack" anew.

Devotion could scarcely have gone further. Cedric Hilton's word was law to the rugged lad who was almost fanatically devoted to him.

He had no doubts. It did not even enter his mind that there was a limit—that at long last even the loyal Kid might "kick."

On that subject a surprise was awaiting the Fifth Form sportsman, but as yet he had no doubts.

His only difficulty was to put his orders into words; low as he had sunk, he was ashamed. But there was no time to lose.

"You feel sure of beating the Banbury man?" he breathed.

The Kid smiled confidently. "Quite, sir."

"Quite sure?" muttered Hilton. He would have been glad to hear at

this moment that the Game Kid doubted his success.

"Oh, yes, Master Hilton!" said the Kid. "That's all right! Why, all the Pet's backers are turnin' round and trying to hedge, they are. It's got out, you see."

"I don't want you to win, Dury!" whispered Hilton.

The Game Kid started violently. He stared at the dandy of the Fifth as if he doubted his ears.

"Wha-a-at!" In spite of his coolness, of the lofty nonchalance which he cultivated as a fine art, Hilton's eyes dropped before the Kid's amazed stare. A faint flush came into his cheeks.

"I—I don't understand, Master Hilton," said the Kid slowly, in a faint voice.

"I've changed my plans—" "Changed your plans?" repeated the Kid.

"Yes. I—I want you to lose." "You—you want me to lose the fight?" breathed the Kid.

"That's it. Put up a decent show, of course; we don't want them sayin'—"

(Continued on page 17.)

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"JACK JOLLY'S BARRING-OUT!"*(Continued from previous page.)*

went crashing to earth, taking Herr Guggenheimer with it.

Crash!

"Yaroooo!" roared the unforchunitt German master. "Donner und blitzten! I believe I have broken my back!"

"Careless chump!" said the Head, who was absolutely drained dry of the good old milk of human kindness. "Tolly-fone for the ambulanse, somebody! Meanwhile, we will tie the ladders again; and I call upon you, Monsure Froggay, to go up and deal with those bratts!"

The French master bowed curteously and wagged his hands.

"We we!" he said. "I am not a man to be played ze fool wiz, and I will make ze garcons obey me. Toot sweet!"

Jack Jolly & Co. overheard that remark, and they grinned. They had some old scores to pay off on Monsure Froggay, and they were looking forward to getting to grips with him.

When the ladders had been put right again, the French master climbed up as nimbly as a munky.

"Go it, Froggay!" shouted the Head, encurrigingly. "If you find your curridge begins to fail you, sing the Marshal Lays."

Halfway up, the French master's nerves became a bit groggy, for he was in eminent danger of a bombardment from the rebbles' peashooters. So he burst into song, in order to keep his pecker up.

"Allons! Ong-fongs de la patreeay, Le jore de glore est arrivay!"

Higher and higher went Monsure Froggay, and still no order to fire came from Jack Jolly's lips.

The rebbles suffered the French master to climb without molestashun, until at last his head popped up above the winder-sill.

"Jolly!" cried Monsure Froggay. "Come down wiz yourself! Ong-fong terrible! I call upon you to make ze surrender! Compray-voo?"

Jack Jolly larfed in the French master's face.

"Collar him, you chaps!" he shouted.

Willing hands were thrust through the winder, and Monsure Froggay was seized by the scruff of the neck and hauled into the dormitry. He shrieked and stormed and struggled, but all in vane.

"What are we going to do with him, Jack?" inquired Merry. "Shall we make him our prizzener?"

Jack Jolly shook his head.

"We'll shift the barrycade and kick the silly old buffer downstares!" he said.

"Help!" yelled the French master. "I will not suffer ze indignity of being used as a football! You shall not kick me down ze stares! Nong, nong!"

But Jack Jolly & Co. were in grim earnest. The barrycade was dragged away from the door, and Monsure Froggay was hussled through the doorway. A number of boots clumped together on the rear of his person, and he rolled down the stares, shrieking wildly.

Bump-bumpety-bump!

It was a long way to the bottom, and when the unhappy French master collapsed in a crumpled heap at the foot of the stares, he was broozed in every part of his annatermy. He heard the dormitry door slam overhead, and the sound of the barrycade being replaced, and the skornful larfter of the rebbles. Then Monsure picked himself up, and limped away to tell his tail of woo to the Head.

If the French master eggpected simperthy, he was doomed to disappointment. The Head hurled abuse at him

until he was brothless. Then he glared round at the groop of masters.

"A fat lot of use you people are, in a crysis!" he said bitterly. "The rebbles are still secure in their stronghold, and all our efforts to dislodge them have ended in smoke!"

So saying, the Head lit a sigarette, and puffed at it savvidgely.

"Why not climb the ladder yourself, sir, and bring the young scamps down?" suggested Mr. Justiss.

"Ahem! My climbing days are over, since I tumbled from the top of Mont Blong and busted a collar-bone," said the

DO YOU KNOW THAT—?

IN the opinion of Billy Walker, the famous Aston Villa forward, footballers who rely on the left foot are generally harder shots than those who use the right foot, but he does not tell us why this is so.

Briggs, the Birmingham centre-forward, and Tunstall, the Sheffield United outside-left, are brothers-in-law.

There are several players who have never been on the winning side in an International match, but Hugh Gallacher, the centre-forward of Newcastle United, has a very different record. He has played in eight matches for Scotland, and his side has won every one of them.

In the season of 1921'2, the Southend United club provided a novelty, as their leading goal-scorer for the season was a half-back. He found the net ten times.

The next big change in regard to the Control of football matches is likely to be the appointment of two referees for each match—one for each half of the field. The League management committee is said to be considering this proposal.

In the opinion of Mr. C. F. Moon, one of our leading referees, goalnets are fixed too tight. If they were slacker the ball would not rebound so quickly, and referees would make fewer mistakes.

A certain Scottish footballer was asked why, when he was playing, he took such long strides. His reply was: "To save shoe-leather, of course."

Finch and Corbutt, two lads who were recently introduced to the West Bromwich Albion first team, played together in a junior side, and were signed on by the Albion on the same day. Corbutt is only sixteen years of age.

Joe Smith, who has played in first-class football for Bolton Wanderers for eighteen seasons, gives the following among his golden rules: "Take plain wholesome food at regular intervals and give pastry a wide berth. Get plenty of sleep—I have nine hours every night."

When playing at home Derby County's men always make a special effort to get on to the pitch first, as there is a tradition that if they do not do so they get beaten.

Head. "I have been strickly forbidden to climb ladders—eggsept the Ladder of Success! I am afraid there is nothing more we can do, at the moment. I will retire to my study, and think out ways and means of dealing with the rebbles."

And the Head, shaking his fist furiously at the grinning faces up above, stamped savvidgely away.

Jack Jolly & Co. were in high spirits. So far, they had carried everything before them. The masters had been beaten off, and the Grate Rebellion was still going strong.

The rest of the day passed without incident. No further attempts were made to get to grips with the mutinus Fourth-Formers.

The rebbles passed away the time in eating, drinking, and making merry. It was not serprizing, therefore, that their stock of pervisions should be exhausted by nightfall.

"What are we going to do now, you fellows?" wailed Tubby Barrell. "We can't stay here without grubb. There isn't so much as a peace of toffy left. We shall starve to deth! Boo-hoo!"

Jack Jolly glared skornfully at the fat junior.

"A week's fasting would do you all the good in the world, Tubby," he said. "It would reduce some of the sooperfluous fat of yours. However, there's no need to talk of starvation. When midnight comes, I'll go down and raid the school kitchen for fresh supplies."

"Oh, good!" said Tubby Barrell, gratefully relieved.

Most of the rebbles turned in early, and went to sleep. But Jack Jolly lay fooly-dressed on his bed, waiting for the sollum strokes of midnight to tinkle from the old clock-tower. Merry and Bright stayed awake with their chum, and when midnight came they helped him to remove the barrycade.

"Mind how you go, Jack!" whispered Merry anxiously.

"Trussed me!" said Jack Jolly cheerfully.

And our hero quitted the dormitry, and dived down the dark starecase.

Softly, silently, stelhily, he slunk like a cautious ratt round the corridors, in the opake darkness.

Little did he dream that he was walking to his doom! Little did he reck of the fate that was in store for him!

Alas for Jack Jolly! The crafty and cunning Mr. Savvidge, antissipating a midnight raid on the school kitchen, had hidden himself behind the door.

No sooner had Jack Jolly opened the door, than a grip of iron fell upon his sholder, and a horse voice eggclaimed:

"Gotcher, my beauty! You walked very neatly into my trap. And now I'm going to take you before the Head. If I am anything of a profit, you will only see one more sunrise at St. Sam's!"

With black despare gnawing at his victuals, Jack Jolly was marched away to the Head's study.

Doctor Birchmall crowed and chuckled, and rubbed his hands, when the leader of the rebbles was brought before him.

"Ha, ha! He, he! Ho, ho!" gloated the Head. "So you've captured the little beggar, Savvidge? Good bizz! Bung him in the punishment-room for the rest of the night. To-morro morning he will look his last upon the hysterical bilding of St. Sam's!"

And the unforchunitt Jack Jolly was marched away in the crool grip of his capter. Hope was dead in his breast; dark despare had taken lodgings in his hart. He felt bitterly consious that this was indeed

THE END.

(Look out for "THE TRIUMPH OF JUSTISS!" next week. It will raise a record laugh, believe me.—Ed.)



(Continued from page 13.)

the fight was squared. But let the Banbury man win, or I'm in a hole! See?" The Kid was still staring hard at Hilton of the Fifth.

His face was quite white. That he would be surprised, perhaps chagrined, Hilton was aware. But he was not in the least aware of the feelings that his base suggestion would rouse in the Kid's breast.

The schoolboy boxer's lips trembled. This was the fellow he had liked, admired, almost worshipped—this was the sporting gentleman to whom he had been recklessly and devotedly loyal, and this fellow was proposing to him to sell a fight—to join in an all-round swindle, to throw away at a word his personal honour and his professional honour!

Obviously, his idol had feet of clay. It seemed like a dream to the unfortunate Kid—an evil dream. He could hardly believe that it was Hilton speaking.

He stared helplessly at the Fifth-Former.

"You understand?" breathed Hilton. "Master Hilton!" said the wretched Kid. "Oh, sir!"

"It's easy enough!" "Easy! I've always fought straight!" The Kid's voice was low and bitter. "Master Hilton, you're joking—you're jest pulling my leg, to see whether I'm that sort of a covey, ain't you?"

It was a last appeal. Against the evidence of his senses, the Kid was clinging to his belief in his idol.

But the appeal drew only an impatient exclamation from the dandy of the Fifth.

"Don't be a fool, Dury!" "Master Hilton!"

"We can't talk any longer—you understand? I'm ruined if you beat the Banbury man—I've put everythin' on him! Keep that in mind!"

Hilton was turning away.

"You mean it?" breathed the Kid huskily.

"Of course! Don't be a young ass!"

"You 'ound!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"You cur!" said the Kid.

Hilton of the Fifth stood transfixed. It was his turn to be unable to believe his ears.

The Game Kid's eyes blazed with scorn.

"Don't you say any more!" he muttered. "I've knocked a man out for less'n that! Leave me alone!"

"Dury—"

The Kid turned his back on Hilton of the Fifth and walked across the room. He was surrounded at once by his backers, and it was impossible for Hilton to address another word to him in private.

The Fifth Form sportsman hardly knew how he got out of the room. In the open air, Price tapped him on the arm, startled by the expression on Hilton's face.

"Is it all right?"

Cedric Hilton laughed harshly. "All right? No, all wrong!" "What do you mean?" "We're done!" "You—you don't mean—you can't mean that he's refused?" said Price blankly.

"Yes!" hissed Hilton. "That little scoundrel— You're mistaken—you must be mistaken! You were so sure!"

"I was too sure!" Hilton clenched his hands. "But there's a chance yet! He knows that if he fails me I'm done with him! I can't believe he will fail me—that he will dare——"

He broke off with an oath that startled Stephen Price.

The crowd was pouring into the zinc building now and gathering round the roped ring. Hilton and Price went in with them. They were both deeply alarmed and dismayed, yet neither could quite believe that the Kid would venture to let them down, as they regarded it. Their feelings, as they looked on at the preliminaries of the contest, were unenviable. If the Banbury man was beaten, Hilton and Price were "broke" to the wide. All they had, all they could borrow, had been laid on the Pet, in the firm belief that the Game Kid would do as he was told. If he did not do as he was told—

It was an appalling prospect for the Fifth Form sportsmen. And there was no comfort in the knowledge that it was exactly what they deserved.

There was a murmur as the boxers came into the ring.

Certainly, to all appearance, the Banbury Pet had a good chance, if not the best chance. On looks, Hilton would have backed him. A hope rose in his breast that the Banbury man might, after all, win on his merits. Gladly, only too gladly, would Hilton have seen the Game Kid knocked out. Some of the Pet's followers were still backing him, glad to get odds against him. There was a chance yet for the black sheep of the Fifth.

The Kid looked round once at the packed audience in the zinc building, at the sea of coarse faces and eager eyes. His glance rested on Hilton of the Fifth for a fleeting second.

His look was expressive, though Hilton hardly understood what it expressed. He did not comprehend that the Kid, even then, was loth to part with his faith in the patron he had blindly worshipped—that he regretted the bitter reply he had made, hoping against hope that Hilton had not been in earnest in his request. Hilton could not have meant it—he could not—that was the Kid's lingering hope and belief.

If he had meant it, he was booked for a bitter disappointment, for the Game Kid was going to fight to win. But he could not have meant it. Dick Dury clung to that. Hilton would be glad to see him win. Afterwards, he would tell his kind and generous patron how sorry he was that he hadn't understood for the moment that he was only jesting.

To that belief the hapless Kid was still clinging, though his better sense told him that Hilton had been in earnest, that Hilton had wanted him to be guilty of black treachery.

But even Hilton had to be banished from the Kid's mind when the seconds were out of the ring and he was facing the slogging attack of the Banbury Pet.

In the first round, and the second, and the third, it looked as if the Pet had the advantage.

The Game Kid, game as he was,

seemed unable to stand against the Banbury man; he was winding, and twisting, and dodging all the time.

Hilton's hopes rose as he watched. The Kid had overrated himself. The Old 'Un had overrated him. Joseph Banks had overrated him. The Banbury man was winning.

But Hilton glanced at the fat, satisfied, grinning face of Mr. Banks, and felt a chill of doubt again. Joseph Banks certainly did not look like a man who had been throwing his money away.

Back into Hilton's mind came the Kid's words—that he had to stall the Banbury man off for a few rounds, and then "walk over him."

He watched feverishly. In the fourth round the Banbury Pet seemed to have the upper hand. But Hilton noticed that the Kid, though he continually gave up ground to the Pet, had received little punishment. He was wearing his man down, as the Greyfriars fellow realised.

It was in the fifth round that the Kid at last took the initiative.

In the sixth, it was the Kid who was attacking all the time, and the Banbury man had hard work to keep clear. In the seventh round the Kid's left got home with terrific force, and the Banbury Pet was stretched out, and Hilton, with a throbbing heart, saw him taking the count. But the man was game. He came up to the scratch, and lived through the round, and came up to the call of time for the seventh.

But from that round it was "pie" for the Game Kid.

His opponent put up a good fight, but he was out-classed, and that fact was growing clear to all who cared to see.

Hilton looked round for Price. But Price was gone. He knew the worst now, and he had edged out of the crowd and gone. Hilton resolved to wait for the finish. It could not be long delayed now.

It was not long delayed. The eighth round was the last. There was a deep breath throughout the excited crowd as the Game Kid's left thudded home, and the Banbury man went down like an ox.

It was the finish.

Hilton struggled somehow out of the buzzing crowd, his brain in a whirl, his heart throbbing with rage, and disappointment, and fury. Broke to the wide, with debts and difficulties impending over him—in the place of the "harvest" he had promised himself. He clenched his hands as he strode away, hardly knowing whither he went. This was the end—this was the end—the end of scheming, and cunning, and dissimulation, and rascality—the end he deserved. It was for this that he had let down his football captain, taken the risk of expulsion from his school—to go back to Greyfriars ruined, in debt and difficulty for the rest of the term.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Blow!

"MASTER HILTON!" The Kid's voice was humble.

Hilton started, and turned his head.

He had left the precincts of the Three Fishers, only anxious to get away from the scene. But he was in no hurry to return to Greyfriars. In the falling winter dusk he leaned against a tree by

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the tow-path, staring at the glimmering river, a prey to torturing thoughts.

He did not see or hear the Kid as he came along; but Dury saw him at once, and came timidly up.

Hilton fixed his eyes on the junior.

"Master Hilton—"

"You!" muttered the Fifth-Former. He almost choked with the rage and hatred that surged up within him.

"I'm sorry, sir—"

"What?"

"I knowed you never meant what you said to me back yonder," said the Kid. "I knowed it as soon as I thought over it, sir. You was only pulling a bloke's leg."

Hilton panted.

"I answered you cheeky, sir, thinking for a minute that you meant it," said the Kid. "I'm sorry for that. I ought to have knowed that you wouldn't go for to do such a thing—a gentleman like you, sir."

The Kid's eyes were fixed eagerly on Hilton's white face, in the shadow of the tree.

He did not believe what he was saying, but he was trying hard to believe it. It was a forlorn appeal to his idol to save his faith in him. A word from Hilton would have been enough. The Kid was ready to believe—he wanted to believe—he passionately longed to believe.

"But that word was not forthcoming."

Hilton only stared at him, with a deadly glitter in his eyes. His hands were clenched convulsively.

"Master Hilton, you'll speak a word to a covey!" muttered the Kid miserably.

"You young rotter!"

"Master Hilton!"

"Don't 'Master Hilton' me! Get away from me! You ruffianly young blackguard, you've ruined me! Get out of my sight!"

The Kid stood quite still.

"Then you meant it, sir?" he said, after a long, long pause. "You was reely asking me to sell a fight?"

"You young scoundrel! Would it be the first you'd sold?" hissed the Fifth-Former. "You unspeakable little hooligan and rotter!"

The Kid quivered.

"I've always fought straight," he said, in a low voice. "Why, back yonder, old Cobb came to me, he did, and 'inted at what you asked me; but he saw in my eye that if he put it plain he'd get my left. And so he would have, he would! I may be a young 'ooligan and a rotter, but I ain't a thief and a swindler, Master Hilton, and that's what you are!"

"You—you dare—"

Hilton's rage overcame him.

He moved forward, and struck the junior full in the face.

The Kid reeled back from the blow, with a low cry.

"Take that! Now go! Get out of my sight! I've done with you!"

The Kid straightened up at once. His hands were clenched, and his eyes blazed.

But he dropped his hands.

"I won't 'it you, sir," he said. "I could knock you across this 'ere path, and easy, and you know it. You say you've done with me—and you 'ave! I've got no use for you now I've found out the kind of covey you are. You can't 'urt me with your 'ands, but goodness knows you've 'urt me enough. I'm done!"

And the Kid stepped back, and tramped down the tow-path towards

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Greyfriars, without another word or look.

Hilton sent a savage stare after him, and gave him no further thought.

The Kid tramped on drearily.

He was tired after the exertion and excitement of the fight with the Banbury Pet. That would have been little enough to the hardy Kid. His face bore signs of the damage received in the ring; he was conscious of it. The Kid's real hurt was deeper than that.

At Greyfriars, where he was alone in a crowd, he had found one fellow to admire, to worship, to whom he could give his humble friendship, asking and desiring no return for his devotion. So long as his idol justified his devotion that was all the Kid asked. And now his faith was gone. His magnificent patron, the superb fellow whose nod had been an honour to him, was a common cheat and blackguard; and the Kid despised him—could not help despising him from the bottom of his loyal heart.

Hilton of the Fifth was nothing to him now—nothing but an object of contempt!

But in losing his faith it seemed to the hapless Kid that he had lost everything; and life looked very dark to him.

With a clouded face Dick Dury came in at the school gates, and tramped across to the House. Dusk was thickening, the football match was long over, and the Lantham men were gone.

In the House the Kid found a crowd of fellows discussing the game. He saw Wingate of the Sixth standing by the fireplace in the hall, chatting cheerily with Blundell and Gwynne. Wingate's face still bore the traces of the blow that the Game Kid had given him weeks before, when he had struck down the captain of Greyfriars, unseen in the dark, to save Cedric Hilton from discovery. The Kid's eyes rested on that mark for a moment, and he felt a pang. For whose sake had he struck the blow?

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry greeted the Kid on the Remove staircase.

"Been in the wars, old bean?"

"Eh?"

"You've bagged a prize nose and eye from somewhere," said Bob, staring at him, "and your lip's cut."

"Is it?" said the Kid indifferently.

"My hat!" said Harry Wharton, from the Remove landing. "Have you woke up some passenger who was able to handle you, Dury?"

The Kid did not answer.

Price had arranged a story for him—of a fight with a bargee—to account for any damages in the fight at the Three Fishers. But the Kid was not disposed to tell that story. He was done with Hilton of the Fifth now, and he was done with lying and deceit.

"Who was the happy victim, Dury?" asked Bob, with a grin. "Must have been a hefty merchant."

"The heftiness must have been terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Dury did not answer; he passed through the juniors without a word, leaving them staring. He went to his own study. Ogilvy and Russell had finished tea there, and they looked at the Kid as he came in.

"Hallo! Where did you get that nose?" asked Ogilvy.

"Find out!"

"What lovely manners!" murmured Russell.

The Kid looked at him.

But he turned quietly away, and threw himself into the armchair. The two juniors regarded him curiously.

There was something they did not quite understand about the Game Kid now.

He sat still, staring before him. There was a black cloud on his brow, a reflection of the dreary misery in his heart.

"I say, anything wrong, old man?" asked Ogilvy good-naturedly.

The Kid did not answer.

"Had your tea?"

"No."

"Feeling down—what?"

"Yes."

"Look here, we'll jolly well get you some tea!" said Russell.

"I don't want any, thanks!" said the Kid. "If you ain't wanting the study jest now, you might leave a bloke alone for a bit."

"Any old thing!" said Ogilvy.

And the two juniors left the study.

The Kid was glad to be alone.

His features were working. He had been wounded to the very heart, and the pain of it was almost more than he could bear. There were tears in the Game Kid's eyes when he was left alone—and the tears ran thick and unchecked down his rugged cheeks.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Fallen Idol!

"SHIPPING a study——"

"Eh?"

"Shipping a study," said Bob Cherry oracularly, "is the infallible cure! It touches the spot."

"What the thump——"

"Look!"

It was morning, and the Famous Five were in the quad. Bob Cherry gave a nod towards two figures on the path by the elms.

Hilton of the Fifth was walking there, with his hands driven deep into his pockets and a dark line in his brow. He was thinking—doubtless of his losses the previous day and the "hole" they had left him in. His expression showed that he was not in a pleasant mood.

From the opposite direction Dick Dury of the Remove came up the elm-shaded path.

That the "friendship" between Hilton of the Fifth and the junior he had taken up was at an end was apparent to the Famous Five at a glance.

The two did not merely pass one another without recognition; there would not have been anything unusual in that, for the Kid had always been very circumspect about how he recognised Hilton in public.

They looked at one another as they approached, and the expression on their faces rather startled Harry Wharton & Co.

Hilton's face grew black and bitter; there was something very like hatred in the look he gave the Kid.

Dury, on his part, gave the Fifth-Former one glance, in which something of sadness was mingled with dislike and scorn.

They did not speak.

Dury moved out of his way, to avoid passing near the Fifth Form man; then he passed on, without another glance at him.

"My hat!" murmured Harry Wharton, in surprise, with a smile.

"The troublefulness must have been terrific!" opined the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed and shady Hilton has got his rag out—he looked as if he would like to deal with Dury punchfully!"

"He did, and no mistake!" remarked Johnny Ball, with a whistle. "They're fed up with one another, that's plain."

"Shipping a study is a good stunt—what?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Hilton's learned his lesson from the Remove!"

"He doesn't want any more of it," said Johnny Bull. "He's chucked Dury, that's clear!"

Harry Wharton shook his head thoughtfully.

"There's more in it than that," he said. "Shipping Hilton's study may have helped. But from the look of things it was Dury who's turned Hilton down, not Hilton who's turned him down. He seemed to me to look at Hilton as if he was dirt."

"That struck me, too," said Nugent. "It's jolly odd. Dury was no end bucked about Hilton taking him up."

"May have found him out," grinned Bob. "Hilton must have seemed no end of a stunning swell to a kid like Dury. But at bottom he's rather a shady blackguard, and perhaps it's dawned on Dury at last. He's a rough bouncer, but he's straight—and Hilton isn't."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Harry. "I'm sure that Dury wouldn't have been so taken with Hilton if he'd known him as we knew him."

"I remember he looked frightfully down and out when he came in yesterday," said Bob. "Something happened yesterday afternoon. I fancy. You know Hilton dropped out of the Lantham match; and I noticed that he wasn't on Big Side to see the game. He was blagging with Price, of course, and Dury was out, too. Another trip in company to the Three Fishers, very likely. Skinner heard from a Highcliffe chap that there was a prize-fight on at that show yesterday—a fellow called Banbury Pet scrapping with some boxer or other. I dare say the Kid would be interested in that, as it's his line of business. Hilton took him there once before, as we know; he may have taken him again, and this time they've fallen out. I'm jolly glad of it!"

"Same here—Dury was heading for the sack under that rotter's influence," said Wharton. "Jolly good thing for him it's over!"

The Famous Five strolled on, rather interested and puzzled.

It was clear that between Hilton of Fifth and Dury of the Remove all was finished. Careless patronage on one side, loyal devotion on the other, had given place to deep dislike and avoidance. Obviously, something must have happened—something serious. The "shipping" of Cedric Hilton's study by the heroes of the Remove certainly did not explain the startling change. It might have helped to make Hilton "fed-up" with the Kid; but it could have no connection with that look of contempt which Dick Dury had given his former patron as he passed him. The phase of hero-worship was over; Dury, it was evident, knew Hilton now in his true colours, and wanted nothing more to do with him. For, as Bob Cherry had said, the Kid was "straight," and Hilton was not; and apparently the Kid knew now that he was not.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Bob greeted the Kid cheerily as the chums of the Remove came on him under the leafless elms.

Dury looked up and nodded.

"Enjoying life, what?" asked Bob.

"No, I ain't!" said Dury.

"Well, you don't look it," said Bob.

"Not chumming with the Fifth these days, what?"

The Kid's brow darkened.

"No!" he said briefly.

"All the better for you, old bean!" said Nugent.

"I know that."

"Trot round the quad with us before classes," said Bob.

The Kid shook his head, and walked away by himself. Evidently he did not want company; even such distinguished company as that of the Famous Five of the Remove.

Wharton looked after him rather curiously.

"That chap's been through it," he said.

"Through a scrap, you mean? He looks it. Quelch will want to know where he got that nose," said Bob.

"I don't mean that. He's been through something harder than a scrap," Wharton wrinkled his brows. "He's found Hilton out, I suppose, and it's a blow to him. Poor kid! He's not really a bad sort."

The Famous Five walked on in a subdued mood. They had seen the signs, in the Game Kid's rugged face, of the mental stress he had been through. He had suffered, and it could be seen that he had suffered. It came into the minds of the juniors that beneath the Kid's rough looks and rugged manners there was a sensitive nature; a heart that could be wounded, and that had been cruelly wounded.

In many ways the Kid knew ten times as much of the world, and of the hard ways of the world, as a Greyfriars fellow. In other ways he had more simplicity than a Greyfriars fellow had. Not another fellow in the Remove could have been taken in by Hilton as the Game Kid had been.

The discovery he had made was a dreary one to the hapless Kid. Even when Hilton had asked him, or rather ordered him to break his promise, he had clung to his faith; he had thought, or tried to think, that a magnificent fellow like Hilton could not be expected to understand that a rough-and-ready lad like Dury had a sense of honour. But the miserable trickery at the Three Fishers had completely opened Dury's eyes. The fellow was a cheat—a rogue—to be classed with swindlers and welshers.

Now Dury only wanted to keep clear of him. But the place in his heart that his worthless idol had occupied was empty now. He had made no friends at Greyfriars—only that one magnificent friend whom he had humbly worshipped. And now there was nobody—nothing! From the bottom of his heart the Kid wished that he had never come to Greyfriars; that the Head had left him where he found him!

But the Kid, hard hit as he was, was not the fellow to wear his heart on his sleeve.

When he came in to morning classes his rugged face was composed and almost expressionless. What he was feeling was buried deep in his own breast.

Some of the Removites grinned as he came into the Form-room. The marks on Dury's face were very visible to the eye; it was plain to all the Form that the Game Kid had been fighting. Mr. Quelch had glanced at him sharply at the Remove breakfast-table, but had made no remark then. His remarks were to come later.

The Kid had been fighting—but not in the school. That was certain, as Skinner remarked, as no Greyfriars fellow was going about looking like a hospital case.

Many of the Removites were wondering who the "happy victim" had been. Certainly, it must have been a rather hefty individual, to have succeeded in marking the Kid. There was no man at Greyfriars, even in the Sixth, who could have done it.

"Where did you pick up that eye, Dury?" called out Vernon-Smith, as the Kid came into the Form-room.

Dury gave the Bouncer a dark look. "You'll know soon enough," he answered.

"Been in a prize-fight?" chuckled Skinner.

"Just that."

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Skinner.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Mind what you say to Mr. Quelch, Dury," said Mark Linley, kindly enough. "He is sure to question you—"

"I know. I'm done with lying. I'm going to tell him if he asks me," said Dury grimly.

"But you don't mean—" exclaimed Peter Todd, staring at the Kid.

"Cave!"

There was a hush as Mr. Quelch came in and the juniors took their places. The Remove master's gimlet-eye singled out Richard Dury at once. The marks on the new junior's face were rather too conspicuous to be passed over.

"Dury!"

"Yes, sir," said the Kid.

Mr. Quelch's glance was questioning, but it was kind. The Remove master had been unvaryingly kind to the new fellow ever since the day that Dury had saved him from being hammered by the "Old 'Un."

"You have been fighting Dury?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am sure, Dury, that you have kept the promise you made me not to fight with any Greyfriars boy."

"I've kept it, sir."

"Then you have been engaged in fighting outside the school?"

"That's so, sir."

"I am bound to question you, my boy; you will understand that," said the Remove master. "Please do not think that I am condemning you; I am well aware that you are not a quarrelsome boy, and I am well aware also that you do not use your very unusual physical powers to domineer over other boys—as I feared once would be the case. But I must ask you, Dury, with whom you have been fighting."

"Not a schoolboy, sir," said the Kid, with a faint grin. "It was a bloke who could stand up to me, sir."

"His name?" said the Form master rather sharply.

"I don't rightly know his name, sir; but he's called the Pet."

"The—the what?"

"The Banbury Pet, sir."

Richard Dury made that answer calmly. Mr. Quelch stared at him, speechless; and the Remove wondered whether they were dreaming. For a long minute a pin might have been heard to drop in the Remove-room at Greyfriars.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

A Clean Breast Of It!

MR QUELCH found his voice at last.

"Dury!" he stuttered.

"Yes, sir."

"What—what name did you say?"

"The Banbury Pet, sir."

"I am unacquainted with such a name," said the Remove master, his eyes beginning to glint. "But I presume that it is the name, or title, of some prizefighter?"

"A boxer, sir."

"Does this mean, Dury, that in spite of your having become a Greyfriars boy, in spite of your promises to the Head and to me, you have taken up once more your old way of life?"

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"Yes, sir."

Coolly and calmly the answer came. Only too obviously, the Kid was done with deceiving and shuffling. If he was to remain at Greyfriars, he was to remain in his true colours, at least.

"Then it was not some chance encounter—"

"No, sir."

"Where did this—this fight take place?"

"At the Three Fishers, sir."

"Is it possible? You are well aware that that disreputable place is strictly out of bounds for all Greyfriars boys."

"I knowed that, sir."

"You have fought, in the ring, with a professional boxer, at the Three Fishers?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

The Remove master stared blankly at the Kid. All the Removites were staring at him, hardly able to believe their ears.

"My hat!" murmured Skinner. "A Highcliffe man told me that there was boxing at the Three Fishers yesterday. I didn't know it was a Greyfriars' man fighting. My hat!"

"Silence!"

Mr. Quelch fixed his eyes on Dury again. Never had the Remove master's eyes seemed so like gimlets. They almost bored into the schoolboy boxer, standing there quiet and calm and self-possessed.

"After this confession, Dury, I need scarcely ask you whether you have renewed your acquaintance with your former trainer and employer, the man Huggins," he said. "You have done so?"

"Yes, sir."

"And your promise to me?"

"I've broke it, sir."

"Bless my soul! Are you not ashamed to look me in the face and tell me so?" thundered the Remove master.

"I'm ashamed of what I've done, sir, but I ain't ashamed to tell the truth," said Dury steadily. "I know this means that I've got to go, sir. I s'pose it does. But I'll go without telling any lies."

"Bless my soul!" said the Form master again.

He was completely taken aback and puzzled.

"You are aware that I must report this to Dr. Locke, Dury," said Mr. Quelch, after a long pause.

"I know, sir," said Dury, in a low voice.

"Very well, the matter will rest till after classes," said the Remove master. "We shall now proceed."

And the Remove proceeded.

But Mr. Quelch had a very unusually inattentive class that morning. Dury's confession had astounded the Removites, and not a fellow in the Form doubted that it meant the "sack" for him. It could not mean anything else. Why he had confessed, was a mystery to the juniors—perhaps to their Form master as well. He could have "spun a yarn" to account for the damages to his face—a fellow who would break a promise, would hardly "jib" at telling an untruth about it afterwards.

It really looked as if the Game Kid was fed up with Greyfriars, and wanted to be "bunked." But that could scarcely be the case. It was all mysterious and puzzling; and the Remove were in a state of excitement which they found it difficult to suppress. Morning classes passed off in a state of tension.

When the Remove were dismissed for

morning break, Dury was surrounded by a crowd of curious fellows, as he went out. But he hardly answered any of the remarks made to him. He was looking about him, as he went into the quadrangle, and as soon as he saw Wingate of the Sixth, he went up to him. A score of the Remove were at his heels, as if they felt unable to take their eyes off the junior who had suddenly leaped into such prominence. The captain of Greyfriars glanced round in considerable surprise, at the sight of a mob of the Lower Fourth marching up to him in quad.

"Skuse me, Master Wingate—" said Dury.

"Well, what is it?" asked the Sixth-Former.

"I want to own up."

"Eh?"

"You never knowed who it was knocked you out, sir, that evening you went up to the Three Fishers," said Dury.

Wingate stared at him.

"I never knew, certainly," he said. "Do you happen to know who it was, Dury?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who was it, then?"

"Me, sir."

Wingate jumped.

"You!" he yelled.

"Me!" said the Kid, with a nod. "You nearly rooted me out, sir—I was 'iding behind a bush, and you nearly had me, and I gave you my left."

There was a buzz among the juniors. This, as Bob Cherry remarked afterwards, put the lid on. Evidently the Game Kid was bent on making a clean breast of it all round.

Wingate stared speechlessly at the Game Kid for some moments.

"You!" he gasped. "You! You were there—"

"I was there," said the Kid.

"And you—struck me down—you struck your head-prefect—the captain of your school—"

"I did just that, sir, and I'm sorry enough now as ever I did it," said the Kid. "I'd 'ave cut off my 'and sooner, if I'd knowed then what I do now. But I did it, sir, and I ain't afraid to take my gruel."

"Well, my only hat!" said the Greyfriars captain. "And what have you come to me and owned up for?"

"'Cause I'm fed up with it, lying and bamboozling," said the Kid. "I did it, and I ain't afraid to own up."

Wingate of the Sixth looked at him long and hard.

"This is a matter that the Head will have to deal with," he said. "I suppose you know that?"

"I know it."

"Very well; you can cut off."

Dury walked away, leaving the captain of Greyfriars staring after him blankly. The Removites followed him in a buzzing crowd. Two or three seniors had heard Dury's confession, and in a few minutes it was known to all the Sixth and the Fifth. To two of them, at least, it brought terror and apprehension. Hilton and Price, of the Fifth, looked at one another with ghastly faces when they heard.

"The game's up!" whispered Stephen Price. "That young scoundrel is givin' us away!"

Hilton clenched his hands.

"We shall have to deny it, and stick to the same story," muttered Price. "It will be touch and go, if we get through. But—but—can't you do something?" Cedric?

"I'll try!" muttered Hilton, with white lips.

The dandy of the Fifth hung about the Form-room corridor, waiting for Dick Dury to come in with the Removites for third lesson. When the juniors came along, he beckoned to the Kid.

Dury hesitated a moment; and then he left the crowd of juniors, and joined the Fifth-Former in a window recess. Many of the Removites glanced at them curiously, passing on to the Form-room.

"What do you want?" muttered the Kid, restively. "I don't want nothing to say to you, Cedric Hilton."

"I—I've heard—" Hilton's lips were trembling. "You—you've told Wingate that—that—"

The Kid's lip curled.

"And you're afraid I'm giving you away," he said, contemptuously. "That's your sort, I s'pose you'd give a bloke away. I ain't said a word about you, not to Mr. Quelch nor yet to Wingate. I ain't going to."

Cedric Hilton breathed again. "I—I thought—I—mean—I—" he stammered.

"Oh, keep a stiff upper lip," said the Kid, scornfully. "Nobody's going to give you away, unless you give yourself away out of funk. They won't get nothing out of me."

"They'd never have spotted you," muttered Hilton. "Why did you own up, you young fool?"

"'Cause I'm fed-up with tricks and lies," said the Kid. "'Cause I'm straight—leastways, I was straight till I knowed you. Now I'm done with you; I'm done with lyin' and spoofin'! I've made a clean breast of it, and I can face the music."

"But—but—" stammered Hilton.

"Oh, you needn't be scared!" jeered the Kid. "Don't I keep on sayin' that I ain't telling about you? What do you take me for?"

And he turned his back on Cedric Hilton and followed the rest of the Remove into the Form-room.

Hilton stood breathing hard.

He knew he could trust the Kid's assurance; he was safe. He had earned the queer junior's contempt and scorn; but he had nothing to fear. His face was flushed, but a weight was gone from his mind as he rejoined Price near the door of the Fifth Form room.

"It's all right," he muttered. "The kid's safe."

"He—won't—" breathed Price.

"No."

"It's the sack for him, anyhow."

"All the better; I'll be glad to see the last of him. But he won't give us away, and that's all that matters."

"You—you're sure?" Price was still uneasy.

"Quite sure!" snapped Hilton. And he went into the Fifth Form room, and Price followed him in, relieved but still doubtful.

At third lesson, in the Remove room, Dick Dury received more attention from the juniors than Mr. Quelch received. When the class was dismissed, Mr. Quelch called to the Kid.

"You will follow me to the Head's study, Dury."

"Yes, sir."

And the Game Kid followed in Mr. Quelch's wake, leaving the Remove in a buzz of excitement.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Up for Judgment!

DR. LOCKE took off his glasses, wiped them, and replaced them on his nose.

To say that the headmaster of Greyfriars was astonished, would be to put it mildly.



"I must ask you, Dury," said Mr. Quelch, "with whom have you been fighting?" "Not a schoolboy, sir," said the Kid. "It was a bloke who could stand up to me, sir." "His name?" rapped the Form master sharply. "The Pet, sir!" replied Dury. "The—what?" gasped Mr. Quelch. "The Banbury Pet, sir!" (See Chapter 11).

He was more than astonished. He was astounded. Indeed, his state of mind would have been described by the juniors as flabbergasted; though certainly the Head would never have dreamed of using such a word.

He had received Wingate's report; he had listened to Mr. Quelch's succinct statement.

He had no choice but to believe his ears; but really the good old gentleman could scarcely give them credit.

Dick Dury stood before him with flushed cheeks and downcast eyes. The Kid had taken his fate in his hands in making a full confession, but he was glad of it. His mind was at ease now.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, at last.

Dury did not speak.

"This is—is—is well-nigh incredible," said the Head.

"It would seem so, sir," said Mr. Quelch. "And it should be remembered in the boy's favour that he has confessed freely of his own accord. I certainly should never have dreamed of suspecting such a thing."

"Nor I," said the Head.

He sighed.

"You were right, Mr. Quelch, in thinking that Dury should have been sent away from the school," he said. "I hoped and believed better things of him; I have been mistaken, and I am greatly disappointed. I regret that I did not take your advice."

That should have been agreeable hearing for Mr. Quelch. But he did not seem wholly pleased.

"The fact is, sir," he said slowly, "that my opinion of Dury has improved very much. Lawless as he has proved to be, I have discerned some very good qualities in the boy."

"Thank you, sir," said the Kid, in a low voice.

"I am glad to hear you say so, Mr. Quelch," said the Head. "But you do not suggest that he should remain at Greyfriars, after what has occurred."

"That, I fear, would be impossible," said the Remove master, shaking his head. "A junior boy who has struck the captain of the school—"

"Wingate leaves that matter entirely in my hands," said the Head. "But there is, I think, only one course I can possibly take."

He fixed his eyes on Dury.

"You have nothing to say?"

"Only that I'm sorry, sir."

The Head coughed.

"No doubt. But that is hardly enough."

"I hope you don't think me ungrateful, after all your kindness to me," said the Kid miserably. "I—I meant to do better 'ere, sir. Course, you'll send me away, and p'raps the blokes are right in thinking that this 'ere school ain't the place for me. But I don't like going and leaving you thinking 'ard about me, sir."

"You have no excuse to offer," said Dr. Locke sternly. "You were out of bounds, in a disreputable resort, when Wingate came there on his duty."

"Yes, sir."

"You struck him down—struck him senseless—in order to effect your escape undiscovered."

The Kid did not reply for a moment.

"I ain't denying anything, sir," he said at length.

"You had no quarrel with Wingate—no cause of grievance against him?"

"No, sir. I like 'im, like all the fellers do. He's a good sort, he is," said the Kid.

"Yet you struck him that brutal blow?" said the Head.

The Kid winced.

"Yes, sir," he said, his voice very low.

"For the rest, I could find it in my heart to pardon you," said the Head. "Your fighting a boxer in the ring was an outrageous thing, but I must remember what you were before you came to the school; I must make allowances for your training, and for your temptations to mingle with old associates and resume your former way of life. I was myself, perhaps, to blame for taking you away from the surroundings to which you had grown accustomed, and for placing you in such a school at Greyfriars. I must not condemn you for my own mistake. But your wanton and wicked attack on a prefect, against whom you allege no cause for complaint—how could that possibly be pardoned?"

The Kid was miserably silent.

It was not on his own account, not for his own sake, that he had struck Wingate of the Sixth down that dusky evening in the grounds of the Three Fishers. Certainly for his own sake he never would have struck that lawless blow.

But he could not tell the Head that.

He despised Hilton now—despised and disliked him. But he could not betray him.

The Game Kid was loyal to the last.

There was a long pause. Dury stood firmly, waiting for judgment; knowing what the judgment must be. He was not sorry, perhaps, to be leaving Greyfriars; more and more it had been borne in upon his mind that a mistake had been made in bringing him to the school. The old lure of the ring was strong upon him; stronger than ever since he had stood up to the Banbury Pet, amid a sea of excited faces, listening to the plaudits of the crowd. Back to Huggins' Ring—back to the boxing—he hardly knew whether he desired

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that, but at least it had its attractions and its compensations.

It was the sorrow and disappointment in the Head's kind old face that hit him hard. It had not been an easy thing for the headmaster to place the boxer in the Greyfriars Remove. He had done it in the kindness of his heart, hoping for the best results. And all his hopes had been shattered; his disappointment was deep and bitter.

The Head spoke again at last.

"You have grieved me deeply, Dury," he said. "Your fighting in the ring I could forgive, if you promised me never to allow such a thing to recur. But your attack on Wingate—that cannot be pardoned. I can scarcely comprehend how you could have brought yourself to inflict serious injury upon one who had never harmed you—who was doing a painful and necessary duty when you struck him down. It proves, I fear, that I was mistaken in you—that you are hard and brutal at heart."

The Kid winced again.

"I—I wouldn't 'ave touched him, sir, only—"

"Only what?"

"Nothing, sir," said the Kid heavily.

"If he had discovered you at that resort, and reported you for punishment, you would doubtless have been flogged," said the Head. "Was it worth such an act of cruel ruffianism to escape your punishment?"

"I wouldn't 'ave done it for that."

"But you did it for that," said the Head sharply. "What other motive do you wish me to believe that you had?"

The Kid did not answer.

He could not answer. If he left Greyfriars in shame and disgrace, at least he would leave it "straight"—he would not stay on as an informer and betrayer. What he had done for Hilton's sake he had done, and he had to face the consequences.

"For the last time, Dury, have you any excuse—any plea of any kind?"

"No, sir!" almost whispered the Kid.

"The matter ends here, then," said the Head. "You must leave Greyfriars. But I shall not forget the service you rendered me when I first met you, Dury. I shall take care of your future. You shall never want!"

The Kid shook his head.

"I ain't asking nothing, sir," he said. "I wouldn't take nothing. I can fend for myself, sir. 'Tain't that. Only—only if you'd try, sir, to think a little kindly of me arter I'm gone, though I know what I've done must look awful bad to you—"

"I fear that you have lost my good opinion for ever," said the Head sadly. "But—"

Tap!

It was a knock at the door of the Head's study.

The door opened and Harry Wharton appeared. Mr. Quelch gave him a freezing glance, the Head made a sign for him to go.

But the captain of the Remove came in, heedless of Form master and headmaster.

"Wharton, leave my study!" rapped out the Head.

"I must speak, sir," said Harry respectfully. "It's about Dury, and I think you ought to know, sir. Dury isn't so much to blame as you believe, and I think you ought to know—"

There was a sharp exclamation from the Kid.

"Hold on! Don't you say nothing! I can take my gruel! You let me alone, Wharton!"

"Silence, Dury!" said the Head.

"Wharton, do you mean that you know something about this matter?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"Then you may speak."

The Game Kid fixed his eyes on Wharton with a threatening glint in them. But the captain of the Remove did not heed him as he faced the Head.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Chance!

HARRY WHARTON had consulted with his chums as soon as Dury had followed Mr. Quelch to the Head's study. That the Kid was gone to take the "sack" was no secret; all the school knew that. And the Famous Five, at least, knew that Dury was to suffer, not so much for what he had done, as for his loyalty to the worthless senior for whose sake he had done it. And all the Co. agreed that it was only "cricket" to put in a word for the hapless fellow who was so severely up against it.

"Speak, Wharton," said the Head, gently enough. At the bottom of his heart, Dr. Locke was anxious to hear anything that could be said in favour of the junior whom his duty compelled him to condemn.

If you're looking for another good school yarn, read

"STANDING BY A SCAPEGRACE!"

in this week's issue of

THE
"GEM"
LIBRARY,

ON SALE WEDNESDAY.

It shows MARTIN CLIFFORD at the top of his form!

"We all know what Dury has done, sir," said the captain of the Remove, "but some of us know why he did it, and we know that he will never sneak about it—he can't. It was bad enough what he did, but it's not as you believe, sir, and, as Dury's Form captain, I feel bound to say a word."

"Quite right, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly," said the Head. "Proceed, my boy."

"We all know, sir, that Dury never broke bounds of his own accord," said Harry. "The time he was flogged a lot of us knew that he had been sent out of the school by another chap. I know Wingate suspected it at the time, from the questions he asked."

"I am aware of it, Wharton."

"And this boxing-match at the Three Fishers, sir," went on Wharton. "I know that Dury never went near the place until he went there in company with the fellow I'm speaking of—a fellow older than himself, who knew better, though Dury didn't."

"A senior, do you mean?"

Wharton hesitated a moment.

"Yes, sir, a senior—a fellow who had a lot of influence over Dury."

The Head's face was very grave.

"This is news to me," he said. "You are, of course, aware of the name of the senior you mention, Wharton?"

"Of course, sir, but I can't give the name," said Harry. "You would not ask me to do that, sir. If I betrayed him, rotter as he is, I should be sent to Coventry by the whole school."

"I will not ask the name, but you must be more explicit," said the Head. "You desire me to believe that this unfortunate, inexperienced boy was led into evil by an older Greyfriars boy—a senior?"

"Yes, sir; and I'm not the only fellow who knows it," said Harry. "My friends know it, and other fellows, too. Some of us ragged the man to make him leave Dury alone."

"Bless my soul!"

"I suspected from the first that it was Dury who had struck Wingate that time at the Three Fishers," went on Wharton. "I couldn't be sure, but I couldn't help thinking so. But I knew that it wasn't to save himself. He was there with the fellow I'm speaking of, and that fellow got clear. It was Dury who took all the risk to save him."

"You are sure of this, Wharton?"

"Quite, sir, and so are other fellows. I know I can't prove it, without giving the fellow's name. I think I would give the name, too, only I know that Dury has broken with him—I know he's found out what a rogue the fellow is, and won't have anything more to do with him."

"Bless my soul!"

The Head looked at the Game Kid. Richard Dury's face was crimson.

"I am obliged to you for coming here, Wharton," said the Head at last. "You may go, my boy."

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

He left the study.

"Dury!"

The Kid looked up, with crimson cheeks.

"My boy, tell me the truth," said the Head gently.

"I ain't saying nothing, sir," said the Kid stubbornly. "I never asked Wharton to chip in. I never was the covey to give a bloke away, and I ain't beginning now, sir."

The Head exchanged a glance with Mr. Quelch.

"I will not ask you to betray anyone, Dury. I ask you only this: were you alone at the time you struck Wingate?"

"N-no, sir."

"Was it to save yourself, or to save another, that you lifted your hand against the captain of the school?"

"Course it wasn't for me, sir," said the Kid. "Think I care about a flogging? I'm tough, sir. It was for the other covey, sir, and I don't mind saying so if you don't want me to give him away."

Mr. Quelch coughed.

"I'm done with 'im now," went on the Kid. "I've found 'im out—he's a rotter, he is, all through! I was took in, I was, and it was 'ard enough on me, finding 'im out, when I admired 'im so much. And then I made up my mind to make a clean breast of it, sir—only I ain't giving any covey away."

"You are aware, Dury, that your action, from whatever motive, was lawless and inexcusable?"

"I know, sir. I'm sorry!"

"But—but—in the light of what I now know—" The Head knitted his brows in thought. "I must consult with Mr.

(Continued on page 28.)

UP AGAINST IT! In the guise of Two Gun Ted, Ferrers Locke sets out to join up with the mysterious Wolf and his plundering band of gunmen, but Fate plays him a scurvy trick and he meets the Wolf as a prisoner!

The MYSTERY of FLYING V RANCH!



A Powerful New Story of Wild West and Detective Adventure.

The Bluff Works!

FOR half an hour Ferrers Locke rode, keeping as far back in the rear as possible. Suddenly he became conscious that the shadowy form had vanished. He reined in his horse and sat tense in the saddle. Nothing stirred. At a walking pace he commenced to move forward. He was well out on the open range with its innumerable small hills and hollows caused by the rolling nature of the ground.

With his hand on his gun-butt he continued to advance, then froze into immobility as a voice snapped:

"Put your hands up, pronto!"

Squinting sideways, he saw the motionless figure of the horseman standing in the deeper shadow of a fold in the ground.

"Blame my hide, if it ain't th' gentleman crook!" drawled Locke. "Reckon I'd recognise that voice anywhar."

He made no effort to put his hands up, and, with his gun thrust forward, Knuller advanced, and demanded harshly:

"What are you trailing me for?"

"How yuh figger I'm trailin' yuh?"

"You've followed me from Wolf Point. I saw you way back along the trail."

"Yep, yore right," agreed Ferrers Locke. "Reckon I am trailin' yuh!"

"Why?"

"Because, mister, it seems ter me thet a feller what talked 'bout killin' sheriffs same as you did has gotten sumthin' more'n a blamed bis'ness deal what ain't come off ter make him talk thet way. I war aimin' ter find out jest what yore game was. Yessir, I'm aimin' ter ride wi' yuh till I finds out!"

"You're a cool customer, as I said before. If you ride with me, how do you know that you are not riding to your death?"

"Huh! Reckon I'm open ter risk thet, mister. I'd rather blamo well die in a gun talk than hike along peac'blo all my nat'ral. 'Tain't what fellers was meant for, ter act 'long as though they was a lot of school marmes. I'm plumb willin' ter fight, but, as I sed afore, I

ain't pluggin' nobody, nohow. less'n I knows, jest fer why. Yuh didn't come clean, yuh knows yuh didn't!"

"I could shoot yuh dead this minute!"

"I knows thet! Yuh've shore gotten me covered. But yore not gonna shoot!"

"How do you know?"

"Because yore gonna take me in wi' yuh! Yessir, yuh are! I'm sayin' yuh kin find a job fer me, when yuh comes clean!"

"Gosh!" laughed Knuller. "You've got nerve!"

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

FERRERS LOCKE, the famous Baker Street detective, and his clever young assistant, JACK DRAKE, takes up quarters in Texas to investigate the mysterious raids made upon the cattle ranches in the neighbourhood of Wolf Point. They have hardly been at Wolf Point five minutes, however, before an attempt is made on Locke's life.

MAT DUKE, the sheriff, saves the situation, but in so doing is himself fatally shot by a person unknown. At the instigation of SILAS CAISTER and two other wealthy ranchers, Locke is asked to fill the role of sheriff at Wolf Point. This he does under the assumed name of HENDERSON.

Shortly afterwards Ferrers Locke is discussing with MONTY EARL, manager of a notorious gambling den, the attempted murder of one of the Flying V hands when the Wolf suddenly makes his appearance, shoots Earl, and then vanishes. Locke is accused of the murder, and in consequence is attacked by an armed posse of men led by PANZALES, Earl's secretary and manager. The new sheriff's life is in jeopardy when a party of masked riders, in the service of the Wolf, gallop upon the scene, scatter the gunmen, and take Locke and Panzales prisoners. Panzales meets his fate in a den of wolves, but Locke, putting up a sterner fight, makes good his escape and manages to reach his friends of the Flying V in safety. No sooner has he done so, however, when four men of the Caister ranch ride up to the Flying V bearing a mangled form between them which they declare to be Caister. A letter left by Caister advising his fellow ranchers to sell up arouses Ferrers Locke's suspicions, and he sets out to bluff the prospective buyer, KARL K. KNULLER.

In the disguise of Two-Gun Ted, an out-of-work gunman, Locke offers to join up with the mysterious Wolf and his plundering band of gunmen. Knuller falls an easy victim to the "bait," with the result that when he makes his next journey out Ferrers Locke follows hard on his trail.

(Now Read On.)

He relapsed into silence, then snapped:

"Have it your own way. You can ride with me, but if any kick comes to you I guess you needn't blame me."

"I kin look after myself, mister! There aren't no kick coming to me," replied Ferrers Locke.

"Come on, then!" snapped Knuller.

He thrust his gun back into its holster, and, clapping spurs to his horse, set off across the range with the detective by his side. Dawn found them still pressing onwards. They were almost to the rising mound which marked the end of the range and the beginning of the hills. They had ridden practically in silence, Ferrers Locke evincing not the slightest interest as to their destination.

Suddenly, far away in the hills, he caught a glimpse of a body of horsemen heading towards them.

"Us is gonna hev comp'ny," he grunted.

Knuller looked at him curiously, but did not reply.

Their progress appreciably slackened as they encountered the rougher ground. Then, without warning, a bend in the trail brought them face to face with the party of horsemen whom Ferrers Locke had sighted earlier. There were eight of them, and every man was masked.

He and Knuller reined in their horses. The masked gang came on, their guns in their hands.

"Howdo!" grunted one, who was obviously the leader. "Who's yore pard?"

The question was directed at Knuller.

"He's a real tough guy," grinned the latter. "And he's looking for excitement. He told Wolf Point just what he thought of them. Say, he's real eager to meet the Wolf. Figures out running with him, or some such dandy notion. Best take him along."

The masked leader surveyed Ferrers Locke in silence, then nodded abruptly.

"Evil-lookin' critter!" he snapped.

"Us'll take him along. Hand over yore guns, stranger!"

"Whaffor?" drawled Ferrers Locke.

"No feller rides ter th' Wolf 'long as

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he's packin' a gun!" was the harsh reply.

"Suits me," grinned the detective, and without demur he pulled out his guns.

"How I know yore not jest kiddin' me?" he asked hesitatingly.

"Us hes no call ter kid yuh, stranger."

"Naw! Reckon that's right. Plumb foolishness if yuh tried ter kid me. Reckon it wud git yuh nowhar. Waal, hyar's my guns!"

Ferrers Locke handed over his guns, and turned to Knuller.

"I sed yuh didn't kim clean, hey? Gosh, yuh can't kid me! Reckon I knew yuh war a deep coyote; but, blame my hide, jest fancy yuh settin' back thar an' knowin' th' Wolf all th' time when I was talkin'. Gee!"

"Come on!" grinned Knuller. "Let's get on!"

Rumbled!

SLOUCHED low in his saddle, Ferrers Locke rode with the gang, who turned their horses and made back the way they had come. More than once the masked men looked at him curiously, but, his shoulders hunched, he glowered at the winding, rocky trail ahead and seemed totally unconscious of their glances.

In his heart, however, was exultation. His bluff had succeeded. These men obviously accepted him for what he was—a real tough gunman, willing to join the Wolf's pack of rustlers.

Then, without warning, came tragedy. The trail was leading into rough, broken country, and at one point it was so narrow that the men dropped into single file, and their horses paced carefully along a narrow ledge no more than a yard and a half wide. On the right towered rugged rock, and on the left was a sheer drop of not more than ten feet. But the bottom was huge, jagged boulders.

The gang's horses were obviously used to the trail, for they moved without the slightest trace of nervousness. Not so Ferrers Locke's mount. The brute jibbed more than once. The detective coaxed him onwards, but, edging nervously towards the edge of the ledge, his off hind leg kicked loose a large stone. Ferrers Locke pulled hard on the rein, but, half in fright and half in temper, the brute lashed out savagely.

His hoofs met only the empty air, and he squealed viciously. There came a startled shout from the men. The next instant horse and rider plunged downwards from the ledge. Ferrers Locke had a vision of the boulder-strewn ground. Then came a jar which seemed to loosen every bone in his body. A thousand stars danced before his eyes, then all was blackness and sheer oblivion.

How long the detective was unconscious he never knew. He came to, and for a moment lay blinking up at the masked faces of the men who were looking down at him. Then he sat up and took stock of his surroundings. He had been carried to a spot where the trail broadened out into a wide, uneven-surfaced valley.

Shakily he rose to his feet, and as he did so every gun whipped out.

"Move an eyelash, and you're a dead man!" gritted Knuller.

Ferrers Locke stared at him, then glanced down at his own empty gun-holsters.

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"Meaning?" he drawled.

"Meaning that we've rumbled you, Mister Henderson!" snarled Knuller. "By heck, you pulled a bluff, but we're wise to you!"

The detective nodded, and said calmly:

"Yes, it looks as though it were your call, Knuller!"

"You bet it is!" snarled Knuller.

"When your blamed horse went over with you we thought you were killed. But we were not aiming to lose a real tough guy, so Spike here emptied his water-bottle on your face. Then its blamed paint started to spread. Reckon I was mighty curious. I give it a wipe with my handkerchief, and, blame me, if it didn't start to come off! It was then that we rumbled you, Henderson!"

"That was real clever of you!" replied Ferrers Locke calmly.

Knuller stepped forward and struck him flush in the mouth.

"That's for pulling your cursed bluff on me, you blamed Britisher!" he snarled.

The detective's fists clenched, but he kept himself under control.

"I'll remember that, Knuller!" he said quietly.

"Yep! Well, you won't remember it long!" replied Knuller savagely. "For, by gosh, you'll die this time! You wanted to see the Wolf! Right! You'll see him, then you'll die!"

He wheeled on the men, and snapped:

"Lash him to the saddle and take him in! I'm riding back now! Give him to the Wolf, for the Wolf's fair aching to see the skunk!"

Ferrers Locke was hoisted into the saddle of a horse, and his arms lashed behind his back, whilst his feet were tied beneath the animal's belly.

"Good-bye, sheriff!" snapped Knuller savagely. "The vultures will have you before I ride in! I'd give something to see you squirm, but the Wolf will tell me about it! Yours won't be no pleasant death!"

"No?" replied the detective pleasantly. "Neither will yours, Knuller!"

"You're a plumb crazy Britisher!" snarled Knuller.

He swung himself into his saddle and turned his horse's head in the direction they had come.

"Remember," he said icily, "if that fellow gets away the Wolf will hang every blamed one of you!"

"He won't git away!" growled the leader of the gang. "Yuh kin shore stake yuh're bottom dollah on thet, Knuller!"

He jerked out an order, and the party moved forward. Ferrers Locke turned his head, and saw that Knuller was riding back along the trail towards the open ranges.

The Lair of the Wolf!

ALL that day Ferrers Locke's captors pushed on. They were well into the hills by now, and the trail rose steadily. More than once they had to ride in single file over the rough, uneven ground. It was late in the evening when they rode up a narrow valley.

Locke noted with surprise that it seemed to be a cul de sac. A huge boulder blocked the end to which they were riding. Reaching it, two men dropped from their horses. Putting their shoulders to the boulder, they

pushed, and the huge stone swung easily, as though on a pivot.

The gang then moved forward. As they passed the boulder Ferrers Locke saw, spread out below him in the haze of the summer's evening, a wide stretch of plain on which thousands of steers were grazing in green, luscious grass. From a group of huts and outbuildings there curled an occasional wisp of smoke, which merged and was lost in the haze.

From the boulder a trail led down to the plain. At the top of it two men were lounging, both with full gun-holsters slung at their belts. They stared at the detective, and one of them drawled:

"Who's thet coyote?"

"Slick Henderson, of Wolf Point!" replied the leader.

"Gosh!" ejaculated the man. "Whom blazes got him?"

"Huh! He reckoned ter come 'long wi' Knuller! Tell yuh it all later! Say, is th' Wolf hyar?"

"Naw! He ain't ridden in yet! Us's bin on guard more'n our time! Put a kick inter our reliefs will yuh?"

"Shore!"

With that the party moved down the trail towards the huts, leaving the two guards staring after them, and speculating loudly as to the capture of Ferrers Locke.

Reaching the huts, the detective saw fifteen to twenty men lounging about. They came forward to meet the gang. They were a villainous-looking crowd and displayed a lively interest in Ferrers Locke.

"Slick Henderson!" snapped the leader, jerking his thumb towards the captive.

"Gee! Slick Henderson!"

"They've gotten Slick Henderson!"

"Gosh! Is thet him?"

"Any fella gotta rope?"

These cries and others rose from the lookers-on. They surged alongside Ferrers Locke's horse, looking up into his face and snarling and jeering.

The detective met their angry looks with stoical calm.

"Guess yore mighty sick, Britisher!" snarled one.

"I shall be in a minute," agreed Ferrers Locke pleasantly. "A crowd of skunks like you would turn anybody's stomach!"

An angry roar greeted this remark, and the men pressed forward menacingly.

"Keep back, fellers!" shouted the leader of the gang. "He's the Wolf's meat!"

Muttering and scowling, the men fell back. Ferrers Locke's horse was halted, and he was pulled from the saddle. Followed by the crowd of toughs, he was marched to a hut and shoved inside. The door was locked on him, and a couple of men were posted on guard.

With a wry grin the detective seated himself on the floor. His arms were still lashed and his body was stiff and sore. Evening deepened into night, and, through the solitary window which the hut possessed he saw the stars gradually becoming more clear.

Time dragged slowly, then suddenly there came a tramp of feet outside. A key grated in the lock, and the door was thrown open.

Four men appeared on the threshold, guns in their hands.

"Kim on!" said one harshly. "He's waitin' fer yuh!"

"Who?" inquired Ferrers Locke.

"Th' Wolf! An' he's in a partic'lar savage mood, lemme tell yuh!"

The Wolf of Texas!

FERRERS LOCKE was hustled out of the hut, and across the encampment, towards a long, low building, with shuttered windows, through which streamed chinks of light.

His escort hurried him through a door, and along a bare, uncarpeted corridor, till they came to a closed door against which lounged two gunmen. The latter looked at Ferrers Locke curiously, whilst one of the escort knocked quietly.

In answer to the knock the door was swung open, and the detective crossed the threshold. He found himself in a large, luxuriously furnished room. A heavy pile carpet was on the floor, comfortable-looking leather armchairs and settees were scattered here and there. A cheerful fire burned in a large open grate at one end of the room. Pictures and hunting trophies were hung on the walls, whilst one side of the room was almost wholly taken up by a high, beautifully wrought bookcase.

But what riveted Ferrers Locke's attention was a man seated at a bare, polished mahogany table in the centre of the room. He was masked, but Locke was conscious of a pair of cold, cruel eyes behind the mask as the man leant forward in the high-backed chair and peered at him intently.

He was tall and lithe, with iron-grey hair, which straggled out in wisps from under the tight-fitting black skull cap which he wore. Behind his chair lounged four men, clad in red cotton shirts and buckskin trousers, with full gun-holsters slung at their belts. They were masked, booted, and spurred, and wore their large stetson hats, as though ready to take the saddle.

At the feet of the man seated at the table, lay a huge hound, half wolf, half dog. He rose to his feet, and padded sniffingly towards the detective; but, at a curt command from the man at the table, he stopped, and, retracing his footsteps, flopped heavily to the carpet.

For a long minute the man and Ferrers Locke regarded each other steadily, then the former said harshly:

"Bring him hyar!"

The detective was marched to the foot of the table. His escort grouped themselves behind him, their hands on their guns.

"Waal! We've gotten yuh, Ferrers Locke!"

The words were softly spoken, but the man's voice was icy.

"Yes," replied Ferrers Locke quietly.

"Yuh knows who I am?"

The detective's lips curled into a mirthless smile.

"The Wolf, I presume!"

"Yep! Yuh've sed it! The Wolf of Texas! King of th' cattle country!"

There was silence for a moment, then the Wolf continued:

"And did yuh think, pore fool that yuh are, that yuh cud live 'gainst me? Did yuh think, when them blamed coyotes made yuh sheriff of Wolf Point, that yuh could hogtie me?"

"I most certainly was under that impression!" replied Ferrers Locke courteously.

The Wolf peered at him closely.

"Sometimes, Locke," he said harshly, "I reckons yore jest plum locoed! Other times I reckon yore a mighty brave man! It's one or t'other, or mebber's jest a bit of both. Howsumever, it don't matter a onery cuss either way. Yore gonna die!"

"So Knuller promised me!"

"Yuh pulled a mighty big bluff on



Ferrers Locke pulled hard on the rein, but, half in fright and half in temper, the brute lashed out savagely. His hoofs met only the empty air, and he squealed viciously. There came a startled shout from the men. The next instant horse and rider plunged downwards from the ledge. (See Page 24.)

Knuller. Reckon I wanna know jest how yuh got wise to Knuller!"

"That," replied the detective, "is entirely my own affair!"

The Wolf's hands clenched and unclenched. He leapt to his feet and shouted:

"More'n oncet I've tried to put yuh outa the way, yuh blamed, crazy Britisher; but, by heck, thar's gonna be no mistake about it this time! Them skunks of ranchers brought yuh to the cattle country to clean me up. Gosh snakes, they've shore gotten gall, I'll say! Whar's Caister? He's dead! So'll yuh be, 'fore long, cuss yuh! So wud Peters an' Jefferson if yuh hadn't corralled them hombres in th' Flying V. Yuh beat me to that, yuh British swine, but, by heck, I'll git them fellers!"

He slumped back in his chair and waved a hand towards one of the shuttered windows.

"Out thar," he continued more quietly, although his voice was quivering with suppressed passion, "thar's more'n a thousand head o' steers, some branded with the Flyin' V, others the Double R, the Bar 8, and some wi' the Caister brand. They all comes alike to me! Git this, Locke. Th' day'll come when I'll hev them four ranches fer my own. Fer why? Breedin' cattle? Shucks, I'd laff!"

The detective was silent, and the Wolf went on:

"I've gotta reason for wantin' them ranches! I reckon Mister Clever Locke mebbes knows thet reason, hey?"

Ferrers Locke stared at him steadily, but did not reply.

"I sed yuh mebbe's hev found out some reason for me aimin' ter cotton onta them ranches!" repeated the Wolf harshly.

"I heard you the first time?" drawled the detective. "You will understand what I mean when I say that I'm aiming to sit tight and say nothing at this interesting stage of the proceedings!"

With an oath, the Wolf sprang to his feet. His hand whipped to his belt, and he snaked out a gun.

"I've heered tell of yore nerve, Locke!" he snarled. "I'm gonna see if it's nerve or bluff! Say, don't flinch none!"

Ferrers Locke watched whilst the Wolf's finger curled slowly on the trigger. It tightened.

Bang!

The gun barked viciously, and a bullet whistled past the detective's ear. His escort had drawn quickly to one side the instant the Wolf produced his gun.

"I'm not killin' yuh, Locke!" drawled the Wolf. "A bullet wud be too blamed easy a death. Nope; reckon I'm jest seein' how yuh kin stan' up agin this!"

Bang!

Again he fired, and Ferrers Locke felt the wind of the bullet as it almost seared his scalp. He stood stiffly erect without flinching.

"Waal, what yuh think? Reckon

them bullets might be a lil' closer, hey?" drawled the Wolf, whilst a rumble of laughter came from the men grouped behind him.

"I don't know about being any closer," responded the detective easily. "But now that you've asked me what I think I don't mind telling you that I think it's a mighty poor sport!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Four bullets whistled past Ferrers Locke's head, then the Wolf threw the still smoking revolver on to the table.

"Yep! Reckon it's nerve, Locke!" he drawled. "Not bluff! Waal, I gonna break that nerve!"

He paused, then continued slowly, icily:

"Yore mine, Locke! Yuh'll never git outa this hyar gulch. I'm gonna break yuh so slow thet yuh'll shoro plead fer death to put yuh outa yore misery. But yore a man, an' I'm gonna make a bargain wi' yuh. Yuh'll not die till yuh yelp. When yuh yelps, then yuh dies!"

"And what if I don't yelp?"

"Waal, it'll be th' same in th' long run. Yuh'll die—fer I'm gonna kill yuh by inches; but yuh won't die so quick as yuh will if yuh yelps! An' if yuh yelps, then I'll shoro say, 'I gotten Locke's nerve at last!'"

"Then I shall endeavour," replied Ferrers Locke gravely, "to refrain from yelping. I should blush to think that you were going about saying, 'I got Locke's nerve!'"

"Yore crazy!" snarled the Wolf. He wheeled on the detective's escort, and snapped: "Git busy!"

The Torture of Ferrers Locke!

FERRERS LOCKE'S escort closed in on him and moved towards the door. As they passed through with their prisoner the detective noted that the two gunmen were still on guard outside.

Leaving the building, he was taken across the encampment to a small wooden hut. It was void of all furniture, save a small table and a chair. One of the men cut the bonds on Locke's arm, leaving only his wrists tied tightly behind his back. A steel chain fastened to a staple in the wall was attached to the rope between his wrists.

Two of the men left the hut, to reappear in a few minutes with a jug of milk, a jug of water, and a tray laden with cold chicken, bread, fruit, and other viands.

The detective watched with interest whilst a spotlessly clean cloth was spread on the table and the food set out. The men worked in silence, save for an occasional remark amongst themselves.

When the table was fully laid, one of them dumped the only chair near Ferrers Locke, and, after a last look round, they quitted the hut, leaving an oil-lamp burning on the table.

The detective waited grimly till he heard the key turn in the lock. He was very hungry, as he had not eaten since the previous night. Added to that, he was feeling the parched dryness of thirst.

He edged forward towards the table, and bent down in an effort to put his lips to the edge of the jug of water. He could not reach it by about an inch. Straining forward, he narrowed the distance infinitesimally.

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"Thought so!" he grunted.

He then tried to sit down, but the chain which held him to the wall was just too short to allow him to do so. He shuffled backwards and leant against the wall. He saw the whole idea quite plainly. It would not be long before overpowering hunger and thirst would, unless he kept a grip on himself, cause him to make frenzied efforts to get at the food and drink on the table. And he could not reach it, no matter how he tried. Neither could he sit nor lie down.

He wondered grimly how long it would be before the sight of the food would begin to react on him. He could find no solace in sleep, either. It would be terrible torture before he was through with it. Torture infinitely worse than any physical pain which the Wolf could inflict.

Well, he would bring every atom of his will power to bear on keeping his sanity. Locke knew that, should he be kept like this for long, madness would be a very real danger.

Leaning against the wall, he set himself to examine the hut carefully. It was strongly built of heavy timber. A few tentative tugs at the chain which held him proved beyond doubt that the staple to which the chain was attached was too deeply embedded in the woodwork to move by that method.

Once he moved towards the table, and, curling his foot round a leg of it, tried to draw it towards him. He found that the table was, somehow, or other, fastened to the floor.

Hours dragged wearily by, and at length a pale dawn came creeping in through the window.

Ferrers Locke was still on his feet, pale and haggard. The parched dryness in his throat had increased beyond what he thought was possible in the few hours that had passed. He was ravenously hungry, and his arms were agonisedly stiff, owing to their unnatural position.

It was towards noon that the hut door was thrown open, and the tall, gaunt figure of the Wolf stalked in, followed by four men, masked as was their leader.

The latter stood idly tapping his riding-boot with a horse crop. He stared at the detective for a few moments, then drawled:

"How yuh stickin' it, Locke?"

"I've had better quarters!"

"Yep! Reckon yore throat's blamed dry," drawled the other. "Hyar, hev a drink!"

He stepped forward, and picking up the jug of water, thrust it forward.

The detective's lips tightened, and he leant nonchalantly against the wall.

"No, thanks," he replied. "I'm not doing any funny tricks for you!"

"Meaning that you're bluffing."

The Wolf laughed harshly.

"Yuh've sed it, Locke. I war figgerin' on yuh wantin' watter thet bad thet yuh'd shoro holler fer it. Gosh, I wudn't give yuh a drink not if yuh went on yore blamed knees, I wudn't!"

"No, I don't expect you would," replied Ferrers Locke. "However, I do not anticipate going on my knees."

"Not kindo figgerin' on givin' thet lil' yelp us spoke of, hey?"

"No, not yet," replied the detective, his cracked lips twisting into a faint smile. "Sorry to disappoint you."

The Wolf stepped forward and peered into Ferrers Locke's face.

"Mister," he said earnestly, "yore a

real feller, an' sumtimes I wish yuh warn't agin me. Git me right. I means I shoro hate like pison to kill a real he-man, for, gosh, they're scarce!"

"Thank you!" replied Ferrers Locke gravely with a slight bow.

With a grunt the Wolf turned on his heel towards the door. Then he stopped and said over his shoulder:

"Locke, when yore nerve goes, jest holler! Yuh kin hev ev'ry blamed thing on thet table when yuh hollers!"

"Thanks. I will, however, endeavour to refrain from hollering. Apart from anything else, I believe that I am to die when you have had the satisfaction of breaking my nerve."

"Yep! But I reckon thet point'll not worry yuh none when th' hunger pains git a real grip on yuh. Yuh'll want food more'n anything else in th' world. Wait till this arternoon!"

He strode from the hut with his body-guard, and the door was shut and locked upon the captive. Ferrers Locke found himself turning over in his mind the concluding words of the Wolf. "Wait till this arternoon!" There had been something deeper in the remark than a reference to the gradual increasing gnawing of hunger.

Ferrers Locke was about all in. The use of speech during the last few minutes seemed to have drained every bit of saliva from his mouth. He was aching in every limb, his tongue was swollen, and his throat dry and burning. He craved for rest, but how could he rest, tied as he was?

"Wait till this arternoon!"

The words kept repeating themselves in his brain, and with a short, harsh laugh he tried to control his reeling, clouding senses. Leaning against the side of the hut, he fell into a semi-stupor. He came to suddenly, and started erect with a jerk. What was the matter? What was wrong? He felt as though he were in a heat bath. Then he glanced up, and almost groaned aloud as a terrific, concentrated sunshine struck him full in the eyes.

A shutter, or roll-blind had been drawn off a window in the roof. It was a large window containing a dozen panes of glass, and each pane was slightly concaved to concentrate the rays of the sun, which was shining down from almost overhead.

The heat was overpowering. Ferrers Locke shuffled here and there the full length of his chain. But nowhere was there any shade or escape from that terrific, burning heat.

The detective was in agony. His throat seemed choked, and he found it impossible to breathe without feeling as though red hot needles were being plunged into his lungs. He glared with bloodshot eyes at the jugs of milk and of water on the table in front of him. He checked himself just in time to avoid a frenzied rush forward. No, insanity lay that way. His hunger had left him, and there remained an overpowering, agonising thirst, coupled with racking pains in every part of his utterly weary body.

He risked a quick glance at the blinding glare of the window. How long would it take for the sun to pass? Two hours at the most. Again and again his gaze was drawn to the water on the table. He shuffled forward. Then there leapt into his heart a wild hope. The Wolf had picked up the jug and laid it down again. It was possible that his lips could reach it!

Tugging, straining at his chain, he bent forward. The rim of the jar was but an inch away! Closer, closer he pressed. His breath was coming in great sobbing gulps. He pulled on his chain, and felt the rope on his wrists cut into the bruised and broken flesh. Then his lips touched the warm, tepid side of the jug. And as they did so, he realised with a sickening despair that the water was an inch or more from the rim. It was impossible to touch it or even tilt the jug with his blackened and cracked lips.

His senses were reeling. Wild, fantastic thoughts jumbled through his brain. The terrific, scorching heat beat down on him with pitiless fury. The Wolf! The devil! He checked a burst of hysterical laughter, and it died rattling in his throat.

He retreated to the wall and leant against it. The woodwork was blisteringly hot. Then for what seemed hours, Locke went through tortures which sickened his very soul. But one thought was predominant in his reeling senses. He must not whisper. Must not—what had the Wolf said?—yelp! Yes, that was it, he must not yelp. But could his nerve withstand the agony of his body? The laden table in front of him seemed to move forward tantalisingly, but when he shuffled forward it receded.

His skin on face and neck was blackened and blistered. His tongue seemed to fill the whole of his mouth. He was choking, choking! Then, without warning, his body went limp, and he sagged forward. Outraged nature had taken her toll, and a merciful oblivion brought a cessation of that soul-searing torment.

A minute later the door was thrown open and the Wolf entered the hut.

"Bring him round!" he snapped to one of the men with him. "Reckon he wins th' fust round!"

A Voice in the Dark!

WHEN Ferrers Locke next opened his eyes he found himself lying on a bunk in a small hut. He felt limp and listless, and as he rolled his head restlessly on the pillow a man, seated by the side of the bunk, rose to his feet and quitted the room.

A few minutes later there came the sound of quick footsteps, and the Wolf entered the room.

"Yore awake?" he drawled.

"Yes."

"Yore a mighty sick man, hey?"

Ferrers Locke was silent. He was aching in every muscle now that consciousness was returning with added

clarity, and he felt indeed a mighty sick man.

"Waal, I ain't aimin' ter see yuh die yet, Locke," went on the Wolf. "Fer one thing, I ain't heerd yuh holler, an' I'm shore gonna break yore nerve 'fore yuh cash in!"

A man came into the hut carrying a bowl of some thick soup. At a gesture from the Wolf he crossed to the bunk and held it near Locke, proffering the detective a spoon.

The detective looked at the man closely, a light of recognition in his eyes. It was Hiffler, the man who had shot at him, and whom, later, he had released. Hiffler's eyes encountered those of the detective's, and he looked away shamefacedly.

"Yuh recognise thet hombre, Locke!" laughed the Wolf. "Waal, yuh shud, seein' thet oncet yuh hed him. But he shore slipped through yore fingers, hey? Waal, he don't like yuh, an' reckon he don't like Caister. Caister reckoned to question him wi' a knife! Reckon Caister's dead!"

"I gave him a chance to quit the country and the service of a murdering devil like you!" snapped Ferrers Locke.

The Wolf laughed grimly.

"Yep, mebbe's yuh did, but no feller takes sarvice wi' me an' then quits. I roped this hombre in soon after he fixed thet get-away. Th' on'y release from sarvice wi' th' Wolf is death!"

He sat on the bunk and watched Ferrers Locke curiously as the detective gratefully drank the thick soup. The food brought new life to him, and he felt the blood begin to course through his veins.

"Don't kid yuhself, Locke," remarked the Wolf harshly. "Thet ain't fer any humanitarian motives, nohow. It's jest as I say. I don't figger on yuh goin' west yet!"

"No? What's the next stunt on your programme?"

"I dunno yet! Reckon I mebbe's try red-hot irons! Most allus breaks a feller's nerve, th' red-hot branding-iron!"

"You seem to know a lot about it!"

The Wolf nodded complacently.

"Yep! Reckon I done it afore! Gosh, I branded one feller wi' nigh ev'ry branding-iron in Texas! Gee! He shore hollered, an' then some, when his skin started ter sizzle!"

"I sometimes wonder," remarked Ferrers Locke, "if, after all, you're not just a dangerous lunatic!"

The Wolf leapt to his feet, his clenched fist drawn back as though to strike. Then, with a short laugh, he dropped his hand.

"No feller but a plumb crazy Britisher wud talk thet away when he's set like what yuh is," he snarled. "But I reckon it's my call. Lunatic, yuh say? Lemme tell yuh, Locke, thet th' day yon skunk Herman came ter yuh in Baker Street, Lannon, he shore set yore blamed feet on th' long trail what leads ter death. Me, I knew yuh was comin'. Bud was one o' my fellers, but he failed. Time an' agin I've tried ter git yuh, an' yuh've shore stepped 'tween me an' th' reign of terror I was shootin' inter this hyar country. But I'm startin' agin, when I've tired of payin' yuh back, an' when yuh've cashed in! Lunatic? Gosh, the Wolf of Texas, king of th' cattle country, ain't no lunatic, yuh dirty swine of a Britisher!"

"If there's one thing I like about you," remarked Ferrers Locke pleasantly, "it's the astonishing clearness of your remarks. You express yourself magnificently!"

The Wolf laughed mirthlessly.

"Locke," he said, "ho feller what sets up ter lead an' control men kin stand a dawg's chance of pullin' it off if he can't control himself. I've taken more sass from yuh than I ever hev from any other hombre! I don't want yuh ter git me wrong. I'm standin' fine an' dandy, an' I can set tight as far as yore consarned, an' lissen! But any other feller wud hev bin plumb cold by now! I'll take it all outa yuh wi' th' brandin'-irons!"

"I see," replied Ferrers Locke. "And when is the show to commence?"

"Ter-night! I ain't losin' no time! It's yore blamed nerve I'm gonna smash, an' by heck, I'll do it!"

He snapped out an order, and a man slouched into the hut. He tied Locke's wrists tightly behind his back, and with the Wolf and Hiffler, quitted the hut. The key grated in the lock, and, lying on his bunk, Ferrers Locke gave himself up to passing the time till his next ordeal.

It was quite dark outside, as he could see through the small window above his bunk. An hour passed by, the intense stillness broken only by the tramp of a man on guard outside the door, or the plaintive bellow of some restless steer far out on the grassy bottom of the gulch.

Then suddenly the detective stiffened. From the window above his bunk had come a stifled:

"Hsst!"

He looked up.

"Who's there?" he whispered.

(Look out for next week's exciting instalment, chums! There's a thrill in every line!)

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"LOYAL TO THE LAST!"

(Continued from page 22.)

Quelch—and Wingate. You may leave me for the present, Dury."

And the Game Kid left the study.

Harry Wharton & Co. met him at the corner of the corridor. The Kid gave them a troubled grin.

"Thank you for speakin' up for me, Wharton!" he said.

"What's the verdict?"

"I dunno."

"Waiting for the chopper to come down, what?" asked Bob Cherry.

"That's it."

"Let's hope for the best, old bean."

The Kid nodded.

It was a nine days' wonder at Greyfriars that the Game Kid was not "bunked" from the school.

But he was not "bunked."

The outcome of the Head's long and earnest consultation with the Kid's Form master was that he should be given another chance. And the Kid, who knew that his chance was due to Harry Wharton's intervention, was not ungrateful.

He looked into Study No. 1 that afternoon at tea-time, with a rather sheepish grin on his face.

"I'm staying on," he announced. "I've seen the 'Ead, and he's given me another chance."

"Bravo!"

"Glad to 'ear it?" asked the Kid.

"Yes, rather, old bean."

"The gladfulness is terrific."

"Wingate's spoke to me," went on the Kid. "He's awful decent, he is. He knows I'm sorry for giving 'im my left. He's looked over it."

"Good old Wingate!"

"Course, I've been a fool," said Dury. "I dessay it would 'ave been better for me to go, too. But I'm staying on. I'm going to show the 'Ead that I can be grateful, if I can show him. He's been awful kind to me. I've made a bad break, but it's never too late to mend."

"Hear, hear!"

"No more friends in the Fifth, what?" asked Harry Wharton, with a smile.

The Game Kid's face set grimly.

"Not 'arf!" he said.

"Plenty of friends in the Remove," grinned Bob Cherry. "Us to begin with, old pippin. Come in and take a pew—there's a spread going."

Stories of Harry Wharton
& Co., of Greyfriars,
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And the Kid grinned and came in and took a pew.

Whether the Head had done wisely in allowing the schoolboy boxer to stay, whether the Kid had done wisely in staying, remained to be seen. But so far as his "friend in the Fifth" was concerned, there was no more trouble to be feared. That was over; more thoroughly over than Hilton understood at first. For about a week later, when the sportsman of the Fifth required to send a message to the Cross Keys, he called on the Kid to render service—the late happenings haying; apparently faded from his volatile mind. The Kid heard him out, with a glint in his eyes, and growing wrath in his rugged brow.

He did not answer Hilton. His reply was in actions; not in words. There was a sudden crash, and Hilton of the Fifth sprawled on his back, with a roar.

The Kid walked away.

Hilton sat up dazedly. He did not follow the Kid—he never spoke to him again. One sample of the Game Kid's "left" was enough for him; and from that moment no word or look was ever exchanged between the Game Kid and his fallen idol.

THE END.

(Look out for the concluding story in this splendid series, by Frank Richards, entitled: "THE CALL OF THE RING!" which will appear in next week's bumper number of the MAGNET. Be sure you order it early, chums!)

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"**Li together, boys!**" the leader of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, and the hero of the Grate Rebellion, was perched on his bed. His face was flushed, and his arms, waving like a windmill, Jack had been singing a song—with variations—from a comic opera; and now he called upon all the rebels to join in. Their tuneful voices rang out on the morning air.

"Oh, a Fourth Form rebel is a soaring sole,

As free as a mountain bird;

His energetic fist will be ready to resist A Dictatorial word!

His eyes will flash with an inborn fire,

His brow will show down to a domineering frown,

Or the tang of a tyrant's tongue!"

The forty rebels of the Fourth bellowed the refrain at the top of their voices. A casual observer would have said that they had breakfasted on birdseed. Such was not the case, however. Their breakfast, in the barricaded dormitory, had consisted of jam-tarts, do-nuts, and plum-cake—a far better brekker than that which was now being served in hall to the rest of St. Sam's.

Jack Jolly & Co. were in grate spirits. For a day and a night, they had held the fort successfully against all comers. Secure in their stronghold, they had hunted defiance—and various missiles—at the masters and prefects who had tried to dislodge them.

On the previous day, the Head had solemnly vowed that he would drive out the rebels like rats from their holes. Certainly he had done his best. It had not been possible to brake down the door of the dormitory, owing to the stoutness of the barricade. So the Head had ordered ladders to be run up to the windows, and he had sent up masters and prefects to deal with the rebels. Jack Jolly & Co. had opened fire with their pea-shooters; and the masters and prefects had descended the ladder much more rapidly than they had ascended it.

The Head, who had no wish to be a target for the juniors' pea-shooters, had wisely kept in the back



Peppered with peas, Fossil was unable to retain a foothold on the ladder, and he fell with a crash to land on the Head of St. Sam's.



A Rollicking Fine Story of Jack Jolly & Co., the Cheery Chums of St. Sam's.

Round, and conducted operations. The Head considered that discretion was the better part of vallet; in other words, he was in a blue funk.

Jack Jolly had very good reasons for holding a barring-out. He had not merely done it as a pleasant diversion.

Mr. Lichtham, the master of the Fourth, had broken down in health, and had gone abroad to recuperate. In his place, the Head had appointed a Mr. Savidge—a man who was savidge by name and savidge by nature.

Mr. Savidge had started quite a Rain of Terror in the Fourth; and his tyranny and injustices had driven the juniors to this desperate course.

With the aid of his chums, Merry and Bright, Jack Jolly clambered up on to one of the high window-sills.

"In eggsppecting another attack, you fellows," he said. "The Head isn't the sort to let the grass grow under his feet. He means to take steps to deal with us; and if he can't do it by taking steps, he'll take a long ladder. He had no luck yesterday; but that will only make him all the more determined to quash the rebellion. I'll watch from this window, and give the alarm if I see anybody coming."

Scarcely were the words out of Jack Jolly's mouth, when he saw a grim-looking procession of people, coming across the quad.

The Head was in the van; that is to say, he walked on foot. His brow was black with rage; his long beard bristled with indignation. Never, in the course of his seventy-five years' eggspperience as a headmaster, had he been so flagrantly defied by a parcel of juniors. He meant business now, as he strode fiercely across the quad.

Behind him came Fossil, the porter, carrying three ladders, tied together with a string. Fossil grunted and groaned beneath his burden, and every now and then he prodded the Head in the small of the back, causing him to spin round with an angry snarl.

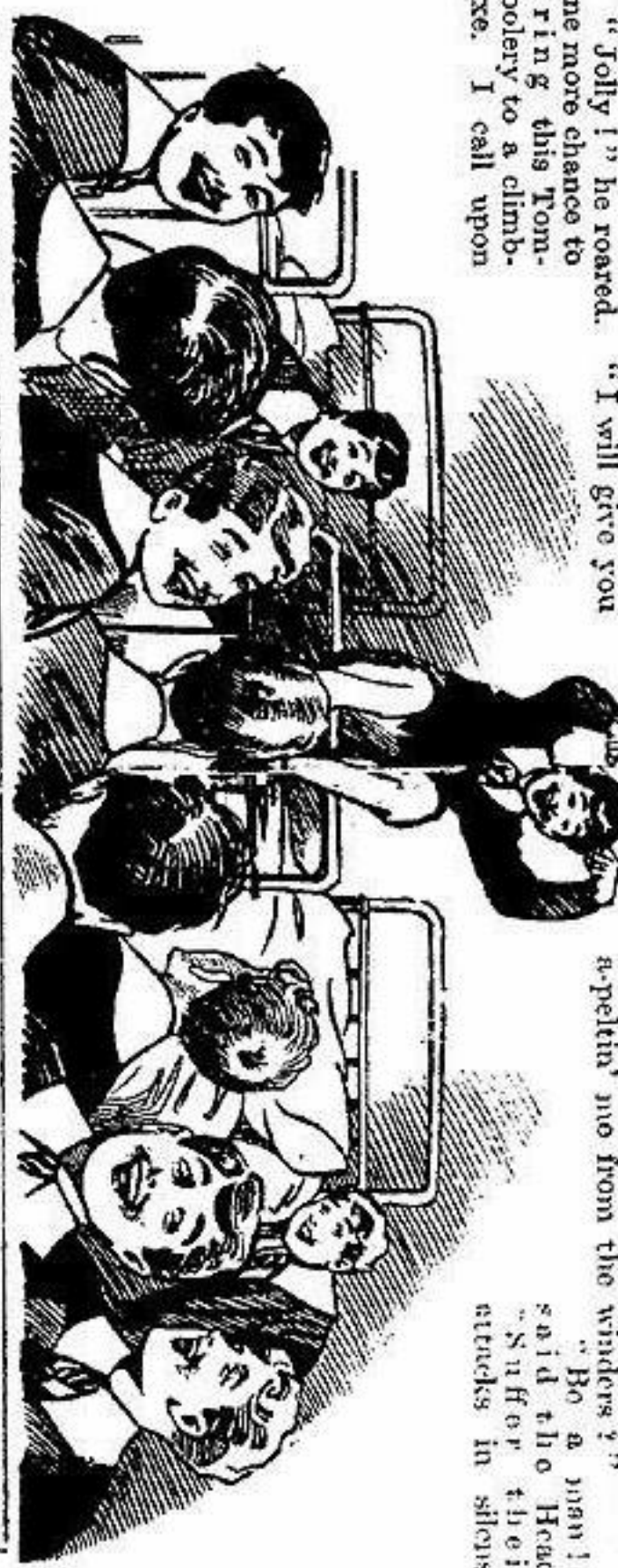
Behind Fossil, the porter, walked a solemn, stern-faced group of masters. There was Mr. Justiss, the master of the Fifth; Mr. Savidge, the tempery master, who had caused all the trouble; Mr. Chas. Tyzer, the master of the Third; Herr Otto Guggenheimer, the German master; and Monsieur Froggley, the French master.

The procession halted underneath the dormitory windows. The faces of the rebels were pressed against the panes, and they grinned down at the Head and his merrydons.

"Top of the mourning, sir!" called out Jack Jolly cheerfully.

The Head nashed his teeth. His beard and his highbrows bristled more than ever.

"Jolly!" he roared. "I will give you one more chance to bring this Tomfoolery to a climb-axe. I call upon



"All together, boys!" cried Jack Jolly, waving his arms like a windmill. The rebels of the Fourth bellowed the refrain at the top of their voices.

you and your companions to surrender!"

"Rats!" cried the rebels in chorus. "If you surrender at once, and give us no more trouble," went on the Head, persuasively, "I promise that you shall receive no punishment, apart from a public flogging all round, and the expulsion of the ringleaders!"

"And if we don't surrender?" said Jack Jolly.

"Then, in addition to being flogged and sacked, I shall hand you over to the perice!" said the Head grimly.

Some of the rebels turned pale at this terrible threat; but Jack Jolly, with his head thrust out of the window, maintained his exposure. He was as cool as a cucumber which had been kept in a refrigerator in the attic regions.

"Do your worst!" cried one hero defiantly. "When you sack that brook Savidge from St. Sam's, the rebellion will be declared at an end; but not before!"

"Put that in your pipe and smoke it!" yelled Merry.

The Head was dancing with rage, like a cat on hot bricks. He turned fiercely to Fossil the porter.

"Rear the ladders!" he commanded, hoarsely.

Heaving and straining, Fossil hoisted the ladders until the top one rested against one of the window-sills.

"Now climb up and fetch those young rascals down!" barked the Head.

Fossil hezzitated.

"Vot I says is this 'ere—I'm a porter, not a jimnynastick eggspert," he protested. "Besides, I ain't got no lead for 'eights. The last time I clumb a ladder, I turned piddy, an'—"

"Enuff!" said the Head, sternly. "Do your duty, Fossil!"

"But supposit the young rips starts 'apeetin' me from the windows?"

"Bo a man!" said the Head. "Suffer their attacks in silence."

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Crash! The Head and the porter came to earth with a sickening konkussion.

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

Jack Jolly & Co., watching from the windows, were almost historical with latter.

The Head set up on the flagstones, snorting with fury.

"You clumsy fool!" he roared. "Take a week's notice, for causing me grievous bodily harm!"

"Ow could I 'elp it?" groaned Fossil. "You shouldn't 'ave got in my way!"

"Well, of all the black ingratitude!" gasped the Head. "I broke your fall, and saved you from a broken cranium, and then you turn round and tell me it was my fault! Take another week's notice!"

"With pleasure!" snorted Fossil, picking himself up. "I shall be glad to get out of this 'ere Bodiam. An' don't ask me to go up that ladder no more, 'cos I wouldn't do it, not for an 'undred pounds! I've 'ad enuff!"

So saying, Fossil, the porter, turned on his heel, and limped painfully away. The grinning rebels at the dormitory windows watched him go; and they were curious to see what would happen next.

"**M. R. JUSTISS!**" The Head beckoned to the master of the Fifth, with a bony forefinger.

"My duty," said Mr. Justiss, "is to impart instruction to the boys in the Fifth Form—not to climb ladders and bigger fool than I look!"

"That would be impossible!" sneered the Head; for Mr. Justiss had a face like a seaside plover. "For the last time, I call upon you to do your duty. Go up and fetch those young rascals down or else hand in your resignation!"

"I shall appeal to the

Guvernors!" said Mr. Justiss Jolly. "I have grown gray in the service of this school, and you cannot dismiss me in this off-hand way."

The Head shrugged his shoulders, and turned his back on the master of the Fifth.

"Mr. Tyzer!" he said, addressing the master of the Third. "Mr. Justiss having refused to do my bidding, I call upon you to carry out my destructions."

But Mr. Tyzer was not having any. He took his queue from Mr. Justiss, and refused to climb the ladder and reason with the rebels. The head sacked him on the spot; and Mr. Tyzer seemed in no hurry to go. He snatched his fingers in the Head's fizz.

"Get somebody else to do your dirty work!" he said, scornfully.

The eggspattered Head turned to Herr Guggenheimer.

"Will you also defy me?" he asked, shaking his head. "I will climb up the ladder mit myself, and fetch der young rascals down. Hoeh, hoeh!"

So saying, the plump and portly Herr Guggenheimer waddled to the foot of the ladder and started to climb it with ponderous steps.

"Look out, you fellows!" shouted Jack Jolly, from above. "Old Guggy's on the warpath!"

The German master assended the ladder, hand over fist. Half way up he paused, and glared up at the rebels.

"Do not dare to put me mit your pea-shooters," he said, "or I will give you der flogging of your lives, ain't it?"

"Take my advice, Guggy, and go down," said Jack Jolly. "You saw what happened to poor old Fossil!"

But you would not dare to attack a master—

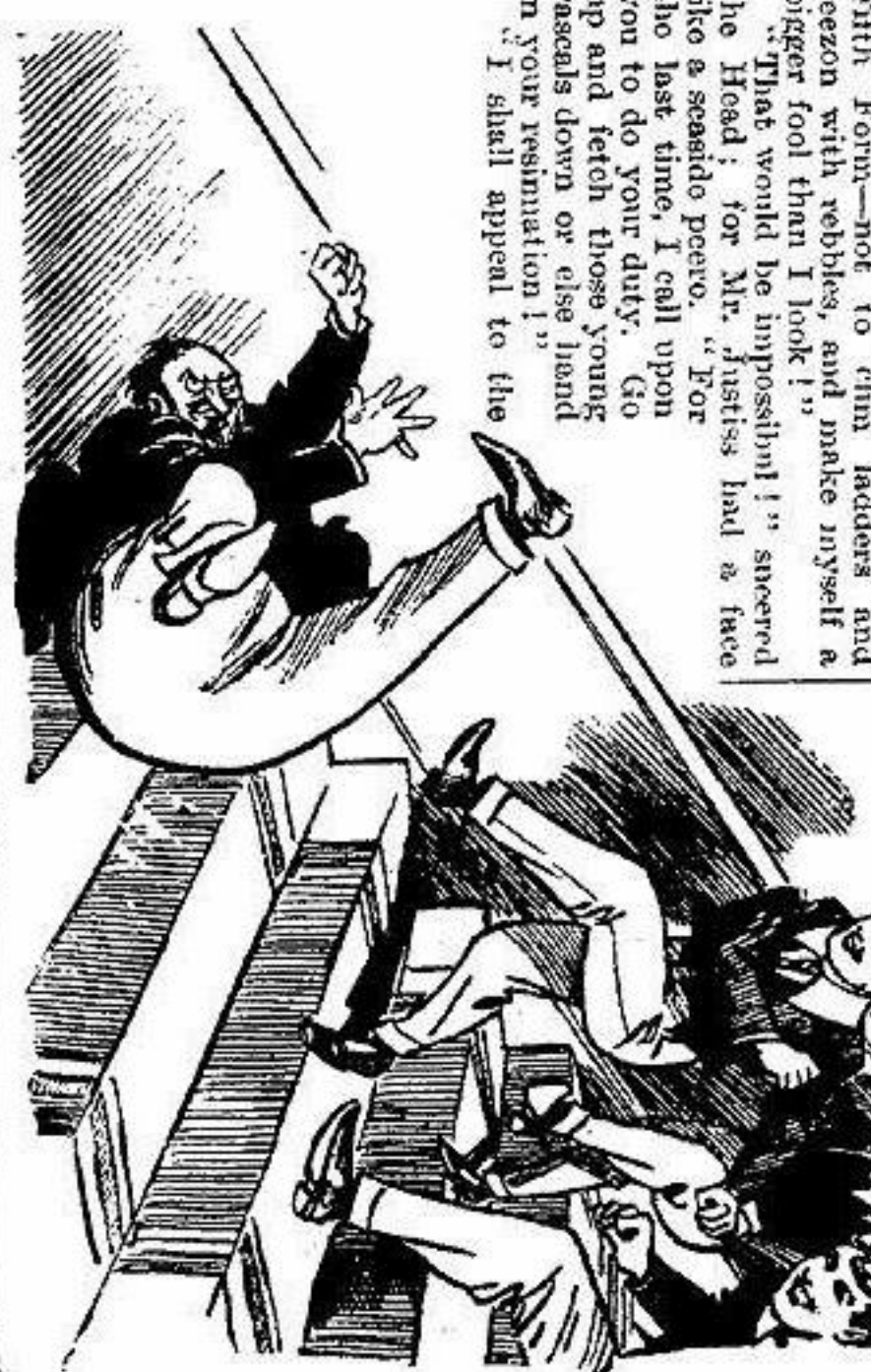
"There is nothing we wouldn't dare!" said Jack Jolly boldly. "We fear no foe in shining armor."

"Go down, sir, while you're safe!" advised Merry.

Herr Guggenheimer promptly obeyed. He had no intension of doing so; but he had reached that part of the ladder where it was tied with string to the next. The string strained and snapped under the German master's

weight; and the lowest ladder

(Continued on the next page.)



A number of boots clumped together on the rear of Monsieur Froggley's person, and he rolled down the stairs, shrieking wildly.