

"PREFECTS AT WAR!" A GRIPPING YARN OF YOUR OLD FAVOURITES—HARRY WHARTON & CO.

The Magnet

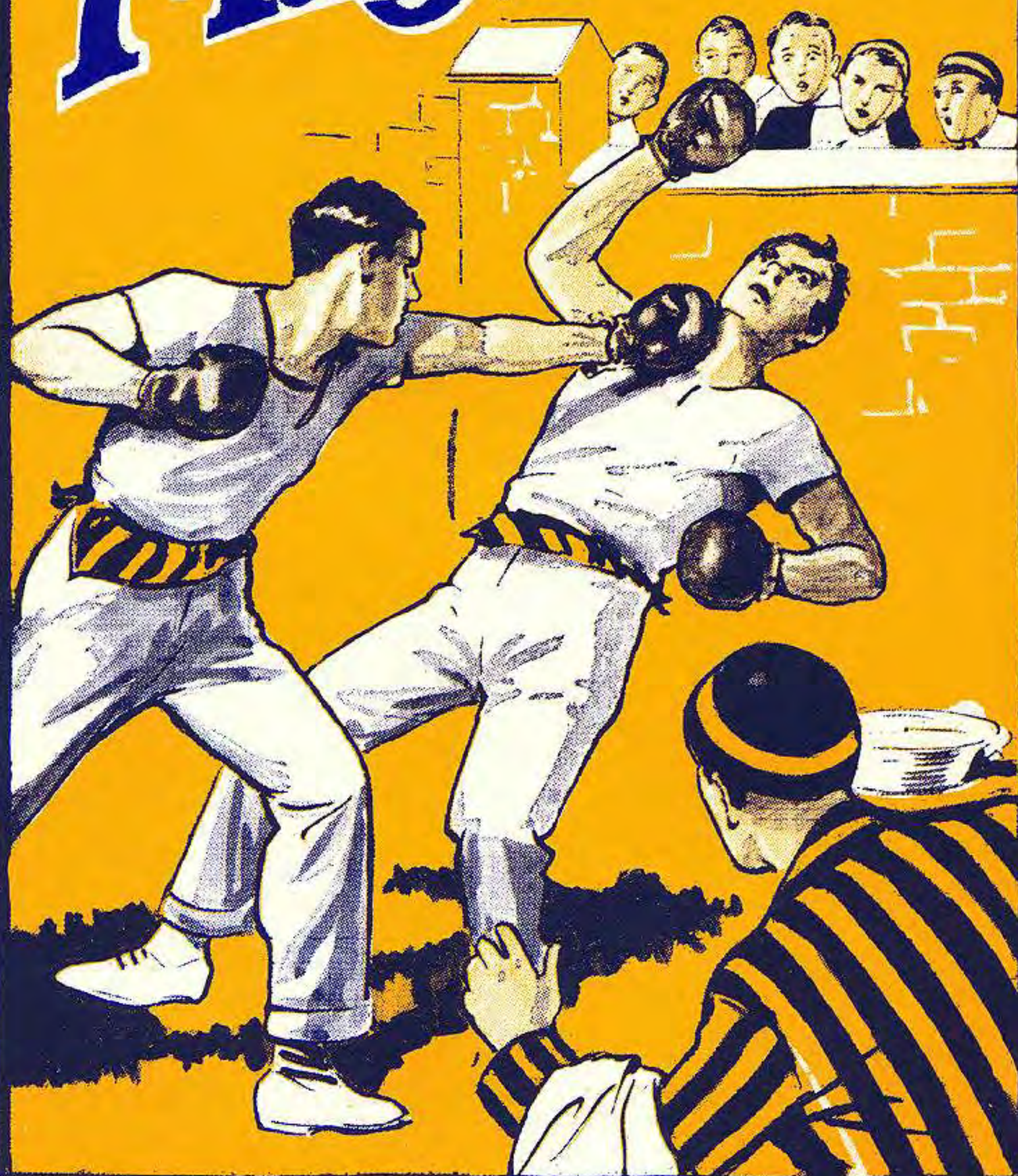
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Week Ending June 8th, 1929.

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EVERY SATURDAY.

LIBRARY



A GREAT FIGHT BETWEEN SIXTH-FORMERS!

Read the trenchant story of school life and adventure, introducing the Chums of Greyfriars—inside.



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:
The Editor; The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to
c/o "Magnet," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C. 4 (Comp.).

AS in previous weeks, chums, we'll kick-off with a Greyfriars limerick, sent in by one of our many lady readers.

Have you heard of that cute guy, Fish,
Whose motto is: "diddle and dish"?
His scheming for dollars
Oft ends up in hollers
As Queelohy gets ready to swish!

A useful pocket-wallet has been forwarded to Miss Lilian Weddall, 60, Tynemouth Road, Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne, for the above winning effort.

Authors are, really, the most erratic of fellows to deal with! Take, for instance—but, no, I won't give his name away! Anyhow, he's just left my office after having wasted about an hour of my valuable time! He arrived full of beans with the apparent intention of discussing new stories with me—I mean serial stories designed for future publication in the MAGNET. To begin with, however, he started off with: "Have you heard this one?"

Well, what could I do after that but tell him a few of the jokes which you fellows have sent along to me, and which have earned penknives? The result is that we spent a considerable amount of time "swopping yarns." Then I got back to work.

"Now, about this new story," I said. "I shall need it before you go on your holidays."

"That reminds me," answered the author. "Talking about holidays—"

And he was off again! Well, I must admit that he talks as well as he writes, and I had no idea of how the time was going until I looked at the clock which stands on my desk. He looked at it, too. "My hat!" he said. "One o'clock! I must be getting along to lunch. Good-bye!" And out he breezed!

And here I am, wondering when I am going to get a chance to have a yarn with him about business! However, there's one good thing—I can rely on any story which he sends in, so you fellows can look out for a really ripping yarn in the near future.

Now let me see what to-day's post has, concerning questions from my pals. Here's Alfred Barwick, of Lowestoft, asking me about

THE LARGEST LINER IN THE WORLD.

Is the Leviathan or the Majestic the largest? The Majestic is exactly eight feet longer than the Leviathan, although the Leviathan looks to be the bigger boat on tonnage. This is because she is measured according to American rules, whereas the Majestic, being a British ship, is measured according to British rules, which make it seem that she is not of as great a tonnage as her American rival. So Alfred can be proud of the fact that the honour of owning the largest liner in the world goes to this country!

Americans are always boasting about owning the biggest things in the world, and in one respect they do hold the record. That is so far as tall buildings (I nearly said tall stories) are concerned.

THE WOOLWORTH BUILDING,

in New York, is the tallest building in the world, and is 792 feet in height. This is in answer to Harry Prestwick, of Iludersfield. The next tallest is the Metropolitan Life Building, which is also in New York, and is 92 feet shorter than the Woolworth building. The largest building in this country is Salisbury Cathedral, the spire of which is 404 feet high, while the cross on St. Paul's is 365 feet high.

Have any of you fellows been up to the top of St. Paul's? If you haven't, I'm afraid you've missed your chance now. Just before the dome was closed to the public owing to rumours that it was unsafe, I went up there, and climbed

HIGH ABOVE LONDON.

It was a most interesting experience. Right in the centre of the dome there is a peep-hole which allows you to gaze straight down upon the people beneath, who appear to be about the size of flies. But the cross is much higher still, and one has to wedge themselves through a tiny opening and then climb a perpendicular iron ladder. Even on the calmest of days the wind seems to whistle around one in fury, at that height. But it is possible to climb right into the golden ball which supports the cross.

I feel I must again remind my chums of the wonderful FREE picture cards dealing with mechanical mysteries and

MARVELS OF THE FUTURE,

which are now being presented with our companion paper, the "Gem Library." This week's superb card—No. 8 in the series—depicts

A GREYHOUND OF THE SEA,

another dream of the future. It's a real beauty, chums, so don't fail to add it to your set. There are plenty more of these topping FREE coloured picture cards to come.

HERE'S ANOTHER QUERY,

which comes from H. T., of Teddington. How long has the earth existed? he asks. No one can say exactly, of course, but scientists believe that the earth is nearly 3,000 million years old! That's a pretty good age, isn't it? And this old earth seems good for another 3,000 millions!

I wonder how many of you have wanted to know—as C. Hart, of Deptford, does—what are

THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD?

Here's a list of them: The Pyramids, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Tomb of Mausolus, the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, the Colossus of Rhodes, the Statue of Jupiter by Phidias, and the Pharos (lighthouse) of Alexandria. The Pyramids are the only wonders that remain practically the same as when built.

Turning to my diary, I find that this Tuesday is the anniversary of the drowning of Lord Kitchener. I expect you all remember how he was proceeding to Russia in a British warship when it was mined and sank, taking down nearly the whole of

its crew. For a long time people refused to believe that Lord Kitchener had been drowned, but a fellow I know who was serving in the Navy at the time told me that he was on patrol fairly near the spot, and the night the Hampshire was mined such a terrific storm was taking place that the chance of anyone escaping was practically nil. Such a tremendous sea was running that a torpedo could not have been fired, and therefore it leaves no doubt as to the fact that the Hampshire was sunk by a floating mine, and not by a submarine, as many people believed.

A GREAT SPORTING EVENT

takes place this week. It is the classic race of the English turf—the Derby. It was originated in 1780, by the twelfth Earl of Derby, and carries with it a stake of about £6,000. Only three-year-olds can run in the race, so you can imagine how sportsmen laughed when a famous woman novelist described the same horse as having won the Derby three years in succession!

I'm getting to the end of my space again, but I have just enough room to print this yarn which earns a penknife for H. Lewis, of 15, Tvas Road, Canning Town, E.16.

A Scotsman and an Irishman, returning from a cricket match by railway, just managed to get into a carriage about two minutes before the train was due to start. To their amazement, however, they discovered that they had lost their return tickets, and in consequence the Scot asked his friend to hurry off to the booking-office and get two single tickets. The other left the compartment and returned within a moment or two. "My word, you have been quick!" said the Scot. "Yes," said the Irishman. "I went into the next compartment and shouted: 'Tickets, please,' and I've collected a handful!"

Finished laughing, chums? Right, then let's consult the little black book and see what we have in store for next week's MAGNET.

Hitting me in the eye, as it were, is another magnificent new long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. And a real gem of a yarn it is, too, chums, with all your favourites well to the fore.

Here's the title:

"OUT OF BOUNDS!"

By Frank Richards.

Of course, to put you wise to the plot would spoil the yarn, and this I do not want to do. That you'll all agree it is one of Frank Richards' best yarns I feel sure.

Following this we come to another rollicking fine story of St. Sam's written by our champion laughter-merchant, Dicky Nugent, of the Second Form at Greyfriars. Minnie, the Greyfriars mouser, has chuckled over it, I have roared over it myself, and you'll just scream over it. Make a note of the title:

"THE HEAD'S MOVIE MASTERPIECE!"

All good things come to an end, unfortunately, and next week the curtain rings down on our successful serial:

"SPEEDWAY PALS!"

By A. Carney Allan.

This thrilling yarn of the dirt-track has been praised on all sides. But trust the good old MAGNET never to let you down, chums. Oh dear, no! I've got another gigantic success in the way of serials now in preparation, the particulars of which I am afraid I must leave over until I write my next "Come into the Office, Boys!"

YOUR EDITOR.

HERE'S A TIP-TOP COMPLETE SCHOOL YARN, BOYS!



PREFECTS AT WAR!

Which deals with the feud between popular George Wingate, and Gerald Loder, the black sheep of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Mixed Dates!

"BUNTER!"

"Oh dear!" ejaculated Billy Bunter.

Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed on Bunter, as if they would bore into him like gimlets.

A fellow addressed in class by his Form master was not expected to ejaculate "Oh dear!" in tones of dismay.

That ejaculation, on Bunter's part, was quite involuntary.

He couldn't help feeling dismayed.

Mr. Quelch was taking the Remove, in third school on Saturday morning, in English history. On that subject, as on most subjects, Billy Bunter's fat mind was a beautiful blank.

Bunter had hoped to escape his Form master's eye that morning. Almost to the end of the lesson he had succeeded in doing so. Now it wanted but five minutes to dismissal, and Bunter had felt fairly safe.

But with Quelch you never could tell! He was quite capable of dropping on a fellow in the very last minute.

Quelch laboured under the delusion, common to schoolmasters, that fellows were at school to learn things. No doubt some fellows were; Bunter wasn't! Not if Bunter could help it. Bunter's occupation was dodging work. He would take more trouble to dodge work than another fellow would take to get it done.

History did not appeal to Bunter. What he did not know about it would have filled immense volumes. And what little he knew, he never could remember.

In first school that morning Bunter had been given lines. In second school

he had been given more lines. But there was a limit to lines. If he came a cropper in third school it would be a caning or detention.

There was the rub!

For that afternoon some Remove fellows were going up the river on a picnic. They hadn't invited Bunter; but that, to the Owl of the Remove, was a trifle light as air. He was going, all the same. But if Quelch gave him a detention he couldn't go!

For that reason Bunter had fervently hoped that Quelch would not call on him in third lesson. He was not prepared to answer questions on the subject of our glorious island story. His kings and queens were hopelessly

"Rows" amongst the mighty men of the Sixth Form are, for obvious reasons, very infrequent. Yet Greyfriars this week is thrilled with the news of a first-class row between the captain of the school and one of his prefects!

mixed. If Mr. Quelch had asked him the date of the Conquest, Bunter was quite likely to answer 1914. On the other hand, he might have dated the outbreak of the Great War 1066. He would cheerfully have given Charles the First or George the Second, as the name of the monarch who found a harmless and necessary amusement in cutting off the heads of his wives. He was quite likely to state that it was Wellington who said "Kiss me, Hardy!" and Nelson who never smiled again.

Knowledge like this Bunter was not anxious to display, on an occasion when it was important that he should not be detained.

Hence his involuntary ejaculation of dismay when the gimlet-eye of Henry

Samuel Quelch fastened on him like the eye of a basilisk.

"What did you say, Bunter?" asked Mr. Quelch, in an awful voice, while the Remove fellows grinned.

"Oh, nothing, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I thought I heard you utter an absurd ejaculation, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch. "However, we will proceed."

Bunter very nearly uttered another absurd ejaculation. But he contrived to suppress it this time.

"I trust, Bunter, that you are prepared to answer my questions?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Bunter. "Quite, sir! I—I—I'm eager, sir!"

"Very good! At what date, Bunter, did Charles the First succeed to the throne?"

Bunter blinked at Mr. Quelch. He blinked round the grinning Form. He rubbed his fat nose.

But it was no use.

Mr. Quelch paused, like Brutus, for a reply. But he had no better luck

than Brutus. There was no reply.

"Bunter!"

"Oh dear! I mean, yes, sir."

"You will tell me, Bunter, all that you know about King Charles the First."

That, really, was an easy task. It wouldn't have taken Bunter two seconds to tell all that he knew about that monarch or any other. But that, of course, would not have satisfied Mr. Quelch. He wanted to hear more than Bunter could tell him.

"In the first place, when did he succeed?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"He—he didn't, sir."

"What?"

"He—he didn't, sir."

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"Wha-a-at?"

"I—I'm sure he didn't, sir!" gasped Bunter. Bunter really was sure of his ground to this extent. "It was Cromwell who succeeded, sir."

"Cromwell?" repeated Mr. Quelch blankly.

"Yes, sir. We—we had that in last history class, sir. I—I'm sure it was Cromwell who succeeded. King Charles failed."

"F-f-failed?" stuttered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Remove. They really could not help it.

"You—you—you obtuse and absurd boy!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Silence! Silence in the class! Bunter, I am not alluding to the success, or otherwise, of Charles the First in his contest with Cromwell. I am asking you when he succeeded to the throne. I mean the date of his ascension, you absurd boy!"

"Oh!" said Bunter. "I thought—"

"I am glad to hear, at least, that you thought, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch, with the irony he sometimes turned on backward members of his Form. "I feared that you were quite incapable of thinking."

The Remove recognised this as a joke and laughed dutifully.

"Give me the date, Bunter."

"I—I—I—"

"The date, immediately."

"Ten-sixty-six, sir," said Bunter at a venture.

"What?"

"I—I—I mean, 1588, sir!" gasped Bunter. Bunter knew that something had happened in 1588, and he hoped that it was the accession of King Charles the First.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Quelch. "I did not ask you the date of the Spanish Armada, Bunter."

"Oh!" groaned Bunter. Evidently it was the beastly Spanish Armada that had happened in 1588.

"Really, Bunter—"

"I—I—I mean, 1688, sir!" gasped Bunter. Something or other had happened in 1688, as well as 1588; Bunter remembered the double 8's. He had no idea what it might have been; but he knew it was something, and again he hoped that it was the accession of Charles the First.

Again his hopes deceived him.

"You have given me the date of the English Revolution, Bunter."

"Oh dear!" So that was it! "Of—of course, sir! What I really meant to say was 1914, sir."

"Nineteen-fourteen!" stuttered the Remove master.

"Or—or else 1745, sir!" groaned Bunter. Bunter often remembered the dates themselves, but unfortunately not the particular events with which they were connected.

"You are answering me at random, Bunter! Your ignorance is abysmal. You will be detained—"

"Ow!"

"For one hour—"

"Wow!"

"This afternoon—"

"Oh, crikey!"

"And I shall set you a paper on this subject. You will come to the Form-room at two o'clock."

And with that Mr. Quelch dismissed his Form, and a smiling Remove trooped out of the Form-room. Only one member of the Form was not smiling. That was William George Bunter. He looked as if he had taken a leaf out of the book of the ancient monarch who never smiled again.

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THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Path of Duty!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were smiling when they left the Remove Form-room, and they were smiling when they met again at the dinner-table. In each case it was the face of William George Bunter that made them smile. Dinner, as a rule, brought a happy expression to Bunter's face. But now even dinner, though ample and good, could not clear his brow of a troubled frown. Even as he sat and gobbled, Bunter seemed to be understudying the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance.

Bunter had a suspicion—only too well-founded—that the Famous Five would not wait for him that afternoon. Harry Wharton & Co., as it happened, were the Remove men who were going on a picnic up the river. Bunter's hour of detention would not have mattered much if they had waited till three before they started. But he had a feeling that they wouldn't. It was only too likely that the beasts would take advantage of his detention to get off without the Owl of the Remove, and obviate the danger of Bunter trailing them down like Chingachgook.

They had not told Bunter where they were going to stop for that picnic. Somewhere up the river, of course; but that was rather vague. As likely as not, old Popper's Island, though it was out of bounds and a good distance off. But Bunter was not sure. He would not have objected to following on later, if he knew the precise spot, and if the picnickers waited for him before they disposed of the tuck.

But he could not help realising that they were not so keen on his society as they ought to have been, considering what a nice fellow he was. Fellows often weren't. Possibly, too, they wanted the tuck themselves, and Bunter, of course, would have bagged the lion's share had he been present. Any fellow who was at a feed with Bunter did little more than hold a watching brief, so to speak.

After dinner, Bunter tackled the Famous Five in the quad. They regarded him with sweet smiles as he rolled up to them. Just as if they knew what was troubling his fat mind.

"I say, you fellows—" began Bunter. "You know that beast Quelch has detained me this afternoon. I shan't be ready to start till three, as it turns out."

"Going anywhere?" asked Bob Cherry innocently.

"Oh, really, Cherry! I'm coming on that picnic!" said Bunter reproachfully. "You didn't think I'd desert my old pals on a half-holiday, did you?"

"Well, no," confessed Bob. "We didn't expect it; we only hoped so."

"Ha ha, ha!"

"The hopefulness was terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "As the honourable and absurd poet remarks, hope springs infernal in the human chest."

"Well, I'm coming," said Bunter. "The question is, will you fellows wait till three o'clock?"

"The answer is in the jolly old negative," said Frank Nugent.

"Then I'll follow on," said Bunter. "Are you going to picnic in Popper's Island?"

"Time we got going, you men," remarked Harry Wharton. "The sooner we're off the better. Loder butted in on Wednesday and spoiled it for us, and we don't want history to repeat itself."

"I asked you a question!" hooted Bunter.

"No harm in your asking questions, old fat bean, if you don't expect them

to be answered," said the captain of the Remove cheerfully.

"If you don't want me to follow on, Wharton—"

"Right on the wicket!"

"Beast! Look here, if you go to Popper's Island in the Sark, you're going out of school bounds," said Bunter. "Suppose Wingate, or Loder, or some other beast of a prefect, got on to it?"

"You fat villain—"

"Of course, I'm not going to mention it," said Bunter, with dignity. "I'm not a sneak, I hope. But one good turn deserves another. You tell me where you're going, and I'll keep it dark—see?"

"I think we can keep it darker by not telling you," chuckled Johnny Bull.

"The darkness will be much more terrific," grinned Hurree Singh. "Speech is silvery, but silence is the cracked pitcher that goes longest to the well and saves ninepence in time, as the English proverb says."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you beasts—"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows, if you won't wait I'll come with you now," said Bunter. "I'll take the risk of cutting detention, rather than desert my old pals. There!"

"You fat ass, you'd get a licking!" said Harry.

"I don't care! Who's afraid of a licking?" said Bunter valorously. "I'm not! I'm not soft, like some fellows I could name! I jolly well won't go to the Form-room at two!"

"It's close on two now, fathoad! You'd better hike off before Quelch gets on the war-path."

"Blow Quelch!" said Bunter. "I'll chance it! After all, who's Quelch? I'm not afraid of Quelch! You fellows know jolly well that he oughtn't to have detained me. The trouble is, that Quelch is ignorant."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Making out that Charles the First succeeded, when any kid in the Second knows that he failed!" said Bunter warmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And then making out that he meant something else, when I jolly well caught him out!" said Bunter. "Fancy ignorance like that in a Form master! Scandalous, I call it!"

"My esteemed idiotic Bunter—"

"I say, you fellows, what about watching the cricket a bit before you start?" asked Bunter. "Wingate's going to put his men through it on Big Side this afternoon. I hear he's put a Fifth Form man in the team, since he chucked Loder of the Sixth. They're getting ready for the St. Jim's match on Wednesday. Why not give them a look in? I'm surprised that you fellows ain't a bit keener on cricket. Suppose you give them a look in on Big Side till three o'clock—"

"Good-bye, fatty!"

The Famous Five moved off.

Bunter snorted.

"Look here, you beasts, I'm coming! Quelch can go and eat coke! I'll jolly well tell him so if I see him before I start, too! I'll show him there's one man in the Remove he can't frighten!"

"Bunter!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

He spun round. Mr. Quelch was looking out of the doorway of the House, and Bunter gazed at him in horror. If Quelch had heard what he was saying—

Fortunately, Quelch hadn't.

"Bunter!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped the Owl of the Remove.

"It is time for you to go to the Form-



Gerald Loder assumed a stern frown as he fixed his eyes on the Famous Five and pointed to the picnic preparations. "These things belong to you?" he demanded. "You've guessed it!" answered Bob Cherry. "Yet you know as well as I do that this island is out of bounds," said Loder. "Get into your boat and pull back to Greyfriars at once, and report yourselves to your Form-master!" (See Chapter 3.)

room, Bunter. I have prepared a simple history paper for you. Come!"

Now was the time for Billy Bunter to tell Quelch to go and eat coke, and show him that there was one man in his Form that he couldn't frighten. But Bunter didn't! He would as willingly have defied a Royal Bengal Tiger as Henry Samuel Quelch, when that gentleman was actually present. With Mr. Quelch at a safe distance, Bunter was as bold as a lion. But under the Remove master's gimlet-eye, the lion turned promptly into a lamb.

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

And William George Bunter followed Mr. Quelch to the Form-room with the utmost meekness.

Harry Wharton & Co. strolled away to the tuckshop, where the picnic basket was ready for them. With the basket they started for the river, in cheery spirits.

It was a sunny and pleasant afternoon. The chums of the Remove were looking forward to their excursion up the river. That excursion had been planned for the previous Wednesday, but Loder of the Sixth had butted in and caused delay, and Billy Bunter had scoffed the picnic—two good reasons why it had been postponed till Saturday. Now the coast was clear, and the fine weather, fortunately, was holding out. With cheery faces, the Famous Five took their boat out and put the picnic basket on board and shoved off from the school raft.

Just as they started, two seniors of the Sixth Form came down to the boat-house—Loder and Carne. Loder had a scowl on his face, never good-humoured. He was not wanted on Big Side that afternoon, where the Greyfriars captain was putting his team through their paces. Gerald Loder had been dropped out of the First Eleven, and though he was by no means eager to turn up for practice, he was deeply irritated by not being wanted. Cer-

tainly, he was welcome to turn up if he liked. He did not like; but he was annoyed, all the same. He would have been annoyed had Wingate made a point of it, and he was annoyed because Wingate did not make a point of it. Which would have proved to anyone but Loder himself that he was extremely difficult for any man to pull with.

He glanced at the Remove boat, dancing out on the shining waters of the Sark, and scowled more blackly. Being a dozen yards out, and safe from Loder's reach, Bob Cherry kissed his hand to the bully of the Sixth—perhaps thinking that that amiable salute would please Loder—perhaps not.

"Cheeky young sweep!" said Carne, with a grin.

Loder's eyes gleamed.

"Cherry!" he shouted.

"Pull away, you men!" murmured Bob Cherry. "I think we'd better be deaf."

"What-ho!"

And the juniors pulled, and the boat glided away swiftly up the river. Loder stood on the raft and stared angrily after them.

"Come on, old man," said Carne. "Better get the boat out if we're going to pull up to the Three Fishers."

"Those young sweeps are going on a picnic," said Loder.

"What about it?"

"As likely as not they're going out of bounds."

"Let 'em!"

"There was a lot of trouble once owing to juniors picnicking on Popper's Island," said Loder.

Carne yawned.

"Old Popper's always kicking up trouble about somethin'. It's his nature to. Look here, never mind those fags!"

"But I do mind," said Loder, shaking his head. "I've got my duty as a Sixth-Form prefect to consider."

Carne almost jumped. This was the first he had heard of any desire on

Gerald Loder's part to do his duty as a prefect.

"My dear man," said Carne, staring at him, "keep that stuff for the Head and the prefect's-room. It's no good to me."

"Duty is a pleasure sometimes," said Loder calmly. "If those young rascals are going to Popper's Island they're going to be caught. And we're going to catch them. The Head's awfully waxy when anybody twists old Popper's tail and brings him complaining to Greyfriars. It will be a leg up for us if we show how jolly keen we are on duty on a half-holiday. And, of course, we shall confiscate the picnic if we find them out of bounds."

"Oh!" said Carne. "I catch on."

"Time you did!" said Loder. "Let's get the boat out. But we'll give the Three Fishers a miss till we've done our duty."

And the two black sheep of the Sixth pulled up the Sark on the track of the Remove boat, and on a quite unaccustomed path of duty.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Picnic for Two!

BUMP! The bow of the Remove boat thudded into the green rushes on the island in the Sark.

Harry Wharton & Co. jumped cheerily ashore.

Popper's Island, in the Sark, was an ideal spot for a picnic. It was all the more attractive to the heroes of the Lower Fourth because it was forbidden territory. On either side of the river, at this point, stretched the broad acres of Popper Court. According to local tradition there were certain public rights on the island. According to Sir Hilton Popper there weren't. To

prevent friction, the headmaster of Greyfriars had placed the island out of bounds. That was satisfactory to the Head and satisfactory to the lord of Popper Court. To the Lower School of Greyfriars it was not satisfactory. Venturesome fellows continued to visit the island on occasions when the weather was propitious—keeping a wary eye open for Sir Hilton and his keepers.

A fellow picnicking on the island might have to run for it. But that gave a spice of adventure to the picnic.

Generally, the island was quite deserted. It was in that condition on this special afternoon, when the Famous Five of the Remove arrived there. They drew the boat well into the bank, so that it would not be noticeable from a distance, took out the picnic basket, and started for the interior. In the centre of the island was a big tree, and round it grew many smaller ones and many thickets. There the picnickers were safe from view from either bank of the river.

Under the spreading branches the Removites camped.

It had been rather a long pull up the river from Greyfriars. But they were not yet ready for tea. They unpacked the basket, and Bob Cherry proceeded to build a camp-fire to boil the kettle. Sir Hilton Popper strongly objected to camp-fires being lighted on his island—if it was his island, which the juniors took the liberty of doubting. But Sir Hilton's objections were not considered. Firewood was gathered from the thickets, and a fire was built, and was soon crackling away brightly and sending a column of smoke up into the branches of the great tree.

On three sticks over the fire, gipsy fashion, the kettle was swung, and in the course of time it would doubtless boil.

While that lengthy process was going on the chums of the Remove wandered about the island, exploring it. The big tree in the centre had a hollow trunk, and once a fugitive from justice had hidden himself there—which made it very interesting to the schoolboys.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly as he heard the sound

of a splashing oar in the river. "Is that a giddy visitor?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Nugent.

Running the risk of Sir Hilton's keepers was rather exciting. But being caught by the keepers was not attractive. For Sir Hilton and his keepers personally, the Remove fellows cared not a straw. But it meant a report to their headmaster, and unpleasant consequences.

"Look out!" muttered Wharton.

They heard a bump in the rushes. Evidently a boat had stopped at the island.

"If that's a keeper we're done!" grunted Johnny Bull. "We shall have to cut, you men. We don't want a row with the Head."

"Can't cut without our boat," said Harry, "and they've stopped where we left it. Let's see who it is."

With the stealth of Red Indians the juniors crept through the bushes towards the landing-place. Another boat was tied up there now, and two figures stood on the shore.

"Oh, crumbs! Two blinking prefects!" murmured Bob. "What the thump are Loder and Carne doing here?"

"Breaking bounds, like our esteemed and absurd selves," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "This excellent and ridiculous island is out of bounds for the execrable Sixth, as well as us."

Loder and Carne followed the path through the bushes to the camp in the middle of the little island. They grinned as they saw the good things that had been unpacked from the basket and the kettle singing over the camp-fire.

Loder glanced round at the green bushes.

"You fags may as well show up!" he called out. "We know you're here."

"The rotters followed us!" muttered Bob. "Well, we're for it this time. Come on!"

And the Famous Five accordingly showed up.

Loder of the Sixth assumed a stern frown. He fixed his eyes on the juniors and pointed to the picnic preparations.

"These things belong to you?" he demanded.

"You know they do," grunted Johnny Bull.

"Don't be cheeky, Bull! You were going to picnic on this island!" said Loder accusingly.

"You've guessed that?" asked Bob.

"Yes, I have!"

"What a brain! Shows what a term or two in the Sixth will do for a fellow!" said Bob admiringly.

"I don't want any cheek from you fags!" said Loder. "You know as well as I do that this island is out of bounds. You're caught in the very act! You will get into your boat and pull back to Greyfriars at once and report yourselves to your Form master."

"Look here—"

"You will tell Quelch that I caught you out of bounds, on Popper's Island, and sent you to him," said Loder.

The Famous Five looked at Loder as if they could have eaten him. They were strongly tempted to collar the two prefects, pitch them into their boat, and drive them off the island. Hefty seniors as Loder and Carne were, the five sturdy juniors could have handled them.

But it was not good enough. Behind Loder was all the authority of the school and the headmaster. He was not only within his rights, but he was, for once, doing his prefectorial duty. Resistance was out of the question, tempting as it was.

"You hear me?" grinned Loder.

"The hearfulness is the obeyfulness, my esteemed and disgusting Loder," said Hurree Singh.

Wharton breathed hard.

"Can't be helped, you men!" he said. "Pick up the things, and let's clear."

"Not so jolly fast," said Loder coolly. "Don't touch those things. All that tuck is confiscated."

"What?" howled the Famous Five.

"It's my duty to confiscate that tuck. I shall throw the whole lot into the river."

"We've blued twelve bob on that tuck!" roared Johnny Bull.

"You should have thought of that before you got out of bounds. I'm sorry, of course; but duty's duty."

"A fat lot of it you will throw into the river!" snorted Bob Cherry. "I know jolly well you'll scoff it when we're gone!"

"That's impudence, Cherry! Take a hundred lines," said Loder. "Now, get into your boat, before I help you with my boot!"

The Famous Five exchanged glances. Their desire to collar the two prefects and pitch them into their boat was almost overpowering. Johnny Bull clenched his fists, and Bob pushed back his cuffs.

"Look here, we're not standing this!" muttered Bob savagely.

"My esteemed chums," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur, "what cannot be cured must go longest to the well, as the proverb says. We do not want an esteemed flogging from the ridiculous Head."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Can't be helped," he said. "We'll jolly well get our own back another time! Let's get out of this."

With feelings that could hardly have been expressed in words, Harry Wharton & Co. tramped back to their boat and went aboard. Loder and Carne watched them, with grinning faces. The Famous Five had no inclination to grin. The laugh was on Loder's side this time, there was not a shadow of doubt about that. With grim and angry faces, the chums of the Remove pushed the boat out from the island and pulled away down the river towards Greyfriars.

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Loder chuckled.

"This is rather a catch," he remarked. "All ready for us; and I think we're going to enjoy this spread, old bean, while those young scoundrels are going home for a licking, what?"

"What-ho!" chuckled Carne.

And the two dutiful prefects sat down to the picnic. While the Famous Five were pulling back to Greyfriars, Loder and Carne disposed of the picnic to the last crumb. As the spread had been intended for five, it was quite an ample repast for two; but it all went. After which, Loder and Carne sat lazily in the grass, leaning back against the big tree, in a mood of cheery contentment. Carne produced a packet of cigarettes, and Loder handed out a pack of cards; and the two black sheep were soon deep in a game of nap, under a cloud of cigarette-smoke. It was quite a happy afternoon for Loder and his chum.

But it was not over yet!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Butts In!

KINGS and queens are generally very agreeable people. But on that sunny afternoon Billy Bunter was fed fairly up to the chin with Royal society. Bunter was quite satisfied with George V., but not in the least interested in the long line of famous monarchs from whom his Majesty is descended. Indeed, he wished from the bottom of his fat heart that King George had had a much shorter pedigree. For Mr. Quelch had given him a paper that embraced all the kings that had reigned in England from Cerdic onwards.

A fellow might really have found interest and instruction in tracing the descent of our present gracious monarch from that ancient Saxon king through the Plantagenets and the Tudors and the Stuarts. But that would have needed a little intelligence—and in that department Bunter did not shine.

He was not in search of instruction, and all his interest was deeply engrossed in the picnic up the river. So he yawned dismally over his history paper, and watched the clock and longed for the hour of release. It seemed ages to him before Mr. Quelch appeared in the offing, and, having expressed deep dissatisfaction at the way Bunter had dealt with the paper, told him at last that he could go.

Quelch's dissatisfaction did not worry Bunter much so long as he could go. That was the important point.

He went!

Bunter's movements, as a rule, resembled the slow and stately progress of a very tired tortoise. But he could get a move on when it was really urgent. Nothing could be more urgent than getting to the picnic before the good things were disposed of. So Bunter, on this occasion, resembled rather an arrow than a tortoise as he flew down to the boathouse.

There were plenty of fellows about, and Bunter quickly learned that the Famous Five had gone up the river, not down. That settled it in his mind, that they had gone to Popper's Island. It was a long pull against the current; but they had had more than an hour's start, and it was certain that they were already at the island.

Still, they were not likely to have tea so very early in the afternoon. Hope springs eternal in the human breast. Bunter still hoped to be in time for the feed.

He did not think of getting a boat

out and pulling up the river himself; that was too much like work. Bunter would as soon have thought of pulling up an oak as pulling up a river.

He started on foot.

The towpath followed the winding of the Sark; but there were short cuts, saving a lot of distance. Bunter proceeded by the short cuts, his fat little legs twinkling as he trotted.

In a state of breathless perspiration, the Owl of the Remove came out on the towpath at last opposite the island. He sat down on a grassy bank to recover his breath.

Getting across to the island was impossible to Bunter. Swimming was the only way, and that was impracticable. But there was no reason at all why the picnickers should not fetch him in their boat. With the aid of his big spectacles Bunter could make out the shape of a boat tucked away in the rushes under the spreading branches on the island. Obviously the beasts were there.

Naturally, Bunter knew nothing of the fact that two Sixth Form prefects had followed the juniors to the island, sent them away, and bagged the picnic. Had Bunter been aware of that little circumstance, he would have been saved that long trot. But he did not know it, and had no suspicion of it.

SMILE, CHUMS, WITH

T. Bilsborough, Bengal Square, Park Lane, Horton, near Garstang, Lancs, who carries off this week's pocket-knife for the following sparkling joke:

The travelling show suffered from three great drawbacks. It had a tenth-rate cast, tenth-rate scenery, and tenth-rate songs. Its reception during the opening week had been particularly hostile. "It's a most extraordinary thing," remarked the producer to the stage-manager, "considering we've left no stone unturned to make the show a success." "H'm, that's all very well," returned the manager gloomily, "but you must remember that up to the present no turn has been left unstoned!"

Who's next for one of these useful prizes? Perhaps you? Send in your efforts to-day!

Having rested and recovered his breath, Billy Bunter rose to his feet and advanced to the margin of the river, to hail the island.

Fascinating fellow as he was, Bunter did not expect the chums of the Remove to be overjoyed by his arrival. He did not even expect them to jump at the chance of ferrying him across the arm of the river. But he meant to hail them till they did. A fellow shouting at fellows on the island was certain to attract attention sooner or later. The juniors might be disposed to leave Bunter to shout; but if they did, it was certain that his shouts, sooner or later, would draw some of the Popper Court keepers to the spot. That would mean trouble all round. So the fat junior astutely worked it out that as soon as the Famous Five heard him yelling, they would come across for him, if only to shut him up.

"I say, you fellows!" bawled Bunter.

The trees and foliage on the little island hid the picnickers from his sight. But he waved a fat hand, in case any of them should be looking out.

"I say, you fellows! I say! I'm here! I'm waiting for you!" bawled Bunter. "Fetch me across, you fellows!"

It was doubtful whether Bunter's fat voice carried across the water, and into the deep wood on the island. Still, he was prepared to put on steam, till he was heard.

But just then, there was a footstep behind him, as a tall, angular gentleman in shooting-clothes and an eyeglass stepped out of the trees.

Sir Hilton Popper stared at Bunter.

He frowned at him.

It was obvious, to the lord of Popper Court, that this fat fellow on the towpath was hailing other fellows on the island—his island.

To be on the tow-path was an offence to Sir Hilton. He disliked members of the public coming up the river through his land. Still, even the autocratic lord of Popper Court could not venture to close the tow-path, much as he would have liked to do so. Probably he had no more right, to close the island to the public. But that he had ventured to do, and persisted in doing. The sight of anybody on the tow-path irritated him. But the bare idea of anybody on the island infuriated him. Probably Sir Hilton did not set his own lordly foot on that island once a year. But it did not occur to him that his policy was a good deal like that of the dog in the manger. It occurred to everybody else in the neighbourhood, but not to Sir Hilton.

With a frowning brow, he strode towards Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was gathering force for an extra-loud yell, when he felt a tap on his fat shoulder, and the yell changed into a gasp.

Bunter spun round and blinked at Sir Hilton.

"Boy!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "G-g-good-afternoon, sir! N-n-nice day, ain't it?"

"You belong to Greyfriars!" said Sir Hilton.

Bunter hesitated. He was about to state that he belonged to Highcliffe, when he remembered that he was on the public tow-path, and that Sir Hilton, terrifying as he was, had no power to turn him off it, or report him to his headmaster for being there.

"Oh! Yes, sir! Remove," he answered.

"I have seen you before," said Sir Hilton. "I think your name is Punter, or somethin' of the sort."

"Bunter, sir."

"What are you doing here?"

"Nothing, sir."

"You were calling to someone on my island."

"Oh, no, sir," said Bunter. "There's nobody on the island, sir. I can't see a boat from here."

"You are lying," granted Sir Hilton.

"Oh, really, sir—"

"You were calling to your friends on the island to fetch you across," said the baronet. "Do not deny it."

"The—the fact is, sir—" stammered Bunter, in dismay.

"Enough!"

Sir Hilton, taking no further heed of Bunter, stared across the arm of the shining Sark towards the island. He could make out the shape of the boat moored in the rushes, much more plainly than the Owl of the Remove could. Darker and darker grew his brow. Obviously, there were trespassers on the island. Certainly, he would not have noticed the boat in the rushes, had not Bunter drawn his attention to the island. But he could see it now, and—now that he was watching keenly—he could make out wisps of smoke rising through the trees in the centre of the island. Picnickers were there—a camp-fire had been lighted—reckless damage

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was being done to his grass, probably to his trees and bushes. This sort of thing, to Sir Hilton's mind, was little short of Bolshevism.

He turned to Bunter again.

"How many boys are on the island?" he demanded.

"None at all, sir," answered Bunter cheerfully.

"Are they boys in your Form—juniors?"

"Oh, no, sir!" Bunter was, unconsciously, telling the truth. But he was quite unaware of that fact.

"You are trying to deceive me, Bunter."

"Oh, really, sir! The—the fact is, I—I think they're gipsies, sir," said Bunter.

"Gipsies!" snorted Sir Hilton. Gipsies to the land owner were like a red rag to a bull.

"I—I think so, sir!" said Bunter, cheerfully. "A—a—a dangerous gang, I think, sir. I—I shouldn't go over to that island if I were you, sir. One of them's got a gun."

Bunter, having revealed the presence of the picknickers on the island, was doing his best to save them from discovery. Unfortunately he followed the methods of the late lamented George Washington. Lying came to Bunter as naturally as breathing.

"You need tell me no more untruths, boy!" snapped Sir Hilton. "I shall report this to your headmaster."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Now go!" snapped the baronet.

Billy Bunter might have stood on his rights, as a member of the great British public, to remain on the tow-path as long as he liked. But Sir Hilton was making a motion with his foot, and Bunter decided not to stand on his rights just then. The fat junior vanished into a woodland path, glad to get away from the irate gentleman.

Sir Hilton frowned after him till he disappeared. Then he stepped back into the wood, and called:

"Joyce!"

A game-keeper appeared in a few minutes.

"There are trespassers on the island, Joyce," said Sir Hilton. "I do not wish to give them the alarm, as they have a boat, and may escape unidentified. Get a boat here as quickly as you can, to cross to the island."

"Yes, Sir Hilton."

Joyce hurried away, and Sir Hilton, leaning on an oak, scanned the island, with a gloomy and angry brow, as he waited for the keeper to return with the boat. On the island, Loder and Carne had finished the picnic, and were smoking and playing nap with great enjoyment. Probably their joy would have been considerably dashed, had they been aware of the next item on the programme.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Two in a Tree!

"YOUR deal, Loder."

Loder, with his cigarette sticking at an angle in the corner of his mouth, dealt the cards. An empty basket, and fragments of the feast, lay round the two seniors, as they sat with their backs to the trunk of the big hollow oak; and the grass was littered with burnt matches and cigarette-ends. The two black sheep were looking rather puffy and pasty, but they were convinced that this sort of thing was enjoyment. Anyhow, it was easier work than slogging at cricket, and a man who wanted to play for the Greyfriars First had to slog.

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"I'd rather be here than on Big Side, come to think of it," yawned Carne, as he lighted a fresh cigarette.

"Same here, so far as that goes. All the same"—Loder scowled—"Wingate will find that I can't be chucked out of the team without trouble to follow. I'm more likely than he is, to play in the St. Jim's match on Wednesday, if he only knew."

"You're stickin' to that wheeze, then?"

"Like glue."

"Gwynne will captain the team if Wingate is called away—"

"No 'if' about it," snapped Loder.

"It's all fixed up for the telegram to come from Chester on Wednesday morning. Wingate's keen enough on games, but he will hardly think of playing cricket, after getting a wire telling him that his pater has been smashed in a motor crash."

"Hardly," agreed Carne. "But, old bean, there will be a row afterwards. He will clear off for home, but as soon as he gets there, he will know that he's been spoofed. He doesn't know anythin' about my pal in Manchester who's goin' to send the telegram, but—"

"And he never will know," said Loder.

"No. But he's bound to suspect that the whole thing was worked from Greyfriars. No stranger could have any reason for playing such a trick on him. He won't think it merely a coincidence that it happened on the day of the St. Jim's fixture."

"Not unless he's a bigger fool than I take him for."

"Then he will work it out that the thing was a spoof to dish him for the match," said Carne.

Loder shrugged his shoulders.

"Let him!" he answered.

"And he's sure to think of you, Loder."

"Let him!" repeated Loder. "He can think what he likes, so long as he can't prove anythin'. He certainly couldn't prove anythin'. Nobody will fancy that I got as far as Chester, from Kent, to send a spoof wire—especially as I shall be seen on the cricket ground at the time. I don't care if he thinks I was at the bottom of it. In fact, I'd like him to know that I've hit back—so long as there's no proof."

"I suppose it's safe enough, so long as it's kept dark," said Carne. "But if any Greyfriars man got a word of it—"

"We're not goin' to talk it over in the prefects' room, or in the quad," said Loder, sarcastically. "Nobody to hear us here, anyhow!"

The splash of an oar in the river followed Loder's words.

Carne glanced round.

"Can't be those fags comin' back," he said.

"Rot! Lots of boats go up the river on a fine afternoon. Nobody's comin' to the island."

But Arthur Carne was a little uneasy.

"I say, it would be no joke to be caught here by that old fool Popper, or some of his keepers!" he said. "What on earth would the Head say—two prefects of the Sixth breakin' bounds—especially after catchin' the fags at it and sendin' them back for punishment?"

"Oh, rot! Don't be nervy! Who's likely to butt in here?"

"That boat isn't passin' the island," said Carne, listening.

"Rot!" repeated Loder carelessly.

But Carne did not feel at his ease, and he rose and moved through the thick bushes, to glance at the landing-place. He was careful not to show himself as he did so; but he gave almost a

convulsive jump at what he saw. A boat was gliding across to the island, and was already within a few yards of the boat tied up in the rushes. Joyce, the keeper, was pulling, and a grim-visaged, angular gentleman in shooting clothes sat at the lines.

Carne felt a cold shiver run down his back as he recognised Sir Hilton Popper.

With a bound he rejoined Loder under the oak.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Loder, startled and scared by the terror in his chum's face.

"Old Popper!" stuttered Carne.

"Wha-a-at?"

"And a keeper with him—just on the island."

"Oh, holy smoke!"

Loder leaped up, scattering cards right and left. For a second the two black sheep stared at one another in consternation.

"Quick—the boat!" breathed Loder.

His companion caught his arm.

"Stop, you fool! That's where they are—close on the boat already—landing at the same place."

"Oh, thunder!"

From beyond the thick bushes came the sound of a boat grating against another, and the heavy tramp of a man stepping ashore.

Loder's face was almost haggard.

There was no escape from the island save by the boat, and the boat was already in the hands of the enemy. He glanced round at the sea of cigarette-ends and the scattered cards. There was no time to clear up the signs of a black guardly afternoon; it was a matter of minutes now, if not moments. Trespassing—smoking—gambling! What a report to reach the headmaster of Greyfriars! And they knew that there was no mercy to be expected from the baronet. Apart from his irritation at trespassing on his island, he was a governor of Greyfriars; and it would be his duty—a duty he was absolutely certain to perform—to report the conduct of the two black sheep.

In his mind's eye Loder could already see the stern, wrathful face of Dr. Locke; he could almost hear the Head's deep voice, announcing that he was degraded from his prefectship—perhaps that he was expelled from the school.

"What's goin' to be done?" muttered Carne hoarsely. "We can't clear all this up in time—it's worse than trespassin'! We shall be sacked—"

"Goodness knows! I—"

"Swim for it!" breathed Carne. "From the other side—"

"We should be seen!"

"Then what—"

It was then that Loder of the Sixth had a brain-wave. He had heard the old story of a fugitive who had hidden in the hollow tree on the island, and in that desperate moment it came back to his mind. If that tale was true—if the big tree really was hollow—

Loder, to Carne's amazement, began to scramble up the rough, gnarled trunk of the ancient oak.

"That's no good!" said Carne, in a shrill whisper. "The leaves ain't thick enough to hide you. Anyhow, they'll look—"

"Follow me, you fool!"

Loder scrambled up to where two branches forked. Between them there was a black orifice, wide and deep, in the great trunk. To Carne's utter astonishment Loder suddenly disappeared from his sight.

"L-Loder, what—?" he stuttered.

There was a sound of rustling and trampling in the thickets. Sir Hilton and the keeper were crossing the island.

There was no time to lose. Carne scrambled up the oak, and the orifice



With a frowning brow, Sir Hilton strode towards Bunter and gripped him by the shoulder. "Oh!" gasped Bunter, spinning round. "G-g-good afternoon, sir! N-n-nice day, ain't it?" "You were calling to your friends on the island to fetch you across, boy!" growled the infuriated Sir Hilton. "Oh, no, sir!" gasped Bunter. (See Chapter 4.)

in the great trunk opened under his eyes. He could not see Loder, who was below in the dark hollow of the tree. But he knew that he was there, and he dropped in after him.

There was a howl in the darkness.

"Ow! Wow!"

Carne's foot had struck something hard. He learned later that it was Gerald Loder's chin.

"Quiet!" breathed Carne.

"You clumsy fool—"

"Quiet! They're comin'!"

Loder suppressed his voice and his feelings.

There was room for the two seniors in the hollow trunk, though it was rather close quarters. The darkness round them was thick; but above they could see daylight at the opening, shadowed by the branches of the oak. It was a dusty, hot, uncomfortable, and unpleasant retreat; but it was safe enough if the enemy did not know that the oak was hollow. On that the fate of the two black sheep of Greyfriars depended.

With beating hearts the two seniors listened, and shivered as the deep voice of Sir Hilton Popper came to their ears.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Stranded!

"Huh!"

Sir Hilton grunted with angry contempt.

The remains of a picnic were irritating enough to the eyes of the autocrat of Popper Court. But the sight

of cigarette-ends, burnt matches, and scattered playing-cards, roused his deepest ire.

Picnicking on the island was a serious matter only from Sir Hilton's point of view. But this sort of thing was really serious.

"Huh! My old school is comin' to somethin'!" growled Sir Hilton Popper.

"Smokin', gamblin'! Huh!"

"They don't seem to be here, Sir Hilton," said Joyce.

"They are hidin' somewhere. Search for them!"

There was a rustling in the trees and bushes on the island as Joyce proceeded to search.

Loder and Carne hoped to hear Sir Hilton follow him. They might have had a chance of getting out and making for the boat if the two went to the farther side of the island. But the baronet leaned on the trunk of the big oak and smoked a cigar, while the keeper was searching. The rustling sound died away, and there was silence; Joyce was at a distance. But, fortunately for Loder and Carne, the baronet's voice warned them that he was still there:

"Huh! Scandalous! Huh!"

"Hang him!" breathed Carne.

"There's no chance to cut!"

"Quiet!" hissed Loder.

"Huh! Greyfriars boys, there is no doubt of that. Huh! Smokin'. Playin' cards. Huh! By gad, I'll take them back to the school myself, and hand them over to Locke! Personally. Huh!"

Which was unpleasant hearing for Loder and Carne.

In the hollow of the oak they hardly breathed.

Joyce returned at last, unsuccessful.

"There is no one on the island, Sir Hilton."

"Sure of that?" grunted the baronet.

"Quite sure, sir."

"Gad! How could they have got away without their boat?" growled Sir Hilton. "They must have seen us comin' and swum for it. Huh! Sure they're not hidin' in the trees?"

"I've looked everywhere."

"They've swum off, then. It won't help them," said Sir Hilton grimly.

"Boys reaching the school with their clothes drenched will be identified easily enough. And there is the boat, too. That belongs to Greyfriars. If they are gone, we may as well go. And we will take the boat with us."

The heavy footsteps of the baronet departed.

In the darkness of the interior of the hollow oak Loder and Carne stared at one another's glimmering, pale face.

They had escaped discovery. But they were stranded on the island when their boat was taken.

"Hang him!" breathed Loder.

"The rotten brute!" snarled Carne.

They waited. But Loder at last climbed up the hollow trunk, with a bunk from Carne below, and looked cautiously out. There was no sign of Sir Hilton Popper or the keeper. They had gone. Through an opening of the

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branches Loder glimpsed the river below the island, and a boat on it, with another in tow. Sir Hilton Popper and Joyce were gone, taking the school boat, and, from their direction, were evidently taking it back to the school boathouse.

"All clear!" growled Loder.

"Give me a hand out, then."

Loder gave him a hand, and Carne scrambled out. The two hapless black sheep descended from the oak.

"Well, we're stranded!" growled Loder.

"Might as well have been caught," muttered Carne dully. "They'll know at the boathouse who had that boat out. That gives us away."

"Not if we could get out of this. We left our boat tied up on the towpath, and somebody priggled it," said Loder. "That will wash all right if we can get out of this. After all, we're seniors and prefects. Nobody's likely to suspect prefects of this sort of thing."

"But we can't get off without a boat."

"We've got to, somehow!"

"That old fool thought we swam for it. I couldn't swim it, and I don't believe you could, either."

"Let's see."

They moved away to the landing-place. Across the arm of the river the towpath was in sight, from which there were short cuts to Greyfriars. But the arm of the river was wide and deep. Many Greyfriars fellows had swum it, but neither Loder nor Carne excelled in swimming. And the Sark had been swollen by recent rains, and rolled wide and deep.

The two prefects looked at it, and the more they looked at it the less they liked it.

"After all, if we got in drenched with water it would give us away, just as that old goat said," muttered Loder.

Carne grinned viciously.

"You mean that you funk it? You needn't make any bones about it. So do I. I'm not goin' to risk gettin' drowned."

Gerald Loder snarled.

"We've got to get off somehow. If we're missed at call-over they won't take long to jump at the names of the fellows who were on the island. It may mean the sack."

"Well, we can't get off," said Carne sullenly. "Precious wheeze of yours, wasn't it, to run down those fags and bag their picnic? We're likely to pay pretty dearly for that feed. Sneakin', mean thing, too, baggin' their grub!"

"Oh, shut up!"

Tempers were wearing thin.

"After all, we may get a lift," said Loder, after a long pause. "Trippers from Pegg often come as far up the river as this in the summer."

"It isn't the summer yet, and there isn't a single tripper at Pegg."

"Well, Greyfriars boats come up the river—"

"Not so far as this; it's out of bounds."

"That didn't stop those young sweeps we caught here. I dare say we shall spot a boat passin', sooner or later, and get a lift."

"Not likely!" growled Carne.

"Well, are you goin' to swim for it?" demanded Loder.

"No, I'm jolly well not."

"Then you'd better watch for a boat, as there's nothin' else to be done."

"If you hadn't come here after those fags—"

"What's the good of that now?" howled Loder.

"Well, it's all your fault."

"Cheese it, you fool!"

"I'll please myself about that, you rotter!"

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"Look here, Carne, you cad—"

"Look here, Loder, you bullyin' rotter—"

For a moment or two it looked as if the two black sheep would find relief for their feelings in hammering one another. But Loder, scowling, swung away. At a distance from one another, with black brows, the two Sixth-Formers watched the river wearily, in the hope of seeing a boat, like shipwrecked mariners watching for a sail. They knew that the chance of getting a lift off the island was slim, and that, unless they swam for it, they were likely to remain stranded there until they were missed at Greyfriars and searched for. But they dared not risk the swim, and so the chance of a passing boat was all that was left to them. They scowled and watched the river, while through their minds, like a horrid panorama, passed a picture of what would happen to them if they did not succeed in escaping from Popper's Island.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Tea by the River!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH sat with a thoughtful expression on his dusky countenance as the Remove boat glided down the current towards the Greyfriars boathouse. Four faces in the boat were looking rather savage. For the second time the projected picnic on the island

WHAT NAME?

The following letters have been jumbled together purposely. Put in their proper order, they spell the name of a well-known junior at Greyfriars.

TENGEEWRAGGOI

Who is it? The answer will appear in next week's MAGNET.

Last week's solution was—
Gerald Loder.

had been "mucked up" by Loder of the Sixth, and this time Loder had bagged the picnic itself. Loder might say what he liked about "confiscation" of the tuck, but the juniors had no doubt whatever what would become of it. There was an angry frowning and grousing in the Remove boat, and some dismal ejaculations when the grey walls of Greyfriars rose into view in the distance over the trees. Reporting themselves to Mr. Quelch for trespassing out of bounds was not an attractive prospect to the Famous Five.

"My esteemed and absurd chums," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, breaking his thoughtful silence at last, "I have been thoughtfully reflecting on this disgusting matter, and the result of my absurd cogitations is that, in this ridiculous case, a stitch in time will not save ninepence."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bob Cherry. "Construe, old chap."

"There is another ridiculous proverb," said Hurree Singh, "to the effect that the more the hastefulness the less the esteemed speedfulness. There is much absurd wisdom in English proverbs. You can always get a proverb to back up any side of any question, which is a terrific advantage. In this esteemed case I suggest that we should disregard the stitch in time that saves ninepence, and remember that the more hastefulness means less speedfulness. The

atrocious Loder has sent us back to report to the august Quelch."

"Can't be helped," said Nugent.

"The beast's a prefect, and a prefect has to be given his fat head!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Exactly so, my esteemed chums. But as soon as we report our absurd selves to esteemed Quelch there will be detainfulness within gates, and probably whackfulness."

"Very probably," grinned Bob. "In fact, the probability is terrific."

"Then why not leave the esteemed matter till after tea?" asked Hurree Singh. "Esteemed Quelch will be busy, and will not be terrifically bucked to see us. And we are not absurdly anxious to see him. Let us leave that preposterous report to Quelch till after tea."

"Oh!" said Wharton.

"Loder said we were to go back at once," said Nugent dubiously. "After all, he's a Sixth-Form prefect. If he comes in and finds we haven't reported it will make matters worse."

"But the esteemed beast is not likely to come in early," said the nabob. "He is out for the afternoon. And we can have tea at the Riverside Inn, and postpone the terrific wrathfulness of Quelch till calling-over."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Good egg!" he said. "We're going to get a licking from Quelch, and we may as well have our half-holiday first. If Wingate or Gwynne had sent us in we should be bound to go; but who cares for Loder?"

"Echo answers who!" said Bob.

"The who-fulness is terrific."

And, after a little discussion, the Famous Five decided to act on Hurree Singh's suggestion. The afternoon was yet young, and it was only wise to make the most of it, before going in to take their medicine from Mr. Quelch. True, if Loder got in first, there would be more trouble for having neglected to obey a prefect's order. It might mean an extra swish, or an extra detention. But it was worth the risk.

"After all, we can keep an eye on the river while we have tea," said Johnny Bull; "and if we see those brutes coming down in their boat, we can cut off to school and get in first."

"That's so," agreed Wharton. "Let's! The later we see Quelch, the better I shall like it!"

"Hear, hear!"

And instead of pulling on to the school boathouse, the juniors pulled in to the bank. The Riverside Inn stood back from the towpath, and there was a balcony overlooking the river where fellows could have their tea. It was undoubtedly a more attractive spot, to the juniors, than Mr. Quelch's study at Greyfriars.

There were half a dozen boats tied up to the bank, opposite the inn, already; and the juniors tied up theirs along with them and landed. The prospect of the postponed interview with Mr. Quelch had rather a sobering effect on their spirits; but they resolutely dismissed it from their minds, and it was quite a cheerful party that walked up to the inn and ordered tea in the balcony.

The picnic on Popper's Island, by that time, had gone the way of all picnics, though it had gone down necks for which it had not been intended. But fresh eggs and buttered scones and cake and tea, on the balcony of the Riverside Inn, were grateful and comforting. The Famous Five made a cheery tea there, with their eyes on the river now and then, lest Loder's boat should come into sight—in which case they were prepared to cut off to school through the

woods, leaving their own boat to be recovered later.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry suddenly.

"What—"
"Jolly old Bunter!"

Along the towpath, from up the river, came rolling a fat and weary form. William George Bunter looked tired. The juniors looked down on him, over the rail of the inn balcony, with a grin. Bunter halted opposite the inn, and they saw him going through his pockets, one after another, evidently in search of a coin.

The Owl of the Remove did not observe the five grinning faces above. He was searching hopefully, but desperately, for some overlooked coin—but without success, and they watched him with considerable entertainment. Evidently Bunter was thinking of tea at the inn; but the expression that overspread his fat face showed that he failed to discover any financial resources in any of his pockets.

With a deep, deep sigh, Bunter was resuming his way, when Bob hailed him.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Fatty!" bawled Bob Cherry.

Bunter started, and stared round and up. A joyous grin came over his face at the sight of the Famous Five.

"Oh, you fellows!" he ejaculated.

In a few seconds Bunter was with them.

"I say, you fellows, fancy meeting you here!" he exclaimed. "Jolly glad I've met you! Pass that cake, will you, Bob, old chap? Order some more tea, Harry, old scout—and some scones—and some eggs—and some more cake—and—"

"Cut out the 'ands,'" said Harry, laughing. "We're not millionaires, old fat bean. You're limited to enough for two."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Enough for two was not enough for Billy Bunter. Still, he was prepared to make the best of it. All was grist that came to Bunter's mill.

"I say, you fellows," Bunter waited till his mouth was full before he began to talk. "I say, how did you get off the island? Didn't old Popper catch you there?"

"We haven't seen anything of Popper," said Harry. "Loder and Carne ran us down, and cleared us off. They've bagged our picnic, and sent us back to report ourselves to Quelch."

"Oh, my hat!" said Bunter. "I'm jolly glad I wasn't with you, after all. You're booked for a licking, then. He, he, he!"

"Is that anything to cackle at, you fat freak?" growled Johnny Bull.

"But, I say, you fellows, there was somebody on the island—I saw a boat there," said Bunter. "I was shouting to you fellows to fetch me across, when old Popper came up. I thought you were there. Somebody was there, because I saw a boat. Old Popper will bag him, whoever he was."

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "If old Popper catches Loder on the island—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove chuckled at the idea. Billy Bunter gobbled cake and chortled. When he told of his meeting with Sir Hilton Popper, on the towpath opposite the island, the juniors could have no doubt that it was Loder's boat that had been seen there, and that it was Loder and Carne whom the baronet would find on his island. And the idea of the two prefects being caught trespassing by the irate old gentleman made the juniors roar.

"What a jolly old shindy there's going to be!" said Bob gleefully. "We're going to get it from Quelch; Loder's going to get it from the Head—if Popper bags him. A high and mighty Sixth Form prefect will get a bigger dose than naughty little fags like us. By the time the Head has finished with him, Loder will wish that he'd let our little picnic alone."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, are you ordering another cake?"

"No, Fatty."

"I wouldn't be mean, Wharton."

"My dear ass, order as many cakes as you like," said Harry. "Order one each all round, if you like."

"I've been disappointed about a postal-order—"

"Then you'll be disappointed about a cake, too!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! Now, look here," said Bunter, blinking at the captain of the Remove through his big spectacles, "I can put you fellows up to a wheeze for getting out of that licking—"

"Go it!"

"Order the cake first."

"Wheeze first," said Harry, laughing. "If it will work, you shall have the cake, you fat cormorant."

"Well, I'll trust you," said Bunter.

"Look here, Loder's ordered you to report to Quelch. If he lets you off, you needn't. See?"

"But he won't, ass!"

"Make him!" said Bunter, with a fat wink.

"Eh! How are we going to make him?"

"You fellows haven't much in the way of brains," said Bunter. "You know what I told you I heard in Loder's study the other day. About that scheme he's got on for dishing

Wingate over the St. Jim's match—Carne's pal sending a spoof telegram from Chester, and all that—"

"What about that, ass?"

"Well, don't you see we've got a pull over Loder?" said the Owl of the Remove. "You tell him you know all about that scheme of his, and offer to keep it dark if he lets you off. It might work."

"You fat villain!" exclaimed Bob indignantly.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"You fat frump!" said Harry. "We've taken measures already to give that scheme the kybosh. And we wouldn't let it go on, to get out of a hundred lickings. Go and eat cake!"

"Well, I think you're a silly ass!" said Bunter. "Loder would jolly well come to terms if he knew you knew about it."

"Shut up, ass!"

"Well, it's a good wheeze," said Bunter. "I suppose you're going to order that cake? Look here, I'll order it, if you like; if you fellows will pay for it. That's all you need do."

"Go hon!"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "There's Popper! The jolly old baronet has been pinching a boat!"

"What?"

The chums of the Remove stared towards the river. Down the Sark, with the current, came the Popper Court boat, Joyce pulling, and Sir Hilton Popper sitting in the stern. Behind the boat another boat was towing empty.

Sir Hilton's eyes, under his shaggy grey brows, glanced at the group of juniors on the inn veranda, and Harry Wharton & Co. rose and raised their caps politely. Sir Hilton was a governor of Greyfriars, and had to be treated

(Continued on next page.)

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with respect. Sir Hilton stared at them suspiciously. He had had a suspicion that this very party of Lower boys of Greyfriars had been on his island that afternoon, and it was their boat that he had captured. But he had to dismiss that suspicion when he beheld them teeing at the inn, more than a mile from the island. He returned their salute stiffly, and passed on down the shining river in the direction of Greyfriars.

The juniors looked at one another.

"That must be Loder's boat he's got there," said Bob. "It looks like the one Loder had. It must be, anyhow."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"No doubt about that. Loder and Carne must have hidden themselves on the island when he got after them, and he's got their boat."

"Ha, ha, ha! Then they're stranded on Popper's Island!"

"The strandfulness is terrific."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Remove roared. Loder of the Sixth had caused them a lot of trouble that afternoon. But there was no doubt that he had caused himself more—much more.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Way Out!

MR. QUELCH, walking sedately under the elms in the quadrangle, bestowed a gracious nod on a group of juniors coming towards the House. They capped him with respectful politeness. The Remove master looked very genial, as was natural in a man who had had a happy afternoon. That afternoon Henry Samuel Quelch had been as free of his Form as his Form had been of him, and the satisfaction was mutual. Untroubled by the Remove, Henry Samuel had spent hours on that great work, "The History of Greyfriars," which had occupied his leisure for many years, and was likely to occupy it for many years to come. He had dived deep in black-letter manuscripts, and he had been happy. Now he was taking a gentle walk in the quad, with a benevolent expression on his face. And when the juniors had passed him Bob Cherry whispered:

"Now's the time!"

"Good!" assented Harry. "I've never seen Quelch look so jolly good-tempered. Looks as if he might lay it on lightly, for once."

"Might even let us off with a caution," said Frank Nugent hopefully. "After all, Quelch must have been a boy himself once, though nobody would suppose so, to look at him."

"The boyfulness of the esteemed Quelch was probably never very terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a shake of his dusky head. "Let us give him a miss in baulk, my worthy chums. The still tongue saves a wise head from going longest to the well."

"But we've got to report to him some time, Inky," said Johnny Bull. "And now he's in a good temper is the time."

"Better get it over," said Bob.

Again the nabob of Bhanipur shook his head.

"I have a wheezy good idea in my idiotic brain, my esteemed chums," he answered. "Let us proceed."

"Oh, all right!"

And the chums of the Remove proceeded to the House. Skinner of the Remove met them when they went in with a grinning face.

"Heard of the shindy?" he asked.

"What shindy?"

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"Old Popper's been here to see the Head. Makes out that somebody's been on his rotten old island."

"Does he really?" asked Bob Cherry, with great gravity. "Has anybody been on the jolly old island, Skinner?"

"Well, the prefects have been told to inquire up and down the school," said Skinner. "You fellows had tea?"

"Thanks, yes."

"Where did you have it?" chuckled Skinner. "On an island?"

"No; at the Riverside Inn."

"Better tell the prefects that, when they ask you. They may believe it more than I do."

"As it happens, Sir Hilton Popper passed, and saw us having tea there," said Bob. "He was towing a boat."

"Not your boat?" demanded Skinner, surprised.

"Not at all!"

"Well, I felt sure it was you lot," said Skinner. "I was sorry, of course, but—"

"Yes, I know how sorry you were," said Bob. "You've got such a sympathetic nature. It does you credit."

"Oh, rats! Funny thing is, that the boat old Popper brought in is said to be a senior boat," said Skinner. "The idea is that some fags bagged a boat belonging to the Sixth and went to the island. According to what I hear old Popper found they'd been smoking and playing cards there—drinking, too, I dare say. There's going to be a fearful row if they're caught. All the prefects are on the trail, except Loder and Carne."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh? Where does the cackle come in?" asked Skinner. "I think Loder and Carne are out of gates."

"I rather think they are!" agreed Bob, with a chuckle. "I think very likely they'll stay out of gates some time longer, too."

The chums of the Remove walked on, leaving Skinner looking puzzled. Sir Hilton Popper, it seemed, had come and gone; and he had left some excitement behind him. So far, nobody had any suspicion that the smokers and card-players on Popper's Island were two prefects of the Sixth. But it was pretty certain that suspicion would turn in their direction if they did not arrive at the school for evening call-over. So far, it was taken for granted that the delinquents were juniors, and to the prefects, at least, it seemed likely enough that a Sixth-Form boat had been surreptitiously borrowed by fags. But if the general attention was drawn to Loder and Carne a very different view was bound to be taken of the matter.

"This way, my esteemed chums!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and he led his surprised comrades to the Sixth-Form passage.

"Look here, what are we coming along here for?" asked Bob.

"To call on the esteemed Walker."

"Walker? What are you going to see Walker for?"

"Because he is the execrable Loder's absurd pal."

"My only hat! Do we want to see a pal of Loder's?" ejaculated Bob.

"The answer is in the ridiculous affirmative."

"Give Inky his head," said Wharton.

"He's got some stunt on in his old black noddle."

And the nabob was given his head. And he led the way to James Walker's study, in the Sixth, and tapped at the door.

Walker of the Sixth eyed the juniors as they came in. He did not look in a good temper. Sir Hilton Popper's visit had had an irritating effect on the prefects, who had plenty of other occupa-

tions, besides rooting after fags who might have trespassed on Popper's Island.

"What do you want, Wharton?" snapped Walker.

"I give that up," answered Harry.

"You young ass! Why have you come to my study?"

"I don't know."

Walker reached for his ashplant.

"My esteemed Walker," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh softly, "my absurd chums have come here because I led them noselessly. I have something to tell you of terrific importance."

"Oh! I suppose you're the gang that were on Popper's Island, and you've come to own up," said Walker. "Well, that saves a lot of trouble. I'll take you to the Head."

"Not exactly. We went to the esteemed island of the idiotic Popper for a picnic, but the execrable Loder and the disgusting Carne turned us off and bagfully pinched the picnic. It is your respectable and absurd pals who smoked and played cardfully on the island."

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated Walker.

"And they are there now, as the esteemed Popper has pinched their boat," said the nabob. "They are strandfully landed on the absurd island, my worthy Walker. And when they are caught they will be sacked."

"Great gad!" said Walker, staring blankly at the juniors. "What are you telling me this for?"

The nabob smiled a dusky smile.

"The excellent Loder has ordered us to report to our ridiculous Form master," he explained. "We desirably wish Loder to withdraw that esteemed order, and let the whole absurd matter drop."

"Likely, isn't it?" said Walker.

"I think so," assented the nabob. "For one excellent turn deserves another, my worthy Walker. If you take a boat up the river you can get those esteemed blackguards off the island in time for call-over, and save their ridiculous bacon."

"Oh!" said Walker.

"And we, of course, will keep mum," added Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The worthy Loder will be so grateful for being rescued that he will jump at the chance of letting us off."

"I don't think!" granted Johnny Bull.

"And if gratitude does not move him," murmured the nabob, "he will let us off all the same, because if he reports us for being on the island we shall report him for being on the island, and we shall get a licking, and he will get the esteemed bunk."

"Oh!" said Bob Cherry.

"Oh!" said Walker of the Sixth.

The juniors left the study.

Five minutes later James Walker was hurrying down to the boathouse; another five minutes and he was pulling his pair-oar up the river at a great rate.

Harry Wharton & Co. strolled away to the Remove passage in a very cheerful mood. Whether Gerald Loder would feel deeply grateful for that tip to his pal which saved him from disaster might be doubtful—gratitude was not strongly developed in the bully of the Sixth. But it was not doubtful that he would desire the events of that eventful afternoon to be kept as dark as possible—and that was where the Famous Five came in.

Harry Wharton & Co., accordingly, did not make their report to Mr. Quelch. They left that to Loder—if he liked! In the circumstances, it was very probable that Loder would not like!



Carne glanced through the bushes and gave almost a convulsive jump as his gaze fell upon a boat gliding across to the island. In the craft sat Joyce, the keeper, and a grim-visaged gentleman in shooting clothes. Carne felt a cold shiver run down his back as he recognised Sir Hilton Popper. "Who is it?" asked Loder, startled and scared by the terror in his chum's face. "Popper!" stuttered Carne. "And the keeper's with him!" (See Chapter 5.)

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Wingate's Warning!

WINGATE of the Sixth stood in the doorway of his study, with a thoughtful expression on his face. His expression grew a little grim as three Sixth-Formers came along—Loder, Carne, and Walker.

Walker gave him a nod as they passed, Carne a stare, and Loder a scowl.

The captain of Greyfriars gazed after them, with grim thoughtfulness in his brow, as they went along the Sixth Form passage to their studies. Finally, he stepped out of his doorway and went to Loder's study and knocked.

There was no invitation to come in, but Wingate opened the door and entered.

Gerald Loder was stretched in an armchair, with a black scowl on his face. Loder was not a good-tempered fellow at the best of times, but never had he been seen in a worse temper than now.

He glanced at the captain of Greyfriars with aggressive hostility.

"I never asked you to come here!" he snapped.

"I've come unasked." Wingate closed the door and stood facing the sprawling prefect. "I've got something to say."

"Cough it up, then, and clear!" snarled Loder. "We're not friends, and I don't want you here! That's plain English!"

"Quite!" agreed Wingate, unmoved.

"Unless you've come to offer back my place in the team," said Loder, with bitter sarcasm. "If you've thought better of that, and feel inclined to keep your personal feelings out of cricket I'll—"

"My personal feelings have nothing to do with it, as you know jolly well! You're chucked out of the eleven for slacking and putting up a rotten game," answered Wingate unceremoniously.

"But I haven't come here to speak about that. There's been a row here this afternoon—that old ass Popper butting in about his confounded island—"

"Hang old Popper!" growled Loder. "Nothin' to do with me, I suppose?"

"I hope not."

Loder stared at him uneasily.

"What do you mean by that?" he grunted.

"According to what old Popper told the Head, and the Head told the prefects, some Greyfriars men have been smoking and card-playing up the river this afternoon," said Wingate quietly.

"Trespassing on his bothering old island doesn't amount to much—but the rest does. It hasn't even occurred to the Head—that the men on the island may have belonged to the Sixth."

"It wouldn't," agreed Loder. "I hope no Sixth Form man here is capable of such things."

Wingate looked at him very hard.

"It was your boat that Popper brought back from the island," he said.

"Dear me!" said Loder. "Has my boat got back? I'm glad of that!"

"You seem to have left it at the island."

"Not at all!" said Loder airily. "Carne and I had the boat out, and we tied it up to take a walk ashore. Somebody came along and pinched it."

"And you did nothing about it?"

"Oh, I naturally supposed it was a Greyfriars man playing a practical joke on us, and quite expected to find that the boat had been brought home," said Loder calmly. "Can't imagine how it got to the island. Whoever priggled it must have taken it there, I suppose. There are some cheeky young sweeps in the Lower School—especially the Remove."

"The Head seems to have the impression that the boat was used by someone it did not belong to," said Wingate.

"Quite right! The Head's got a lot of judgment," said Loder. "I should

be surprised if he thought anything else." Loder could not quite keep a sneer out of his tone.

"I haven't that impression myself," said the Greyfriars captain, his eyes fixed on Loder.

"You know better than the Head!" asked Loder. "That isn't like your usual retiring modesty, old bean."

"In this case I think I do," answered Wingate. "If anybody had pinched your boat—practical joke, or not—you'd have raised Cain about it. Will you tell me where you've been this afternoon?"

Loder gave him a venomous look.

"I will—when the Head gives you the right to question a Sixth Form prefect like a fag! Not before!"

"Whoever was on the island, was stranded there when old Popper got the boat—must have hidden," said Wingate. "And must have been fetched off later. Walker was at the cricket this afternoon. But he came in just now with you and Carne. Did he fetch you off the island?"

"We happened to meet him when he was out for a stroll," yawned Loder. "I don't mind telling you that; though, of course, all these questions to a prefect are a sheer impertinence."

"You met Walker out on a stroll?"

"I've said so."

"He must have been strolling in his skiff, then—as I saw him pulling up the river. You see, I was out for a stroll after tea with Gwynne, and we both saw him in the boat."

Loder bit his lip hard.

"Look here, what are you driving at, Wingate?" he demanded abruptly. "I know you're my enemy, and always have been. Does this mean that you're looking for a chance to land me in trouble with the Head?"

"You know it doesn't. It means this—that I'm practically certain that you

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(Continued from page 13.)

and Carne were on Popper's Island, that you smoked and played cards there, and that Sir Hilton Popper nearly caught you. I'm glad you dodged him somehow, because it would have meant a disgrace for the school. As likely as not the Head would have sacked you both. But that sort of thing isn't good enough for Greyfriars, Loder. You're not going to bring disgrace on the school. You've got to chuck it."

"You're takin' a lot for granted," muttered Loder huskily.

"If I told the Head what I think, I fancy an inquiry would bring out exactly what I'm taking for granted. I'm not going to speak to the Head about it."

Loder drew a deep breath of relief.

"But I'm going to put a stop to it," said Wingate quietly. "That's my duty as head prefect and captain of the school. If I find out for certain that you were on the island this afternoon—"

He paused.

"Well, what?" sneered Loder. "Are you goin' to tell me to bend over and take six, like a Second Form fag?"

"Yes!" said Wingate calmly.

"What?" roared Loder.

"If I catch you out, you're going to get a prefect's beating," said the captain of Greyfriars. "You deserve to be sacked, and you know it. You'd be sacked if the Head dealt with the matter. Take it to him if you like. Leave it to me if you like that better. I'm morally certain about the matter now. If I get absolute certainty on the subject, you're going to bend over, in the prefects' room, and take six."

Loder stared at him, his face white with rage.

"You—you'd dare!" he articulated huskily.

"Nobody knows, at present, who those blackguards on the island were," said Wingate. "I'm not going to make any special effort to find out—I'd rather leave it at a warning. But I tell you this plainly, Loder—if it comes out that it was you, or if I catch you at that shady game on any other occasion, you get a prefect's beating. Better keep that in mind as a warning for the future."

With that George Wingate left the study and closed the door after him.

Loder sprang to his feet. He shook his clenched fist at the closed door, his eyes almost flaming. For several minutes the black sheep of the Sixth gave himself up to a passion of rage. A prefect's beating—for a man who was a prefect himself! Loder would almost have preferred the "sack" from the Head—though not quite.

But he calmed down at last. He knew that Wingate meant every word he said, and he knew that there was danger of the facts coming to the Greyfriars captain's certain knowledge. Loder of the Sixth left his study and proceeded to the Remove passage. He threw open the door of Study No. 1 and Wharton and Nugent, who were there, jumped up at once. The look on Loder's face gave

them the impression that he had come on the warpath. Certainly, Loder would have liked nothing better than to give the chums of the Remove six each from his ashplant. But the time was not propitious for that.

"You fags need not report yourselves to Quelch," he said, as civilly as he could bring himself to speak.

"Oh!" said Harry. "Right-ho, Loder!"

"I'm letting you off," said Loder. "Walker's told me that you did me a good turn, and, of course, I—I don't want to punish you, after that!"

"I know exactly how much you don't want to," said Wharton cheerfully; and Nugent chuckled. "But let it go at that, if you like."

Loder breathed hard.

"Better not say anythin' at all about the matter," he said.

"Much better not," grinned Nugent.

"I gave Cherry a hundred lines. Tell him from me that he need not do them," said Loder.

"What-ho!" said Wharton.

Loder left Study No. 1, and the two juniors grinned at one another. The bully of the Sixth went back to his own quarters, feeling relieved in his mind. Letting the juniors off was not agreeable to him, but at least it secured their silence. He dropped in at Carne's study, and found his comrade in an uneasy mood.

"I say, there's a lot of jaw goin' on, about old Popper findin' things on his beastly island," said Carne. "If those fags talk—"

"I've fixed it with them," growled Loder. "I'll find some other chance of takin' it out of the young sweeps. Never mind them, but"—his eyes glittered—"Wingate's warned me that it will be a prefect's beatin' for me, if it comes out that I was there. He won't find out now—it's all right. But what do you think of that, for Wingate's latest? A beatin' for a Sixth Form prefect!"

"Cheeky cad!" said Carne. "Still, it would be better than the sack. Cheeky cad, all the same!"

Loder gritted his teeth.

"I'll get even with him on Wednesday," he said. "He's bankin' on the St. Jim's match, to begin the season with a big victory. He's just wrapped up in that fixture. I'll dish him over a fool's errand to the North, while his precious eleven are gettin' thrashed by the St. Jim's men. I fancy he will find that as unpleasant as a prefect's beatin'."

And from that happy prospect Loder drew some solace—little dreaming that his plot was known to the chums of the Remove, and that they had taken measures to defeat it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Tries It On!

BILLY BUNTER'S fat brow was wrinkled in thought.

It was Tuesday, the day before the great match. Most Greyfriars men were giving a good deal of thought to the St. Jim's fixture on the morrow. Not so William George Bunter. Nearer and dearer considerations wrinkled his fat brow with the lines of cogitation.

A big fixture like the St. Jim's match interested the whole school. Juniors as well as seniors were very keen about it. And the circumstances of this particular fixture were unusual. George Wingate had had a great deal of trouble in the final arrangement of his team. Loder had been dropped, and Tomlinson of the Fifth put in his place—which

everybody but Loder agreed was a great improvement. Nevertheless, Loder was a good man at his best, and Wingate would have preferred to see him at his best, and playing in the match. Still, he had every hope of beginning the season with a big win over the old rivals of Greyfriars. Loder also had his hopes, though he kept them carefully secret.

All was arranged now for the false telegram that was to come from Chester on Wednesday morning, to call Wingate home, and "dish" him for the big fixture. Loder looked at his scheme from every side, and did not see how it possibly could fail. And since Saturday's adventure, Loder had taken every opportunity of showing keenness as a cricketer. Wingate, if he observed it, no doubt supposed that his warning had had its effect on the black sheep of the Sixth. Certainly he did not suspect that Loder still nourished hopes of playing against St. Jim's. But if Wingate was absent on Wednesday, Gwynne, as vice-captain, would take his place, and he would have to play another man. Loder hoped that that man would be himself. He had slacked long and persistently, and he had not much time left to recover lost ground. Still, it was something to show keenness.

Harry Wharton & Co., of the Remove, also had their thoughts fixed very particularly on the St. Jim's match. They were quite aware of Loder's hopes, and they were prepared to enjoy watching his face when his plot was given, as they expressed it, the kybosh, on Wednesday morning.

But while so many fellows were giving their particular consideration to the coming match with St. Jim's, William George Bunter had no time to think of such trifles.

Much more important matters filled his fat mind.

For it was tea-time now, and Bunter, having been disappointed about a postal-order he had expected, was in a state so usual with him—stony.

On the other hand, he had seen Loder's fag taking several parcels from the tuckshop to the prefect's study.

Loder, it seemed, was having some friends to tea.

Bunter was considering whether he might not in the circumstances, include himself in the list of Loder's friends.

It was true that he did not feel friendly towards Loder of the Sixth, generally speaking. But in a time of crisis, personal feelings could be ignored. It was a time of crisis now, when a fellow was stony at tea-time.

It was equally true that Loder never had a junior to tea, and of all juniors the one he was least likely to ask was Billy Bunter. But an invitation was a formality that Bunter could afford to ignore.

The question was, whether he could get away with it.

Bunter thought that he could.

Since Saturday Loder had been very circumspect. Nobody knew who had been on Popper's Island that day, and the inquiry had died away. Some of the prefects—Loder with special emphasis—had informed the Head that in their opinion the fellows on the island had not been Greyfriars men at all—a view the Head was only too willing to take. Anyhow, the matter seemed to have died a natural death, and no doubt Loder was feeling quite safe.

Still, Bunter knew that he had been there. The Famous Five knew, and they said nothing, for good reasons. Bunter considered that if he, too, said nothing, there ought to be a "quid pro quo." One good turn deserved another. A spread in Loder's study would make

the matter right. It was the least Loder could do, if Bunter kept his shady secrets for him.

But the matter required thought. Loder was a beast, with a beastly temper, and quite likely to take his ashplant to a junior who cheeked him. And if it came to the test, Bunter realised that he dared not accuse Loder of being the fellow who had smoked and played cards on Popper's Island. The beast would wriggle out of it somehow, and Bunter would be thrashed. He knew the fact, but he had no proof to offer. Still, he knew, and it seemed to Bunter that his knowledge ought to be worth something, when he was stony, and when there was a feast on in Loder's study.

Bunter drifted into the Sixth Form passage, and blinked at Loder's door through his big spectacles. He saw Carne and Walker go into the study. The feast was evidently at hand.

He hesitated long.

Safety first, was a good rule, in dealing with a fellow like Gerald Loder. But the feast in the Sixth Form study drew Bunter like a magnet. After all, he knew all about the beast, and the beast ought to be grateful to him for keeping it dark.

Bunter rolled along to Loder's door at last and tapped. He opened the door and blinked in.

Loder and Carne and Walker had sat down to tea. All three of them looked round at Bunter—not with expressions of welcome.

"Well?" snapped Loder.

Bunter stepped in.

He assumed his most ingratiating grin.

"I—I say, Loder—"

"Cut it short!"

Bunter blinked at the tea-table. Good things were stacked there. Loder had plenty of money, and he spent it freely. The expression on Loder's face was anything but encouraging. But the good things on the table were irresistible. Bunter took his courage in both hands, as it were, and made the plunge.

"I—I say, old chap, I—I've come to tea!" he gasped.

Loder stared at him blankly.

"You've come to tea!" he repeated.

"Yes, old fellow."

"Are you callin' me old fellow?" gasped Loder.

"Yes, old chap."

"Potty!" remarked Carne, staring at the fat junior.

Loder rose to his feet. He glanced about him, and Bunter did not need telling that he was looking for his ashplant.

"I—I say, Loder!" stuttered the Owl of the Remove, in a great hurry. "I say, you know, one good turn deserves another, you know. I'm keeping it dark about where you were on Saturday."

Loder jumped.

"Oh gad!" said Walker.

"I'm not going to tell anybody it was you on Popper's Island, old fellow," said Bunter. "I'm no sneak, you know. Besides, I know you can't help being a bit of a blackguard, old chap. I'm willing to be friendly. What about it?"

Carne and Walker were staring at the fat junior as if his podgy visage fascinated them. Loder found his ashplant and picked it up.

"So you've come to tea, Bunter?" he asked.

"Yes, old fellow."

"There's your chair," said Loder, pointing with the cane.

"Thanks, old chap!"

"Don't sit on it."

"Eh?"

"Bend over it."

"What?"

"Don't I speak plainly?" asked Loder pleasantly. "Bend over that chair, you young scoundrel! I'll help you, if you like!"

"I—I say— Yaroooooh!"

Loder caught the Owl of the Remove by the back of the collar, and helped him to bend over the chair. Then the ashplant rose and fell with terrific vigour.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Wow! Help! Fire! Yarooooogh! Yooooop!"

Bunter was slung off the chair, slung round to the door, and all of a sudden he found himself in the passage. A severe pain where Loder's boot had struck told him how he had got there.

"Whoooooocop!" roared Bunter as he landed.

The door closed on him.

Billy Bunter picked himself up. He rolled away—no longer thinking of tea in Loder's study. A mountain of tuck would not have tempted him to enter that study again.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the Owl of the Remove wriggled painfully into the Rag. "Trying to tie yourself into a sailor's knot, old fat bean?"

(Continued on next page.)



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"Owl! Owl! Owl! That beast Loder—" groaned Bunter. "I say, you fellows, that awful beast has given me six and kicked me—hard! Owl!"

"What for?" asked Bob.

"Nothing!" groaned Bunter. "I simply went to tea in his study—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I told him that one good turn deserved another," said Bunter. "But he's ungrateful. I thought he'd be glad to have me to tea, if I kept it dark about his being on Popper's Island. At least, I thought he would stand it. I say, you fellows, you know where that beast was on Saturday. The Head mightn't believe me—he's doubted my word more than once. You fellows go to the Head and tell him about Loder."

"You fat villain!" said Harry Wharton.

"Oh, really, Wharton! I think you fellows ought to back me up!" said Bunter indignantly. "You tell the Head you saw Loder smoking and playing cards on the island—"

"We saw nothing of the sort!"

"Well, you can stretch a point, you know, considering what a beast Loder is. See?"

"I see," said Wharton. "You men, I think we'd better back Bunter up."

"What?" ejaculated Nugent.

"That's right!" said Bunter eagerly. "Always stand by a pal, you know. Back me up—Yarooogh! Leggo! Wharrer you doing, you silly idiots?"

"Backing you up, you fat villain!"

And Bunter, in the grasp of the Famous Five, was backed up—to the wall of the Rag, which he smote with a heavy concussion.

Bang!

"Yarooooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Want some more backing, old fat man?"

"Owl! Wow! No!" yelled Bunter. "Leggo! Beasts! Whoop!"

"Back him up again," said the captain of the Remove.

Bang!

"Yooooooooooooop!"

Billy Bunter sat at the foot of the wall and roared. The Famous Five walked away and left him to it. And to judge by Bunter's remarks, he was utterly dissatisfied at the way he had been backed up by his old pals.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

St. Jim's Day—and the Telegram!

FIRST school, on Wednesday, was the only school that day; after which all Greyfriars would be at liberty to gather on Big Side, and see what was to be seen.

That morning Wingate of the Sixth was seen walking over the ground, examining the pitch with a meticulous eye. Loder might have been observed—had anyone thought of observing Loder, eyeing him with a sarcastic smile while he was thus engaged. By that time Carne's sporting relative at Manchester had dropped into the post office in the ancient city of Chester with the spoof telegram; and that telegram was on its way to Greyfriars. As soon as it arrived Loder had no doubt that the captain of the school would lose all interest in the cricket pitch.

The St. Jim's men were expected early; stumps were to be pitched before eleven. Great men who were to play in that big match lounged with an air of exaggerated carelessness, followed by the admiring glances of juniors.

Words dropped by giants like Gwynne of the Sixth, and Blundell of the Fifth, were caught up and eagerly repeated by

Lower boys. Fags of the Second and the Third thought how great and glorious it was to be a "Blood," and yearned for the time to come when they, too, would lounge with that careless air, followed by looks of worshipful admiration.

Wingate of the Sixth, that day, was the greatest man in the wide world, from the point of view of Greyfriars. Ten other men were lesser, but still great. The whole school was keen. Even Lord Mauleverer was going to make an effort to see the game; even Billy Bunter's fat mind did not dwell with its usual constancy on footstuffs. Even Loder of the Sixth, though he did not relent, made up his mind to play the game of his life if he got into the team, and wished that he could have got into it by some less questionable method.

The Remove swarmed cheerily out of their Form-room after first school, cricket in every mind. Hardly a man in the Lower Fourth was thinking of missing the great game.

"Not come yet!" remarked Bob Cherry to his chums, as he sighted Wingate of the Sixth, chatting with Gwynne and North in the quad.

The cheery, equable look of the Greyfriars captain showed that the blow had not yet fallen.

Loder came out of the House and glanced round him.

The juniors smiled to one another.

Loder's glance rested on Wingate, and then wandered in the direction of the gates, then returned to Wingate again. There was a shade of anxiety on his brow, a restless gleam in his eyes.

Loder was too busy with his thoughts to observe the eyes of the Remove fellows on him, and certainly he had not the slightest suspicion that any man in the Lower School could have guessed his thoughts just then.

But the Famous Five guessed them easily enough.

As the moment drew nearer for the delivery of the false telegram, Loder grew more anxious and uneasy. He feared that something might have occurred to cause the failure of his plot. Perhaps he even feared its success. For now that the time was at hand, and it was too late to retreat, the plotting prefect realised more clearly than before the blackness of the treachery he had planned. Only too well he knew that, if the truth should come out, he would be driven from the school under a hurricane of scorn. Loder's feelings in those minutes were probably not pleasant.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry, as a figure in uniform came in sight. "Look out for the giddy climax!"

Wingate and his friends had started towards the cricket-ground, to have a last look at the pitch. Bob Cherry called out to the telegraph-boy, as he came towards the House.

"Want Wingate?"

"Yes, sir," answered the lad.

"There he is!" Bob pointed out the stalwart figure of the captain of Greyfriars, and the boy from the post office hurried after the little bunch of Sixth-Formers.

Loder stared round at the Famous Five. He knew—none better—that the telegram was for Wingate. But how did Bob Cherry know? By what wizardry had Bob guessed that the telegraph boy wanted Wingate, before the boy had opened his mouth, or shown the buff envelope in his hand? A chill of uneasiness went through Loder.

He came over to the group of juniors, and they eyed him, with smiling faces.

"Cherry!" muttered Loder, vainly trying to speak casually.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob affably.

"How did you know that wire was for Wingate?" Loder could not keep the anxiety out of his tones. A hideous doubt was in his mind that somehow these young sweeps in the Lower Fourth had "got on" to his scheme. How else was Bob's knowledge to be accounted for?

The prefect's uneasiness was quite apparent to the juniors. Their contempt for his rascally plotting made them implacable, and they were quite prepared to terrify him further.

"Oh, we know a lot in the Remove!" said Bob airily. "It's the Form for knowing things at Greyfriars."

"The knowfulness is terrific, my esteemed Loder!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"In fact, we could guess what's in that telegram," said Harry Wharton, with great blandness.

Loder caught his breath.

"You—you could guess?"

"Oh, we could make a shot at it!" said the captain of the Remove. "Don't you think it may be something to call Wingate away before the St. Jim's game, Loder?"

"Just my idea!" grinned Johnny Bull. "Some awful bad news from Chester. That's where Wingate's people live, Loder, you know."

Loder felt a contraction at his heart.

They knew!

How they knew was a baffling mystery. Loder was in blissful ignorance of the fact that the Owl of the Remove had overheard his scheming with Arthur Carne nearly a week ago. But it did not matter much how they knew. They knew!

"Dear me! Loder's looking quite pale, you men," said Frank Nugent. "He feels for Wingate. He's so sympathetic, you know! Buck up, Loder, it will be all right."

"What?" muttered Loder. "What do you mean?"

"Right as rain," chuckled Bob Cherry. "If there's a heap of bad news in that telegram, Loder, it will turn out to be unfounded."

"Unfounded?" breathed Loder.

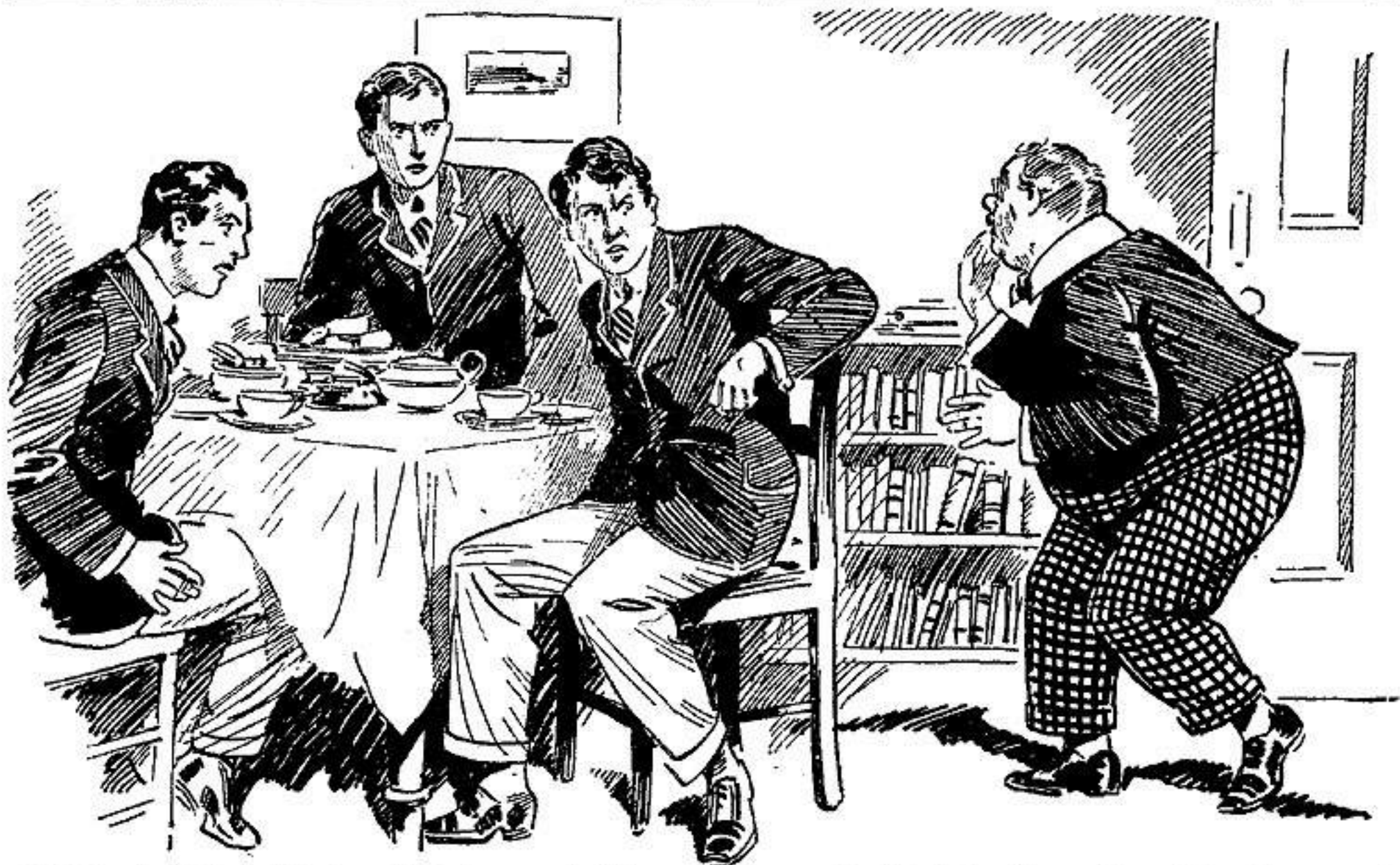
"Terrifically so!" smiled the nabob. "It will be all right rainfully, my esteemed Loder. You need not worry over the absurd Wingate."

Loder seemed scarcely to breathe. He was too startled and scared even to be angry. He turned away from the group of juniors, his face white, his forehead beaded with perspiration. They knew! It was certain now that they knew. But he told himself, like a man catching at a straw, that they could have no proof. That was impossible. If they had heard something—some unguarded word—they might guess, they might know; but proving such a thing was a very different matter.

If they spoke to Wingate, would the Greyfriars captain heed them? Would he listen to a tale of a mob of fags while his heart was torn with anxiety for his father? It was impossible. They knew, and some time or other he would make them suffer for it. But whatever they knew they could not intervene.

There was a murmur, swelling to loud exclamations, from two or three score of fellows, as Wingate of the Sixth was seen coming striding rapidly towards the House.

Wingate's face was white as chalk, and a telegram was crushed in his hand.



Billy Bunter blinked at Loder and his chums and at the good things on the table before them. Then, taking his courage in both hands, as it were, he took the plunge. "I—I've come to tea!" he gasped. "One good turn deserves another, you know. I'm keeping it dark about where you were on Saturday." The three Sixth-Formers stared at Bunter as if his podgy visage fascinated them. (See Chapter 10.)

Gwynne followed him into the House, and a hundred pairs of eyes watched them disappear in the doorway, and a babel of voices rose in the quad.

What was the matter with Wingate? In less than half an hour St. Jim's were due to arrive, and the captain of Greyfriars had received a telegram that had knocked him completely over! He did not heed the voices that called to him as he passed; he did not seem to hear them. He went into the House looking like a fellow stunned by some terrible blow.

"What's the row?" exclaimed Blundell of the Fifth. "What's happened to old Wingate?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Bad news, I suppose! He had a wire—"

"Looks dicky for the match now."

"Rotten!"

"Poor old Wingate!"

Loder listened to the exclamations round him in silence, his eyes, from a little distance, on the Famous Five. He saw Harry Wharton & Co. go into the House.

They were going to Wingate. He knew that. But Wingate would never listen. How could he, with the telegram from Chester in his hand, that told him of disaster at home? More likely to kick them out of his study for butting in at such a moment. It was impossible that he should heed idle talk from Lower boys then—impossible! They must be mad to dream that he would listen to them. So Gerald Loder told himself again and again. But the anxiety in his heart intensified the torture, and again and again he passed his hand across his brow.

The black sheep of the Sixth shuddered to think what would happen to him if the facts of the matter became known. But this, he told himself, could never happen. He had been far too clever for that.

But had he?

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

In Black and White!

"**H**ARD cheese, old man!" muttered Gwynne.

Wingate did not answer. He stood in his study, in the Sixth Form passage, his hand resting on the table for support, his face white and drawn, a tremble in his limbs. He had hurried into the House as fast as possible after reading that terrible telegram, to get out of sight of hundreds of staring eyes. It was not like Wingate to crumple up under a blow, however hard; but now, for the moment, he seemed quite knocked out. He was trying hard to pull himself together.

"Hard cheese!" repeated Gwynne awkwardly. "Rotten hard! But—but don't jump to the worst conclusion, old man. While there's life there's hope."

Wingate's lips trembled.

"Unless it was serious they wouldn't say come home at once!" he muttered. "They wouldn't!" He passed his hand over his brow. "I've got to buck up. Gwynne, old man, you'll explain to the Head; and you'll carry on—about the cricket! My father—" His voice broke. "The poor old chap—the kindest man—more like a pal—" He broke off abruptly. "I've got to pull up. Look out a train for me, old man; there's a time-table on the desk. It's a long journey—hours and hours—"

"Leave it to me, old man! I'll have your train, and a taxi called, before you're ready to start."

There was a tap at the door.

Neither of the seniors heeded it. The door opened, and the Famous Five were revealed.

Harry Wharton stepped into the study, his chums remaining in the doorway.

Wharton was very grave. The look he had seen on Wingate's face had gone to his heart.

"Wingate—"

"Don't bother now, kid—cut!" said Wingate. Even at that moment he did not speak harshly. "I'm bothered enough now; clear off, there's a good kid!"

"But, Wingate—"

"Get out!" roared Gwynne. "Haven't you any sense? Get out, confound you!"

Wharton stood his ground.

"I must speak to Wingate," he said. "I know what the matter is, Wingate, and I've come to tell you—"

"If you know what the matter is, how dare you butt in here?" exclaimed Gwynne, angrily. "Get out before I—"

"The telegram—"

"Get out!"

"It's a spoof!" shouted Wharton, just in time, as the angry Sixth-Former was about to collar him and pitch him into the passage. "Wingate, listen to me! It's all lies; I can prove it! Your father's not hurt—"

Gwynne dropped his hands in sheer astonishment.

"Mad!" he snapped.

Wingate turned to the junior.

"Wharton! What do you mean? How dare you? Are you mad? You do not even know what is in the telegram—"

"I do know! At least, I'm pretty certain I do," said Harry. "Isn't it that your father has been hurt in a motor smash?"

Wingate stared at him blankly.

"Yes," he said. "How can you know?"

"Because it's all spoof, and we knew that telegram was coming this morning, as long ago as last week!"

"Impossible!"

"We all knew, Wingate," said Bob Cherry. "It's a wicked lie from beginning to end, and your father isn't hurt!"

"Are you out of your senses?" panted

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Wingate. "This telegram is from Chester, where my father lives, and it says he has been badly smashed in a motor accident. Of course it's true! Go away!"

"You've got to listen!" said Harry determinedly. "I tell you that wire was sent by a rotter to spoof you, and never came from any of your relations at all!"

"Nonsense! Nonsense!"

"I can prove it!"

"Impossible!" But, though Wingate said that it was impossible, and though it seemed to him that it was impossible, his expression was changing. His white face flushed and his eyes sparkled. If only the boy was right—if only the telegram was false! "Wharton, if you know anything, tell me at once! How can this telegram be false? It's marked, handed in at Chester this morning."

"It was sent by a man who was put up to send it—a man who lives in Manchester, and crossed over to Chester for that very reason," said Harry. "We've known nearly a week that it was coming."

"You knew, and never told me?"

"I tried to put you on your guard; but you wouldn't listen. You said you couldn't listen to hearsay and tattle."

"I—I remember! I'd forgotten that! You young fool!" Wingate's voice was harsh now. "You heard some silly talk, and fancied something or other, and now you come here worrying me with it—"

"Hold on, old man!" said Gwynne quietly. "The kid says he can prove it. Let's hear him."

"But it's rot—"

"You don't want to go hiking off to the other end of England if there's nothing in it," said Gwynne. "A few minutes won't hurt. Let the kid trot out his proofs, if he's got any."

"Quick, then!" snapped Wingate.

"I'm ready!" answered Wharton. "Look here, if I prove to you that all of us knew, last Friday, that that telegram was coming, won't that prove that it is a spoof? How could we know last week that your father was going to have a motor accident this week? It's not sense!"

"But you can't prove that!"

"I can easily!"

"How?" demanded Wingate.

"You've got a letter in your desk that we asked you to lock up for us last Friday," said Harry. "It's all written in that letter, and you can see it in black and white. You wouldn't have believed a word of it before the telegram came. Now it's come you must believe it. Take out the letter that Hurree Singh gave you, and read it."

"I remember that," said Gwynne, with a deep breath. "The kids asked you to mind a letter for them, Wingate; you locked it in your desk—"

"It's still there," said Wingate. "I'd forgotten about it; but it's still there, of course."

"Open it and read it," said Harry.

"The readfulness of the absurd letter will bring the esteemed and ridiculous enlightenment," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

George Wingate gave the chums of the Remove a long, hard look. Then, without a word, he went to his desk, unlocked it, and took out the sealed envelope that the nabob had placed in his charge.

"Read it!" said Harry.

Wingate broke the seals, drew out the letter, and the two Six-Formers read, together, the following epistle:

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Honourable and Esteemed Wingate,

On Wednesday a ridiculous telegram will arrivefully reach you, stating that your never-sufficiently-to-be-respected paternal parent has experienced the disastrous eclipse of an accidental motor. To-day, being solely Friday, it will be apparent to your luminous and lofty intellect that this fore-knowledge of the spurious communication demonstrates that it will be only a fake, a snare, and a delusion. As you will have the comprehension that if your ridiculous father was going to be accidentally motored on Wednesday, next week, the writer hereof could not possibly know about it to-day, not being of the prophetic nature. And so you will surmise that the disgusting telegram from ancient and respectable City of Chester is merely a trick to absent you from cricket match.

As the English proverb observes with sapient wisdom, fore-armed is fore-legged, this ridiculous letter will place you on your absurd guard!

BRAVO, TOTTENHAM!

This week's MAGNET Pocket Wallet has been won by F. Harrison, of 13, Arnold Road, Tottenham, N.15, who sent in the following clever limerick:

Said Mauly, the dude, with a frown:

"I fear that some silly great clown
Upon my top-hat
Has carelessly sat,
And mixed up the brim with the crown!"

There are plenty more of these useful prizes waiting to be won. Send in your Greyfriars limericks to-day!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Plot that Failed!

GEORGE WINGATE stared blankly at that remarkable letter.

It was not easy, at first reading, to follow the exact meaning of the wonderful English that Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had learned from Mook Mookerjee, the wisest moonshee in Bhanipur. Wingate was not so used to it as the Removites were.

"My only hat!" said Gwynne.

Wingate read the letter through again. Then he looked at the Famous Five of the Remove.

His mind was in a whirl.

The telegram lay on his table, stating that his father had been hurt in a motor smash at Chester, and calling him home. These juniors had known last Friday that that motor smash would be announced to him by telegraph on the following Wednesday; there was proof of their knowledge in black and white. It followed that the telegram was false; that it was a trick, of which the juniors had known days ago.

Wingate's first feeling was amazement, but it was succeeded by a deep, deep relief. If that terrible news was not true—if his father was safe and well! And yet—Evidently, from the evidence in his hand, a plot had been laid to call him away from Greyfriars on St. Jim's day, by a telegram announcing an accident to his father. Yet

if, by a horrible coincidence, the accident had happened—It was unlikely, but he had to know. He stood silent, his brow wrinkled in thought. Gwynne broke the silence.

"It's all spoof, George," he said. "Those kids knew the wire was coming—that settles it. I daresay they could tell us who was at the bottom of it, if we asked them."

Wingate nodded, slowly.

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances. Certainly, they could have told the name of the plotter. Indeed, it hardly needed telling. But they were unwilling to mention names. To defeat Loder's miserable scheme had been a matter of duty, but giving away even a rascal like Loder was repugnant to their minds. But Wingate's next remark relieved them.

"I've no doubt," he assented. "But we need not ask them to name any name. If a Greyfriars man has played a dirty game like this, the less said about it the better."

"I fancy I can guess the name," said Gwynne, dryly.

"But I've got to be sure," muttered Wingate. "It looks—it looks—I—I suppose this is a horrible trick to take me in. But—it by chance something has happened at home—"

"Too much of a coincidence if it has, old scout. Nothing's happened," answered Gwynne.

"I know. But—" Wingate had not recovered from the shock of the cruel message and the mental picture of his father lying in the wreck of the smashed car.

"It's a trick, and you're not falling to it, old bean," said Gwynne. "These kids have saved the situation—and the St. Jim's match."

Wingate nodded again, but his uneasiness was not gone.

"May I make a suggestive remark, my esteemed Wingate?" asked the nabob of Bhanipur.

"Eh, what?" ejaculated Wingate.

"Inky means a suggestion, Wingate," said Wharton, with a grin.

"A suggestion in the form of a remark is surely a suggestive remark," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Go ahead, anyhow," said Wingate, with a smile.

"If your esteemed and ridiculous father is on the telephone, an absurd trunk call will get through perhaps—fully in a short time—"

"That means losing the train," muttered Wingate. "Besides, we're not on the telephone, at home."

"Perhaps I may make another suggestive remark," said the nabob cheerfully. "If your esteemed and absurd father is smashfully crocked, he will have called in his ridiculous doctor. All absurd doctors are on the telephone. The ringfulness of the medical sahib will enlighten you."

"That kid's got some brains in his black head," said Gwynne. "That's the tip, Wingate—ring up your pater's medico, and he will know. You'll miss the train—but it's a practical certainty that there's nothing wrong at home. You can't go off on a wild-goose chase. Get a call through to Chester."

"Right!" said Wingate.

He hurried from the study, to the prefect's room, where there was a telephone. Gwynne hummed a tune. He was quite certain that the news from Chester was false.

"You kids have played up jolly well," said the prefect. "All you've got to do now is to hold your tongues. You can see as well as I can that a story like this mustn't spread through the school."

"Quite!" said Wharton.

"The cheerfulness is the prop-

caper!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder scowled blackly at the juniors and moved away. He had turned up for the match, in the hope of seeing Wingate put up a poor game. Wingate was putting up the game of his life. That had no interest for Gerald Loder, and he walked off the ground.

It was a great game.

Greyfriars fellows, though they fully expected a victory, admitted that the St. Jim's team knew something about cricket; especially Kildare, their captain, who was a giant in himself. As a matter of fact, the two sides were pretty evenly matched; and the result was on the knees of the gods all through the summer day.

But one thing, as the Famous Five told one another, was certain; that, without Wingate in the ranks, the visitors would have over-matched the home eleven. They admitted that there was hardly a pin to choose between the two sides; but with the best man at Greyfriars gone, the story would have been very different.

So the chums laid the flattering unction to their souls, that if Greyfriars pulled it off they had had a very material share in bringing about that happy result, by defeating Loder's scheme.

Which was a very satisfactory reflection to the heroes of the Remove.

Greyfriars was still batting when the cricketers knocked off for lunch, Wingate not out. And when they resumed, Wingate was not out at the end of the innings; and he carried out his bat at last for sixty of his own out of the total of a hundred and twenty. So much for Loder's hope that the Greyfriars captain would be off his form!

Loder of the Sixth was not seen on the cricket ground in the afternoon. He was fed-up with the St. Jim's match. So he missed the pleasure—or otherwise—of seeing Wingate catch out Kildare, after that hefty man from St. Jim's had taken four—something like a knock-down blow for the visitors. Greyfriars roared themselves hoarse over that catch; and though Loder was not there to enjoy it, Carne joined his voice in the cheering, with great emphasis.

Arthur Carne was keeping clear of Loder that day. In view of the fact that the plot had gone awry, and that Loder was obviously uneasy as to the outcome, Carne considered it judicious to give Loder a wide berth for a time, and display a keen interest in cricket.

When St. Jim's were all down for sixty—half the Greyfriars score—the visitors had serious expressions on their faces. But they did not envisage defeat yet. Cricket is full of glorious uncertainties; and the day was yet young.

"All over bar shouting!" said Coker of the Fifth, with the air of an oracle—which was just Coker's way of jumping to a conclusion.

It was not all over by any means.

Greyfriars fought hard in their second innings; but the bowling was keen, the fielding first-class, and the margin of runs was kept down. This time Wingate was first man in, and he was again not out at the finish, thunderous cheers punctuating his innings. But the total for the innings, well-fought as it was, was eighty; and there was plenty of time yet for St. Jim's to pull up, if they had it in them to do so.

It looked as if they had.

Kildare of St. Jim's proved himself, in his second innings, a mighty man with the willow. No lucky catch sent

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him home this time. His men backed him up well, and the runs came.

When St. Jim's were a hundred for six wickets, even Coker of the Fifth realised that the game was not yet out of the fire.

"Forty to tie, forty-one to win," said Bob Cherry. "Four wickets to fall, and lots of time! This game isn't over yet, my beloved 'carers!"

"The over-fulness is terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"There goes Kildare!" exclaimed Nugent at last; and, good sportsmen as they were, the Famous Five felt relieved when Kildare's wicket went down at last to a ball from Gwynne.

But by that time St. Jim's stood at a hundred and twenty on their second innings. Twenty to tie, twenty-one to win, and three more wickets to fall! Evidently the game was on the knees of the gods; and Coker of the Fifth was no longer oracular.

Four, another four, and then two; and another wicket down. Ten to tie, eleven to win, and two wickets in hand. Then a roar from Greyfriars for Gwynne, as a man went out for a duck's egg. Nine down for one hundred and thirty. The last man in buckled on his pads.

Last man in for St. Jim's was Cutts, a Fifth-Former, a brilliant bat, but a little uncertain. Kildare watched him rather anxiously. Cutts had the bowling, and on his day he was good for more than the eleven runs that were wanted to win. He started well knocking the ball away for four. And then another four. Two to tie, three to win, and Cutts looking as if he was prepared to hold the fort till the sun set.

"All over, bar shouting!" said Coker of the Fifth. But this time his remark meant exactly the reverse of his earlier remark.

But again Coker of the Fifth was over-oracular.

Down came the ball to Cutts, and again he snipped it away—right into the ready palm of Wingate of the Sixth.

For a second there was a hush.

Then the roar broke forth, as George Wingate was seen holding the ball.

"Caught!"

"Oh, well caught, sir!"

"How's that?"

"Hurrah! Bravo, Wingate! Well caught! Oh, well caught!"

Bob Cherry tossed his cap into the air, careless where it came down—or indeed, whether it ever came down at all.

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo!"

"How's that?"

The umpire's "Out!" was hardly needed. A roaring crowd surged over the field. From end to end of Greyfriars rang the cheering, reaching a scowling prefect who sat sullenly in his study, and telling him that the St. Jim's match was won.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Licking for Loder!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Bow-wow!"

"Something's on, you fellows!" said Billy Bunter.

The excitement was over. The St. Jim's men were on their homeward way. In the June sunset Harry Wharton & Co. were refreshing themselves with ginger-pop in the school shop when the Owl of the Remove rolled in.

Bunter's fat face was excited.

"I say, you fellows——" he repeated.

"One for Bunter, Mrs. Mimble!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Thanks, old fellow! I say, I think I'll have some farts with this ginger-pop," said Bunter.

"Think again."

"Beast! When I came here specially to tell you!" said Bunter. "I've a jolly good mind not to tell you now that Wingate's going to fight Loder of the Sixth."

"What?" roared the Famous Five.

There was a spilling of ginger-pop as they jumped, at that startling announcement.

"Wingate—Loder!" ejaculated Nugent.

"Gammon!" said Johnny Bull. "They don't scrap in the Sixth. Too jolly high and mighty."

"Well, Wingate's waiting behind the old chapel with North," said Bunter. "Nobody ever goes there, except to scrap. And—— I say, I'll have another ginger-pop, if you're going to be mean about the tarts."

"Fathead! Get on with it," said Harry Wharton.

"Well, Gwynne's just walked out of the House with Loder," said the fat junior. "He's linked arms with him—and you know how he loathes him. He's not letting Loder hook it, see? You should have seen Loder's face! He, he, he!" Bunter chortled, and some of the ginger-pop went the wrong way, and he choked. "Groooooogh! Hoooooh! Hoooooh!"

Bunter recovered his breath as the Famous Five rushed out of the tuck-shop.

"I say, you fellows!"

Only a hurried trampling of eager feet answered him.

"I say, what about that other ginger-pop?" yelled Bunter.

But answer there came none.

The chums of the Remove were gone.

Heedless of Billy Bunter—and indeed, forgetful of his fat existence, the Famous Five sped in the direction of the old chapel. If George Wingate was going to give Loder what he had asked for the Famous Five wanted to see the entertainment—very much they wanted to see it. And they lost no time.

"Cover!" panted Wharton as they drew near the old building. "You know what the Sixth are—they won't want Remove men around. But we're jolly well going to see the fun, all the same!"

"The samefulness is terrific!"

"What-ho! Keep out of sight!" chuckled Bob.

And the Famous Five cautiously picked their way behind a low wall that bordered the space behind the old chapel—a secluded spot, often used for the settlement of fistical disputes.

They were in good time.

Peering cautiously over the ivied wall, they spotted Wingate and North of the Sixth waiting there by the old rails. Nobody else was in sight. Evidently the matter was being kept very private; but Wingate had not allowed for the Peeping Tom proclivities of William George Bunter. That a "scrap" was toward was demonstrated by the sight of a tin basin of water, with a sponge floating in it, and a set of boxing-gloves.

A few minutes later Loder and Gwynne came in sight, round a corner of the building. Gwynne's arm was still linked in Loder's, and the expression of the bully of the Sixth showed that he had come very unwillingly.

"Here we are!" said Gwynne cheerily, and he dropped Loder's arm at last.

"Yes, here we are! And what does this mean, Wingate?" snarled Loder. "I've been practically forced to come here——"

"Quite so!" said Wingate quietly. "You've come here, Loder, out of sight of the school——" At this remark five



Cutts snipped the ball away—right into the ready palm of Wingate. For a second there was a hush. Then a deafening roar broke forth from the spectators. "Oh, well caught, sir!" "Bravo, Wingate!" Bob Cherry tossed his cap in the air, careless where it came down. Greyfriars had beaten St. Jim's! (See Chapter 14.)

juniors behind the wall grinned at one another. "You've come here to answer for what you've done. You've played a dirty trick, that I'd never have believed a Greyfriars man capable of, and you very nearly got away with it."

"Lies!" said Loder, breathing hard. "If you've paid any attention to the lies of a gang of fags, who hate me, as you know—"

"Some fags put me on my guard, certainly—"

"And you believe their talk about a Sixth Form prefect?" sneered Loder.

"They never mentioned your name."

"Oh!" exclaimed Loder, taken aback.

"I've thought the thing out for myself," said Wingate. "A false telegram was sent me this morning. I don't know and don't care who sent it, but clearly it was worked from Greyfriars. It was intended to call me away from the St. Jim's match."

"And what puts it into your head that I had anythin' to do with it?" said Loder, with a sneer.

"Do you deny that you had?"

"I don't choose to answer insultin' questions."

"I thought you would jib at the lie direct," said Wingate, his lip curling. "Well, I believe it was you worked that trick, and I'm going to thrash you for it, or else you're going to thrash me. But if you deny, on your word of honour, knowing anything about that dirty trick, I'll take the matter to the Head, and ask him to hold an inquiry."

Loder breathed hard.

"In that case, the juniors who warned me will be compelled to state all they know—and it's clear they know a lot," said Wingate. "I needn't tell you that if the Head deals with the matter, and it comes out that you put a man up to sending a forged telegram, it will be the sack for you. You can take the chance if you like."

There was a long silence.

Loder broke it at last.

"I know nothin' whatever about the matter," he said at length. "But at the same time, I don't choose for it to go before the Head."

"I thought not," said Wingate contemptuously.

"If you think I'm afraid of you, you're makin' a mistake," sneered Loder. "It's pretty low down for two prefects of the Sixth to hammer one another like a pair of fags; but you're responsible. I'm ready, and I'll do my best to knock some of the swank out of you, hang you!"

"If you're ready, let's waste no more time."

It was a great fight.

Harry Wharton & Co., who were rather connoisseurs in that line, told the Remove men afterwards that it was a great and glorious fight.

They did not miss a single item.

At first, they expected Wingate to knock the bully of the Sixth into a cocked hat in a round or two. But Gerald Loder put up an unexpectedly good scrap.

The black sheep of Greyfriars, seething with rage and disappointment, and revenge put all his beef into it. He had wanted to elude the scrap, but as it was not to be eluded, he did his best—and for some time, doubtless, nourished a hope of revenging himself by defeating the captain of Greyfriars hand to hand, foot to foot.

If that was his hope, it proved delusive.

Four rounds passed off, and Loder was still fighting hard, but obviously getting the worst of it. In the fifth round he went down with a crash; in the sixth, he went down again; in the seventh, he was hammered right and left, and laid breathless on his back, and failed to come up again at the call of time.

He lay gasping on the ground, his half-closed eyes gleaming up at the victor.

Wingate looked down at him.

"That's enough!" he said. "I've taken this method, Loder, to save a disgrace and scandal in the school. But take warning—another dirty trick of that sort from you and you'll hit against something more serious than a fight! You've got your chance to be decent—you'd better make the most of it!"

"Hang you!" panted Loder. "I'll make you suffer for this!"

Wingate turned away contemptuously.

He peeled off the gloves, put on his coat, and walked away with Gwynne. As he went, there came a shout from behind the ivied wall.

"Bravo, Wingate!"

The captain of Greyfriars jumped, and stared round. The fight had not been so private as he had supposed.

He made a stride towards the wall. But the Famous Five promptly vanished into space.

"Oh, my hat! It will be all over the school now!" muttered Wingate.

Gwynne laughed.

"It would be, anyhow, old bean, when the fellows see your chivvy—and Loder's. Specially Loder's!"

"I suppose so," said Wingate, smiling.

And it was!

Few fellows knew the actual cause of the fight between the captain of the school and a Sixth Form prefect, and those few kept their own counsel. But everybody knew that it had taken place, and everybody jumped, as a matter of course, to the conclusion that Loder had asked for it, and got what he had asked for—a conclusion that was perfectly correct.

That evening, in the Rag, the Famous Five were the centre of an eager throng, eager to hear the minutest details of the great fight—details that the chums were able to give, as the men who knew. And there were plenty of fellows in the Lower School who, much as they admired old Wingate for having pulled off the St. Jim's match, admired him immensely more for the thrashing he had administered unto the bully of the Sixth.

THE END.

(There will be another magnificent new long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. in next week's MAGNET, entitled: "OUT OF BOUNDS!" Make sure of reading it, chums, by ordering your copy WELL IN ADVANCE!)

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THERE'S NO NEED TO GO TO THE DIRT-TRACK—THERE'S TONS OF THRILLS HERE, CHUMS!



Refused!

IT was with unconcealed displeasure that Brown recognised in the newcomer the figure of Jimmy Beresford. An ugly glitter appeared in his eyes as he drew away from Ron and regarded the youngster who had crossed the threshold.

Jimmy returned his glance grimly for a moment, and then he smiled. But it was a smile that was not quite to Brown's liking—a smile that made him uneasy.

"Hope I'm not intruding," Jimmy remarked coolly, and, glancing at his chum: "Am I, Ron?"

He suddenly realised that Ron had an air of awkwardness about him and looked desperately uncomfortable, for when he answered Jimmy he faltered over his words.

"Brown came on business, Jimmy," he said. "He's just made me an offer for the invention."

Jimmy gave vent to a curt laugh.

"Brown's got a nerve," he observed. "And Volson, too. Do you think we can't see farther than our own noses? Do they think we're not wise to the trick they played just before your engine was tested on the private track at Beresford Motors?"

Brown affected a calmness of manner which he did not feel, and raised his eyebrows expressively.

"Meaning?" he inquired.

"You know well enough what I mean," Jimmy told him scornfully. "Otto tampered with the invention."

Brown came a step nearer, and there was something almost menacing in his attitude.

"You're fond of jumping to conclusions, Beresford," he said, "and it seems you influence Connolly with them. For he made the very same statement as you have just made—a slanderous statement, for which—"

"Cut out the bluff!" Jimmy interrupted. "You're wasting your breath. Ron and I saw Otto with our own eyes. We saw him leaving the shed where the invention was housed."

Brown was discomfited at this, but he

SPEEDWAY PALS!

A. CARNEY ALLAN

passed it off with a shrug of the shoulders.

"I didn't come here to argue with you, Beresford," he growled. "I came to put a proposition to Connolly, on behalf of Mr. Bernard Volson. Connolly's heard me, and now I'm waiting for an answer."

Jimmy looked Brown full in the eye.

"I fancy I can tell you what that answer is," he said, "unless I'm pretty much mistaken. You wouldn't negotiate with the Volson people, would you, Ron?" he asked, turning to his chum.

Brown thrust himself between the

before he had actually had the satisfaction of seeing Ron Connolly waver. There had been no doubt of it, for on Ron's boyish face hesitation had been written as clearly as it could possibly be. And now, with the steadying influence of Jimmy, he was veering towards refusal again.

"Listen to me, Connolly," Brown said. "Beresford Motors have rejected your engine, and after that you won't find many firms willing to consider it. But the Volson people are prepared to take it up right away. If you turn down the offer I've been authorised to make you're a fool. Now, what's your answer—yes or no?"

Ron glanced sideways at Jimmy, with a hunted expression, and just for a moment Jimmy felt a tremor of anxiety. Then Ron spoke.

"I—I hate the idea of trading with the Volson people, Jimmy," he faltered.

"There's your answer, Brown," said Jimmy quickly. "No."

Brown's lip curled.

"I'm taking no answer from you!" he sneered. "Is it 'No,' Connolly?"

Ron nodded slowly.

"I don't feel inclined to accept your offer," he rejoined, in a voice that was not quite steady.

Brown strode towards the doorway, but on the threshold he paused.

"We'll see," he said; and then he was gone.

When the front door had closed behind him Jimmy looked at Ron, and he was the first to break the silence that had followed Brown's departure.

The thunderous racket of the exhaust, the resounding cheers of the crowd, is like music in the ears of Jimmy Beresford, our young speed merchant. Read how he carries off the "Gold Gauntlet" in this breathless instalment.

two youngsters, giving Jimmy a shove that sent the youngster staggering aside. It was now clear that the Volson agent had lost his temper.

"I suppose Connolly can make up his mind without you butting in!" he said savagely; and then to Ron: "Is there any need for Beresford to be here while we discuss business?"

Ron looked uncomfortable.

"Jimmy's my best friend," he murmured. "I'm always ready to listen to his advice."

Brown bit his lip, and shot a vicious glance at Beresford. A few minutes

"Ron, old man," he said, "I believe you had more than half a mind to take the Volson offer, didn't you?"

Ron Connolly did not answer at once, but suddenly sank into a chair with his head in his hands. When he did speak it was in a husky accent.

"I'd hate to have any dealings with the Volson people, Jimmy," he said. "But there's Tom—out in Canada—in desperate need of money—and I saw a chance of letting him have some. That's why I hesitated, Jimmy."

"I know—I guessed that," said Jimmy. "But don't you worry; we'll raise money for your brother Tom all right. I'm going to see dad again, and I'm going to do all I can to make him give the engine another trial. Anyhow, Ron, I've managed to save a decent bit out of the money I've made on the dirt tracks, and you can take every cent of that if you like—"

"Take your money, Jimmy," Ron cut in, "not knowing when it could be paid back? I couldn't do that, old son. I'd rather sell the invention to the Volson crowd than touch the money you've risked your neck to earn."

"Well, then, we've got to arrange another trial for your engine," said Jimmy. "We both know it's the goods, and somehow or other we're going to prove its worth to my father."

Jimmy sounded confident and reassuring, and there was something infectious in his manner which made Ron look on the brighter side of things. So much so that it was Ron who presently turned the conversation into fresh channels, asking Jimmy the result of the race for the Silver Helmet.

"Yours truly carried it off," said Jimmy cheerfully, "and I'm entering for the Gold Gauntlet. And what do you think, Ron? Some fellows in the crowd started to yell something about a match race with Tornado Rossiter."

"Your ambition, Jimmy," Ron murmured. "It once seemed a long way ahead, but it's not far off now. You'll be champion of the speedways yet."

Jimmy grew thoughtful and stared at the floor.

"Not on the present Beresford Twin," he mused. "I'll need a faster bike to beat the Volson that Rossiter rides!"

The Gold Gauntlet!

It was Saturday afternoon, an afternoon of brilliant sunshine. Old Sol smiled on the speedmen who dared all on the dirt-tracks, and gleamed upon their helmets and their bikes.

The turnstiles at Elsenham Park were rattling unceasingly as long files of speedway enthusiasts pushed through them. The stands rapidly began to fill, and by the time the first race started there was a crowd of thirty thousand present, while more and more "fans" were flocking to the Stadium.

The first race was Heat 1 of the Club Handicap, a competition for which only novices were allowed to enter. But watching those novices wheeling their bikes across the ramp, Jimmy could not help thinking of the time—not so long ago—when he had been in that very same class.

Jimmy was aroused from his reverie by the sudden appearance of Ron Connolly in the pits. Ron was breathless, having dashed straight from work after a meal of sandwiches.

The youngster was in a cheerful frame of mind, but when he saw Jimmy's face his expression changed, for Jimmy regarded him gloomily.

"Dad's back in town, and I had a word with him this morning," he told

Ron. "He wouldn't hear of another test."

Ron seemed to wilt, but he did not speak, and he remained silent and brooding while the first events of the meeting were run off.

In other circumstances there would have been no more interested spectator than Ron Connolly, but his mind was not on the speedway, and the thunderous racket of the bikes and the resounding cheers of the crowd, seemed remote and far away.

Then came the grand parade, and immediately after it Heat 1 of the Gold Gauntlet. Only then did Ron rouse himself.

"Good luck, Jimmy," he said; and Jimmy gripped his chum's hand feelingly.

The announcer was giving out the names of the entrants.

"Colin Halloran, Eric Bellamy, Roger Huxton, Buzz Foster, and Jimmy Beresford."

The five riders lined up, the starter ascertaining that each competitor was properly equipped. The attendants pushed them off, and the quintet made the preliminary circuit in accordance with the rules governing a scratch race.

As they came into the front straight, however, it was clear that Halloran's machine had developed engine trouble, and he signalled an appeal by holding up his right hand. The appeal was allowed, and, after some delay, the riders were again pushed off on a preliminary.

Halloran's bike was still out of tune, however, but by the regulations he could not appeal a second time, and he was forced to make the best of it as the front straight was reached once more.

The competitors passed the starter in a straight line, and the engines roared as the riders "turned on the taps." Foster, in the inside, took the lead from the get-away, with Huxton a close challenger. Jimmy, in the middle of the row, stormed for the bend with Bellamy abreast of him. Halloran was left behind, obviously out of the running.

Bellamy was no stranger to Jimmy, for the youngster had defeated him in the race for the Silver Helmet, and he was sure of doing so again unless the luck was against him. But Foster and Huxton were men of greater renown—Foster, an Australian, who had recently arrived in the Home Country with a formidable reputation, Huxton, an Englishman who had made a name for himself in the North.

INTRODUCTION.

Mainly owing to an encounter with his cousin Otto, young Jimmy Beresford, a cheery, athletic youngster, is told by his irate father that he will either have to take a position in the Beresford motor works or fend for himself. Jimmy decides to do the latter, and, helped by the expert mechanical knowledge of his pal, Ron Connolly, rapidly makes a name for himself at the Elsenham Park Speedway. The youngster soon realises that by fair means or foul the scoundrelly Otto is determined to inherit Beresford Motors. After an unsuccessful attempt has been made on Jimmy's life, his father, who is recovering from a serious illness, is kidnapped by agents of Volson Motors, Beresford's unscrupulous rivals, with whom Otto is in league. Jimmy and Ron discover, however, that Mr. Beresford has been taken to the lonely house of Bernard Volson, near the south coast town of Westleigh, and the two chums succeed in rescuing him. A new motor-cycle engine invented by Ron Connolly, and upon which he had banked all his hopes, is tried out by Beresford's, but proves a failure. Jimmy and Ron are convinced that this is the result of Otto having tampered with the engine, but there is no actual proof of this, and Mr. Beresford refuses to have another trial. The next evening Ron finds a representative of Volson's, named Brown, waiting for him at his lodging. The man offers him a thousand pounds for his invention and Ron, desperately in need of money, is weakening when the door of the room opens and a tall figure enters. (Now read on.)

Foster and Huxton dashed into the first corner at reckless speed, and Foster, failing to hold the white line, swerved outward. Huxton was quick to seize an early chance, and bored through on the inside, to take the lead.

Then came Jimmy and Bellamy, and with a slashing skid Jimmy left the latter a yard behind him on the curve. Yet the youngster was a clear length to the rear of Foster when he hit the back straight, and Huxton was just double that distance ahead of him.

Huxton was riding a Beresford "Twin," like Jimmy. Foster was astride a Volson, and on the back stretch the Australian proved the Volson's superiority in acceleration. Thundering over the track, he forged level with Huxton, and then hurled his bike into the second bend, to snatch first place again.

Crouched over his handlebars, Jimmy rushed at the curve in full pursuit, and, juggling with the cut-out button, he jerked his back wheel into a screaming broadside that delighted his special army of admirers. There was a gasp as he almost came to grief, but he wrenched at the steering and scored the cinders with his toe-plate to steady himself, and he gained the front straight not more than half a length behind Huxton.

On the front straight Foster increased his lead by the advantage of acceleration, and he was three lengths to the good when he cut out on the bend. Huxton and Jimmy made a concerted bid to beat him there, both of them scrabbling furiously as they raked round the curve.

Halloran had already retired, his machine utterly failing him, but Bellamy took a desperate chance in an effort to avoid last place. With a long, tearing skid he came round on the outer edge, and Jimmy and Huxton saw him pull level with them on the top of the curve.

The crowd yelled applause, and then checked abruptly, for Bellamy had overreached himself, and, hitting the wire fence, had crashed amidst a smother of dirt.

A couple of attendants in white doubled across the track to the spot where he had fallen, but Bellamy was able to rise of his own accord.

He was limping painfully, however, as he made his way to the turf, the attendants wheeling his bike after him.

Meanwhile, the remaining three riders were on the back straight once more, Foster still a length or two in advance, Jimmy and Huxton speeding abreast of each other.

Their exhaust ports roared out the engine notes of the bikes and stabbed jets of flame as the throttle-grips were twisted hard round.

By the time the second bend was reached Foster had gained another length, Jimmy and Huxton still riding level.

Huxton went all out for the corner, and raked his way round in a neck-or-nothing skid. He finished up on the front straight ahead of Jimmy, and only a length behind Foster.

The crowd cheered him to the echo, and roared encouragement as he clung doggedly to the Australian. He hurtled into the first bend of the third lap in an attempt to beat the latter.

The attempt came near to succeeding, for when Huxton swung on to the back straight he was taking the cinder spray from Foster's rear wheel.

Jimmy Beresford bucked on to the straight two lengths behind the leaders, and was still two lengths behind Huxton at the second bend, though Foster's Volson had managed to pull slightly away.

Again Huxton risked everything on a fearsome skid, and the fans rose to their feet and shouted themselves hoarse as he entered the straight ahead of the Australian.

But many were watching Jimmy, recalling how often that dare-devil, smiling youngster had snatched the victory in the closing moments.

The yellow flag fell to signal the last lap of the heat, and the excitement was now at top pitch. More than forty thousand pairs of eyes watched Huxton, Foster, and then Jimmy swing into the first bend, and more than forty thousand voices yelled one or other of the three names.

Jimmy thumbed the "cut-out" button, and his back wheel ripped round in a tear-away broadside. The spectators on the curve surged backward as a stream of cinders raked the safety fence. A hoarse shout went up as Jimmy's bike was seen to swerve violently, but he controlled the skid expertly, and swept on to the back straight dead level with Foster.

Amidst the storm of cheering the name of Jimmy Beresford seemed to prevail, and even the roar of his engine, as he slammed in with the throttle, could not drown the thunder of the applause.

Again, with the advantage of acceleration in his favour, Foster managed to pull abreast of Huxton. Jimmy being a shade behind the pair of them. But he hit the last bend at full speed, and, with a long, controlled slide, he forged into line with the leaders.

The three of them were fighting with the victory an equal chance, and the three of them were forced to dig with their toe-plates till the sparks were flying. But almost imperceptibly Jimmy was thrusting ahead, and it was Jimmy's speed-iron that first blurted out a deafening engine song.

He was away with a half-length lead before Huxton and Foster opened up, but Foster was a determined challenger, and the Volson bike cut in next instant with her savage, full-throated note.

The Australian gained, and his front wheel pushed level with the gauze shield round the Beresford's engine. Every man in the stands was on his feet, pent-up and breathless with suspense. The question was, could Foster snatch the victory before the finishing line was reached?

The line was only a few yards away. Foster was still gaining, inch by inch. With one long leg Jimmy kicked at the track surface in an effort to propel his machine forward at the height of its speed, and the effort was not unavailing.

The checked flag sliced downward and the gun banged. Jimmy Beresford had won the closest race of his career by half the width of a wheel.

The Final!

THE ensuing three heats of the Gold Gauntlet produced a trio of star riders, each one of whom was a formidable rival for Jimmy. Winner of Heat 2 was Rich Conway, who had beaten Foster in a match race the previous week. Heat 3 had been won by Dave M'Cormick, another Northerner of repute, and Heat 4 by Louis Boucheron, the Frenchman, who had ridden so gallantly against "Tornado" Rossiter a day or two before.

Jimmy had the misfortune to draw the outside position, and as he was shoved off he told himself grimly that

he would have to go "all out" to carry off the event against such talent as the three who were competing with him.

Coming into the front straight from the preliminary circuit, they opened up for the starting-line. But the temperamental and excitable Boucheron threw them into ragged confusion by "turning up the wick" too recklessly, and a fault was signalled.

They toured the oval track once more, and at the second attempt they crossed the line to the starter's satisfaction.

The impetuous Boucheron whipped open the throttle and tore away with the lead. He had been only a short time in England, but already he had delighted the "fans" with his wild and impetuous daring, which was sometimes dangerous to others as well as himself.

The Frenchman was a length to the good when he tore into the first bend, skidding madly. Then came Conway and Jimmy, and close behind them M'Cormick.

Boucheron, swinging into the back straight, swayed from side to side precariously. But for all his daring he could ride, and, mastering his machine, he stormed along the stretch for the second bend.

Jimmy and Conway gave chase, and Conway gained slightly on Jimmy. But when the second bend was reached Boucheron had increased his lead to two lengths.

The Frenchman swept into the curve, broadsiding furiously. Conway followed suit with a challenging effort, but failed to cut down Boucheron's advantage, and raked into the front straight still two lengths behind, with Jimmy at the tail of his bike.

M'Cormick was last, but on the stretch he made a strong bid to gain lost ground, and as Jimmy crossed the line for the second lap the Northerner was almost level with him.

Boucheron took the first bend of the second lap in a way that drew a roar of applause from the crowd, and a long slide by Conway failed to reduce the Frenchman's lead. Jimmy and M'Cormick, diving into the curve after the others, switched into the back straight abreast of each other.

Already it looked like Boucheron's race, but it was too early to tell yet, and on the next corner the "fans" became conscious of Jimmy Beresford. The youngster had dashed for the curve at top speed, and, with the aid of the "cut-out," he slung his bike into the kind of broadside that had earned him his fame.

With the back wheel grinding through the dirt, he ploughed on to the front straight half a length behind Conway, and almost simultaneously with the latter he opened up to pursue Boucheron.

The line was crossed for the third lap, and on the first bend M'Cormick made a tremendous attempt to challenge Conway and Jimmy.

Conway, falling into an ugly skid, swerved outward, and Jimmy was forced to wrench aside in the same direction. M'Cormick thought he saw his chance, and tried to thrust through on the inner edge, but there was barely room for him, and, with his bike heeling far over, he grazed the turf.

M'Cormick made a desperate effort to steady himself by digging with his toe-plate, but there had been rain, and the turf was slippery. Down he came, his bike somersaulting clean over his head, and Conway and Jimmy slashed on with their challenger out of the running.

The double skid had lost them ground, and Boucheron was three lengths away when they reached the back straight. In unison they gave their speed-irons full throttle and chased the daring Frenchman along the stretch, but he was still three lengths in advance when the second bend was gained.

Boucheron hurled his machine into the curve, and a stream of cinders shot across the track from his back wheel. It was on this bend that Conway came to grief in an effort to make up on the Frenchman, for an uncontrollable broadside brought him down in a long, lazy slither.

He fell directly in front of Jimmy, and the youngster had to wrench hard on the handlebars to switch towards the white line and avoid a double crash. With his rear wheel swinging to and fro, Jimmy came safely on to the front straight, where he let in the throttle and mastered the bike.

With only the two of them left in the race, Jimmy stormed after Boucheron. The yellow flag dropped for the Frenchman and then for himself to signal the last lap; and, flat out, Jimmy drove his screaming speed-iron into the first bend of the circuit.

He came round in a tear-away broadside that might have carried him abreast of the Frenchman; but Boucheron had hit the bend in his usual reckless style, and he swung wide. Jimmy was forced to swerve with him to avoid collision, and he swept on to the back straight at right angles to the safety fence—a yard behind the foreigner.

The youngster controlled the vicious skid and gave chase. He realised that he would have to play a watchful game to win from the impetuous Frenchman, and there was only one bend left on which to take the lead.

With less than a length between them, they dashed along the stretch. Boucheron hurtled into the corner, and, flat out again, Jimmy followed him.

Once more the Frenchman's recklessness produced a violent skid, but this time Jimmy was ready for it. Wrenching inward to the white line, he streaked past his rival, and out of the corner of his eye he saw the latter scrabbling with his toe-plate to master a furious sideslip. Then he heard the thud of Boucheron's body and the grinding clatter of his machine, as bike and rider crashed amidst a cloud of cinders.

Alone Jimmy crossed the finishing-line; but, though it was a solo climax, the crowd knew the effort it had cost the youngster to win, and the bang of the gun was almost lost in the roar of cheering that went up.

The cheering was prolonged as Jimmy rode round the track wearing the trophy of the race, and it was still resounding all over the arena when the youngster eventually made his way to the pits.

There he sought his chum, Ron Connolly. He discerned him in company with a tall, lean man—a man who was speaking to him in an undertone—and Jimmy's eyes hardened as he recognised the man called Brown, agent of the Volson Company.

Brown saw Jimmy almost at the same moment, and, with an ugly frown, he brought his conversation with Ron to an abrupt termination, moving away.

Jimmy watched him go, and then he made his way to his chum's side. Ordinarily Ron would have been ready with a word of congratulation; but he was standing with a look of utter misery on his face, and at sight of Jimmy he said not a word.

"I noticed that fellow Brown," Jimmy mentioned, trying to sound casual. "Did he want anything special with you?"

Ron looked at his chum, and his features seemed suddenly to grow haggard.

"He made Volson's offer again," he said, speaking as if with an effort. "He asked me to think it over. I told him 'No.' But—"

He left the sentence unfinished and glanced away.

Jimmy regarded him for a moment, and then laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Dad seems set against another trial," he told him. "You'd better do what you think is best, Ron."

Ron made no answer; and during the journey to their digs he maintained a gloomy silence. That silence remained unbroken as, instead of immediately entering the house, Ron made his way round to a patch of garden at the back.

Jimmy followed him.

There was a fair-sized shed in the garden, and here the landlady had allowed Ron to work on his invention when he had first conceived the principle

they sat down to the meal, Ron still moodily silent, and Jimmy thoughtfully so.

It was now dusk; and by the time the two chums had finished tea it was quite dark. They did not trouble to put on the light; and when, presently, Jimmy spoke his voice came out of the shadows that had crept about the room, and Ron could only see him indistinctly.

"Ron," he said, "just before we left Elsenham Park I had a word with the pit steward, and he told me there was some talk of arranging a match between me and 'Tornado' Rossiter. I understand that Rossiter's keen on the idea himself." He laughed grimly. "Maybe, the Volson people think it's a good chance of getting me out of the way. Rossiter's clever at riding foul, and a crash might be fatal."

"I wonder who Rossiter is?" Ron muttered.

There was a silence; and then Jimmy spoke again.

"Brown?" he suggested.

"I thought of him myself," said Ron. "But what reason could he have for hiding his identity?"

that door when he had left the shed with Jimmy, and, with a frown, he stepped closer to the threshold, his feet making no sound on the earthen path.

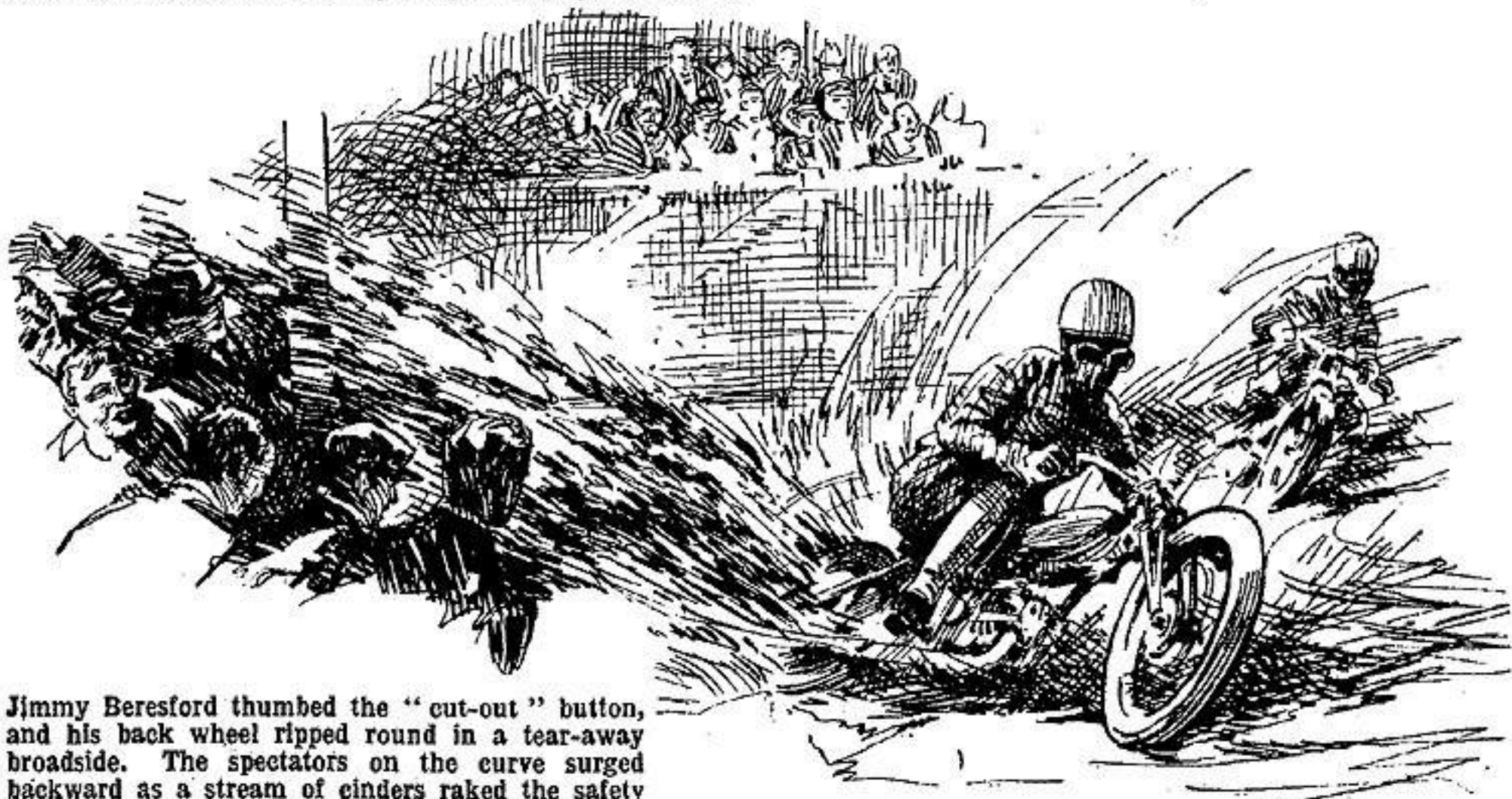
Then Ron saw a dim figure in the gloom of the shed's interior, and, with a sharp cry, he flung himself through the doorway.

The intruder turned, and next moment Ron had closed with him. Grappling, they reeled to and fro in the black darkness, and, as his hands found a hold, Ron felt the texture of a padded leather suit.

The advantage of a surprise onslaught was in Ron's favour, but the advantage of weight, height, and strength were with his adversary; and, though the youngster struggled manfully, he was borne back and back over the bench to which his engine was bolted.

He managed to wriggle clear, and his hand encountered a heavy spanner. Snatching it up, he tried to strike with it, but before he could do so a gauntleted fist took him squarely on the jaw with stunning force.

The blow pitched Ron across the shed,



Jimmy Beresford thumbed the "cut-out" button, and his back wheel ripped round in a tear-away broadside. The spectators on the curve surged backward as a stream of cinders raked the safety fence! (See page 26.)

of it. The model was in there now; for it had been dismantled from the Beresford bike on which it had been tested, and, by order of Jimmy's father, it had been dispatched to the digs.

Opening the door of the shed, Ron crossed to a bench, on which the engine was bolted, and he laid his hand on one of the big cylinders.

"I hate to sell it to the Volson people, Jimmy," he breathed. "But there's Tom—out there in Canada—and I've got to have that money quickly."

"Supposing I try to persuade dad again?" said Jimmy.

But Ron shook his head dismally.

"It would be a waste of time," he told him. "You'd never convince him that it's worth another test, though we know it is ourselves. Jimmy, you know it's going to go against the grain to trade with a set of crooks like the Volson crowd, don't you? But they've got me cornered. They don't realise it, for they don't know anything about my brother Tom; but they've got me where they want me."

"I understand, Ron," Jimmy said.

And, leaving the shed, they went into the house.

A late tea was waiting for them, and

"Ask me another," Jimmy countered. "Maybe, we'll discover the whys and the wherefores one day."

Again they lapsed into silence; and again it was Jimmy who broke it. He did so rather surprisingly, suddenly starting to his feet.

"I say, Ron," he exclaimed, "there's a call I want to make! I'm going to dad's place. Don't expect me back for an hour or two."

He left the "digs" rather hurriedly, and Ron remained alone in the sitting-room. He fell into a reverie—a dismal reverie concerning the unpleasant business of negotiating with Bernard Volson for the sale of his invention; and at length, his mind turning on the engine that he had created, he rose and directed his steps towards the garden at the back of the house.

His objective was the shed. He wanted to take another look at his invention, for soon it would be out of his hands, and in the hands of the firm with the shadiest reputation in the industry.

A shock awaited Ron Connolly, for when he approached the shed he saw that the door of it was swinging open.

He was certain that he had closed

and he fell into a corner. Then a darkness that was not the darkness of the night seemed to descend over him.

Sacked!

WHEN Jimmy returned to the digs, he found Ron Connolly in the sitting-room, nursing a jaw that was decidedly swollen.

Ron glanced up as his chum entered, and Jimmy saw then that there was a savage expression on his face.

"My hat! What's wrong with you, Ron?" he demanded. "You look as if you'd like to slaughter somebody!"

"Then I look how I feel!" the other youngster growled, "for I'd like to slaughter the fellow who gave me this!" And he indicated his bruised chin.

"Who did it?" Jimmy inquired.

"It was Rossiter," answered Ron; and at mention of the name Jimmy gave a start. "After you'd gone I went out to the shed and found the door open. Rossiter was inside, at the bench where my engine was standing."

Ron paused, and his expression became still more grim. Then he went on:

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"SPEEDWAY PALS!"*(Continued from previous page)*

"I jumped for him and he swung round. There was a scuffle, but he got home on my jaw, and when I came round he had gone, and the engine as well—"

"Just a minute!" Jimmy interrupted. "How do you know the fellow was Rossiter? No one's ever seen Rossiter's race. Rossiter's only a name to us—the name of a personality that's hidden behind an aviation mask and a pair of tinted goggles."

"I knew it was Rossiter," said Ron, "because he was wearing a padded leather suit—dirt-track 'togs,' Jimmy. We've discovered that Rossiter is hand-in-glove with Otto and the Volson people want the invention. Well, they weren't sure that I'd take their final offer, so Rossiter came to steal it."

Jimmy stroked his chin and regarded Ron oddly.

"Now, what would be the use of stealing your invention, Ron?" he asked. "You've taken out a patent for it, and they can't infringe the principle of the thing."

Ron's brow seemed furrowed with care.

"I can't tell what game they intend to play," he said agitatedly, "but they've got the engine for a purpose. Oh, I'm fed-up with it all! I was out to help my brother Tom, and now I've not a chance of letting him have the money he needs."

"I've told you that every cent I have is yours for the asking, Ron," Jimmy observed.

"And I've told you that I couldn't bring myself to touch a ha'penny of it, Jimmy," Ron countered. "I just couldn't, because I don't know if I would be able to pay it back again. It's not a few quid Tom needs—it's two hundred pounds!"

There was a spell of silence, during which Ron sat brooding. But at length he roused himself as if in an attempt to throw aside all care, and looked across at Jimmy as he spoke.

"You said you were going to your dad's place," he mentioned. "Did you see your dad?"

"First of all, I saw Mr. Palmer, clerk of the course," Jimmy answered, "and he told me definitely that the date of a match-race with Rossiter had been fixed for me. Then I went on to dad's, and what do you think? I've persuaded him to come and see that race!"

"Jimmy," said Ron, leaning forward, "when do you think your father will be able to hear the truth about Otto? I want to see Otto and the Volson people smashed by the law!"

"As a matter of fact, dad seems pretty well now," Jimmy told him. "That's why Rossiter is anxious to have that match-race with me, I guess. You and I have seen Rossiter crash men before. He may try to crash me, in the hope that the crash will be fatal, and I reckon there would be every chance of dad having another stroke then. With the two of us gone, Beresford Motors would automatically fall to Cousin Otto, and that's what the Volson crowd want. But, in the meantime, Ron, what are you going to do about your invention?"

"What would you advise me to do, Jimmy?" Ron asked.

Jimmy stared at the ceiling thoughtfully and whistled a bar or two from a popular melody before speaking.

"I'd advise you to do nothing," he said at length. "Leave it to me, for I've got a plan in the making."

Ron Speaks Out!

IT was a Thursday evening—the evening that had been fixed for the match-race between Jimmy Beresford and Rossiter.

In the workshop of Glendale Richards, motor engineers and dirt-track specialists, Ron Connolly was engaged in the task of tuning a bike that had been brought in by one of the "boys." He reckoned he could just about finish the job and allow himself sufficient time to reach Elsenham Park in time for Jimmy's contest.

His work on the bike completed, Ron stepped out of his overalls, washed his face and hands, and then walked through to a large yard adjoining the repair-shop. As he did so a big saloon car drove in and pulled up beside a row of petrol pumps that Ron was passing.

Ron noticed something peculiar about the car. The blinds of the windows in the rear portion were drawn, so that the interior was in darkness.

Behind the steering-wheel sat a big man of brutal countenance. He seemed familiar to Ron, but not until he stepped out and looked around impatiently for someone to serve him did the youngster recognise who he was.

The man was Bernard Volson, head of Volson Motors!

In the moment of Ron placing him, Volson caught sight of the youngster, and hailed him in a domineering voice:

"Here, you! Give me some petrol, will you? I'm in a hurry."

Ron walked up at his leisure, and, as he approached, Volson stared hard at him, a puzzled expression dawning on his heavy face.

"Where have I seen you before?" he demanded.

Ron did not answer at once. Volson had left the near-side door open, and Ron was looking past the man into the car. He could not see into the rear section, but several articles on the front seat caught his attention.

Those articles were a pair of tinted goggles and an aviation mask, a pair of gauntlets, and a crash-helmet.

It suddenly flashed upon Ron that Rossiter was known to come and go by car to the speedway meetings, leaving his bike to the care of a Volson mechanic. Rossiter was in the back of this car, unmasked!

"I said, where have I seen you before?"

It was the voice of Bernard Volson.

Ron faced him with a glitter in his eyes.

"You ought to know my name," he ground out. "It's Connolly, and you've got hold of my invention."

"Ah, Connolly, of course!" Volson recollected, and his tone became less peremptory. But, realising all at once what Ron had said about the engine, he frowned as if he did not understand. "What was that? Got hold of your invention? Are you crazy, or something?"

"Don't bluff!" Ron said between his teeth. "You know well enough what I mean. And Rossiter knows what I mean, if he happens to be listening just now!"

"Rossiter?" Volson echoed, in bewildered accents. "Rossiter—"

"Cut out the bluff, I tell you!" Ron blazed. "Rossiter's in your car, and it was Rossiter who got away with my engine. He's going to answer for it now!"

With the words Ron brushed past Volson and reached for the handle of the rear door.

(For the concluding chapters of this powerful serial, see next week's MAGNET.)

DR. BIRCHEMALL—FILM STAR!*(Continued from page 15)*

a tellygraph wire by your hands for about a mile or so—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Then you'll have a fight with a savidge dog—"

"Yow-wow!"

"And after that with a man-eating tiger—"

"Yaroooo! Stoppit!" roared Dr. Birchmall despritley. "Do you imagine for a moment that I'm going to risk my neck in such wild feats as that?"

Flicker Y. Reeler shrugged.

"I guess that's up to you, Doc. That's the leading part in the fillum, anyway. If you don't like it, I guess you can resign. But you can't stop me producing in this little old skool. It's all signed and settled now. Savvy? Jevver get left? Ha, ha, ha!"

And the grate producer burst into a roar of larfter.

Dr. Birchmall fairly nashed his teeth with rage as he saw how he had been caught.

"You—you deceeving rotter! You scheming cadd!" he hooted. "I see it all now! I've been dishd, diddled, and done!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You know jolly well I'd never play the part of Flash Harry!"

"Ho, ho, ho! I guess I did. Jevver get left?"

"I'll beat you yet, though!" said Dr. Birchmall, as a sudden brain-wave occurred to him. "I've just thought of a way out, after all!"

Flicker Y. Reeler stopped larfing, and Jack Jolly & Co. straightened their dikes again, wondering what was coming.

"On consideration," said Dr. Birchmall, beginning to grin himself now, "I'll accept the job, in spite of what you have told me."

"What?" yelled Mr. Reeler, almost incredibly.

"Ha, ha! He who larfs last larfs loudest!" chuckled the Head. "I'll take the part of Flash Harry, after all, just to teach you a lesson. I'll mannidge the safe, braney side of the peace and I'll order Mr. Lickham to disguys himself as me and do all the dangerous stunts. Ha, ha, ha! How's that?"

"Say, that ain't playing the game!" protested Mr. Reeler.

"San fairy ann!" replied the Head, in French, shrugging carelessly as he spoke.

"And, anyway, I guess this Lickham of yours won't be willing to disguise himself as you."

"Won't he? He'll have to, or risk getting the sack!" said Dr. Birchmall, with an unplezzant larf. "Well, that's settled, then! I shall eggspect you to turn up to-morrow morning ready to begin work. Cheerioski!"

Larfing historically, Dr. Birchmall opened the door to speed the parting guests.

Outside, they all felt like kicking themselves, though, as Jack Jolly said, they might have eggspected something of the kind from the cunning old Head. However, facts were facts, and had to be axcepted. It was too late to back out now, and Mr. Flicker Y. Reeler simply made the best of a bad job and told the juniors he would turn up on the morrow and see what he could do.

THE END.

(Look out for another rollicking fine story of St. Sam's next week, entitled: "THE HEAD'S MOVIE MASTER-PIECE!" You'll roar with laughter over it, chums!)

Dr. BIRCHEMALL—FILM

STAB!

DICKY NUGENT.



If you've got the blues, sample this tonic story by young Dicky Nugent, of the Second Form at Greyfriars. It's guaranteed to make even a cat laugh!

JACK JOLLY, the handsome young captain of the Fourth at St. Sam's, stood before Dr. Birchmull's desk.

The Head, who was a keen reader of the Greek classics, looked up from his Zonophone, with a frown of annoyance.

"Well, Jolly, what the merry dickens have you barged in for?—or to put it in vulgar parlance, what is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"I hope you won't think it cheeky of me, sir, but I wanted to ask you whether you'd reconsider your decision about allowing Mr. Reeler to produce a film at St. Sam's."

Dr. Birchmull's frown deepened. "Certainly not, Jolly. You are well aware of the condition. I laid down. Unless I can be the leading actor in the film, I decline to allow it."

"But you can't get for toffy, sir!" ejaculated Jack Jolly, forgetting in his eagerness the respect due to a revered and majestic headmaster.

Dr. Birchmull glared. "What?" he cried. "Can't act for toffy? After spending days on end studying 'Film-Acting for the Beginner'?"

How dare you make such a remark, Jolly! And anyway, who are you, a mere junior, to address me in such a disrespectful manner?"

The captain of the Fourth looked rather sheepish, and became as meek as a lamb again.

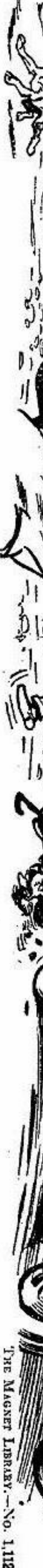
"Sorry, sir—"

"Sorry, rats!" said the Head, with a leer. "Give me over that bunch!"

Jack Jolly stammered, and obeyed.

"What are you going to do, sir?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing! I merely require it for the purpose of dusting my desk!" answered the Head sarcastically; then, saying unkind things about the Head.



in a voice like the rumble of thunder, he roared: "Bend over!"

The captain of the Fourth, with a groan, resigned himself to his fate, and Dr. Birchmull, with a cruel grin hovering over his dile, began to lay the birch on well and truly.

For the next ten minutes, no sound was heard in the Head's study save the steady swishing of the instrument of agony as he bore his punishment with unflinching fortitude.

Only when the birch had been worn to a stump did Dr. Birchmull desist.

"Now buzz off, Jolly—or, as the vulgar would put it, you may go!" he said, with a satisfied smirk.

In again whenever you feel like it, my boy. I can always do with a bit of exercise."

Jack Jolly flung a look of scorn at the tyrant of St. Sam's, then flung out of the study. Obviously it was no good trying to argue the toss any further that day.

Merry and Bright, Jack's two chums, were waiting for him round the corner of the passage. They gave him a questioning glance.

"Anything doing, old chap?" asked Merry.

"Yes. A licking for one!" answered Jack Jolly robbingly. "I'm afraid it's hopeless. The old donkey is as obstinate as a mule, and he simply won't listen to horse-sense."

Merry and Bright looked awfully fed-up. They were as keen as mustard on the film that Flicker Y. Reeler wanted to produce, for the grate of stunts—dropping from aeroplanes into motor-cars, fighting wild animals, et cetera. As soon as the Head hears that, he'll do anything to get out of it, and we can go ahead without him. Then everything in the garden will be lovely!"

"M-m-m-my hat!"

Jack Jolly and Merry spent a minute thinking it out. Then they grinned. "It's a corking wheeze!" ejaculated Jack Jolly. "It ought to work like a charm!"

"We all know what a coward the Head is at heart. He'll be scared stiff at the idea of risking his neck for the movies!" chuckled Merry.

"Oh, rather!"

"No time like the present, you chaps!" said Jack Jolly briskly. "I vote we run down to Muggleton and see Mr. Reeler at once!"

The chums of the Fourth, without more ado, sprinted over to the bicycle shed and got out their jiggers, and within a few minutes they were whizzing along the dusty lanes towards Muggleton at breakneck speed.

They found Flicker Y. Reeler, the grate film magnet, in his luxurious sweet of rooms at the Muggleton Arms Hotel. Needless to say, he welcomed them with open arms.

"Waal, I swear! If it ain't the kids from the collidge!" he ejaculated. "Step right in, boys, and have a stick of chewing-gum!"

Jack Jolly & Co. accepted the kind invitation, and Jack Jolly explained what they had come about. Flicker Y. Reeler listened with grate interest to Bright's branawave, and as he began to get the hang of it, he fairly hung on Jack Jolly's words.

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets!" he chuckled, when he understood the wheeze. "Waal, that's the dandiest little old Herring Pond! I can just kinder picture your boss' face when he finds he's the hero of a thriller! Ho, ho, ho!"

And Mr. Flicker Y. Reeler laughed loud and long.

"Then you think it's a good idea?" asked Jack Jolly.

"I guess 'good' ain't strong enough. That ought to be a new word invented for it," grinned the film magnet. "I kinder calculate we'll go right back and see the old doc, instanter!"

Mr. Flicker Y. Reeler insisted on Jack Jolly & Co. accompanying him in his grate limousine, promising to have their jiggers delivered to the school later on.

Altogether, it was a delightful and eggshattering experience, and Jack Jolly & Co. arrived at St. Sam's again feeling in grate spirits.

Leaving the car in the quad, they all went into the Skool House together and made a bee-line for Dr. Birchmull's study.

"You again?" he shouted, glaring at Mr. Flicker Y. Reeler. "What the merry dickens—"

"Howdy, Doc?" grinned the grate film-producer cheerfully. "I guess you didn't expect me, hay?"

"I did not!" snorted Dr. Birchmull. "At our last meeting, sir, you had the infernal impudence to offer me a piffing part as one of the crowd in your paltry production. I certainly didn't expect that you'd show your face again after giving me such cheek as that!"

Flicker Y. Reeler pulled a rye face. "Say, Doc, forget it!" he said. "Cut it right out!"

Dr. Birchmull shuddered. To his sensitive and skollery ear the film magnet's American eggpressions were positively an eyecore.

"I presume you have not returned to this ancient edifice merely for the purpose of wasting my giddy time?"

"You're sure said a mouthful!" agreed Flicker Y. Reeler.

"Meaning 'No jolly fear!' I suppose," nodded the Head, translating Mr. Reeler's remark into the more classical English. "Very well. In that case, I'll tell you what I think about it. You already know my terms, of course?"

"I guess so. You figger on being the big noise in the picture, hay?"

"The big noise!" repeated Dr. Birchmull, in surprise. "I didn't know it was going to be a talking film!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the American. "You don't quite get me, sir. I mean, you're aiming at being the star in the film, ain't you?"

"Eggshady!"

"Waal, that's the position I'm here to offer you, sir. I guess I'm ready to give you the leading part in my film, if you'll give me the run of this little old skool to produce it in."

Dr. Birchmull's crafty little eyes began to sparkle again.

"You mean it? You mean that I shall be the handsome hero and the central figure of the peace—the bright star beside which all others pall into insignificance?" he asked eagerly.

"Yep, bo! You've said it!"

Dr. Birchmull blew his nose violently. "I thought you'd come round in the end!" he said. "Mr. Reeler, I'm glad you've found out your mistake. I congratulate you!"

"Grate snakes! Do you? asked the American gentleman in surprise. "What for?"

"I congratulate you on obtaining the services of a born film-actor, whose name will soon be a household word, completely eclipsing the fame of such small fry as Douglas Mix and Tom Fairbanks!" said Dr. Birchmull, beaming with eggshattering.

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets!"

"Well, that's only fare and square, I suppose," nodded Dr. Birchmull, coming down to earth again. "Here's a pen, Mr. Reeler. Draw up the merry old agreement and I'll sign it like a shot!"

Jack Jolly & Co. chuckled to themselves as they saw how easily the Head was falling into their trap.

Flicker Y. Reeler, grinning all over his dile, wrote out an agreement and handed it over to the Head. It ran like this:

"I, Alfred Birchmull, M.A., D.D., having been offered the position of leading actor in a film to be produced at St. Sam's Collidge, hereby grant to Flicker Y. Reeler, producer of aforesaid film, the run of the Collidge and its grounds for a period of seven (?) days from to-day."

With a flourish Dr. Birchmull willingly signed his name as witness.

Flicker Y. Reeler then folded up the document and put it in his pocket with a grunt of satisfaction.

"And now I guess I'll tell you something about the part you'll be eggshattered to play," he remarked casually.

"Ah, now you're talking!" smirked Dr. Birchmull. "Shall I be the handsome young headmaster of a grate seat of learning, or are you going to make me the aristocratic hero of a society film?"

"Neither!" answered Mr. Reeler, chuckling to himself. "The part you will have to take, Doc, will be that of Flash Harry, gentleman crook, the uncrowned King of the Underworld!"

Dr. Birchmull's smile vanished.

"Look here, Mr. Reeler, this is no time for joking or jesting—"

"I guess I was never more serious," said the American. "Either you'll be Flash Harry or you won't have a part at all. Now listen to what you have to do in the film. First, you'll have to jump from a blazing aeroplane on to the roof of St. Sam's."

"What?" yelled the Head.

"Then you'll have to swing along

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