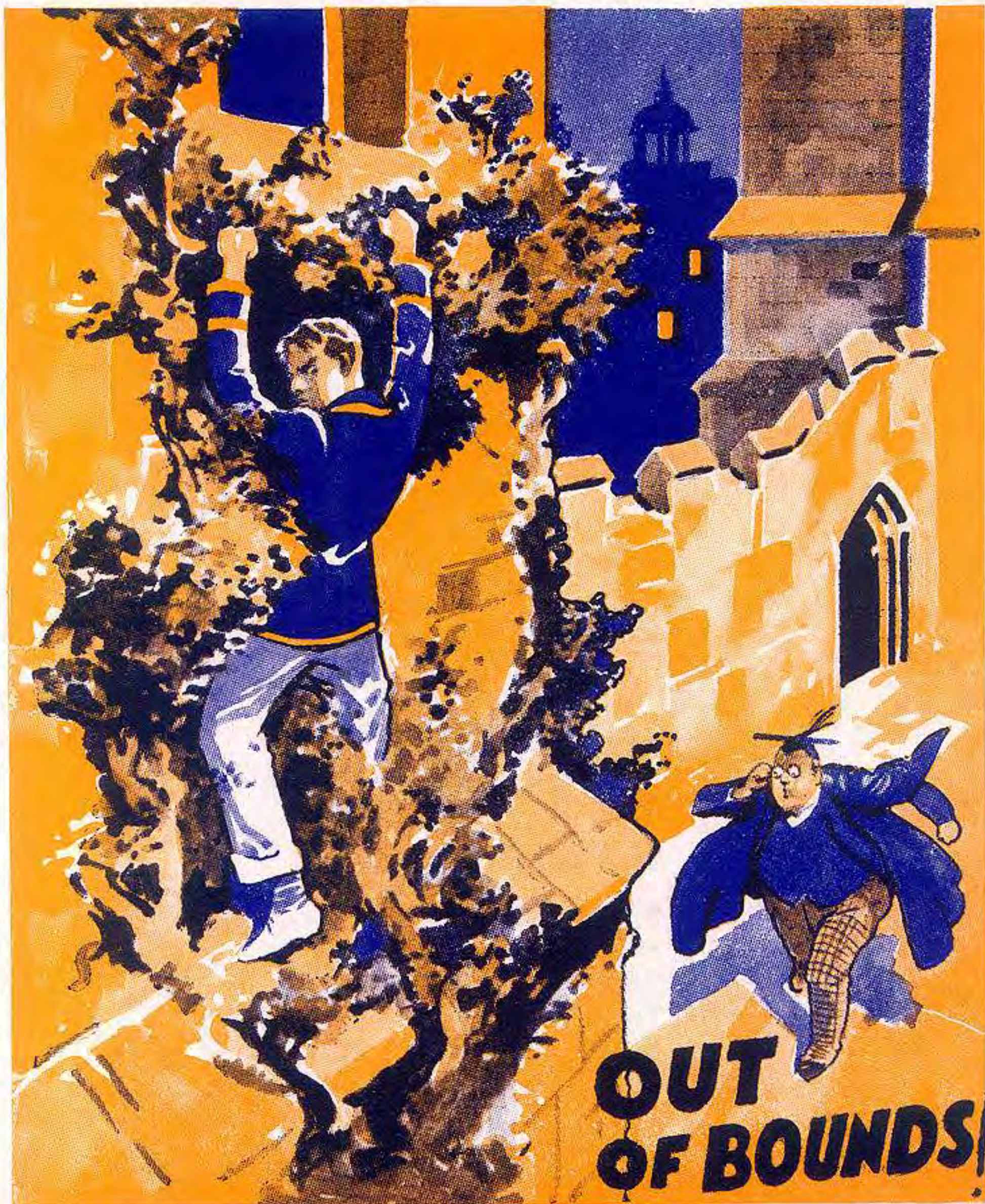


WHO WALLOPED WIGGINS?

(This Week's Sensational School Story of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars.)

The MAGNET 2^D





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., The Fleetway
House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

ONE of my Darlington readers has been fired with enthusiasm—and ambition—by Frank Richards' new serial. So he has written to me to tell me that

HE WANTS TO GO TO THE SOUTH SEAS!

How does he set about it? he asks. Well, if my chum has plenty of money, there is nothing to stop him fitting out a trading schooner and setting sail for these romantic islands. But, otherwise, there isn't much chance of him getting out there. Very occasionally jobs in the South Sea islands are advertised in the newspapers—but only experts have a hope of getting them, as they are all highly technical jobs, such as pilots, harbour masters, engineers, and so on.

There are thousands of islands out there which white men have not yet settled on, and anyone who cares to live on them can have them for the taking. The majority of them, however, are off the usual trading vessel tracks, so it is essential to have some sort of vessel to establish contact with the rest of humanity. Many of the men who have settled on South Sea islands are ex-sailors, who like the climate and the free-and-easy life. Several of them have prospered extremely well, but a large number have "gone to the wall," and become what are known as "beachcombers." A "beachcomber" is a man who picks up a precarious living in any way he can, and drifts from one island to another. I am afraid that the chances of a boy without friends or plenty of money becoming a "beachcomber" are too strong for me to advise any boy to think about emigrating to the South Seas.

THE next query this week comes from "Speedway Fan," of Coventry, who asks me the meaning of

SPEEDWAY FLAGS.

There are six different coloured flags used in Speedway racing, most of which will be familiar to those of my readers who follow up this exciting sport. The *Green* flag is used during a race to give warning that there is an obstruction. The *Red* flag means "stop." The *Yellow* flag tells the rider that there is one more lap to go, and the *Black and White* flag signals the finish of the race. As regards the start of a race, a *Green* light or a *White* flag is used.

A flag that is not often brought into use on Speedways is the *Black* flag. This informs a defaulting rider that he must withdraw from the race.

In response to requests from many readers, I am giving you a further selection of

THINGS YOU'D HARDLY BELIEVE!

Water that will not Boil Eggs! The water of Lake Titicaca, in the Andes, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,276.

cannot be used for boiling eggs! Nor will iron rust in it! Only one kind of fish can live in it!

A Letter was Written on the Back of a Stamp! The stamp on which it was written was posted in Japan to an address in America—and safely delivered to the addressee!

A Postage Stamp Nearly Caused a War! The Dominican Republic issued a postage stamp in 1900 in which the frontier between that country and Hayti was wrongly drawn. The Haytians were so incensed that war was threatened unless the stamp was withdrawn. It was withdrawn!

An Eight Pound Radish! A farmer in New Zealand has recently grown a radish weighing eight pounds! It is two feet six inches in length!

A Man was once put to Death for Killing a Cat! It happened in ancient Egypt, where cats were looked upon as sacred animals. A Roman killed a stray cat, and the populace promptly punished him by putting him to death on the spot!

There are ten animals which are Feared by Snakes! Most animals fall easy prey to snakes—except the following snake-killers: Mongoose, Hedgehog, Armadillo, Wild Pig, Swallow-tailed Kite, Opossum, Serpent-Eagle, Crane Hawk, Eyed Lizard, and Secretary Bird. King Cobras, Glass Snakes, and Mussurama Snakes are cannibals, and eat other snakes.

NOW FOR SOME REPLIES IN BRIEF.

What Ships Are Allowed to Fly the White Ensign? "Seahorse," of Harwich: The White Ensign is the flag of the British Navy, and none but naval vessels and ships of the Royal Yacht Squadron are permitted to fly it.

What Fish "Shoots" its Prey? "Tom G." of Newhaven: The Archer Fish, which is found in the Indian Ocean, "shoots" its prey with water. It can blow water to a distance of five feet, bringing the flies on which it feeds down to the surface—when, of course, they become the fish's food.

Ready for a chuckle? Right, then here goes! This amusing yarn has been sent to me by Fred Hood, of 288, Easter Road, Leith, and I have dispatched a topping Sheffield Steel penknife to him:



Worried Old Gent: "I say, waiter, did I leave a wad of notes behind?"

Waiter: "Yes, sir—thank you!"



JACK THOMAS, of Wimbledon, asks me to tell him which is

THE OLDEST THAMES TUNNEL,

and when was it constructed? This was called "The Thames Tunnel," and was commenced in 1825. It took seventeen

years to construct. Twenty-three years later it was sold to the East London Railway.

Here are some more interesting facts regarding tunnels under the River Thames: A tunnel was constructed from the Tower across the river, and was opened in 1870, but is now closed. The longest Thames tunnel is the Blackwall Tunnel, which, with approaches, is 1½ miles in length. The most expensive tunnel is the Rotherhithe Tunnel, which cost two million pounds. Other tunnels are the Greenwich Tunnel and the Woolwich Tunnel, and, of course, the various underground railway tunnels.

The same reader also wants to know which was the first bridge to be built over the Thames. This distinction belongs to

LONDON BRIDGE,

which has had a most chequered career! The first timber bridge was constructed in 994, and was swept away by a whirlwind ninety-seven years later. In 1177 the first stone London bridge was commenced, and it took thirty-three years to construct. In 1450, London Bridge was the scene of an all-night battle which raged on the bridge between the Men of Kent and the Men of London. Five years later, seventeen thousand Men of Kent again attacked the bridge, but were driven off.

The most gruesome scene associated with London Bridge was in 1598, when the heads of over thirty traitors were set on pikes and exhibited from the bridge! The present London Bridge was commenced in 1825 and finished in 1831, and was damaged by the fire of 1861, to the extent of over two million pounds.

By the way I almost forgot a clever Greyfriars limerick, for which F. W. Lewis, of 39, Watling Crescent, Eaton Road Estate, Chester, earns a useful leather pocket wallet. Here it is:

Billy Bunter, with puckered brow,
Was dolefully wondering how
He could raid the school shop
And scoff doughnuts and "pop"
Without getting into a "row."

I MUST hold over several replies to readers' queries until next week, otherwise I shall have no space to tell you the splendid programme which I have in store for you next week. Here it is:

"BILLY BUNTER'S BAD LUCK!"

By Frank Richards.

is one of the best yarns I have ever read by this famous author, and is the first of a grand series dealing with the holiday adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. You will find that your interest is held by it from the first line to the last, and, as usual, it is packed full of fun—and thrills! Don't miss it, or you'll be sorry!

Besides, you will all want to read the next instalment of the adventures of Bob, Billy & Co. The next chapters of "The Island Traders" is especially good. Have you written to me yet to tell me how you like this grand yarn?

Doctor Birchomall will figure in "BIRCHEMALL'S BIG BLUNDER!" by our irrepressible contributor, Dicky Nugent—and I'll have a few more interesting paragraphs and answers to queries on my weekly page.

YOUR EDITOR.



Who Walloped Wiggins?

Sensational School Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Sticky!

LOOKING for you men!" Skinner of the Remove put his head into the bikeshed, as he made that announcement. There were five juniors in that building.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent, Hurree Singh and Johnny Bull were standing by their machines, and Bob Cherry was kneeling by his, the jigger being up-ended. Bob was dealing with a puncture, and his friends were waiting for him while he dealt with it.

Bob's usually cheery face wore a frown. It was rather irritating to discover an unexpected puncture just when a fellow was about to start on a spin on a half-holiday. Somebody had lately borrowed that jigger without mentioning the fact to the owner, and left it with a puncture for the owner to attend to when he discovered it. Bob was feeling a deep yearning to find out that somebody and use his features for a punchball.

Skinner's rather hard-featured face wore a cheery grin as he looked in at the Famous Five. Skinner was the bearer of bad news, and he had one of those peculiar natures which find amusement in the discomfort of others.

"Looking for you——"

"Look for somebody else!" suggested Harry Wharton.

"You're wanted!"

"Rats!"

"Loder of the Sixth——"

"Blow Loder!"

"Blow him as hard as you like!" said Skinner genially. "But he wants you on Big Side, and you're to go at once."

Bob Cherry looked up. It was rather an obstinate puncture, and there was sticky solution on Bob's fingers, and a dab of solution on his nose. And his temper was ruffled.

"Tell Loder of the Sixth he can go and eat coke!" he growled.

"You can tell him that yourself, old bean!" said Skinner. "The dear man's not in a good temper. Wingate's been ragging him over the games practice. He was looking like a jolly old demon in a pantomime when he spoke to me."

"Look here! What does Loder want?" asked Wharton, frowning. "We're just going out for a spin for the afternoon."

"Fags!" answered Skinner.

"The cheeky rotter knows that the Remove don't fag!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Games fagging!" said Skinner. He

**It was far from an act of treason—
Mr. Wiggins has never had foes ;
But, for some unaccountable
reason,
He's been punched — and
punched hard—on the nose !**

chuckled. "He's got you there! This is what comes of being such jolly good cricketers! Loder hasn't asked me to fag at bowling for him. I thought he was going to, though, when he called me; but, luckily, he's got a down on you fellows, and he thought of you, and told me to root you out."

"And why couldn't you give us a miss?" demanded Bob. "You were bound to look for us, but you weren't bound to find us."

"The lookfulness was the proper caper," agreed Hurree Janset Ram Singh, "but the findfulness was a boot on the other leg, my esteemed and execrable Skinner!"

"My dear men," said Skinner. "a

chap's bound to carry out the orders of a Sixth Form prefect! I hope you don't think I'm capable of being disobedient or undutiful?"

"You mean you're just as pleased as that beastly bully Loder to muck up our half-holiday!" growled Bob Cherry.

"What a suspicious mind!" sighed Skinner.

"Look here! We're going out," said Johnny Bull. "You can go on looking for us without finding us, Skinner. See?"

"Good egg!" said Bob. "I'll leave this dashed puncture, and borrow Smithy's jigger—he won't mind! Give us a couple of minutes, Skinner, and that will be enough. Go and look for us in the Cloisters, or in the tuckshop—any old place!"

"Right as rain!" said Harry Wharton. "Look in here again in five minutes, Skinner, and tell Loder that we're out of gates on our bikes, see?"

Skinner shook his head.

"I'm afraid that would rather smack of deception," he said blandly.

"What?" roared the Famous Five, with one voice.

This was rather too "thick" from Harold Skinner. If there was one fellow in the Greyfriars Remove who was nearly as untruthful as Billy Bunter, it was Harold Skinner. A fellow who smoked in his study, who broke school bounds after lights out, and who told unnumbered untruths to cover up his many delinquencies, was really not the fellow to set up as the possessor of an unusually tender conscience.

"Sorry, and all that!" said Skinner regretfully. "But I'm like that American in the story, you know. I cannot tell a lie."

"Who's asking you to tell a lie, you sneaking worm?" roared Johnny Bull. "We shall be out of gates, and you can tell Loder we're out of gates."

"It will be the truth, you worm!" said Frank Nugent. "It may come awkward to you to tell the truth for once, but you can manage it."

Skinner shook his head again.

He was not a particular fellow about the truth, and the chums of the Remove were very particular in such matters, and had, indeed, often told Skinner what they thought of him and his dingy lying. So it was quite entertaining to Skinner to adopt a tone of lofty admonition.

"I'm afraid it would be a bit deceitful," he said. "I'd like to oblige you men—like it no end. But I couldn't be deceitful on your account. It's asking too much of a fellow."

Harry Wharton looked at him.

"You mean that if we get out of gates, you're going to tell Loder of the Sixth that you gave us his message before we went?" he asked.

"Well, you see—"

"I see!" growled Bob Cherry. "Loder's going to muck up our half-holiday because Wingate has hunted him down to games practice, and he wants to take it out of somebody, and you're going to help, because you're a sneaking, cringing, ill-natured, malicious worm! Isn't that it?"

Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

"What a nice way of putting it!" he said. "Well, I've told you what Loder says, and you can please yourselves about going. Ta-ta!"

Skinner turned to go.

The chums of the Remove exchanged rather dismal glances. The Remove were exempt from ordinary fagging, which fell to the lot of the Third and the Second. But any First Eleven man could call on juniors to fag at games practice, and, as Skinner had said, Loder had them there! Any fellow but Skinner, in the circumstances, would have looked for them without finding them. But the cad of the Remove was the fellow to develop a strong sense of duty and a very tender conscience, when it was possible to make fellows he disliked "sit up" thereby.

"We're for it!" grunted Wharton.

"Hold on a minute, Skinner," said Bob. He had a tube of solution in his hand, and a glint in his blue eyes.

Skinner looked round again.

"No good asking me to do anything that smacks of deceit, old bean," he said. "I really couldn't."

"I'm not going to ask you to do anything, you cringing worm. But I shan't be using this solution on the bike now—you can have it!"

Skinner stared at it.

"What the thump do you mean? I don't want your solution!"

"I know that. You're going to have it without wanting it," explained Bob Cherry.

"Here, look out! Hands off! Leggo!" yelled Skinner, in alarm, as Bob grasped him. "Keep that muck away from me! Oh, my hat! Grrrrgh! Ooooh! Why, you rotter—Grrrrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skinner struggled frantically in Bob Cherry's powerful grasp. But the sturdy Bob easily held the weedy slacker of the Remove with one hand. With the other, he rubbed the solution into Skinner's hair.

"Take the lot!" he said generously. "I know you don't want it, old bean—but you shouldn't ask for what you don't want." Bob squeezed the last drop of solution into Skinner's hair. "Feel a bit sticky?"

"Ow! Grooogh! Leggo!" shrieked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The stickiness is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

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"Ow! Oooooogh—yooooop!"

"That will keep you busy, old top, while we're busy at games fagging," said Bob. "You'll enjoy the half-holiday as much as we shall now. Do you wish you'd given us a miss, after all?"

"Oooooogh!"

"The missfulness is sometimes better than the milefulness!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on," said Harry Wharton, laughing; and the chums of the Remove left the bikeshed and went in to change for cricket, leaving Harold Skinner clawing frantically at a sticky mop of hair, and perhaps wishing that he had not, after all, been so extremely dutiful for once.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Scene on Big Side!

GERALD LODER of the Sixth Form was not looking good-tempered. On that bright and sunny afternoon in July most of the Greyfriars fellows looked merry and bright.

The other Sixth Form men on Big Side looked cheerful enough. Loder was an exception. He was in flannels, with a handsome bat under his arm, and the green playing fields looked attractive enough to any cricketing fellow—and Loder rather fancied himself as a cricketer.

Certainly he was keen enough to play in the school fixtures. But Loder was a good deal of a slacker, and he loathed slogging at the nets. And on that particular afternoon Loder had planned a little excursion with his friends Carne and Walker, featuring billiards at the Three Fishers up the river.

But Wingate, captain of the school and head of the games, had come down like a wolf on the fold, as it were. According to Wingate, a man who cut games practice could cut games also; and Loder had the choice of turning up at the nets, or seeing his name left out of the list for the Redclyffe match. So Walker and Carne had gone off "on their own," leaving their pal to it.

The bully of the Sixth had only one consolation, which was to make others share his own discomfort. He had a "down"—and a very heavy down—on the cheery chums of the Remove, and as he had no doubt that they had made their own plans for that half-holiday it was a consolation to call on them to fag on the cricket field. Keen cricketers like Harry Wharton & Co. had no rooted objection to games fagging, which was more or less useful to them in the way of instruction; but they did not like Loder, and they did not like having a half-holiday "mucked up." It was a solace to the bully of the Sixth to see five faces almost as clouded as his own.

"What do you kids want?" asked Wingate, as the Famous Five put in an appearance—not joyfully.

"They're fagging for me," said Loder, before any of the juniors could reply.

"Oh!" said the Greyfriars captain.

"We were going out for a long spin this afternoon, Loder," said Harry Wharton. "And if you don't really want us—"

"I do!" said Loder.

"Dash it all, you don't want the lot of them, Loder!" said Wingate, rather testily.

"Some of these kids are rather hot stuff at bowling," said Loder. "The nigger especially. You can take the ball, Hurree Singh."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dark eyes gleamed for a moment. He did not like being called a "nigger"—a circumstance of which Loder was well aware. But he took the ball obediently.

Wingate looked impatient. Loder was within his rights, though he was stretching them a little. But the Greyfriars captain said no more. He had already talked very plainly to Gerald Loder that afternoon, and he did not want any more unpleasantness if he could help it.

Loder went to the wicket. Wingate looked on rather grimly. He wanted to give Loder a chance in the cricket, all the more because he did not like him personally; but Loder had been in rotten form of late, and if he did not improve his name was not going down for the Redclyffe match—that was settled.

Loder was in a savage, irritated, discontented mood; it was not likely that he would be at his best. He was, as a matter of fact, at his worst; and had he considered the matter a little more carefully he might not have picked out the demon bowler of the Remove to send down the ball. It was good business, so far as practice went, but not from the point of view of showing off Loder's powers with the willow.

There was a gleam in Hurree Singh's eyes as he prepared to bowl—a gleam that his comrades knew. The dusky junior took a little run, turned himself into a catherine wheel, and the leather went down like a bullet. Loder of the Sixth did not even know where the ball went till the crash of the wicket enlightened him. Bob Cherry, who was keeping wicket, chuckled as he picked up the ball. Loder stared at the sticks, and Wingate stared at Loder, and two or three Sixth Form men smiled.

Loder controlled his feelings with an effort. Bob's chuckle nearly earned him a swipe from Loder's bat.

"Catch, Inky!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh caught the ball and bowled again. Loder looked out very sharply for that bullet-like ball which had taken him by surprise. But this time it was a slow, which curled round Loder's bat in the most unexpected manner and laid his middle stump low.

"How's that, umpire?" chirruped Johnny Bull.

Loder breathed hard and deep. Wingate grunted. A dozen seniors gathered round to look on. Sixth Form wickets were not supposed to go down like this to fag bowling.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled a dusky smile as he grasped the ball again. It was his duty, of course, to give a Sixth Form bat his very best bowling. In this case it was a very pleasant duty. Loder's face, as Nugent remarked to Wharton, was worth a guinea a box. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, for a junior, was a wonderful bowler, and there were good cricketers in the Sixth and Fifth who would not have found him easy to deal with. Loder in his present form was "pie" to the dusky bowler. The chums of the Remove were thinking that Loder would probably soon be sorry that he had called on their services that afternoon.

The ball went down again, and this time it looked easy to Loder, and he swiped at it. How he missed it he never

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knew; perhaps it was not so easy as it looked. Clatter went the bails!

"Good old Inky!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was the "hat trick" if it had been a game. Loder's face was crimson with rage and mortification. Wingate grunted again very expressively, and some of the seniors laughed. Loder glared along the pitch at the smiling, dusky face of the Nabob of Bhanipur. His grasp was almost convulsive on the cane handle of the bat. He was tempted to stride along the pitch and lay that bat round the dusky bowler's shoulders.

"Try that again!" grunted Wingate.

"Certainly, esteemed and venerable Wingate," answered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gripped the ball again. Loder watched him like a cat. He was being made to look a fool, and he knew that the games fags were enjoying it; yet it was scarcely possible to find fault with a fag for giving him good bowling. But Loder was on the very edge of his self-control now, and an explosion was imminent.

Smack!

This time the bat met the ball, and it flew. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh gave a little hop, and his dusky hand flashed up. There was a yell from the Co. in sheer exuberant delight.

"Well caught!"

"Caught and bowled!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loder glared at the dusky junior as

"You kids can cut!" snapped Wingate, and the chums of the Remove cleared off, leaving Loder still sprawling and the captain of Greyfriars glaring down at him in towering wrath. Not only Loder's outbreak of temper, but the fact that Lower boys had seen such an exhibition on the Sixth Form ground, roused Wingate's ire.

"You cowardly rotter!" hooted Wingate. "What do you think you are up to? Pitching into a fag for taking your wicket, by gum! Is that what you call cricket, you loafer?"

Loder panted, and scrambled up.

"Get off the ground!" snapped Wingate.

"I—I—"

"You're not wanted here!" hooted the Greyfriars captain. "You never



"Keep that muck away from me—oh, my hat! Grrrrgh! Oooch!" Skinner struggled frantically, but the sturdy Bob easily held him with one hand, while he rubbed the solution into the weedy slacker's hair with the other.

The ball came down like a bullet again. This time Loder tried to block it, but he did not succeed. For a fourth time his wicket went to pieces, and there was a laugh from the seniors. Wingate gave a snort, and Loder glanced at him with glittering eyes. He knew what was in the Greyfriars captain's mind as well as if Wingate had told him. A man whose sticks went down like this to fag bowling was not a man whose name could be put in the First Eleven list. Loder almost choked with rage. He had turned up unwillingly at the nets, but so far as his chances for the Redclyffe match were concerned he might as well have gone with Carne and Walker to the Three Fishers and played billiards.

Bob Cherry tossed the ball back to the nabob, grinning. Then, as Loder's eyes turned on him, he jumped back. Only by a great effort at self-control did Loder restrain his desire to give the grinning junior a "lick" with the cricket bat.

his hand held up the ball. He had hit the ball this time—back into the bowler's ready hand! Hurree Jamset Ram Singh held up the ball and winked at his comrades. Perhaps it was that wink that did it. Loder dropped his bat, tore along the pitch, and grasped the astonished Nabob of Bhanipur, and boxed his ears right and left.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"You rotten bully!"

"Stop that!"

"Oh, my esteemed hat!" yelled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, struggling wildly with the bully of the Sixth. "Rescue! Yaroooooh! Oh crikey!"

Wingate, for a moment, stared on stupefied. Then, with a thunderous brow, he strode at Loder, grasped him by the shoulders, and dragged him away from the yelling nabob.

"You rotter!" he roared. "You dummy! You cur!"

With a swing of his sinewy arms, he sent Loder sprawling in the grass. Loder crashed down heavily.

wanted to turn up—well, now you can go! Go, and keep clear! Get off the ground before I put you off, you rotter!"

"I'll please myself about that!" panted Loder savagely.

"Will you?"

Wingate strode at him, and grasped him by the shoulders and spun him round. In sheer desperation, Loder struck out. The next moment, he was crumpling up in the grasp of the Greyfriars captain. Panting and gasping, struggling and squirming, Gerald Loder was bundled off the field and pitched down in a spluttering heap. Seldom, indeed, did "old Wingate" lose his temper, but he had lost it now, with a vengeance! Leaving Loder spluttering helplessly, he walked back to the cricketers, and it was some minutes before the bully of the Sixth recovered sufficiently to pick himself up and limp away to the House.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bad for Bunter!

"I SAY, you fellows!" Billy Bunter of the Remove was adorning the ancient gateway of Greyfriars School with his plump and portly person when the Famous Five came in from their spin. Owing to Loder's peculiar proceedings on Big Side, the chums of the Remove had been able to get out after all, without a great deal of delay, and they had enjoyed their half-holiday, in spite of Loder and all his works. As they wheeled in their bikes, ruddy and cheery after a long ride and more than ready for tea, Billy Bunter dawned on them.

"I say, you fellows! Heard?" asked Bunter.

"Heard what?" asked Bob Cherry, halting. "What's the jolly old news, Bunter?"

"Then you haven't heard?" said Bunter eagerly. William George Bunter liked to be the bearer of news, especially startling news. "I say, you fellows, I can tell you the whole school's talking about it! You fellows never hear anything!" added Bunter.

"Well, get it off your chest!" said Harry Wharton. "What on earth's happened? Don't say your postal order's come!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! As a matter of fact, I was expecting a postal order—"

"Is that the news?" asked Bob Cherry. "We've heard that, old fat bean!"

"No, you ass! But it hasn't come—"

"That's no news, either!"

"We've heard that!" assented Johnny Bull.

"Oh, don't rot!" said Bunter. "I can tell you it's frightfully exciting. I'll

tell you fellows over tea! As my postal order hasn't come, I'll tea with you fellows, and you can tea with me tomorrow, see?"

"Certainly!" said Nugent. "We're teasing in Hall! Come by all means!"

"Quite welcome!" said Bob.

"The welcome is terrific, my esteemed Bunter!"

Snort from Billy Bunter! Tea in Hall had no attraction for him. He had, in fact, already tea'd in Hall, and was now looking for tea in a study. One tea, to Billy Bunter, was rather in the nature of a snack before a meal.

"Come on, you men," said Johnny Bull. "I want my tea!"

"I say, you fellows, hold on!" exclaimed Bunter. "I can tell you, it's frightfully exciting—the school's fairly buzzing with it!"

Billy Bunter would rather have told the news over tea in the study. But if there was to be no tea in the study, he had to tell it, anyhow.

"Cough it up, then!" said Harry Wharton.

"Loder, you know—he, he, he—"

"Oh, what about Loder?" asked Bob. Out of gates, cycling cheerily up hill and down dale, the Famous Five had forgotten the existence of Loder of the Sixth.

"There's been a fearful row," said Bunter impressively. "I didn't happen to see it, as I was in Smithy's study at the time—"

"What were you doing in Smithy's study, you fat villain?"

"I mean, I wasn't in Smithy's study. If Smithy makes out that anybody's had his toffee, I don't know anything about it—I haven't been near his study. In fact, I hardly remember which is his study. I was in my own study, writing lines for Quelch, you know, when Loder

tried to brain Wingate with a cricket bat—"

"What?" yelled the Famous Five.

"Made you jump, what?" grinned Bunter. "I told you it was frightfully exciting! Awful row on Big Side, while you fellows have been out! It happened hours ago—"

"Tell us about it, old fat man!" chuckled Bob. And there was a chuckle from the Co. They knew now what was coming—with additions, adornments and embroideries from Billy Bunter's fertile imagination.

"I wish I'd seen it," said Bunter. "But I know all about it, you fellows. From what I hear, Loder bagged some fags for games practice—I don't know who they were."

"We can guess!" grinned Nugent. "Go on!"

"Well, one of them buzzed the ball at Loder's head—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Loder collared him, and laid his bat about him," said Bunter. "I haven't seen the chap, but I hear that he was fearfully hurt—bones broken, I believe—"

"The breakfulness of the esteemed bones was not terrific!" chortled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky! You don't know anything about it, you know! I can jolly well tell you that the chap was stunned—"

"Phew!"

"Loder seems to have attacked him like a hooligan," went on Bunter, blinking at the grinning five through his big spectacles. "Wingate rushed up just in time to save the fellow's life, from what I hear. Loder turned on him like a tiger, and tried to brain him with his bat—"

"Splendid!" exclaimed Bob. "Go it!"

"I'm telling you fellows exactly what happened! Then Wingate got the bat away from Loder and let him have it, right and left!" said Bunter impressively. "Loder's eyes are blacked—"

"Great pip!"

"His nose fairly smashed—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Five or six teeth knocked out—"

"Bravo!"

"I haven't seen him," continued Bunter. "I fancy he's keeping out of sight, in that state, you know."

"He would—in that state!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "You're sure that old Wingate didn't rend him limb from limb, and strew the hungry churchyard with his bones?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, it happened exactly as I've told you. The fellows who were on games fagging must have seen it, but I don't know who they were—"

"Then we can tell you something you don't know!" grinned Bob. "We were the fellows!"

"You?" ejaculated Bunter.

"Little us! But we didn't see any battle, murder, or sudden death! All we saw was Loder smacking old Inky's head, and Wingate lugging him off."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" said Bunter, quite taken aback.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five, quite entertained by the expression on the fat face of the Owl of the Remove.

"Anyhow, I jolly well know that Wingate handled Loder!" said Bunter. "All the fellows are talking about it. And I can tell you that everybody's jolly glad that cad Loder got chucked off Big Side—"

"Shurrup!" breathed Bob Cherry, as

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he sighted a Sixth Form man coming in at the gates.

But the Owl of the Remove, whose range of vision was limited, in spite of his big spectacles, did not see Loder of the Sixth coming in, and he saw no reason for shutting up. Shutting up did not appeal to Billy Bunter, anyhow.

"He jolly well was chucked off Big Side," declared Bunter, "and he's jolly well chucked out of the First Eleven, too, and I'm jolly glad! Loder's a beastly bully—"

"Quiet, you ass!" gasped Harry Wharton.

Loder had glanced round, and was striding to the spot. Evidently he had heard Billy Bunter's happy remarks.

"What the dickens are you fellows blinking at?" asked Bunter. "Blessed if I can make you out! You know jolly well that Loder is a beastly bully and a rotten cad, and— Yaroooooh! Oh crikey! Leggo! Whoop!" Billy Bunter spun round, as a heavy grasp was laid on his shoulder, and blinked in utter horror at the enraged face of Loder of the Sixth. "Oh crumbs! I—I didn't see you, Loder! Wow!"

Smack! Smack! "Yow-ow-ow!" roared Bunter. "Leave off, you beast! Whoop! I say, Loder, I ain't glad that Wingate chucked you off Big Side! Yooop! I—I was just telling these fellows that you ain't a beastly bully! Whoop-hoop! I say— Yarooooop!"

Smack! Smack! "I say, you fellows— Yaroooooh! Oh crikey! Leggo, you beast!" shrieked Billy Bunter, struggling frantically in Loder's grasp. "Oh, my hat! Leave off smacking my head, you rotter! Yaroooooh!"

Smack! Smack! For the second time that afternoon Gerald Loder had lost his temper. Even a good-tempered fellow might have been annoyed by Billy Bunter's remarks.

He smacked right and left, and Bunter yelled and roared and struggled, and tore himself away at last, and ran. "Stop!" shouted Loder.

He had not finished yet. Apparently he thought that Bunter had not had enough. Bunter's impression, on the other hand, was that he had had too much. He ran for his fat life.

Loder charged after him. "Hook it, Bunter!" yelled Bob Cherry.

Bunter did not need telling that. He ran his hardest; in fact, in too great a hurry to look where he was going. In an unfortunate moment for himself, Mr. Wiggins, the master of the Third Form, crossed the path from the gates, and Bunter crashed without even seeing him.

"Oooooogh!" gasped Bunter. "Wooooogh!" gurgled Mr. Wiggins. And both of them sat down quite suddenly.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

No Luck!

"O O O O O O O G H!" "Oh!" "Yurrrrrgh!" "Bless my soul! Ooooooh!"

Loder of the Sixth halted, just in time to save himself from sprawling over Bunter and Mr. Wiggins. He turned and walked quickly away in another direction. Harry Wharton & Co., leaving their bicycles, ran up to render first aid.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What—what—what—" stuttered Mr. Wiggins, quite bewildered.

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent ran to help the Third Form master. Bob

Cherry grasped Bunter to heave him up.

"Ow! Leggo!" yelled Bunter. "You beast, leggo! I never said you were a beastly bully! Yaroooooh! You can ask those chaps! They heard me! Leggo, will you? Yaroooooh!"

"You silly ass, it's not Loder!" gasped Bob. "Shut up, you potty porpoise!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter, realising that he was not in Loder's grasp. "I say, keep that beast off! Smacking a fellow's head, you know! Wow!"

Bob heaved him up, and Bunter stood gasping and spluttering. Wharton and Nugent performed the same service for Mr. Wiggins.

"What—what—what—" stuttered Mr. Wiggins. "I—I have been—been knocked over! Someone ran into me, I think! Bless my soul!"

Little Mr. Wiggins, who was almost as short-sighted as Billy Bunter, blinked round over his glasses.

"Did you run into me, Bunter?" he gasped.

"Oh, no!" spluttered Bunter, in alarm. It was rather a serious matter to charge over a Form master, and Mr. Wiggins was looking breathless and very much annoyed indeed. "I—I was just walking, sir—"

"You silly owl!" breathed Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"What—what—what—" exclaimed Mr. Wiggins. "How dare you prevaricate, Bunter! How dare you rush about the quadrangle, and rush into a Form

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master! I shall report this to Mr. Quelch! Oh dear! Oh!"

"I—I—I didn't run into you, sir!" gasped Bunter. "Besides, that beast Loder was after me!"

"Pah!" snapped Mr. Wiggins.

He turned and gasped his way towards the House. A charge from Billy Bunter was a serious affair. It would have told even on a hefty man on a football field. Mr. Wiggins was not a hefty man, and he was quite unaccustomed to receiving a charge. He tottered away in a gasping and gurgling state.

Billy Bunter, gasping even more emphatically than Mr. Wiggins, leaned on an elm and blinked dismally at the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows— Groogh! I'm winded! I say, if that beast goes to Quelch and makes out that I barged him over—"

"Fathead!"

The chums of the Remove went back to their machines and wheeled them away, leaving Billy Bunter to splutter, leaning on the elm.

For quite a long time the fat Owl leaned and spluttered and gasped and gurgled. Bunter was not well provided with wind at the best of times, and what little he had was all expended now.

As he stood there spluttering, his eyes fell on an envelope that lay on the ground a few feet away.

Evidently it had been dropped by Mr. Wiggins when Bunter bowled him over. Mr. Wiggins had been too breathless

and confused to notice it, and it had not caught the eyes of Harry Wharton & Co. Billy Bunter detached himself from the elm at last and picked it up.

He felt that he was in luck.

Wiggins had dropped that letter, and if Bunter returned it to him, it might have the effect of placating him, and preventing a report to the fat owl's Form master.

The envelope was not addressed; neither was the flap sealed. It seemed to contain a square of cardboard, as Bunter felt it in his fat fingers.

What it contained was no business of Billy Bunter's, and perhaps, for that reason, it interested the inquisitive Owl. Minding his own business had never been one of Bunter's weaknesses.

He pulled out the flap, which was pushed inside the envelope, and took out the square of cardboard to look at it. It bore a printed inscription:

COURTFIELD HALL,
ADMIT ONE.
No. 10. Row B.
Friday evening, July—

There was not much in that to reward Bunter's inquisitiveness. It was a ticket of admission to the lecture hall at Courtfield for Friday evening that week. But though the ticket had no interest for Billy Bunter, who was not keen on lectures on serious subjects, no doubt it had an interest for Mr. Wiggins, who had paid five shillings for it. The fat Owl slipped it into his pocket, and rolled away, feeling that he had the means of making his peace with the Third Form master.

As he rolled into the House, he came on Wingate of the Sixth.

"Here, Bunter!" called out Wingate. "I was just going to fetch you. You're wanted in your Form master's study."

"Oh crikey! I—I say, Wingate—"

"Cut off!"

"Oh dear!"

Billy Bunter rolled away to Mr. Quelch's study. Wiggins evidently had already made his report to the Remove master, and it was too late for Billy Bunter to make his peace. Still, if Wiggins was with Quelch— Unfortunately Wiggins was not with Quelch. Having acquainted Mr. Quelch with Bunter's obstreperous conduct, Mr. Wiggins had gone to his own study. Mr. Quelch was alone when Bunter presented himself.

The Remove master gave the fat Owl a severe glance.

"Bunter! Mr. Wiggins has informed me that you rushed into him in the quadrangle, and knocked him over—"

"I—I—I didn't—" gasped Bunter, "and it was an accident, too—quite an accident—"

"Such accidents must not be allowed to happen, Bunter! Mr. Wiggins has had a very painful shock—"

"So—so have I, sir."

Mr. Quelch glared at him. Apparently, the Remove master regarded Bunter's shock as a matter of no moment.

"You will take two hundred lines, Bunter."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"You may go!"

"But, sir—"

"You may go, Bunter."

"I was going to say—"

"Leave my study!"

Mr. Quelch stretched out his hand to a cane; and Billy Bunter left the study promptly.

"Beast!" he murmured, as he went down the passage.

Billy Bunter's next proceeding ought to have been to head for Mr. Wiggins' study to return the ticket. But that

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was not his next proceeding. As Mr. Wiggins had got him two hundred lines, Bunter had no desire whatever to oblige Mr. Wiggins; on the other hand, he found consolation in the idea of "old Wiggins" hunting for his ticket without finding it. Which, in Bunter's opinion, would serve the beast jolly well right!

About an hour later, when William George Bunter rolled out into the quad, he was gratified by the sight of Mr. Wiggins, bent double, rooting along the path, blinking to and fro through his glasses—evidently in search of a lost ticket!

Billy Bunter grinned and rolled on with the ticket in his pocket, leaving Wiggins to root!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Loder's Chance!

B UZZZZ!

Gerald Loder, seated in an armchair in the prefects' room, had a newspaper in his hands, and was apparently reading it. Over the top of the newspaper, however, his eyes rested on a group of Sixth Form men in the doorway—Wingate, Gwynne, Tom North, and Sykes. They were talking cricket—discussing the Redclyffe match; which was shortly due. Probably they did not observe Loder in the room; at all events, they gave him no heed. Loder's chance of playing in that match had been slim; but such as it was, it was washed out now. That exhibition of savage temper on Big Side had "fed-up" Wingate; and Loder had been dropped like a hot potato.

For that, however, Loder cared less than for the fact that the Greyfriars captain had laid hands on him, and pitched him off the cricket ground; a humiliation that the bully of the Sixth could not forgive.

Fighting was unknown in the Greyfriars Sixth; especially among the prefects; but that would not have deterred Loder from calling Wingate to account, had there been the faintest chance of "getting away with it." It would have rejoiced his heart to stand up to George Wingate with the gloves on, and knock him out—if he could have done it. But he knew that he could not; and he knew that he lacked the courage to try it on, even if he had believed that he had a chance of pulling it off. What had happened was humiliating enough, without a thrashing to follow it up. Ever since it had happened Loder's thoughts had been running on vengeance; but he was not thinking of open methods.

He was thinking of vengeance now, as he pretended to read his newspaper, and listened to the cheery talk of the group of cricketers in the doorway.

Wingate seemed to have forgotten that incident on Big Side—or perhaps he made a point to forget it. When he came into contact with Loder, he treated him civilly, as if nothing had happened—and Loder took the cue from him and was civil in return. Open enmity would only keep alive the memory of the incident, and Loder wanted it forgotten as soon as possible. And outward civility made it safer to plan secret vengeance—if a chance came his way. And Loder was determined that sooner or later a chance should come.

The buzz of the telephone bell interrupted his reflections. He threw down the newspaper, and stepped to the telephone. The seniors in the doorway glanced round; but as Loder was taking the call, they left him to it. The next moment, however, Loder called to the captain of Greyfriars.

"You're wanted, Wingate."

"Right!" said Wingate, coming into the room. "Thanks," he added, as Loder handed him the receiver; and Loder nodded and went back to his chair and his newspaper. The other seniors strolled away.

"Hallo! You, dad!" exclaimed Wingate. "You in London."

Apparently, it was Wingate's father who was speaking on the phone. Wingate's people lived in Cheshire.

"Jolly glad to," went on Wingate, in answer to something from the other end. "I can easily get leave from the Head, and run up. Topping to see you in town, dad! But couldn't you manage to run down here and give us a look-in at the school?"

Loder yawned behind his newspaper.

"Well, if you can't come down, dad, I'll be jolly glad to run up!" went on Wingate, after a reply that Loder did not hear. "Friday—all right! Any day is the same to me—the Head will give me leave like a shot! Lunch—all right—and a matinee—fine! Is there a matinee on Friday? Good! Couldn't be better!"

Evidently Wingate was in great spirits at the idea of a run up to town, and seeing his father! Loder scowled behind his newspaper.

"Oh, that's all right," said Wingate in reply to something further on the phone. "Prefects don't have to turn up for call-over—anyhow, I shall have special leave. I can't get back here early, of course—but the nine o'clock from Victoria will land me at Courtfield at half-past ten, and it's only half an hour's walk to the school from there. That's all right—prefects have a key to the Masters' gate, you know! I shall be in bed by eleven or thereabouts, and shan't lose my beauty sleep. Yes—plenty of time for a spot of dinner—and the nine o'clock train!"

A few more words, and Wingate rang off and walked out of the prefects' room with a smiling face.

Loder scowled after him.

A few minutes later he heard Wingate telling the good news to the fellows in the passage, and his scowl grew blacker. Then the Greyfriars captain went away to see the Head, to ask for the necessary leave—the granting of which was a foregone conclusion. Dr. Locke was not likely to refuse his favourite anything, as Loder sourly reflected.

Wingate would be cutting classes on Friday afternoon—lunching in town, going to some matinee, dining with his father—having a jolly good time! And he would be coming home late, letting himself in at the Masters' gate with a key at eleven o'clock. Loder's thoughts ran on that; and though he was now alone in the room, he lifted the newspaper, as if he feared that someone might see his face, and the glitter in his eyes.

Darker and darker grew the look on Loder's face as he followed his train of thought. Wingate had probably forgotten his existence; certainly he had not heeded the fact that Loder must have heard what was said at his end of the telephone. Wingate was not likely to dream of what was passing in the mind of a fellow like Loder.

Eleven o'clock at night—it would be dark, even in July. And the Masters' gate, to which all the Greyfriars prefects had keys, was shadowed by thick old trees—it would be dark there, even if there was a moon. And there would not be a moon! A fellow letting himself in at the gate at eleven o'clock would be in deep darkness, seeing nothing but the shadow of thick trees, till he came into the open quad. And if somebody was waiting for him there—

Loder felt his heart beat unpleasantly. He was revengeful and malicious, but he was not the fellow to take risks. But where was the risk?

He dared not face George Wingate in open combat, dearly as he would have liked to do so. But this was quite a different proposition. A sudden rush in the dark—a shower of fierce blows—and swift flight—where was the risk? He would leave his enemy sprawling on the ground, knocked out, without the faintest idea of who had hit him. There would be a row, of course—a fearful row! But who was to suspect Loder? Who could suspect any Greyfriars fellow of such a deed? He was on bad terms with Wingate—but that would not justify suspicion—besides, other fellows were on bad terms with him; Walker and Carne of the Sixth, Hilton and Price of the Fifth—and there were juniors, too, fellows like Skinner of the Remove, and Angel of the Fourth, who might as well be suspected. Most likely it would be supposed that some tramp or thief had got into the place, and had chanced on Wingate and knocked him out. It was safe—quite safe—and Loder, who had crumpled up helplessly in Wingate's sinewy grasp, gloated at the thought of the Greyfriars captain going down under his blows.

He grinned behind his newspaper.

The fellow might have a black eye, perhaps, to take home with him for the summer holidays! Anyhow, he would get it hot and strong; a surprise attack in the dark would take him completely off his guard; he would be knocked out, and Loder would be gone before he could even get on his feet. He could leave the House by his study window—and get back the same way; it would not be the first time by many a one. It was safe as houses.

Gerald Loder's face was quite cheery as he threw down the newspaper at last, and strolled away to his study. He found Carne of the Sixth there, and Arthur Carne glanced at him curiously.

"You're looking merry and bright!" he remarked. "I hear that Wingate's chucked you for the match at Redclyffe."

"I don't care to play, really," answered Loder.

"Oh, my hat! What are you going to do about Wingate?"

Loder raised his eyebrows.

"About Wingate? I don't see—"

"Well, from what I hear, he seems to have let himself go," grinned Carne. "Some of the fellows think you'll be asking him to step into the gym, and put the gloves on."

"Nothing of the kind," answered Loder. "The fact is, I was to blame—and I shall let the matter drop entirely."

Carne laughed.

"You were to blame, all right!" he agreed. "It was jolly thick, from what I hear. But it's not like you to let it drop."

"What rot!" said Loder. "I lost my temper, and Wingate rather lost his—and the less said about it the better, in my opinion. Prefects can't scrap like fags. So far as I'm concerned, the whole thing's washed out."

"Well, that's the best way," assented Carne. "But I'm blessed if I ever thought you so jolly forgiving. Got a fag?"

And, having locked the study door, the two black sheep of the Sixth sat down to cigarettes and banker. But Loder of the Sixth was thinking less of the cards than of a mental picture—



No sooner had Hurree Singh caught the ball than Loder dropped his bat, tore along the pitch, grasped the astonished Nabob of Bhanipur, and boxed his ears right and left. "Rescue! Yaroooooh! Oh crikey!" yelled the dusky junior. "You rotter, Loder!" roared Wingate.

of a fellow going down under fierce blows in the dark! And Gerald Loder smiled cheerily over his cigarette.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

No Sale!

"**H**ARRY, old fellow—" Harry Wharton laughed. "How did Bunter know I had a remittance this morning?" he inquired.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I never knew you had a remittance this morning! I didn't see you take it out of the envelope—"

"And you didn't see me paying my account at the tuckshop with it, or you wouldn't be calling me 'Harry, old fellow'!" chuckled the captain of the Remove.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at," said Billy Bunter peevishly. "If you're stony, old chap, you can borrow half-a-crown from one of these fellows. Half-a-crown isn't much for a ticket that cost five bob."

"Eh?"

"Of course, you fancied that I was on the make!" Bunter said scornfully. "Beastly suspicious mind you've got, if you ask me! The fact is, I'm going to do you a favour. You can get leave from Quelch all right. In fact, he will be pleased to hear that you want to go to a geological lecture. It will give you a leg-up with Quelch—keep you in his good books, you know, as well as getting you off prep on Friday."

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the

Owl of the Remove. What William George Bunter was driving at, was a mystery to them.

"You'll enjoy the lecture," went on Bunter. "You're one of those thoughtful, studious, brainy chaps, Wharton who—"

"Am I?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes; cleverest chap in the Remove," said Bunter, blinking at him. "Brains—my belief is that you've got more brains than Quelch!"

"Oh crikey!"

"The brainfulness of the esteemed Wharton is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But what is the absurd gamefulness, my idiotic Bunter?"

"You shut up, Inky! You needn't be jealous because you're not a brainy chap like Wharton! I've picked Wharton out to use this ticket, because he's so jolly clever! Geology is just the thing that a fellow with brains like Wharton will enjoy! Ain't it, Harry, old chap?"

Billy Bunter blinked rather anxiously at the captain of the Remove.

Mr. Wiggins' ticket for Courtfield Hall was still in the fat Owl's possession.

After Mr. Wiggins had got him lines, Bunter had quite abandoned his intention of handing that ticket over to the Third Form master. Let the beast hunt for it, and be blowed to him, was Bunter's idea.

Since then other ideas had been evolved in Billy Bunter's powerful intellect. The ticket, having been some time in his possession, Billy Bunter now regarded it as his own. That was one of Bunter's little ways!

That ticket had a value—not to

Bunter! Had it been a ticket for a picture palace, Bunter could have found a use for it. But a lecture at Courtfield Hall had no appeal to Bunter—especially since he had learned that the lecture was on geological subjects. If there was any fellow in the Greyfriars Remove who had a weakness for geology, that fellow certainly was not named W. G. Bunter.

Why any man in his senses should give five shillings for a ticket to a geological lecture, was a deep mystery to Bunter. Mr. Wiggins had done so—which seemed to indicate, in Bunter's opinion, that Wiggins was a little "batty." Bunter, certainly, would rather have paid five shillings to miss the lecture than to attend it.

Still, though wild horses would not have dragged Billy Bunter to the Courtfield Hall to hear a learned gentleman expound geological theories, he hoped that other fellows might like the idea.

So far, he had had no luck.

Fisher T. Fish, who would buy almost anything, if it were cheap, refused to offer a halfpenny for that ticket. Skinner and Snoop and Stott had told Bunter that they wouldn't take it at a gift. The Bouncer had advised him to take it back to its owner—declining to believe that Bunter had bought it, and changed his mind about going. One or two fellows had considered it on the ground that even a geological lecture might be better than prep, if they could get leave from Quelch for the evening. But they were not willing to risk any cash on it.

Hence the deep duplicity with which

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the fat Owl was tackling the captain of the Remove. After being described as a brainy chap, a chap who would understand things that were incomprehensible to ordinary chaps, Bunter considered it was up to Wharton to play up.

But he blinked anxiously at his intended victim. No amount of "soft sawder" would have induced Billy Bunter to listen to a single sentence of that geological lecture. He hoped for better things from Wharton; but he could not help feeling doubtful.

"Geology is an awfully important subject," went on Bunter. "A fellow ought to get that subject up, you know. I believe it's about stones, or something—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And fossils and things," said Bunter. "Fossils are frightfully interesting. You would learn a lot about fossils, and—and stones and things, old chap—and you've got the intellect for it! You're not a silly fathead like Bob Cherry, for instance—"

"Thanks!" said Bob.

"Or a noodle like Nugent—"

"Go it!" said Nugent.

"Or an ignoramus like Bull, or a silly nigger like Inky! You've got the brains," said Bunter. "If anybody asked me who was the brainiest chap at Greyfriars, I should say it was you, old fellow—I should, really! I'm not pulling your leg, you know, just because I want to sell you this ticket."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Geology is the thing to appeal to a really clever, brainy chap. You'll simply lap it up, Wharton, with an intellect like yours. You'll get off prep, too, you know. I'm letting you have the ticket at half-price, because—because I want you to enjoy that lecture! You're about the only fellow at Greyfriars who would really enjoy it, you know—because of your tremendous intellect, see?"

And Billy Bunter extracted a square of cardboard, with some aniseed balls adhering to it, from his pocket, and held it out hopefully to the captain of the Remove.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "So you've got old Wiggins' ticket?"

Bunter started.

"Eh? Oh, no! I bought this ticket, old chap—walked down to Courtfield specially on Wednesday, and gave five shillings for it. I've changed my mind about going—I think Quelch might not give me leave, and—and I want you to enjoy the lecture. With your brains—"

"You fat villain! Wiggins put a notice on the board this afternoon that he'd lost a ticket—"

"Just like that old ass to lose a ticket, if he had one," said Bunter. "But he never lost this ticket. How could he, when I've had it in my pocket for weeks—"

"You've had it in your pocket for weeks?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Yes, old chap—weeks and weeks—"

"And you fetched it specially from Courtfield on Wednesday—"

"Oh, I—I—I mean—"

"You mean to pinch old Wiggins' ticket?"

"No, you beast! I—I mean, the—the Wednesday I was speaking of was weeks ago, see? Not last Wednesday, just a—Wednesday! You shut up, Bob Cherry—I'm speaking to Wharton. I say, Harry, old fellow, I'll let you have this ticket for two bob! Honest, old chap! Just because you'll enjoy that lecture on geometry—I mean geology—see? With a brain like yours—"

"With a brain like mine, old fat bean, I'm not giving you two bob for Wiggins' ticket!" chuckled the captain of the Remove. "If you want to palm off stolen goods, it's no good picking out a fellow with a brain like mine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look for a sillier ass than yourself, if there is one—"

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

"I heard that Bunter was trying to sell a ticket up and down the Remove," remarked Nugent. "I didn't know it was Wiggins' ticket!"

"It isn't!" roared Bunter. "It's mine! I'm offering it to Wharton for eighteenpence, because—"

"You pernicious porpoise," said Johnny Bull, looking at the ticket. "That's old Wiggy's; it's the same number seat; I've seen his notice on the board."

"I dare say they printed two tickets the same, by mistake," explained Bunter. "I've had this ticket ever since weeks and weeks ago. I never picked it up in the quad—so far as I know, old Wiggy never dropped anything—anything at all—when I barged him over when Loder was after me. I never saw him looking for it afterwards."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Besides, I was going to give it back to him, if he hadn't reported me to Quelch," said Bunter warmly. "After that, of course, the beast could hunt for it as long as he liked! Not that this is the same ticket!" added Bunter cautiously. "It's quite a different ticket! If the number's the same, that's one of those coincidences, you know. Look here, Wharton, I think you might give me a bob for this ticket—you being such a frightfully clever chap that you'll enjoy the lecture on conchology—I mean geology—"

"I'll take the ticket—"

"Good!"

"—back to Wiggins—"

"Beast!"

"Hand it over."

"Shan't!" roared Bunter. "If you think you're going to give my ticket to old Wiggins you're jolly well mistaken! I'd rather go to the lecture myself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is what you call gratitude, I suppose, when I'm trying to do you a favour?" said Bunter. "Talk about ingratitude being a sharper child than a serpent's tooth! Look here, make it ninepence—ninepence won't hurt you, old fellow. What?"

"I think the Head's birch might hurt me if I pinched old Wiggy's ticket," said Harry Wharton.

"Tain't old Wiggy's ticket, you beast! Look here, old chap, don't be mean about ninepence! What will you give me, then?"

"I'll give you a kicking—"

"Beast!"

"And keep on kicking you till you've taken that ticket back to Wiggy. That's for a start—"

"Yaroooo!"

"And that's to go on with—"

"Whoooo!"

"And that—"

"Ow! Beast! Leave off kicking me! I—I'm going to Wiggy this minute," yelled Bunter. "I—I was going to, all along! Think I'd keep a man's ticket, you beast! I hope I'm honest!"

"Oh crikey!"

"He—he—he hopes he's honest!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"The hopefulness is terrific."

"I think we'd better walk as far as Wiggy's study with him," chuckled Nugent. "That hope might turn out to be unfounded."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—look here—I suppose you can trust me—"

Apparently the Famous Five couldn't for they gathered round William George Bunter, and walked him to Mr. Wiggins' study.

There—with the Famous Five waiting outside the door—Billy Bunter handed over the ticket, and received Mr. Wiggins' polite thanks for having found it and returned it—thanks which did not seem to buck the fat Owl very much.

He rolled morosely out of the study and shut the door, and blinked a scornful blink at the captain of the Remove.

"Catch me doing you any more favours, you beast!" he said bitterly. "You could have got off prep on Friday, even if you hadn't brains enough to understand the lecture—which you haven't—"

"Not the brainiest chap at Greyfriars?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yah! A silly fool like you wouldn't have understood a word of it, of course—not a born idiot like you!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not a silly, fatheaded, num-skulled, blithering dunderhead like you—a crass, wooden-headed, jabbering silly idiot—wow! You kick me again, you beast, and I'll—whoooooop!"

Billy Bunter departed in haste.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

No Blagging for Bunter!

"YOU coming to-night, Smithy?" Skinner of the Remove asked that question, in Herbert Vernon-Smith's study, after prep, on Friday evening. Tom Redwing, who was putting his books away when Skinner came in, compressed his lips a little; and the Bounder glanced at him and grinned.

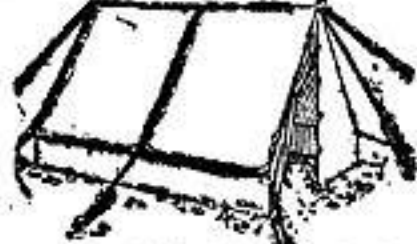
"It's safe to-night," went on Skinner, taking no notice of Redwing. "Safer than usual, old bean—Wingate's away, and he won't be back till late!"

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders. Not uncommonly, when his blackguardly fit was on, the Bounder of Greyfriars would join Skinner in some shady excursion after lights out. But wary and cautious as he was, he did not always consider "safety first"; and certainly the fact that the head-prefect was absent would have made no difference to him.

"It will be rather jolly," went on Skinner. "Some of the Highcliffe men will be there—I've had word from Ponsonby. And some racing men from Wapshot—you know the races are on there now. You'll come, Smithy?"

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"What do you think, Reddy?" asked the Bounder.

"I think you'd better kick Skinner out of the study," answered Tom.

Skinner gave him an unpleasant look. "Smithy doesn't want any of your pi-jaw, Redwing," he said. "Mind your own business. Look here, Smithy, you'd like to come."

"More or less," yawned Smithy. "But it's cricket to-morrow; and late hours don't improve a man's form."

"Oh, never mind the cricket!"

"Well, I have to mind it a little, as I'm in the Remove team, old top! Many thanks; but I'm not comin'."

Skinner gave a grunt.

"It's as safe as houses," he said. "It's Wingate's turn with the Remove this week; but he's away; Loder's seeing lights out for us to-night, I hear; and you can bet Loder will go straight back to his study, to play banker with his pals in the Sixth. You know Loder! Couldn't be better for us."

"Oh, quite," agreed Smithy. "But I'm giving it a miss, all the same. The cricket—"

"Oh, rats!"

Skinner swung sulkily out of the study. There was a yelp in the Remove passage, as he collided with a fat figure just outside the door of Study No. 4. He gave Billy Bunter a glare.

"You fat rotter!"

"Oh, really, Skinner! I never heard what you were saying to Smithy—whooooop!"

Skinner kicked the fat Owl and went on his way.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

Loder of the Sixth was seeing lights out for the Remove that night. Any Sixth Form prefect would have been willing to take over the Greyfriars captain's duty while he was away on leave; but Loder of the Sixth had offered very civilly, and Wingate had been rather glad of it.

He did not like Loder, and could not be friendly with him; but he was glad to think that the disagreeable incident on Big Side was no longer rankling.

Certainly a fellow like Wingate was not likely to guess what was in Gerald Loder's mind. Civility, as Loder reflected sourly, cost nothing; and the more he kept up the appearance of having "buried the hatchet" the less likely he was to be suspected—after what was scheduled to happen that night in the dark shadows by Masters' gate.

Loder was far from being a dutiful prefect; and it was certain that no shady young rascal in the Remove had anything to fear from his vigilance. Skinner was right on that point.

When the Remove went to their dormitory, and Loder loafed in the passage while they turned in, Billy Bunter spoke to Skinner in a stage whisper.

"Smithy isn't coming, is he, old chap?"

Skinner glared. He did not want all the Remove to hear what was on for that night.

"It's all right," said Bunter affably.

"I'll come, old chap."

"You fat idiot!"

"I mean it," said Bunter, blinking at him. "The only difficulty is that I happen to be short of ready money. But you can lend me—"

"Shut up!" hissed Skinner, as Loder glanced in at the door.

Bunter winked a fat wink.

"All right, I'm not going to give you away, old chap!" he said. "Look here, you'd like me to come, wouldn't you?"

"I'll twist your silly fat ear—"

"Would you like me to come, or not?" asked Bunter, raising his voice.

Loder glanced round, and Skinner trembled.

"Yes!" he breathed. "Shut up—yes! Quiet!"

"Turn in, you fags!" snapped Loder.

"Don't keep me waiting all night."

The Removites turned in, and Loder put out the light and departed. He went back to his own study; but not, as Skinner surmised, to play banker with Carne and Walker. Loder had something more important than banker to think of that evening.

Ten minutes after the prefect was gone Skinner was getting out of bed, and dressing quietly in the dark. As a rule, Billy Bunter's snore was heard before ten minutes had elapsed. But Bunter's snore was not audible now. There was a creak of a bed as the fattest fellow in the Remove rolled out, and Skinner gritted his teeth.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Who's that up?" yawned Bob Cherry.

"Nobody, old chap," answered Bunter. "I'm not up! I've only got out of bed to get some—some toffee!"

"You blithering ass!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, Skinner." Bunter's cautious whisper was heard all over the dormitory. "Wait a minute for me, old fellow."

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"Shut up, you fat dummy!"

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"What's this game?" asked Harry Wharton, sitting up in bed.

"Nothing, old chap!" said Bunter.

"I'm not going out with Skinner! Nothing of the sort, you know! You go to sleep, old fellow; you've got to play cricket to-morrow, you know, and you don't want to lose your sleep. Skinner isn't going down to the Cross Keys; and I'm not going with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, don't make a row! It's all right with Wingate away, but all the same—"

"So you're going on the tiles with Skinner, are you?" asked Peter Todd.

"Wait a minute while I get my bolster."

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

Skinner hastily crept to the door. He hoped to get clear in the dark, unobserved by Bunter. But the fat Owl was not to be dodged. He rolled after Skinner to the door.

"I say, Skinner, hold on! I'm coming, you know! Look here— Oh, here you are!" Bunter grabbed at Skinner's arm in the dark.

Thump!

"Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

A vigorous drive caused Bunter to sit down with great suddenness.

The door opened and closed again. Skinner was gone.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" came from Billy Bunter. "Beast! Wow! I say, you fellows— Wow! Ow! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter staggered up. Peter Todd was out of bed now, a bolster in his hands, groping towards the fat Owl. "The awful rotter!" gasped Bunter. "Going off without me, you know! I'll jolly well go after him, and— Whooop! What's that? Yooooop! Who's that banging me— Yooooop! Oh crikey!"

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

"Oh crumbs! Leave off! Is that you, Toddy, you beast? Yow-ow-ow! Keep that bolster away, you beast! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

"Going back to bed, Bunter?" asked Toddy.

"No!" howled Bunter.

Swipe, swipe!

"Ow! Wow! I—I'm going back to bed!" yelled Bunter. "Keep off, you beast! I'm not going out with Skinner! I—I wouldn't! Yaroooooh! I'm not that sort of chap, I hope! Whooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Swipe!

Billy Bunter dodged wildly.

"Will you chuck it, you beast?" he howled.

"Not till you're in bed!" chuckled Peter Todd. "I haven't taken the trouble to get up for nothing! Take that—and that—and that—"

"Oh crikey. Yaroooooh! Beast! Oooooooooooooogh!"

Billy Bunter plunged wildly into bed. Toddy gave him one final swipe and went back to bed, leaving Bunter roaring.

"You cheeky rotter!" he howled. "What's it got to do with you, I'd like to know! Mind your own business, you beast!"

"You're in my study," explained Toddy. "Nobody in my study is going to be sacked for blagging!"

"You cheeky rotter! I'm jolly well going—"

There was a sound of Peter getting out of bed again.

"I—I mean, I'm going to sleep!" gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was not Billy Bunter's intention to go to sleep, however. With great cunning he laid his head on the pillow and began to snore—while he waited for Peter to go to sleep! In about three minutes the pretended snore became a genuine one—and Billy Bunter was not likely to open his eyes again till rising-bell.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Done in the Dark!

"GREEK!"

"Yes!"

"What rot!"

"Can't be helped," said Loder. "The beak's been ragging me, and I've got to mug up the muck! Shut the door after you."

Carne grunted, shut the study door, and left Gerald Loder to himself—and Euripides.

There was to be no banker in Loder's study that evening.

Neither, as a matter of fact, was there to be any Euripides! As soon as Carne was gone, Loder threw that great Greek aside.

Loder was a slacker, in class and out, and it was true that the Head had expressed considerable dissatisfaction. It was a good excuse for being left alone, and Loder wanted to be alone. Even a slacker had to get a move on sometimes, and Loder let his friends know that he was sporting his oak that evening for the noble purpose of "swotting." But

never had swotting been further from his thoughts.

At a quarter to eleven Loder quietly locked his door and turned out his light. Most of the Sixth were in bed at that time; in fact, only two of them were still up—Walker and Carne, in the latter's study.

They were playing banker, without the company, as usual, of Gerald Loder. Loder crossed to his window, and opened it, and put his head out in the summer starlight. He glanced along the Sixth Form windows, and scowled at the light in Carne's. But the blind was drawn there. Considering how they were engaged, Carne and Walker were not likely to risk observation from outside. All was safe for Loder's enterprise.

He opened his window softly.

The Sixth Form rooms, which were study and bed-room combined, were on the ground floor, though rather high up from the ground. But it was an easy drop into the quad. Many a time had Loder left his study at a late hour by the window, and returned the same way, when he had to meet sporting friends outside the school.

All was silent in the quad; few windows showed a glimmer of light. All Forms below the Sixth had to go to bed at fixed hours, and most of the masters were in bed before eleven. In the distance there was a glimmer from Mr. Prout's window, and another from the Head's study; that was all. Loder stood breathing quickly.

He gave a violent start, as his door-handle turned. He was thankful from the bottom of his heart that he had locked the door. If a fellow had butted in and found him with his light out, standing fully-dressed by the open window—

"Hallo!" It was Walker's voice. "Gone to bed, Loder?"

Loder tiptoed to the bed in the alcove across the study, his heart thumping. Arrived there, he contrived to yawn loudly.

Walker shook the door-handle.

"Hallo, who's that?" yawned Loder.

"It's me, you ass! What the thump have you locked your door for?"

"I'm in bed, old bean! You've woke me up, confound you!"

"Look here!" It was a whisper through the keyhole, "We've run out of smokes—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Look here, Loder—"

"I'm not getting out of bed again. Good-night!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Walker sulkily, and he went back to Carne's study.

Loder stood in the darkness, with beating heart. That trifling incident had alarmed him and set his heart thumping. But on reflection, he realised that it was all to the good. Walker, if necessary, would be a witness that he, Loder, had gone to bed before eleven!

He went back to the window.

It was ten minutes to eleven now and he had no time to waste. By that time, Wingate had been landed at Courtfield and had started to walk to the school—he must be more than half-way home. It was more than time for Loder to be ready on the scene.

He dropped lightly from the window. Standing there, under the window, he glanced round him with furtive eyes. Light glimmered through the blind at Carne's window dimly into the dusky quad. No other window near at hand showed any light. With his heart beating unpleasantly, but his teeth set with savage, malicious determination, Loder crept away through the shadows.

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In a few minutes he was under the trees at Masters' gate.

There was summer starlight in the quad, but under the thick branches that shadowed the little gate set in the old stone wall, the darkness was thick and intense. Not a glimmer of the stars came through the leafy branches of the old elms.

Loder groped and stared round him, feeling his way along the paved path to the gate. Close by a trunk he stood and waited, within a few yards of the gate.

He passed his hand across his forehead and his fingers came away wet with perspiration. But again he told himself that it was safe—safe—there was no risk! He could hardly see his hand before his face in the darkness. If Wingate saw anything of him, it could be nothing more than a black shadow among shadows. His nerves were on the jump, but his determination remained fixed. The fellow who had handled him, who had humiliated him under a crowd of staring eyes, was coming—and Loder clenched his hands hard, almost convulsively, longing to dash them in the face of the fellow he hated and feared.

He started, as eleven boomed out from the clock-tower. The last stroke died away, leaving a deathly silence behind. Wingate might come any minute now—

Click!

It was the sound of a key in the gate!

MORE JOKES AND LIMERICKS WANTED!

(See page 17.)

Loder's heart jumped. The gate was opening. Within a few yards of him was his enemy—coming through the gloom, unsuspecting. Perhaps, for a moment, he wavered in his purpose, but, if so, it was only for a moment. With hands clenched hard, he watched and waited and listened. He heard the gate open and shut, and there were footsteps on the paved path—and through the darkness a figure loomed like a shadow.

Loder sprang from the tree and struck.

There was a startled, horrified, gasping cry and a heavy fall. Even in the excitement of the moment, Loder was astonished that the stalwart captain of Greyfriars should have gone down so easily. He had intended to deal smashing blow after blow, but his victim had crashed down at the first knock. But the next moment Loder understood.

"What—what—what—" came a gasping, squealing cry from the figure sprawling at his feet. "Who—what—Help! Goodness gracious! What—what—what—"

Loder stood stunned.

It was not Wingate!

That gasping, squealing voice was the voice of Mr. Wiggins, the master of the Third Form!

He had knocked down a master!

By what horrible chance had Wiggins been out that evening, and coming in at the very time that the blackguard of the Sixth, in ambush, was watching for Wingate?

Loder stood petrified, incapable of motion, incapable of thought. It was not Wingate—not Wingate—it was a master—a member of Dr. Locke's staff—it was that old fool, Wiggins—

"What—what—help!"

Loder pulled himself together somehow. He leaped away in the darkness and ran. He was not thinking of his

precious scheme of vengeance now—he was thinking of nothing but saving his skin. To get back to the House—to plunge into bed—to escape the consequences of what he had done—that was the only thought in his terrified mind. He darted away at a frantic speed, left the dark trees behind him, and raced across the quad towards the House.

Crash!

Loder gave a stifled cry.

He had run into somebody—somebody who spluttered as he was sent crashing headlong from the shock.

He reeled for a moment, and then dashed on again. Who it was he had crashed into, he had not the faintest idea, but the unexpected incident had terrified him to the marrow of his bones. If he had been seen!

He clambered breathlessly in at his window and closed it after him. He tore off his clothes and plunged into bed. There were sounds of commotion in the House, footsteps in the Sixth Form passage, but it was Loder's cue to hear nothing, to know nothing; he was supposed to be sleeping—and he tried to sleep! But sleep was not likely to visit the eyes of the fellow who lay palpitating with terror—a panic terror that was, perhaps, a full punishment for his rascality.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Exciting for Skinner!

SKINNER staggered to his feet. His face was like chalk.

The game was up—that was Skinner's terrifying thought, and he was as scared as the senior who had rushed into him in the dim quad and knocked him spinning.

Skinner had not exactly enjoyed his "night out." His sporting friends at the Cross Keys had relieved him of his pocket-money, and his head was aching from smoke and a stuffy atmosphere. He had tramped back to Greyfriars in dismal spirits, tired and dispirited and sleepy, anxious only to get to bed, and realising, perhaps, what a fool he had been to leave it. And as he crept furtively towards the House, a running figure crashed into him, taking him utterly by surprise. As he sprawled on the ground, his staring, startled eyes glimpsed the face of Loder of the Sixth, ghastly white in the glimmer of the stars. And he staggered up, in the full expectation of being collared by the prefect, marched into the House, and handed over to his headmaster for judgment.

When he realised that Loder had not stayed, that he was running for the House like a fellow demented, Skinner could only wonder. He stared round him in the dimness, amazed.

Loder was gone!

Instead of collaring him and marching him in, as was his duty as a prefect, Gerald Loder had darted away, leaving him to his own devices. Skinner gasped with relief. Perhaps Loder had not even recognised him—not even looked at him. A grin came over Skinner's face as he thought it out. Loder, no doubt, had been out of bounds himself—coming in after a "spreo" like Skinner—and he had been as alarmed as the junior by the encounter. That was the only explanation Skinner could think of, and it was a relief to his mind. If that was the case, Loder was not likely to inquire who it was that had been abroad in the quad at that late hour. He was likely to be glad to leave the matter where it was.

Skinner was about to hurry on his way, breathless, but relieved, when a sound reached his ears, and he stared



Billy Bunter was running his hardest, with Loder in hot pursuit, when Mr. Wiggins crossed his path. The Owl of the Remove crashed into the master of the Third without even seeing him. "Oooooogh!" gasped Bunter. "Woooooogh!" gurgled Mr. Wiggins.

round. He realised that someone was calling from a distance—from the direction of Masters' gate—the direction from which Loder had come running.

"Help! Goodness gracious! Oh dear! Oh! Upon my word! My nose—my nose— Oh—oh—help!"

Skinner stared blankly through the gloom. He knew that voice—the voice of little Mr. Wiggins. What on earth had happened to Wiggins? Skinner, who had nothing to do with the Third Form or its master, hardly remembered the existence of Wiggins till he was thus reminded of it. But he remembered the lecture-hall ticket that Bunter had been trying to sell up and down the Remove a day or two ago, which belonged to Mr. Wiggins. Wiggins had been to his geological lecture in Courtfield, and come in—and something, it appeared, had happened to him.

"Help! Oh! Goodness gracious! Oh dear!"

Skinner made a step in the direction of the calling voice—and stopped. He dared not be seen out of the House at eleven o'clock. Whatever had happened to Mr. Wiggins, Skinner could not help him.

In the dusky starlight he sighted the Third Form master, tottering in the direction of the House, holding his hand to his face. He would not have recognised him in the dimness, but he knew the rather squeaky voice of Mr. Wiggins. Obviously he was hurt, and he was calling for help as he tottered towards the House.

What on earth could have happened? Mr. Wiggins' voice appeared to be heard as he approached the House, for the great door opened, and light glimmered out into the quad.

Skinner, keeping back in deep shadow, saw the Third Form master totter up the steps.

In the doorway the plump and portly

form of Mr. Prout, master of the Fifth, was outlined against the light within.

"What—what is it?" Prout's fruity voice boomed into the summer night. "I heard—I am sure I heard—"

"Oh! Bless my soul! Help, Prout! Oh dear—"

"Great gad!" ejaculated Mr. Prout. "Is that you, Wiggins? What ever has happened? You are hurt, my dear fellow—"

Plump and portly as he was, Mr. Prout fairly jumped out of the doorway to the assistance of his unfortunate colleague.

"Take my arm, Wiggins. Lean on me, my dear fellow. Good gad, what has happened? There is blood on your face—"

"My nose!" gasped Mr. Wiggins. "I have been struck—struck forcibly on the nose—"

"What? Impossible!"

"I have been knocked down—"

"Wiggins!"

"As I came in at the gate, Prout—in the darkness—someone rushed on me and knocked me down—"

"Extraordinary!"

"I was felled—felled to the earth! My nose is very painful—exceedingly painful! I am dazed—quite dazed—"

"What has happened?" Mr. Quelch's voice was heard. "What—"

"Wiggins has been attacked—assaulted—knocked down!" gasped Mr. Prout. "Pray assist him into the House, my dear Quelch. I will immediately search for the scoundrel—"

Skinner stayed to hear no more. Thrilling with excitement and curiosity, he had lurked in the shadows to learn what had happened. But as Prout relinquished the care of Wiggins to the Remove master, and came striding out into the quadrangle, Skinner fairly bolted. There was going to be a search, and any fellow who was out of the House

was in dire danger—indeed, he might be suspected of being the unknown miscreant who had whopped Wiggins! That alarming thought sent Skinner scurrying round the buildings at his best speed.

Prout, heading for Masters' gate, heard a sound, and spun round. He stared through the darkness in the direction taken by Skinner.

"Who is that?" he shouted.

Skinner was not likely to answer. He knew that Prout had heard him in flight, and he fairly raced on.

"Who is that? Stop at once, whoever you are!" roared Prout.

Skinner flew.

He heard Mr. Prout in pursuit. Prout was not quick on the uptake, but the sound of running feet in the quad could hardly fail to connect itself, in his mind, with the assault on Wiggins.

He rushed after the unseen fugitive.

Skinner panted with sheer terror. Prout panted at a good distance behind him. There was the sound of a stumble and a fall, and then the voice of Prout. The Fifth Form master had run into something in the dark and measured his portly length on the earth.

Skinner flew on. Breathlessly he clambered up to the leads under the Remove box-room window, and he gasped with relief when he dropped inside the House. A couple of minutes more, and he reached the Remove dormitory. From below, sounds came to his ears—the House, usually so quiet at that hour, was disturbed. Skinner did not stay to listen; he bolted into the dormitory, and plunged into bed. All the Remove were fast asleep, and from the shadows rumbled the deep and echoing snore of Billy Bunter. But it was long before Skinner closed his eyes.

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Who?

"I SAY, you fellows! Something's up!"

"Tell us something we don't know!" said Bob Cherry.

"The upfulness seems to be terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"But what—"

"Goodness knows!"

"Did they bag you last night, Skinner?"

"No fear!"

"Well, there's a jolly old hullabaloo about something."

After early prayers all Greyfriars School knew that something was "up," though few, as yet, knew what it was.

One of the masters was absent from prayers—Mr. Wiggins, master of the Third.

All the other beaks had exceedingly grave faces. The expression on Dr. Locke's face was absolutely portentous.

The Sixth Form prefects looked, as the Bounder expressed it, like a lot of moulting owls, so excessively solemn and serious were they.

In the quad, before breakfast, fellows asked one another what was up, but no answer was forthcoming. Even Billy Bunter did not know!

But it was something of an unusually serious nature—all the fellows knew that.

Skinner could have told the Remove men, if he had liked, but he was very careful to keep his own counsel. Skinner knew that Mr. Wiggins had been knocked down at Masters' gate—and he knew that he had seen Loder of the Sixth in frantic flight from that spot immediately afterwards. Skinner was quite capable of putting two and two together.

Why Loder of the Sixth had "whopped" Wiggins, was an utter mystery to Skinner—but he knew perfectly well that Loder of the Sixth had done it. But if Skinner had thought of stating what he knew, he would have been prevented by fear for his own skin. He had been out of bounds at eleven o'clock at night, or he could have seen nothing—and that was a circumstance that Skinner could not keep too dark!

At breakfast, Skinner looked across at the high table where the Sixth Form prefects sat, and eyed Loder curiously.

Loder did not glance at him, which was proof enough that Loder had not recognised him in the quad the previous night; not that Skinner would have feared Loder mentioning it, if he had! He grinned at the thought.

Loder was looking rather pale, but he was quite cool and collected. If there was fear in his heart, as undoubtedly there was, he had himself well in hand.

What had he done it for, Skinner wondered. Wiggins was a harmless little ass. Nobody disliked him—and he had nothing to do with the Sixth. Yet it was certain that Gerald Loder had laid in wait for him at Masters' gate and knocked him down. Only Skinner knew—but he knew it beyond the shadow of a doubt.

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It was the "sack" for Loder if it came out—the sack short and sharp! Knocking down a master was an unheard-of outrage—an almost unthinkable act of ruffianism. Loder had done it—and if he was found out—

Skinner could guess what Loder was feeling like, and it rather entertained him. He had felt the heavy hand of the bully of the Sixth a good many times, and he had not liked it.

At the usual time for class, the Greyfriars fellows did not go to the Form-rooms. There was an order for the whole school to assemble in Hall, and they realised that they were about to hear what was up.

"Now for the giddy history of the jolly old mystery!" murmured Bob Cherry, as the Remove men gathered in their places in Hall.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Found it out yet, Bunter?"

"I say, what's happened to Wiggins?"

"Wiggins!" repeated Bob.

"Look at his nose!" grinned Bunter.

Mr. Wiggins was present now. Many fellows, beside Billy Bunter, had noticed his nose. It leaped to the eye, as it were.

"My hat!" murmured Harry Wharton. "What on earth has Wiggins done to his nose?"

"Charged a lorry with it, I should think," said the Bounder.

"Looks as if it's been punched—and jolly hard!" remarked Nugent.

"If it was a punch, the punchfulness must have been terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Is that it?" asked Johnny Bull. "Somebody been punching a beak's beak—"

"Great pip!"

"Silence!" called out Wingate of the Sixth.

And the juniors were silent; but they stared with fascinated eyes at the Third Form master's nose. Mr. Wiggins' nose, in its natural state, was rather small and plump. But it was not in its natural state now. It was large and red and swollen. Obviously it had had a knock, and a hard knock; but the theory that a master's nose had been punched was rather too startling to be believed.

Yet that precisely was what had happened, as the astonished school learned when the Head addressed them. In low, but deep, tones, and with a portentous countenance, Dr. Locke stated briefly what had happened at Masters' gate the previous night, and the Greyfriars fellows gasped as they heard it.

Some unknown person, the Head stated, had been lying in wait for that member of his staff, and had struck him down as he entered. The Head would have hoped and trusted and believed that that atrocious assault had been committed by someone not belonging to the school—by some tramp, some pilferer, who had obtained entrance to the school grounds, and had been alarmed by the appearance of a master—but this it was impossible to believe. Mr. Prout had heard, and followed, someone who had been running to the House, but who had unfortunately escaped him. Obviously it was some Greyfriars boy who had done this thing, and the Head called on him in deep tones to stand forward and confess.

Nobody stood forward.

Several fellows in the Remove glanced at Skinner.

Skinner was hardly to be suspected of having knocked down a master; even if he had wanted to, nobody in the Remove would have believed that he had the nerve. But most of the Remove knew that he had been out of bounds the previous night, and some of them

wondered if he had seen anything of the mysterious happening.

Skinner's face was expressionless.

The conclusion had been drawn that the unknown fellow whom Prout had heard running for the House was the person who had assaulted Wiggins—and it was a natural conclusion to be drawn in the circumstances.

Skinner was aware that the assailant had been safely off the scene before that, and had climbed into his study window in the Sixth! But Skinner had no intention of imparting his knowledge to the Head.

There was a long silence.

Probably the Head did not expect the culprit to confess. Confession could only mean immediate expulsion from the school. That was not an attractive prospect.

"Once more," said the Head in a deep voice, "I call upon this wretched boy to stand forward and confess what he has done."

"Who's jumpin' at this chance?" murmured the Bounder.

There was a suppressed snigger in the Remove. Mr. Quelch's gimlet eyes turned on his Form, and every face became instantly grave.

A long minute passed.

"Very well," said Dr. Locke in the same deep tones, "the most rigid inquiry will be made. The culprit will undoubtedly be discovered. He will be instantly expelled from the school. Dismiss!"

The Greyfriars fellows filed out in silence.

In the Third Form Room that morning there was some hilarity among the fags. The state of their Form master's nose entertained those lively and thoughtless young gentlemen.

But most fellows felt a sincere sympathy for poor Mr. Wiggins, and a deep disgust for the unknown "rotter" who had hit him in the dark.

"The sooner that blighter's found out and sacked the better!" said Bob Cherry. And all the Remove agreed.

"But who the dickens could it have been?" asked Redwing. "Who could want to whop poor old Wiggins?"

"Plenty of Third Form men!" grinned the Bounder. "But a fag can't have done it!"

"No fear! But who—"

"Did you see anything of it, Skinner?"

"Wish I had!" answered Skinner airily. "I've never seen a beak's nose punched yet!"

"I say, you fellows, do you think it was Wingate?"

"What?" roared the Removites.

"Well, Wingate was out, you know," said Billy Bunter. "I hear that he came in about ten minutes after Wiggins; but that may be gammon, you know. I wonder if it was Wingate!"

"You piffling porpoise!" hooted Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it was all your fault, Wharton, anyhow," said the fat Owl, with an accusing blink at the captain of the Remove.

"Mine?" ejaculated Harry Wharton.

"Yes, yours," said Bunter warmly.

"If you'd bought that ticket—"

"That ticket?"

"And gone to the theological lecture—I mean, the geological lecture—old Wiggins wouldn't have gone! Then he wouldn't have come in late, and got dotted on the boko! Old Wiggins has got whopped just because you were mean about ninepence—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fat idiot!" gasped Wharton.

"It was all through you being so jolly

mean about ninepence, and I can jolly well say—Ow! Leggo my ear, you beast!"

That day there was only one topic at Greyfriars. Even cricket took a second place. Every fellow asked—without being able to find an answer to the question—who had whopped Wiggins?

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner's Secret!

"O H crumbs!" ejaculated Snoop. "What—" began Stott. "It's Loder!"

Skinner hastily removed the cigarette from his mouth. On second thoughts, he replaced it as he stared round.

It was Monday afternoon after class. Skinner & Co. had retired to a quiet spot in the old Cloisters, with a supply of cigarettes, where, secluded from observation, they smoked with a solemn pretence of enjoyment.

Nobody was expected to come rooting into that secluded spot—least of all a prefect of the Sixth Form. But it was a prefect of the Sixth whom Sidney James Snoop suddenly spotted among the old stone pillars and arches of the ancient Cloisters.

Loder of the Sixth, with his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a moody frown on his brow, was walking slowly, buried in thought, his eyes on the mossy old stone flags. Loder had plenty of food for thought these days.

The excitement on the subject of the mysterious attack on Mr. Wiggins had rather died away in a couple of days. But the inquiry on the subject was going on unremittingly.

Dr. Locke had placed the matter in the hands of the prefects—including Loder. Loder certainly was not likely to have anything to reveal. But all the other prefects were very keen.

Wingate, as head prefect, had called a meeting of that august body after tea on Monday, and Loder was booked to attend. He dared not show any lack of keenness, though the matter was gall and wormwood to him. He was thinking dismally over the matter as he walked alone in the silent old Cloisters, deep in gloomy meditation; and he did not observe the three young rascals of the Remove till he was fairly upon them.

Loder told himself over and over again that he was safe—quite safe; but he could not feel sure. He was haunted by the recollection of the unknown fellow he had butted into on Friday night. Who the fellow was Loder had no idea, except that he must have been a junior. Some young rascal who had been out of bounds, and would keep silent for his own sake, Loder had no doubt—even if he had recognised Loder. The fellow, at all events, had said nothing, so far.

But it was a lurking fear in Loder's heart. The end of the term was near, and with the holidays the mystery would, no doubt, be given up if no discovery had been made by then. Loder longed for the last day of term. But the Head and all the staff were in deadly earnest, and the prefects were very keen, and discovery might be made any minute. It was not a matter that could be passed over if it could be helped. No stone would be left unturned to find out the Greyfriars fellow who had had the temerity to knock down a member of Dr. Locke's staff.

Loder's temper was savage these days. He had always been a bully, but juniors and fags found him worse than ever now. The fear and worry on his mind made his temper Tartaric. The slightest excuse was enough for Loder to bring

the ashplant into play. Snoop and Stott were utterly dismayed as he came on them, but Skinner, for some reason known only to himself, was quite cool, and he even kept the cigarette in his mouth as Loder raised his eyes from the ground and stared at the young rascals, caught fairly in the act. Any excuse was good enough for Loder, in his present frame of mind, to "whop" a Lower boy, but now he did not need an excuse; it was his bounden duty to whop the three dingy black sheep of the Remove. The glint in his eyes showed that he was going to do his duty with vigour.

"Smoking, what?" Loder slipped the ashplant under his arm into his hand. "You young sweeps!"

"Oh crikey!" groaned Snoop. "Bend over!" rapped Loder. "You first, Skinner! Take that cigarette out of your mouth, you young rascal!"

Skinner removed the cigarette, but he did not bend over; his face was rather tense, but he was quite cool.

Loder stared at him.

"I've told you to bend over, Skinner," he said.

"I heard you," answered Skinner.

Your Editor Calling!

Have I received a Greyfriars Limerick or a funny story from you yet?

Don't forget I'm still handing out TOPPING LEATHER POCKET WALLETS and SHEFFIELD STEEL PENKNIVES for limericks and funny stories. All efforts should be sent to: "Limericks and Jokes" Editor, c/o MAGNET, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

"Well, I'm waiting!" Loder swished the ashplant.

"You can wait!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Wait!" said Skinner breezily.

Loder stared blankly. Defiance from fellows like Harry Wharton or Bob Cherry would not have surprised him; from a fellow like Skinner it was astounding.

Snoop and Stott looked at their comrade, hardly believing their ears; they fairly gaped at him.

Loder made a stride forward.

"Hold on," said Skinner quietly and coolly, though his voice shook a little. "Keep that cane to yourself, Loder. You're not whopping me—or my friends, either."

Loder with his left hand gripped Skinner's collar; his right hand rose, with the ashplant in it. Skinner set his teeth.

"Better not!" he said. "I shall go to Wiggins if you do!"

The swipe was arrested in midair.

"You'll what?" panted Loder.

Skinner's words were a mere mystery to Snoop and Stott. He might have complained to his own Form master, Mr. Quelch, if the punishment had been unjust. But he had nothing to do with Mr. Wiggins, the master of the Third Form. To Snoop and Stott it seemed as if Skinner was "talking out of his hat."

But it did not seem so to Loder. To Loder there was only one explanation

of Skinner's words. He lowered the ashplant.

"What do you mean, Skinner?" he asked, unable to keep the tremble out of his voice.

"Guess," said Skinner coolly.

There was a brief pause. Snoop and Stott looked on in utter wonder. Loder turned to them.

"You can cut!" he said.

Gladly enough Snoop and Stott "cut."

They realised that they were to escape punishment, though they did not even begin to understand why. Loder made Skinner a sign to remain, and he remained cheerfully enough. The bully of the Sixth did not speak again till Snoop and Stott were gone.

"Now," said Loder at last, "what did you mean by that, Skinner?"

Skinner smiled.

"I fancy you know," he answered. "You haven't forgotten bumping a fellow over in the quad on Friday night."

"You!"

"Little me!" smiled Skinner.

"You admit having been out of bounds after lights out?"

"Are you going to report me to Quelch?" grinned Skinner. "You didn't seem keen on it at the time."

Loder breathed hard. He knew that it was Skinner whom he had barged into in the dark that wild night; he had guessed it when the cad of the Remove defied him. It was this dingy, unscrupulous young rascal who knew his secret! It was useless to deny it; he knew that Skinner must have recognised him that night, or he would not be taking his present line. For a long minute there was silence. Skinner broke it.

"I've said nothing so far," he remarked. "I don't want to get you sacked, Loder. No bizney of mine. And I don't want to be flogged for breaking bounds after lights-out. But I'd as soon be flogged as whopped by you, you bully. Lay a finger on me, and I'll go straight to Wiggins!"

"You think he'd believe you?" asked Loder huskily.

"I'll chance that."

"You think anybody would listen to you if you said that a Sixth Form prefect had—had—"

"I fancy so," said Skinner. "Anyhow, I'm ready to chance it if you are. Are you?"

Loder looked at him. He was under this young rascal's thumb, unless he defied him to do his worst. For a moment or two he was tempted to take the chance. Who would believe such an accusation from a young rascal who had to admit, if he made it, that he had been out of bounds at night? The Head would pooh-pooh it; Wiggins would pooh-pooh it. Nobody could imagine any motive on Loder's part for such an act. If he had "got" Wingate as he had intended, it would have been different; but he had "got" Wiggins, and nobody guessed that there had been a mistake in the dark. Everything was in Loder's favour if he chanced it, thrashed this young scoundrel as he deserved, and contemptuously denied his accusation.

But—

But he dared not take the chance!

He knew that he dared not. Believed or disbelieved, the accusation would concentrate the attention of the whole school on him. Already it was hard enough to conceal his uneasy fears. What would he feel like with the eyes of all Greyfriars on him, with everybody surmising and speculating on the subject—perhaps guessing that there

had been a mistake in the dark? Fellows would remember that Wingate had been due at Masters' gate about the same time as Wiggins; once Loder's name was mentioned in connection with the affair, surmise would take a new turn. Loder, indeed, wondered that it had not already been guessed that Wiggins had been "whopped" by error—it was known that Wiggins had not seen his assailant, and it might have been deduced from that fact that the assailant had not seen Wiggins. Loder was on too thin ice to take chances.

He stood with puckered brow thinking it out, while Skinner watched him coolly. Skinner was feeling quite safe.

It was easy enough for him to guess what was passing in Loder's tormented mind, and easy enough to guess what Loder's conclusion would be. The fellow who had whopped Wiggins dared not be accused.

Loder gripped the ashplant hard. He would have given much to lay it about Harold Skinner with all the strength of his arm. But he had to tread the hard way of the transgressor.

Without speaking again he turned away at last. Skinner smiled.

"Not chancing it, old bean?" he asked mockingly.

Loder did not answer.

"From now on," added Skinner cheerfully, "you'll keep that ashplant to yourself, Loder! None for me, and none for my friends. Understand?"

Loder choked.

It was sheer delight to Skinner to "check" the bully of the Sixth. But Loder—the last fellow in the Sixth, as a rule, to be cheeked by a junior—had to swallow it. He tramped away, leaving Skinner laughing.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Lines for Loder!

"THE rotter!"
"The worm!"
"The outsider!"
"Blow him!"

"The blowfulness is terrific."

Five voices were speaking in Study No. 1 in the Remove in a wrathful and

indignant chorus. Harry Wharton & Co., to judge by their remarks, were up against it.

"This is what comes of taking Sixth Form wickets, Inky!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Next time you bowl to Loder, for goodness' sake let him down lightly."

"The lightfulness will be preposterous!" grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed and disgusting Loder is taking it out of our ridiculous selves."

"The brute seems like a bear with a sore head lately," said Frank Nugent. "I suppose it's getting turned out of the cricket that's done it!"

"And Wingate chucking him off Big Side!" said Johnny Bull. "Time he got over it—but he won't get over that in a hurry! Any man with an ounce of pluck would have asked Wingate to put the gloves on! Not Loder! He would rather take it out of us."

"The rotter!"

"The worm!"

"The cad!"

It was the chorus again. Skinner glanced in at the study door and grinned at the wrathful and disconsolate five.

"I hear that you men are up against it," he remarked.

"The hearfulness is terrifically correct, my esteemed and execrable Skinner. We are down on our ridiculous luck."

"Loder, what?" asked Skinner.

"Yes!" growled Harry Wharton. "Five hundred lines each—which means staying in! We were going over to Highcliffe to see Courtenay and the Caterpillar—but—"

"And you never asked for the lines?" said Skinner sympathetically.

"Well, even Loder has to have some excuse," said Harry. "We were kicking Fishy! You know Fishy has to be kicked. He's been money-lending in the fag Forms again—and we jolly well kicked him. Of course, we couldn't tell Loder that. Can't give even Fishy away to a prefect."

"Loder jolly well knows that Fishy has to be kicked," growled Johnny Bull, "and he doesn't care a rap if we kick him across to New York. It was just an excuse for getting down on us."

"He called it bullying," said Bob

Cherry, with a deep breath. "That's jolly from Loder—the worst bully at Greyfriars! Jevver hear of such an impot as five hundred lines—and to be handed in before dorm? Sticking indoors on a day like this—to write lines for Loder—just because Inky made him look a silly ass by taking his wicket last week—that's the real reason."

Skinner chuckled.

There were other reasons, as Skinner knew, for Loder's savage temper of late. But the Famous Five did not know what Skinner knew.

"Well, it's no good grouching," said Bob. "We've got to do the lines. We'll go and kick Fishy again, though."

"Hear, hear!"

"Look here, how'd you like to get off the lines?" asked Skinner.

The chums of the Remove stared at him.

"The likefulness would be terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I might get you off!"

"What utter rot!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Loder won't let us off if you ask him, I suppose."

"I fancy so! The fact is," said Skinner airily. "I've got on the right side of Loder. My people have been meeting his people, as it happens, and making friends and all that—and Loder is making it a point to be civil to me."

"Oh, my hat!"

"We may be having him for the summer holidays," said Skinner. "Loder's being jolly civil to me, anyhow. I don't think he'd refuse if I asked him a favour."

Harry Wharton & Co. looked very curiously at Skinner. They were not on friendly terms with that dingy youth—indeed, they had hardly spoken to him since Bob had mixed the solution in his hair in the bikeshed. It was not Skinner's way to do any fellow a good turn—especially the Famous Five. They could not help being surprised.

"Well," said Harry, at last. "We'd like to get off the lines, and get out, instead of sticking indoors. But—"

"But you don't like taking a favour from me?" sneered Skinner.

"Well—you—you see—"

"Quite! But I'm not offering to oblige you for nothing," said Skinner coolly. "I'm on the rocks since I went out of bounds last time, and we're on short commons in my study. I shouldn't refuse to come to a study supper if you asked me."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, if you put it on a business footing, all right," he said. "We'll ask you to supper, and a jolly good supper, with pleasure, if you can get us off this impot."

"If!" said Johnny Bull.

"I fancy I can," said Skinner. "You'd hardly believe how jolly friendly Loder has been, since—since my people got pally with his people at home. I can work it."

"While you're about it, then, ask him to let us alone till the end of the term!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Done!" said Skinner.

"Gammon!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Seeing is believing," yawned Skinner. "Come down to Loder's study with me now and I'll see you through."

The Famous Five exchanged glances. Skinner's statement was a little difficult to credit; but a chance of escaping such an imposition as five hundred lines each was too good to be lost. It was well worth a study supper; and they did not expect a fellow like Skinner to do anything for nothing. Their only doubt was that the playful Skinner might be pulling their leg.

"Look here, if you take us down to Loder's study for nothing, Skinner, I

A RED-HOT SCHOOL YARN!

THE RIVAL CAMPERS!

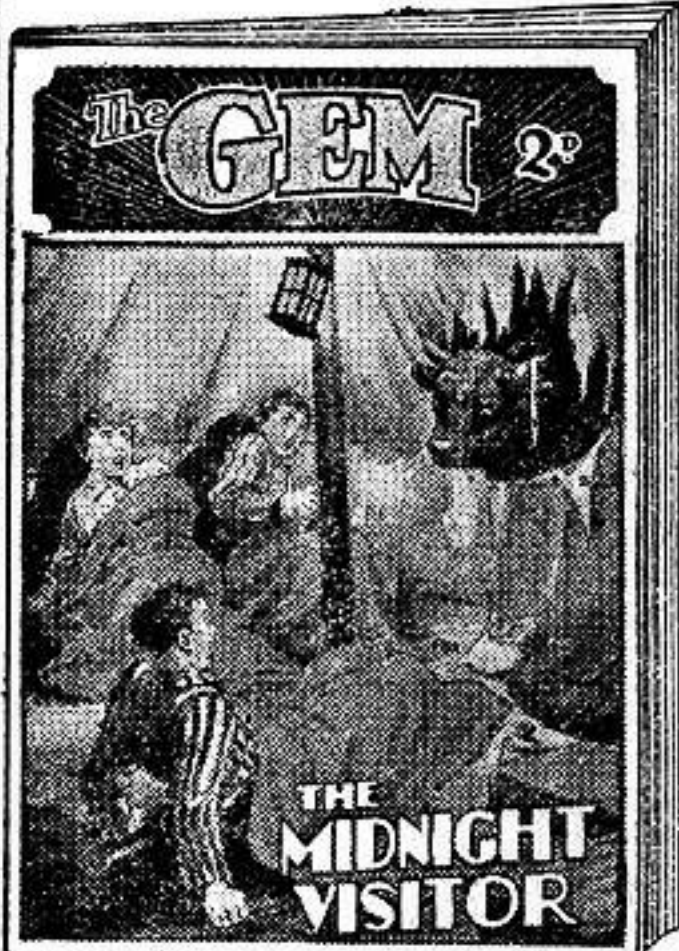
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"Take that cigarette out of your mouth, you young rascal!" rapped Loder. "And bend over!" Skinner removed the cigarette, but he did not bend over. "Hold on!" he said quietly and coolly. "You're not whopping me—or my friends, either, Loder. I shall go to Wiggins if you do!"

shall jolly well kick you," said Johnny Bull.

"Right as rain!" agreed Skinner.

"Oh, all right, then."

And the Famous Five, greatly surprised and still a little dubious, followed Skinner down the stairs and into the Sixth Form passage. Skinner tapped on Loder's door, and threw it carelessly open. Loder was there, and he stared at the crowd of juniors in the doorway.

"You've not done your lines yet," he snapped. "What do you want?"

"These fellows are friends of mine, Loder," said Skinner airily. "I want you to let them off the lines."

"What?"

"Don't I speak plainly?" asked Skinner.

"You—you—" Loder broke off.

It was past understanding on the part of the Famous Five. Loder's look, for a moment, was that of a demon. If looks told anything, Loder would have asked nothing better at that moment than to take his ashplant and thrash Skinner of the Remove within an inch of his life.

But he did nothing of the kind. He choked back his wrath, almost gasping. He did not reach for the ashplant.

"Oh!" he stuttered. "You—you—you want me to—to let your friends off their lines, do you?"

"Yes! I've told these chaps that you're going to be rather decent to me, Loder, because our people are pally at home," explained Skinner. "I'd be no end obliged if you'd let them off."

Loder breathed hard.

"Well, I—I—I—" It was a bitter pill to swallow, but Gerald Loder had to get it down. "If—if you make a point of it—"

"I do!"

"You fags needn't do the lines," gasped Loder.

"Thank you, Loder," said Skinner, very civilly, but with a mocking gleam in his eyes, "and while we're on the subject, I'd like you to let them off lines

and lickings till the end of the term, if you don't mind. I should take it as a favour."

Loder choked.

"I—I—very well—all right!" he stammered. "You—you kids behave yourselves, you know—don't ask for trouble, and you won't get any. Shut the door after you."

The juniors left the study. In the passage, the Famous Five stared at one another, and at Skinner. If Loder's concession had been based on friendly feelings, his looks certainly had not done him justice.

"Well, we're off the lines," said Bob. "Much obliged, Skinner! Let's go and get the bikes out, you men."

"What-ho!"

Puzzled, but very bright and cheery, the Famous Five went for their bikes. Skinner strolled away smiling; with the happy anticipation of a study supper that would be very welcome indeed, now that he was on hard tack, owing to his late visit to the Cross Keys. All the juniors were satisfied; but Loder of the Sixth, as he paced his study after they were gone, did not look satisfied. Fear and fury were mingled in his face as he paced and paced; and he wondered, with a sinking heart, how this was going to end!

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter, Too!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"I want you—"

"Bow-wow!"

"To speak to Skinner—"

"Eh?"

"I think you might do that much for a pal!" said Billy Bunter, with dignity.

Harry Wharton & Co. regarded the fat Owl of the Remove in astonishment. They were sauntering in the quad after class, when William George

Bunter, rolled up, and made that surprising request.

"You want us to speak to Skinner?" repeated Harry Wharton blankly.

"Yes, old chap!"

"What the thump for?"

"To get me off my lines, of course," said Bunter peevishly. "I've got lines for Loder, you know. Blessed if I don't think nearly every man in the Remove has got lines for Loder these days—not to mention lickings. Never seen such an ill-tempered beast! He gave me a hundred lines for nothing yesterday—"

"You always get things for nothing, poor old fat bean," said Bob.

"Exactly. I never get justice here," said Bunter sadly. "Loder made out that I was going down to the pantry, you know, because he saw me on the kitchen stairs. I told him I wasn't—but you know that cad Loder—he doesn't take a fellow's word. He gave me a hundred lines; and just because I haven't done them, he's doubled them. Fancy that!"

"Then you'd better get going with them," said Wharton. "It will be a licking next."

"That's why I want you to speak to Skinner. Skinner can make that beast Loder do as he likes."

"Fathead!"

"Look here, you jolly well know he got you off your lines yesterday," said Bunter warmly. "I've heard you speaking about it. And he caught some fellows smoking in the Cloisters, and let them off, because Skinner made him. And he gave Skinner a prefect's pass out of gates after lock-up—and you know the beast never does. No other prefect would give Skinner a pass—they know him too jolly well. Skinner's got him feeding from his hand."

The chums of the Remove looked at Billy Bunter, and looked at one another.

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Some of this was news to them; and it added to the surprise they had felt over the affair of the lines.

"It's jolly queer," went on Bunter. "Looks to me as if Skinner's found out something about Loder."

"Wha-a-a-at?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Spotted him out of bounds, or something," said Bunter sagely. "May have seen him at it, you know, when he went out of bounds last Friday."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Skinner says that his people have got friendly with Loder's people, and they seemed to have asked Loder to be decent to him," said Bob.

Bunter gave a fat wink.

"Stuffing you, old chap," he said. "You're pretty easy to stuff, you know. I saw him looking at Skinner to-day as if he'd like to eat him. Still, I don't care about that—I know that Skinner can make him do what he likes, and that's what I want. I know Loder would let me off my lines if Skinner asked him, same as he did you fellows."

"Well, speak to Skinner yourself, fathead," said Nugent.

"I've spoken to him," explained Bunter, "and the rotter won't do anything. I can't ask him to a study supper like you fellows did—you see, I would, only I've been disappointed about a postal order! He makes out that he can't keep on bothering Loder."

"I fancy Loder would get fed-up pretty soon if he did," grinned Bob Cherry. "His people may have asked him to be decent to Skinner, but there's a limit."

"That's all very well," said Bunter. "But I want to get off my lines. They've got to go in by tea-time; and it's tea-time now, and I haven't done them. That means six! You know what Loder's like—just enjoys taking it out of a fellow. He's got a worse temper than yours, lately, Wharton."

"You silly owl!"

"I mean it," said Bunter, blinking at the captain of the Remove. "You know what a rotten temper you've got—well, Loder's worse. I wonder the Sixth Form men stand him—just as I wonder sometimes how these fellows stand you, old chap—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Co., quite entertained by the expression on Harry Wharton's face.

"Well, you speak to Skinner, old fellow," urged Bunter. "You wouldn't like me to be licked, would you?"

"I was just thinking of licking you myself, you fat villain!"

Bunter jumped back.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, it's up to you," urged the fat Owl. "It's all right if Skinner put in a word for me, only he won't. Well, he will if you fellows ask him. Tell him you'll whop him if he doesn't. See?"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Any of you could whop Skinner," said Bunter. "In fact, I could whop him myself, if it came to that! He's a rotten funk, you know, and you fellows are as plucky as anything—you're not afraid of Skinner. You go and ask him, Bob, old chap—he's under the elms now—go and ask him, and tell him you'll smash him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at. I can tell you this is a jolly serious matter," said Bunter warmly. "As the matter stands, I'm booked for six, after tea, and Skinner could get me off, if

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he liked. You go and ask him, Wharton, and hit him in the eye—"

"You can hit Skinner in the eye yourself, old fat freak," said the captain of the Remove. "Buzz off!"

"I say, you fellows!" howled Bunter. "Don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you—I say, you fellows—oh, you rotters!"

The Famous Five walked off; apparently not disposed to use such drastic measures with Harold Skinner to induce him to exert his influence in Billy Bunter's favour.

Billy Bunter glared after them with a wrathful blink.

"Beasts!" growled Bunter.

The fat Owl rolled away, to look for Skinner again. Matters were, as he had said, serious. "Six" from an ashplant loomed over Bunter like the sword of Damocles; and he rather regretted that he had not done those lines for Loder. But it was too late to think of that; two hundred lines was a long task, and they were already over-due. At any moment now the chopper might come down; and Skinner, with his mysterious influence over the bully of the Sixth, was the fat Owl's only resource.

Skinner was seated on a bench under the elms, with a Virgil open in his hand. Any master who had passed and observed Skinner would have received the impression that he was a rather studious youth—mugging up Latin verse after class. Closer observation would have destroyed that impression, however. What Skinner was really "mugging up," was a list of horses, with weights and odds, cut from "Sporting Snips," and concealed inside the innocent-looking school book. Skinner was deep in that congenial task, not having decided yet whether his next pocket-money should be lost on "Jolly Roger," or on "Bonny Boy." He closed the book hastily as Bunter came up, and scowled at him over it.

"Cut off, you fat frump!" he snapped.

"Now, look here, Skinner," said Bunter determinedly. "I've asked you to put in a word for me with Loder—"

"Go and eat cock!" snapped Skinner. Even if the Bully of the Sixth was "feeding from his hand," Skinner realised that it would not be judicious to push him too hard; neither was Skinner the fellow to take trouble for nothing.

"Loder would let me off, if you asked him. Same as he did Wharton and that lot, and Snoop and Stott for smoking," said Bunter.

"Get out!"

"I've asked Bob Cherry to whop you if you don't, and he's promised," went on Bunter. "I dare say you saw me speaking to those chaps. Well, Bob's backing me up, see? If I get a licking from Loder, you get a licking from Bob Cherry."

If Skinner had believed that statement, as Bunter hoped, no doubt he would have played up. But Billy Bunter's "whoppers" were seldom believed, and this one had no better luck than usual.

Skinner rose to his feet.

"You're going to Loder?" asked Bunter hopefully.

"No; I'm going to kick you, you fat, lying toad," answered Skinner.

"I—I say, old fellow—Keep off, you beast!" roared Bunter, jumping away in alarm. "Look here, Skinner, you—"

Skinner walked away.

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

He rolled after Skinner.

"I say, old chap—Stop, you beast! Look here, dear old fellow—Hold on, you rotten cad—"

"Cut off!" snapped Skinner impatiently, and he walked faster.

But Billy Bunter accelerated, too.

"Be a sport, old chap!" he urged. "You can get me off, if you like, and you know it! Think I don't know that you jolly well found out something when you were out of bounds on Friday night—"

"Shut up!" gasped Skinner.

At the end of the path under the elms two Sixth Form men were standing—Wingate and Gwynne. Both of them looked round as Bunter's loud squeak fell on their ears.

"Shan't!" hooted Bunter. "Look here, Skinner, be a sport! Every chap in the Form knows that Loder will do anything you ask him, and you can jolly well tell Wharton that it's because he knows your people; but you can't stuff me! You jolly well spotted him on Friday night, in my opinion—"

Billy Bunter broke off, the horror and dismay in Skinner's face warning him that something was wrong. He blinked round, and gave a gasp at the sight of the two prefects.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

"Skinner!" said Wingate quietly.

"Ye-e-es, Wingate?" groaned Skinner.

"Go to my study, and wait for me there!"

Skinner almost limped away to the House. Billy Bunter, greatly relieved not to be told to go to the study also, rolled away. Wingate and Gwynne exchanged a glance, and the captain of Greyfriars followed Skinner to the House.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Coughing it Up!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "Enjoying life, old bean?"

Skinner did not look as if he was enjoying life as he passed the Famous Five in the quad.

If ever a fellow looked as if he was "for it," Harold Skinner did.

"Anything up, old bean?" asked Harry Wharton.

Skinner gritted his teeth.

"That fat fool, Bunter," he muttered. "Wingate heard him gabbling about—about last Friday—"

"Oh, my hat!"

The Famous Five looked grave. They did not like Skinner, or approve of his shady pursuits. But no man in the Remove would have dreamed of giving him away—not even Bunter, if he had been aware of it. It looked like a flogging for Skinner, and the chums of the Remove could sympathise with a fellow up for a flogging, even if he richly deserved it.

"Well, you asked for it, old scout!" said Johnny Bull, perhaps by way of being a Job's comforter.

Skinner snarled, and went into the House. The undoubted fact that he had asked for it did not console him.

He had not long to wait in Wingate's study. The Greyfriars captain came in in a few minutes, and shut the door. Skinner almost squirmed under Wingate's clear, steady gaze.

"You know that I heard what Bunter was saying to you," said Wingate quietly; "as a rule, of course, I should take no notice of a thing heard by chance, but this is too serious a matter to consider that. You were out of House bounds on Friday night?"

Skinner licked his dry lips. It was

useless to deny it. No man in the Remove would willingly have betrayed him; but now that it was known it was obvious that investigation could not fail to bring the truth to light. He nodded dismally.

"Was it you who attacked Mr. Wiggins?"

Skinner jumped.

"I? No!" he almost yelled. "Of course it wasn't!"

Wingate eyed him grimly.

"I don't see any 'of course' about it," he said. "I've been trying for days to find out who was out of the House that night. I've found out now. Certainly I never thought of the Remove, or any junior Form. I should not have supposed that a junior had the nerve to do such a thing. But it seems that you were out of the House, and I can't find that anybody else was."

"I—I never even saw Wiggins! Why should I touch him?" gasped Skinner.

"Why should anybody?" said Wingate. "Nobody in the school, so far as I know, has any grudge against Mr. Wiggins. But somebody knocked him down last Friday night in the dark. You were out of the House—"

"I never went near Masters' gate."

"Where did you go?"

"I—I went for a—ramble," stammered Skinner. "It—it was really only a lark, Wingate—"

He faltered under Wingate's steady gaze.

"I'll speak to you plainly, Skinner, before taking you to the Head," said the prefect. "As I've heard this by chance, I'd rather not send you up for a flogging, if I can help it. Breaking bounds after lights out is pretty serious,

but I can deal with it myself—if it was only that! But—"

"I never even saw Wiggins!" panted Skinner.

"If that's the truth, I'm glad!" said Wingate dryly. "But if it was you that knocked Mr. Wiggins down, you will be expelled from Greyfriars on the spot. You know that, of course."

"It—it wasn't!" groaned Skinner. "Why should I touch him? He's not my Form master; I've no grudge against him! Even if I had, do you think I should have the nerve to knock a master down?"

Wingate smiled faintly.

Certainly he, or anyone else, would never have suspected Skinner of having that amount of nerve.

"You heard what the Head said in Hall," went on Skinner. "He said that some fellow had laid in wait for Wiggins in the dark, and pitched into him. Why should I—even if I had the nerve?"

Wingate was silent. He was thinking.

Ever since the mysterious happening of Friday night the Greyfriars prefects had been unrelenting in their investigations. But the keenest investigation had failed to bring to light any imaginable motive that any fellow might have had for "whopping" Wiggins. Why any Greyfriars man should have ambushed that harmless little gentleman and knocked him down in the dark was a complete mystery.

"No," said Wingate at last, "I can't imagine what grudge you could have had against Wiggins, Skinner; and I'm quite certain that you haven't the nerve to lie in wait for a master and knock him down. Now that I know it was you—"

"It wasn't!" shrieked Skinner.

"Now that I know it was you," repeated Wingate calmly, "I think I can understand how it happened. A fellow in a funk, with a flogging hanging over him, might do a hasty thing, without thinking. Mr. Wiggins came in late and ran into you in the dark, and you were afraid of being spotted, and you knocked him down and ran for it, to get away unrecognised. That's how it was, I fancy."

Skinner panted.

"It wasn't! I swear it wasn't! I never saw him—he never saw me. I wasn't near the place—"

"You'd better tell the Head all that," said the Greyfriars captain. "It's up to him! All the prefects have been instructed to find out who was out of the House that night, and it's taken for granted that when the fellow's found, the fellow who attacked Wiggins has been found."

"I—I—"

"I can't believe that you intentionally laid for him and whopped him," said Wingate. "But if you knocked him down to keep him from spotting you out of bounds, it comes to much the same thing. And—"

"I didn't!" almost screamed Skinner.

"Well, it looks clear enough to me," said the Greyfriars captain. "You were the only fellow out of the House that night, so far as we can ascertain. It must have been you that Mr. Prout heard and followed."

"Yes, but—"

"You were alone?" asked Wingate.

"Yes, but—"

(Continued on next page.)



"Come on Hope!"

Hope looks like making it in record time . . . stout fellow, Hope. (Captain of the soccer team, too. And that team's fit . . . from strenuous training.)

Wrigley's takes its share . . . and the team takes its share of Wrigley's. The pure cool flavour refreshes—keeps the mouth fresh.

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MADE IN GREAT BRITAIN.



WRIGLEY'S

MEANS BETTER CHEWING GUM

"Can you say that you saw anyone else out of the House?"

Skinner licked his dry lips.

"I'd rather deal with you myself, as I've said," added Wingate, as the wretched Skinner did not speak. "If it were only breaking bounds, I'd do so. But the assault on Mr. Wiggins is a matter for the Head to deal with. You had better come with me now, and get it over!"

"I—I—I never—" groaned Skinner huskily.

Wingate turned to the door.

Skinner leaned on the study table, hardly breathing. If he was taken to the Head—

He knew what it looked like! Hardly anybody could have suspected Skinner of ambushing a master and "whopping" him. Any man in the Remove would have laughed at the idea. But any man in the Remove, on the other hand, would have said that Skinner was capable of anything, in a funk, to save his skin. What was the Head to believe?

Obviously, he would believe that Skinner, coming in surreptitiously in the dark, had unexpectedly come on Mr. Wiggins—and struck that hasty blow to get away unrecognised! It looked like it—indeed, Skinner knew that he would have thought so himself, in the case of any other fellow! He was going up to the Head—to be sacked!

For many reasons—most of them unworthy ones—Skinner did not want to give Loder of the Sixth away. But all those reasons, good and bad, vanished now, at the prospect of the chopper coming down on Skinner himself!

Wingate's hand was on the door-handle, when Skinner gave a yell.

"Stop!"

The Greyfriars captain looked round.

"I—I'll tell you!" panted Skinner. "I'm not going to be sacked to save that rotter's skin!"

Wingate looked at him hard.

"If you've got anything in your own favour to say, before I take you to Dr. Locko, you'd better cough it up, Skinner," he said quietly. "I've given you the chance. I warn you to stick to the truth, though. Do you mean that you saw some other fellow out of the House that night?"

"Yes!" groaned Skinner.

"You saw him attack Mr. Wiggins?"

"No! But I know he jolly well did!" gasped Skinner. "He barged into me, running away from Masters' gate, and knocked me over. I knew he'd done it, as soon as I heard Wiggins yelling."

"Who was it?"

"Loder, of the Sixth!" panted Skinner.

Wingate gave a violent start. He made a stride towards Skinner, his eyes gleaming.

"You young rascal! You dare to accuse a Sixth Form prefect—"

"It's the truth!" shrieked Skinner. A deadly fear smote him, that he would not be believed, now that he had made up his mind to tell the truth. "I saw him—I tell you he barged into me, running away after he whopped Wiggins, and sent me spinning—"

"Loder? Impossible!"

"I can prove it!" yelled Skinner.

"Prove it, then!" said Wingate savagely. "If you're spinning this yarn because you know I'm not on good terms with Loder—"

"It was Loder! You heard what Bunter said—"

Wingate started again.

"Any fellow in the Remove will tell you," panted Skinner, "I've got fellows off their lines by asking Loder—"

Wharton and his friends—they'll tell you if you ask them. That fool Bunter was asking me to get him off his lines—because Loder would do anything I asked him—"

"You dinky little scoundrel!" said Wingate, between his teeth. "Do you mean to say that you know this about Loder, and that you've been making use of such a thing—holding it over his head—"

"He gives fellows lines for nothing," mumbled Skinner. "He's a rotten bully. Ever since he whopped Wiggins he's been afraid of being found out, and he's taken it out of the fellows! I didn't see any harm in making him let the fellows off lines—"

"You young rascal! But it can't be true—why should Loder—" Wingate broke off in perplexity. "It's impossible—"

"I don't know why he did it—but I know he did!" panted Skinner. "He's admitted it in speaking to me, too. Half the Remove knows that he will do anything I ask him. I had to explain it by stuffing them that his people know my people at home. Ask Wharton—if you can't take my word—"

Wingate made a gesture of contempt.

"Your word!" he said, in a tone that made Skinner wince.

"It's the truth!" muttered Skinner. "I'll say so to the Head, if you take me to him! I'm not going to be sacked to save that bully!"

Wingate compressed his lips.

"I shall not take you to the Head—yet," he said. "I shall look into this, Skinner—for the present you can go. Don't say a word about this outside this study."

Skinner almost crawled away. Wingate slammed the door after him and remained for a long time in deep thought.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Wingate Wants to Know!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter blinked into Study No. 1 in the Remove with a dismal blink.

The Famous Five had gathered there to tea and William George Bunter, as usual, was superfluous. But for once they refrained from bidding Bunter to buzz off. The lugubrious look on the fat Owl's face disarmed them.

"Had your licking?" asked Harry.

"Nunno! I haven't seen Loder yet!" mumbled Bunter. "I—I've got to go to his study! I—I don't want to go."

"Go hon!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"That beast Skinner could get me off, if he liked," went on Bunter. "He knows something about Loder, you know—"

"Oh, rot!" said Wharton uneasily.

"You seem to have landed Skinner in a row with your chinwag, you fat ass."

"Yes, and serve him right!" agreed Bunter. "Of course, I wouldn't have given him away to a prefect! I never saw Wingate, you know. It was all Skinner's fault, though—if he'd got me off my lines, I shouldn't have been arguing with him, and then Wingate wouldn't have heard anything. See? He'd have got me off my lines if I could have stood him a study supper, like you fellows! Selfish beast, you know!"

Bunter shook his head sorrowfully. "There's a lot of selfishness at this school," he said. "If there's one thing I never could stand, you fellows, it's selfishness."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I've wondered sometimes whether I

mightn't grow selfish myself, in the long run, you know, associating with such a selfish lot. Look at you fellows, now—never asking a chap to have a whack in that cake, although you know he's up for six!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Tuck into the cake, fatty, and shut up!"

"Well, I didn't come to tea," said Bunter, "but as you're so jolly pressing, I don't mind." Billy Bunter filled his capacious mouth with cake and resumed. "I want you fellows to see Skinner after tea. Make him play up, you know! Mind, I'm not asking you to do this for nothing. I'm going to make it worth your while, see?"

"Fathead!"

"I mean it!" said Bunter. "You fellows whop Skinner till he agrees to get me off my lines, and I'll ask the lot of you to Bunter Court for the summer holidays. There!"

"Oh, crikey!"

"Bit of a change for you, after your own humble homes, you know!" said Bunter, blinking at them. "Is it a go?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! You whop Skinner—easy enough to whop that funk! He can make Loder do anything he likes—"

There was a knock at the open door of the study and Wingate of the Sixth looked in. The Famous Five jumped up from the tea-table. Billy Bunter blinked round and jumped up, too. With his mouth crammed with cake and a large chunk of the same in his fat hand, he blinked at the Greyfriars captain with startled eyes.

Wingate, however, took no heed of Bunter. He looked at Harry Wharton & Co., and the grave sternness in his face made them a little uneasy. They wondered why the Greyfriars captain had come to Study No. 1.

"Anything up, Wingate?" ventured Bob Cherry.

"I've a question to put to you kids," said Wingate curtly. "Had you lines to do for Loder recently?"

"Oh!" said Harry. "Yes!"

"Did you do them?"

"Um! No!"

"Why not?"

"Loder let us off," answered Harry, rather uncertainly.

Wingate's grim look rather worried the juniors, but, after all, their consciences were clear. A prefect could let them off lines if he liked, and certainly leniency could not, as a rule, be imputed to Loder as a fault! But the juniors felt uneasy, all the same. Why Wingate was inquiring into such a matter they could not guess, but his stern gravity was a little alarming.

"What was the impot for?"

"Kicking Fishy!" said Bob.

"Was it a heavy one?"

"Five hundred lines each."

"And Loder let you off?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean that he reconsidered the matter and decided that he had been too severe?"

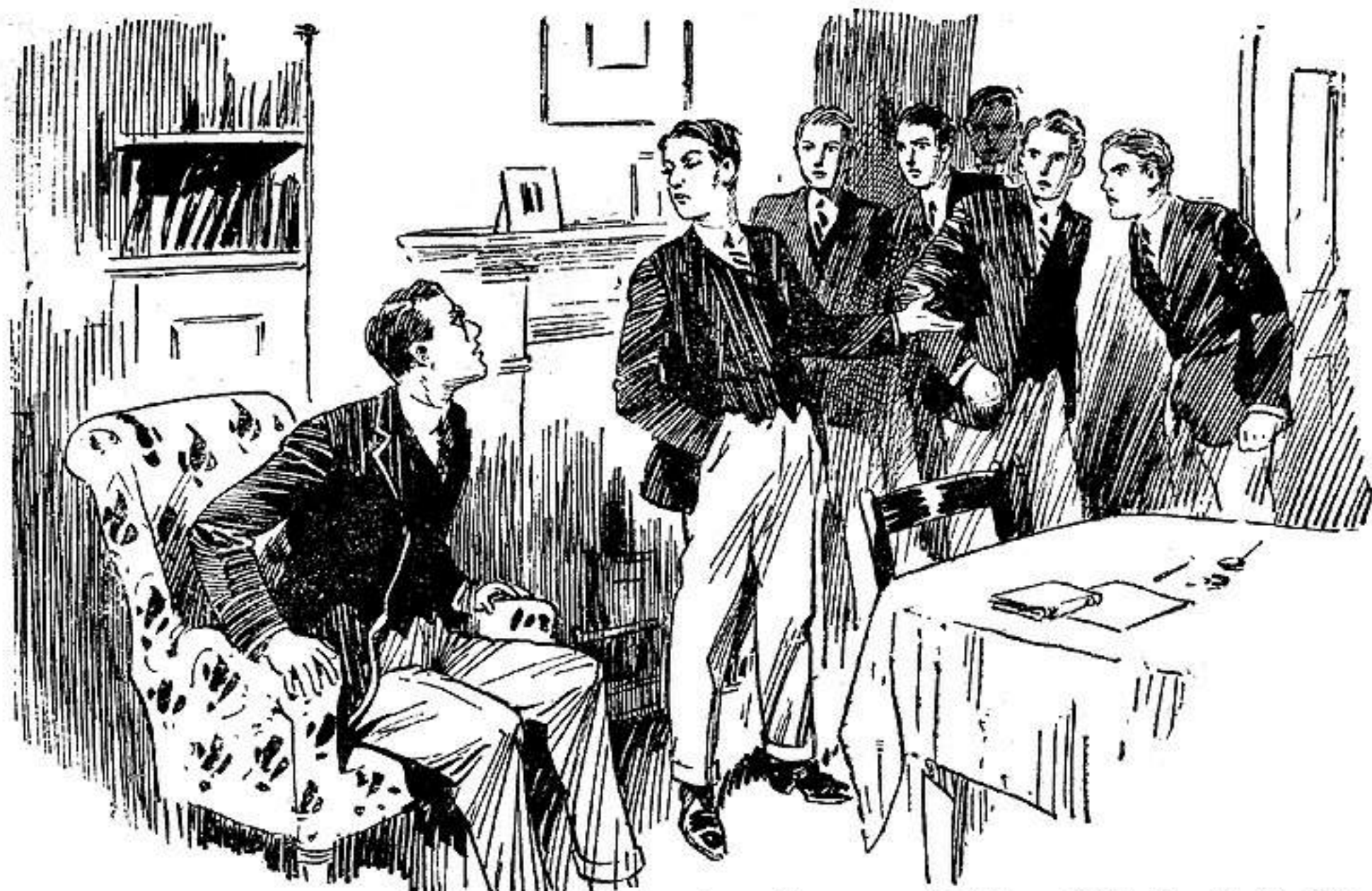
The juniors grinned involuntarily. Certainly they did not mean that the bully of the Sixth had departed so far from his usual manners and customs.

"Oh! No!" said Wharton.

"Then why did he let you off the lines?"

The juniors looked at one another uncomfortably. Wingate's face grew grimmer.

"I've a reason for asking these questions," he said. "You will answer me at once, or I shall take you to the Head to be questioned. Had Skinner, of your Form, anything to do with it?"



"These fellows are friends of mine, Loder," said Skinner airily. "I want you to let them off their lines." The Sixth-Former breathed hard. "You—you—you want me to—to—to—" It was a bitter pill to swallow, but Loder had to get it down. "Well—er—all right, if—if you make a point of it!"

"Well, there was no harm—" began Nugent.

"I'm not saying there was any harm. I want to know!" snapped Wingate. "Loder, as a prefect, was entitled to cancel an imposition if he chose. I want to know why he did so in this case."

"Well, I think you ought to ask Loder," said Wharton.

"I've a reason for asking you juniors," said Wingate quietly. "If you're thinking you may do Skinner any harm you needn't worry; I know already all that Skinner can tell me about it."

"Well, Skinner put in a word for us," said Wharton slowly. "The fact is, Wingate, we did nothing to get the impot, and we were jolly glad to get off the lines. Loder isn't often good-natured, as I dare say you know. He knew jolly well that we never deserved the lines, and I dare say that was why he obliged Skinner in the matter—"

"He obliged Skinner?"

"Well, Skinner asked him to let us off—"

"Why should Loder oblige Skinner any more than any other fellow in the Remove, or any other lower Form?"

"Skinner told us that his people knew Loder's people, and I suppose that was the reason."

A fat grin came over Billy Bunter's face. It faded away as the Greyfriars captain turned sharply on him.

"Bunter!"

"Oh! It—it wasn't me!" gasped Bunter in alarm.

"What? What was not you?"

"Anything!" gasped Bunter. "I mean, nothing."

"I understand that you've been asking Skinner to get you off lines for Loder. Why did you suppose he could do it?"

"Oh! I—I didn't—"

"What?"

"I—I mean, I—I did!" gasped Bunter. "I mean, I—I knew Loder would do anything Skinner asked him, because—"

"Because what?"

"Oh! Nothing! I—I wasn't thinking that Skinner spotted him out of bounds last Friday," stuttered Bunter. "I never thought of that for a minute! I—I didn't think he was afraid of Skinner giving him away, or anything of that sort! I—I'm not a suspicious fellow, you know! I—I just thought he might ask Loder because—because Loder's so—so kind—"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"That will do!" said Wingate quietly. And he left the study.

The chums of the Remove looked at one another.

"What on earth's up?" asked Bob. "A prefect ain't supposed to let fellows off impots because he's asked—but it's nothing to look so jolly serious about! Tain't often a fault of Loder's, anyhow. What the dickens was Wingate looking like a boiled owl for?"

"Blessed if I can make it out!" said Harry. "Skinner can't have any hold over Loder—that's rot! And I don't see why Wingate should butt in if he had—it's Loder's business. But—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, you fellows, if Loder was spotted out of bounds, and they fix it on him, and he gets sacked—think he'll be sacked before he gives me six?" asked Bunter.

"Fathead!"

"Well, that's rather important, you know," said Bunter.

And Bunter corrugated his fat brows over that question, which was so important; at the same time, however, devoting full attention to the cake, which was even more important!

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Called to Account!

LODER of the Sixth stretched out his hand to his ashplant as a tap came at the study door. He was expecting Bunter of the Remove, whose licking was overdue.

"Come in!" he snapped.

He dropped the ashplant, and stared as Wingate entered the study.

The Greyfriars captain shut the door behind him, a proceeding that Loder watched with uneasy eyes. The grim sternness of Wingate's face did not escape him. A guilty conscience needs no accuser, and a sickness of fear came into Loder's heart at the thought that something had been discovered.

"Well, what is it, Wingate?" Loder tried to speak lightly, but his voice almost cracked. "Have you come to tell me that I shall be wanted at Redclyffe, after all?"

"No!"

"You don't often drop into my study," Loder waved a shaking hand to a chair. "Take a pew, old man."

"I'll stand, thanks!" Wingate's eyes were fixed on Loder's face, and with all his efforts the bully of the Sixth could not meet that steady gaze. His eyes dropped. "I'll come straight to the point, Loder! It's come out that a junior was out of House bounds last Friday night—"

Loder's heart almost ceased to beat.

"He accuses you of being the fellow who knocked down Mr. Wiggins."

Loder gazed at him, dumb.

"That's the accusation," said Wingate. "If it's true, you're going up to the Head to be bunked. I thought I'd speak to you first."

"It's not—not true!" Loder panted huskily. "There's not a word of truth in it. I—I never touched Wiggins."

"I hope you didn't," said Wingate;

(Continued on page 28.)

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THE ISLAND TRADERS!

By FRANK RICHARDS



READ THIS FIRST.

BOB HARRIS AND BILLY McCANN, TWO YOUNG BRITISHERS TRADING UNDER THE NAME OF "BOB, BILLY & CO"—THE "CO." BEING AN ANCIENT AND BATTERED FORD CAR—ARE OWNERS OF A STORE ON KALUA ISLAND. KNOWING THAT A VAST TREASURE LIES HIDDEN ON THE SITE, DAVID BONE, A RASCALLY AMERICAN TRADER, OFFERS TO BUY THE STORE, BUT THE ISLAND TRADERS REFUSE TO SELL. DETERMINED TO "BREAK" THE YOUNGSTERS, BONE GETS SOO'OO, THE DEVIL-DOCTOR, TO PUT A TABOO ON THE STORE. THE CHUMS REFUSE TO QUIT, HOWEVER. NOT TO BE OUTDONE, THE AMERICAN TRADER BRIBES PURKISS, A BEACHCOMBER, TO FIRE THE STORE AND THEN OFFERS THE STRANDED ISLANDERS A FREE PASSAGE ON ONE OF HIS SCHOONERS. "MAKE UP YOUR MIND TO-DAY," SAYS CAPTAIN HIGGS, OF THE PEARL, "WE LIFT THE HOOK AT DAWN."

"Taboo He Stop!"

"I'VE made up my mind already," answered Bob Harris. "I want no favours from Mr. Bone—and I'm not leaving Kalua. Tell him to try again."

"I guess Mr. Bone doesn't care a hoot whether you accept his offer or not," answered Captain Higgs gruffly. "There it is, if you choose to take it—if you don't, leave it!"

"I'll leave it," said Bob.

"Suit yourself!"

"I see you've brought Loo, Bone's nigger, back to Kalua," said Bob. "Last time he was here he got friendly with the beach-comber who set fire to my store. What's his game this time?"

The skipper looked puzzled. It was easy to see that David Bone had confided none of his affairs to the captain of the Pearl. So far as Captain Higgs knew, Mr. Bone's offer was simply such an offer as any rich trader in the islands might have made to a white man who was down and out.

Loo was listening to the talk with keen attention. Bob did not need telling that the black Santa Cruz boy was interested to learn whether the partners were leaving Kalua or not.

"I don't know the boy's business here," grunted Captain Higgs. "Mr. Bone told me to give him a passage, that's all."

"I fancy I can tell you more than you know!" said Bob grimly. "If we leave Kalua, that black scoundrel will go back to his master and tell him so. If we stay, he stays—to work some more treachery."

"I ain't good at riddles," grunted Captain Higgs. "I don't even know whether the boy's stopping at Kalua."

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"I can tell you that—he will stop!" said Bob. "And if I had proof to go on, I'd break every bone in his black carcass. Unless I'm mistaken, he fixed it up with Purkiss, the beach-comber, to burn out my store, under orders from Mr. Bone."

"Lucky for you there's no law of libel in the islands," said Captain Higgs. "You been swallowing too much kava, and dreaming? Anyhow, I can't listen to talk of that sort about my owner. You'd better drop into your canoe, Mr. Harris. Can't say I'm sorry not to have your antediluvian Ford blocking up my deck."

Bob jumped back into his canoe.

He paddled back to his fishing, with plenty of food for thought. David Bone's offer of a passage on the schooner meant one thing, and one thing only; he wanted to get the partners off the island. The ruin of their business had not driven them off Kalua, but Mr. Bone was not willing to let them stay there even combing the beach. It meant that Billy McCann was right; for there was only one imaginable reason why the keen American trader should desire to clear them out of the island—he wanted to grab the site of the burned store, where the partners' hut now stood.

Why?

What was the value of that patch of ground to the American trader, when it had no value for any other man in the Pacific?

There was no answer to that question. But Bob's mind was made up now. He was at one with Billy McCann! Never, so long as blood flowed in his veins, would he give in to the grasping 'Frisco trader. He was sticking to Kalua—sticking tight, even if he had to come down to combing the beach for shell-fish

as a living. That was the net outcome of David Bone's offer of a free passage on the schooner for Bob, Billy & Co.

"Jacky!"

Bob and Billy uttered that ejaculation simultaneously.

It was the following morning. The partners of Kalua had breakfasted under the palm-tree outside their hut, watching the Pearl schooner glide out of the lagoon under the rising sun, and vanish into the blue of the Pacific.

The schooner was gone—without passengers from Kalua. But it had left a passenger behind. They knew that Loo had landed in the schooner's boat, and vanished into the bush. Gone, perhaps, to confab with Purkiss, for the beach-comber was still skulking in the island town. Gone, perhaps, to plot with Tu'uka, or with Soo'oo, the devil-doctor.

Whatever might be the Santa Cruz boy's business on Kalua, the partners did not need telling that it meant mischief. The kind offer of David Bone had been refused. The boy traders had refused to leave the island. And that meant that another blow was planned by their enemy, though what form it would take they failed to guess.

They were watching the topsails of the schooner sink into the Pacific, beyond the reef, when Jacky came up the coral path.

Jacky, the house-boy, was grinning, an ingratiating grin, showing all the flashing white teeth in his head.

They stared at him.

When the taboo had been laid on the store the house-boy had cleared off, as was only to be expected. They did not expect a Kalua boy to brave the terrors of taboo. Billy McCann had rooted him

out and given him a dose of lawyer-cane; but rather to relieve his feelings than from any hope of bringing the house-boy back to his duties.

Now he had returned of his own accord. They could only stare at him in blank amazement.

"Jacky!" repeated Bob.

"Me comey back along feller white master, sar!" grinned the house-boy.

"What name you comey back?" demanded Billy. "You no 'fraid along taboo?"

Jacky grinned.

"Taboo he no stop!" he explained.

"What!"

"Big terrible feller Soo'oo, big feller witch-doctor, he tellee this feller Jacky, taboo no stop," said the house-boy. "Me no 'fraid any more altogether. Along taboo, me plenty too much fright, all same all Kalua boy. Me no fright, now taboo no stop any more."

"Suffering cats!" ejaculated Billy.

Bob could only stare.

The taboo, which had stopped all trade with the natives for the island store, had been laid by Soo'oo—for no motive that the partners could guess, unless he had been bribed by David Bone. Taboo had been still upon them after the fire, though there was little harm it could do them, now that trade was over for good. Now it had been suddenly lifted.

That the taboo had been taken off was certain, otherwise Jacky would never have come back. The fact that he was there was proof that the taboo was no longer in force.

Billy McCann brightened.

"Is our luck turning, old man?" he asked. "If the taboo's off, we can do business in joy-rides. I can tell you, the niggers have missed their joy-rides in the Co. They'll be glad enough that the taboo's taken off."

Bob nodded. It was a brightening of the prospects, like a gleam of the sun through the clouds. Before the taboo had been laid Billy had done a great deal of business in joy-rides. The Kanakas, simple as children, had always been delighted by rides in the car.

Often and often had the ancient Ford careered over Kalua, packed with jabbering, cackling natives, blowing shells, or twanging ukeleles, or singing the interminable songs of the Kanakas. Joy-riding had been a source of profit, a side-show to the store. The store was in ashes, but the sideshow, if it could be revived, was all the more welcome on that account.

But Bob was puzzled. If David Bone had been at the bottom of the taboo, he must be at the bottom of its removal. Was that why the Santa Cruz boy had come to Kalua in the schooner? The morning after his arrival the taboo was taken off. Had the hard-hearted, hard-fisted American repented of the harm he had done to the island traders? That did not seem likely. But what did it mean?

Jacky was grinning, but there was a slightly anxious look in his eyes. Evidently he wanted to re-enter the service of the boy traders now that the lifting of the taboo enabled him to do so.

"You feller white master, you likee this boy comey back along you?" he asked. "Me plenty good feller boy. Me likee serve white feller master plenty too much."

"You can come back, you rascal," answered Bob, and Billy nodded a cheerful assent.

They had missed the services of the house-boy. And wages on Kalua were not a large item.

"This boy he plenty glad, sar!" said Jacky.

And the house-boy took possession of the hut, and resumed the duties to which he had been accustomed when he was house-boy in the island store.

"I don't get it," said Bob slowly. "Is David Bone letting up on us, Billy?"

Billy snorted.

"Not in your lifetime!" he answered.

"He's sent his nigger to tell old Soo'oo to take off the taboo. That's plain enough."

Billy McCann thought for a moment, and nodded.

"Looks like it," he agreed. "What the thump is his game? I don't get it, either." He shook a worried head, and then brightened. "Anyhow, the taboo's off! I'm getting the old bus out today."

Billy whistled cheerily as he went round to the lean-to with a can of petrol. He cranked up the old car, in great spirits.

Bob smiled as Billy rocketed away in the Ford with a wave of a plump hand. He was glad to see business—such as it was—looking up again, glad to see his chum in high spirits once more. But he was worried to know what it all meant.

That the taboo was off, and that all Kalua knew that it was lifted, was soon evident. Bob, standing under the palm-tree before the hut, saw the old Ford careering away, packed with Kanakas for a joy-ride.

Billy McCann was earning money again; little, perhaps, but every little helped, in the straits to which the island partners were reduced. That alone was enough to make Billy merry and bright. He was at work and earning money, and that sunny morning Billy did not ask for more.

Bob watched him career out of sight, while he listened to the singing of Jacky, at work in the hut.

He was hopelessly puzzled.

He strolled along the beach, thinking it out, or trying to think it out. Natives saluted him, and showed no desire to avoid his approach. All Kalua knew that the taboo was off.

It was useless to try to think out the puzzle. David Bone's actions, as well as his motives, were unfathomable. Of one thing alone Bob was sure—there was treachery behind this new development.

But, so far as he could see, the island firm stood to benefit. Billy McCann was having a busy day joy-riding the natives. Once more the honking of the Ford awoke the echoes of the bush and the lagoon. And the return of Jacky, the house-boy, came as a great relief.

They had missed his services. That morning Jacky was cleaning, sweeping, tidying, working industriously, as if in a repentant mood, though, as a matter of fact, the partners blamed him little for having fled from the taboo.

Bob gave up the problem, and went out for fish. As he sat in his canoe, the honking of the Ford came from a distance, a cheery sound to his ears.

He came back a couple of hours later with a string of fish. Jacky was doing the cooking that day, and Bob brought in the supplies. As he came up to the hut there was a sound of voices within.

They were speaking in the island dialect, of which Bob knew little. Not that he had the faintest curiosity to hear what was said between Jacky and any other native who had come in to chatter during the absence of the white masters.

But at the sound of Bob's footsteps on the powdered coral, the voices in the hut suddenly ceased.

Bob looked in, the string of fish in his hand.

Two startled brown faces turned on him. It was Kolulo-ululo, the pig-hunter of Kalua, who was in the hut talking to Jacky.

Bob's glance passed from one brown face to the other. The startled looks of the two natives brought vague suspicion into his mind.

"What name you comey along this place, Ko?" he asked, eyeing the pig-hunter sharply.

"Me comey talkee along Jacky, sar," faltered the pig-hunter. "Me askee feller Jacky wantee buy feller pig, sar."

Bob knew that it was a lie. Kolulo-ululo backed out of the hut, obviously uneasy under the white man's eye. Bob looked at Jacky, but the house-boy had recovered his composure now.

"Plenty good fish, sar!" said Jacky, and he took the string of fish from his master's hand. "No wantee buy feller pig along Kolulo-ululo, sar—plenty too much good feller fish."

Bob left the hut without replying. A vague suspicion was in his mind, and yet—what was there to suspect?

"Timeo Danaos!"

JACKY, the house-boy, opened the earth-oven, and an appetising scent of well-cooked fish proceeded therefrom. The Kalua boy looked round at Bob Harris, who was standing under the palm-tree before the hut, gazing down to the beach.

"This feller fishee plenty cookeo, sar!" said the house-boy.

Bob nodded.

"Keep it hot till feller white master comey back, Jacky."

"Yes, sar."

"It's more than time that Billy was back!" Bob stared rather uneasily along the beach of Kalua. "It's high time he got back in the Ford."

Jacky grinned.

"Plaps that feller car he no stop, sar!"

Bob Harris made no answer to that. The Venerable Ford might be an ancient car—almost antediluvian, in fact. But it was not for a brown-skinned house-boy to jest about it.

Leaving the house-boy to close up the earth-oven again, Bob walked towards the beach. It was likely enough that Jacky's suggestion was well-founded, and that Billy McCann had had trouble with the venerable Ford.

He had packed it full of Kanakas for a joy-ride into the interior of the island; and there was no doubt that the Ford had been rather overloaded. Even with a light load the old car often jibbed. Packed full of the islanders, it was only too likely that it had struck trouble on one of the hillsides of Kalua.

Bob hoped that it was nothing worse than engine trouble. But since the day when Billy had narrowly escaped going headlong into the Kalua Gorge with the Ford, Bob had been a little anxious whenever he was delayed out of sight.

He listened to the honking of the car, which was heard at a great distance in the clear air of Kalua when it was heard at all. But there was not a whisper of the honk now.

Bob pictured Billy McCann stuck on some lonely track, far away amid the high bush, wrestling with the old engine, grimy and oily, with rising temper, circled by a crowd of waiting joy-riders, grinning and cackling.

He could picture the expression on Billy's plump face at such a moment, and the possibility that if his temper failed him he might use a spanner on the cackling Kanakas instead of on the ancient Ford. This would not be good for business; and passenger work in the old Ford was all the business that re-

mained to the island traders now that the store had been burned down.

He stopped on the beach, and stared either way for a sign of the car. But the Ford was not in sight.

The sun was sinking to the Pacific in the west. Already shadows lengthened on the shining lagoon.

"Bother!" muttered Bob.

If there was trouble with the car he would have been glad to lend a helping hand, if only he had known where to look for his partner. Running repairs on the old Ford was not an easy matter. Billy might be stuck up for hours if the matter was serious.

Old Mackey, the planter, called to Bob from the veranda of his bungalow, and Bob went up the palm-wood steps of the planter's veranda.

"I'll borrow your binoculars if you'll lend them to me," said Bob.

"Looking for a ship?"

"No; for a car."

Old Mackey grinned.

"That old Ford broken down again?"

"I don't know; but Billy's late," answered Bob. "I'd trot out and help him if I could pick him up, and I might with the binoculars."

Mackey shouted to his house-boy:

"You feller boy! You bring feller long-see glass along this place, plenty quick!"

The house-boy came out on to the veranda with the binoculars. Bob Harris put them to his eyes, and scanned the beach of Kalua, circling far round the glimmering lagoon.

Back of the beach, all round the lagoon, was bush and forest and groves of graceful coconut palms, with wide spaces of greensward intervening. Only in one spot a stream came tumbling down a gorge from the hills and flowed into the lagoon.

On the beach was no sign of the car. From any of the openings among bush and forest it might emerge. There were no roads on Kalua, and such tracks as there were in the open country had mostly been marked out by the tyres of the Ford.

Distant tiny moving spots, here and there, rushed into view as natives when Bob turned the powerful glasses on them. But he did not pick up the Ford. He lowered the glasses.

"Time you scrapped the old bus," yawned Mackey.

"Better not tell Billy McCann so!" said Bob, with a laugh. "Guard with your left if you do!"

"Business is looking up for you boys since old Soo'oo took the taboo off you," said Mackey.

"Only with the car," said Bob. "The store's gone up. Still, one must be thankful for small mercies."

"You reckoned that David Bone had put up Soo'oo to laying that taboo on your store."

"I'd swear to that. He threatened to break us if we refused to sell the store; and that did it!"

"Then why's it taken off again?"

"Ask me another! David Bone's up to something—I can't get it! But I know that his Santa Cruz nigger, Loo, was landed here by one of his schooners yesterday, and went into the bush. To-day the taboo's taken off. Soo'oo got his orders from Bone."

"That means that Bone's letting up on you?"

"Perhaps! Anyhow, we score. We can do business with the natives in the car, and we've got our house-boy back. Jacky gave us a wide berth while the taboo was on." Bob laughed. "No

native would come within yards of us while the taboo was on."

Mackey, thoughtful, pulled at his cheroot. Under his wrinkled brows, his keen old eyes dwelt curiously on the handsome bronzed face of the young island trader.

"If you've figured it out right, it's owing to David Bone that you've got your house-boy back—owing to his telling the old devil-doctor to let up on the taboo."

"That's about right."

"I was at school once," said old Mackey. "I was educated for something different from what I'm doing on Kalua. I remember a few Latin tags."

Bob stared at him, wondering what the old planter was driving at.

"One of them is this: 'Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes,'" said old Mackey. "I've always remembered that because it's useful."

"Translate!" said Bob, with a smile.

"I fear the Greeks and the gifts they bring," answered Mackey.

"How does that apply?" Bob was puzzled.

Mackey shrugged his lean shoulders.

"If you owe it to David Bone that the taboo's off and your house-boy's come back, keep an eye on the house-boy," he said dryly. "I fancy Bone wasn't worried about you and your partner having to cook and sweep for yourselves."

Bob Harris gave a start.

"Jacky? Jacky's all right."

"Good!" said Mackey, in the same dry tone, and he smoked in silence.

Bob opened his lips and closed them again. Back into his mind came an incident of the morning, when he had come suddenly into the hut and found Jacky talking in "native" with Kolulo-ululo, the pig-hunter of Kalua. He remembered the startled looks of the two natives, and the lie Ko had told him to account for his coming there, and the pig-hunter's quick and uneasy departure.

The incident had been trifling, but it had awakened a vague feeling of suspicion in Bob's mind. Yet what was there in it? Jacky had served the island partners for a whole year before the laying of the taboo. Immediately the taboo was taken off he had come back into their service. Likely enough, Kolulo-ululo had only come there to spirit away some small article that Jacky had "pinched" from the salvage of the burned store. That would account for the startled uneasiness of the two natives when Bob came suddenly in. Bob had been long enough in the South Seas not to expect too much in the way of honesty from a house-boy.

But old Mackey's words revived the incident in his mind. More than once during their fight with the 'Frisco trader the keen old Scotsman had dropped a useful hint.

But Mackey evidently intended to say no more. He was a man of few words, and though he wished well to the young traders he did not want to be drawn into their war with David Bone. Bone was strong enough to break almost any man in the Pacific, and Mackey was not hunting trouble.

Bob lifted the binoculars to his eyes again and once more scanned the beach of Kalua.

Far away, a speck on the distant beach round the circling of the lagoon, there was a moving object.

Certainly it was not the car. It looked like a human figure crawling along the sand.

Bob fixed the binoculars upon it curiously. He was not specially interested, but he wondered what the man was up to. His antics looked strange enough.

The powerful glasses brought the distant figure clear to his vision. A native in a dingy loincloth was creeping along the beach with a palm-leaf in his hand. Every now and then he stopped and lowered his head to peer at the sand, or into some crevice in the sand. Then he moved on again, creeping, crawling, watching—evidently seeking some tiny object in the sand of the lagoon beach.

"Ko!" ejaculated Bob.

He recognised the man now. It was Kolulo-ululo, the pig-hunter—the native who had been talking with Jacky in the hut that morning.

Bob watched the man, puzzled.

Kolulo-ululo, when he was not sleeping in the shade of a palm, was generally in the bush, hunting the wild pigs that abounded on Kalua. What he was seeking on that lonely beach, far away from the native villages and the white men's bungalows, was rather a mystery.

Suddenly, as Bob watched him through the glasses, the pig-hunter's movements changed. He remained quite still, watching the sand, and then, to Bob's amazement, backed away, leaned a long arm forward, and poked the end of the palm-leaf into a crevice of the beach.

Whatever it was that he had been looking for, Kolulo-ululo appeared to have found, but it was something that he did not care to touch. A minute more and Ko had risen to his feet, like a man whose task was finished, the palm-leaf held carefully in his hand.

Honk! Honk!

It was the horn sounding, and Bob immediately forgot all about Kolulo-ululo and his strange actions. From one of the openings of the bush came the old Ford, honking and clanking, with Billy McCann at the wheel and a crowd of native joy-riders on board. Billy sounded triumphantly on the horn as he came careering along the firm, hard sand.

"Here he is!" exclaimed Bob; and he handed the binoculars to Mackey and moved away to the steps of the veranda.

"Dinna forget!" called out Mackey.

"What?" asked Bob, over his shoulder.

"Timeo Danaos!"

"Right!" said Bob, with a laugh; and he hurried down the steps and across the beach to meet his partner.

Bob Is Curious!

"ENGINE trouble?" asked Bob.

"Nothing to speak of."

Bob grinned.

Any trouble that the ancient Ford gave was, according to Billy McCann, nothing to speak of.

"I guessed she'd conked out on a hill," he remarked.

"Not exactly conked out," said Billy. "She was a bit overloaded, and she didn't quite like it. You have to consider a car."

"You're jolly late, anyhow."

"What's the hurry?"

"Oh, none at all," said Bob, laughing. "I tried to pick you up with old Mackey's glasses to come out and help—"

"Thank goodness you didn't!" said

Billy ungratefully. "I mightn't have been home till morning if you had."

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

The joy-riders cleared off, and Billy McCann backed the Ford into the lean-to beside the hut. He gave an appreciative sniff as Jacky opened the earth-oven again.

"That smells good!" he said emphatically.

"It's been waiting a long time——"

"Why shouldn't it wait?"

"Well, I waited, too."

"More duffer you!"

"You haven't come home in your best temper, Billy."

"Temper's all right," said Billy, "but after three hours tinkering with a car, in the middle of a lot of cackling niggers, a fellow likes to hear a fellow talk sense when he gets in."

"Three hours! My hat! Poor old Billy!"

"Keep your 'poor old' for yourself, Mister Harris."

"Mister Harris" was a sign that Billy McCann was edgewise. Bob sagely said nothing more till that excellently cooked fish was served, and Billy had taken the keen edge off his appetite. He had come in tired and hungry after a hard day, and certainly three hours of tinkering with a venerable car was enough to set the best temper a little on edge.

It was impossible to sympathise with Billy without casting reflections on the venerable Ford—to which Billy McCann never could listen with patience. So Bob Harris devoted himself to supper, aware from long experience that Billy's little spasms never lasted long, and that a solid supper was the best antidote.

"Suffering cats!" said Billy. "This is good fish and good cooking. I'm glad we've got Jacky back. Your cooking was a real corker, Bob!"

"Passed nem, con," said Bob cheerfully. "Feeling better?"

"Yes. Business is looking up," said Billy McCann. "That hound Bone has burnt us out of the store; but we'll make a living with the car. I've got news from Tu'uka's village, Bob. That beach-comber Purkiss is coming back to the beach."

Bob whistled.

"You know the kind of hound he is," went on Billy. "He's been skulking in the interior ever since he fired the store, to keep out of our way. But he's got to scrapping with the niggers—drunk on kava, and throwing his weight about—and Tu'uka's ordered him away. He's got to get back to the beach, or take to the bush—and he would starve in the bush." Billy McCann's plump face set grimly, and his eyes glittered. "We've got no proof that he fired the store, of course, and I dare say he's banking on that now it's a few weeks old. But——"

Billy McCann said no more, but his face was grim as he finished his supper. More than a fortnight had passed since the island store had been burned down, and the partners of Kalua had built a palm-wood hut close by the ruins, which was now their home. But Billy McCann, plump and good-natured as he was, had not forgotten, and was not likely to forget. The sun had gone down on his wrath many times, and risen on it unabated.

"After all, we've no actual proof," said Bob, after a long pause, "and if Purkiss did it, Billy, it was on the orders of David Bone—that cur bribed him. It's Bone we want to handle."

"We can't get at Bone, and we can

get at Purkiss. I'm going to break every bone in his carcass!"

"But——"

"Leave it to me, Mister Harris."

Bob shrugged his shoulders and let it go at that. Billy McCann lighted a cigarette, and scowled over it.

Jacky, the house-boy, came out of the hut.

"Please, sar, this feller likee go swim along lagoon, sponsee feller white master say yes," said Jacky.

"Certainly," answered Bob.

Billy stared round.

"You go cut feller big lawyer-cane along bush, Jacky, bring him along me. Then you go swim."

"Yes, sar."

The house-boy soon came back with the lawyer-cane, and Billy laid it across his knees while he finished his cigarette. Jacky departed, padding away softly on

TOPPING PENKNIVES FOR JOKES!



Tourist (in village store): "What have you got in the shape of motor-car tyres?"

Smart Assistant: "Invalid cushions, rubber rings, and doughnuts, sir!"

For sending in the above rib-tickler, J. Pavelin, of Hatfield Road, Witham, Essex, has been awarded one of this week's useful penknives. Why shouldn't you win one, chum?

naked feet. He did not go directly down to the lagoon, but padded away along the beach, and Bob noticed, though without particularly heeding, that he took the direction in which he had seen Kolulo-ululo searching the sand, palm-leaf in hand.

Bob glanced after the house-boy.

"I wonder——" he said.

"What?" grunted Billy.

Bob repeated what old Mackay had said.

"I was wondering if there could be anything on between Jacky and Ko," he added. "You never know what the natives have got in their minds."

"Most likely he's pinched a tin of tobacco from the store," answered Billy indifferently. "They're all pinchers, every man. You coming to look for Purkiss? He will be back on the beach by this time. He was kicked out of Tu'uka's place early to-day."

"Oh, all right!" Bob rose from his camp-stool. "That's a hefty stick, Billy. Don't kill the poor wretch."

"I won't—but I'll go so near that it

won't make much odds," grunted Billy. "Whether Bone's at the bottom of it or not, Purkiss burned us out, and he's going to pay for it—hard!"

The two partners walked down to the beach. They passed a trader, smoking a cigar on the sands, and called to him:

"Seen anything of Purkiss?"

"No; but I hear he's back. My house-boy's seen him to-day."

"Good!" said Billy.

They reached the native huts, at a little distance from the white men's bungalows. It was there that the beach-comber usually lived. But Malo'oha, the headman, informed them that Purkiss was not there.

"That feller white master, he drink too plenty much kava, mouth belong him," said Malo'oha. "Me tinkee that feller go sleep along beach."

"If you've got him hidden in these huts, Malo'oha, I'll come back and take the skin off you with this feller stick!" said Billy grimly.

Malo'oha gesticulated earnestly:

"No, sar! He no stop along this place, sar! Us Kanaka feller no likee that feller any more, sar! He got plenty dlunk along villago belong Tu'uka, sar, big chief Tu'uka plenty angry along that feller. Us feller plenty angry along him, sar. He no stop this place, sar."

Billy grunted and turned away. "Purkiss seems to have fallen out with his native friends," remarked Bob, as they walked away from the huts. "He's a quarrelsome brute when he's drunk—and he's never sober if he can get hold of any poison. I imagine he was soaking kava all the while he was skulking in Tu'uka's village."

"Spending David Bone's bribe," growled Billy. "And if he's spent it all they've got no more use for the brute. But I have!" he added, swishing the lawyer-cane. "He's come back to the beach to get what's coming to him."

The sun was long gone, starry night glimmered on Kalua. The partners tramped along the starlit beach, Billy's keen eyes searching right and left for a sleeper in the sand.

A figure loomed up in the starlight. It was Jacky, coming back from his excursion along the beach. Apparently he had had his swim at a distance, if he had swum at all.

"Here, you feller Jacky!" called Billy McCann, recognising the house-boy in the glimmer of the stars.

Jacky stopped reluctantly.

"Yes, sar! What you want along this feller, sar? Me go back along hut makee bed belong white master, sar."

"You see feller Purkiss, eye belong you?" asked Billy.

"Yes, sar! That feller sleep along sand, along that place, sar!" Jacky pointed with his left hand to a coral rock that jutted from the sand near the margin of the lagoon. "Me see that feller, sar, eye belong me."

The house-boy was holding something in his closed right hand. He kept it behind him as he pointed with his left.

"Come on, Bob!"

"Hold on a minute!" Somehow old Mackay's words rang in Bob's mind, and some vague suspicion, he could hardly have told what, haunted him. "Here, you Jacky! What feller thing you keep along hand belong you?"

The black eyes of the Kalua boy seemed to dilate a little.

"That feller thing belong me, sar!" he faltered.

"What is it?"

(Bob and Billy come up against it again next week, chums, so look out for more thrills.)

WHO WALLOPED WIGGINS?

(Continued from page 23.)

"though I believe you did, Loder! Why you should, I can't imagine—a harmless ass like Wiggins! Goodness knows I'd give anything to believe it was not true—I'm thinking of the disgrace to the school, the disgrace to the Sixth—all Greyfriars talking about a Sixth Form prefect being sacked for assaulting a master—" He paused. "That can't be helped, if it's true! But if you deny it—"

"Of course I deny it!" panted Loder. "I've got it from Skinner of the Remove. Did you run into him out of the House last Friday night?"

"No!" panted Loder.

"I'd better say that I've been making some inquiries. You've been doing Skinner a lot of favours lately—letting juniors off lines at his request, and so on—"

"I haven't! It's a lie!"

"I've asked the juniors concerned—and it's not a lie!" said Wingate dryly. "Goodness knows I'm unwilling enough to believe such a thing of a Sixth Form man—unwilling enough to report it to the Head. There's never been such a scandal in the school. But—Skinner's prepared to go before the Head and repeat his statement, and the other juniors will have to tell what they know, if necessary. Are you ready to face it?"

Loder did not answer. He sat with every vestige of colour drained from his cheeks. Wingate waited for the answer that did not come.

His face hardened.

"Very well," he said quietly. "I've got my duty to do, Loder. But if you care to go to the Head, without me, you can have the benefit of confessing, without being reported and accused. That's all."

"I—I can't go to the Head!" Loder's voice was a husky whisper. "Look here, Wingate—you—you don't want to get a Sixth Form man expelled. Think of the disgrace—"

"I've thought of it, you miserable cur," said Wingate contemptuously. "But that can't be helped! A fellow who would lie in wait for an elderly man, and knock him down in the dark—Pah!"

"It—it wasn't that!" Loder saw a gleam of hope. "I—I—I never meant to touch Wiggins! I—I never saw him in the dark. It was a mistake—"

Wingate stared at him.

"How could it be a mistake? What do you mean? If you mean that you were afraid of being spotted out of bounds, and knocked Wiggins over to get away unseen, that makes no difference. You—"

"No! Not that! I—I—I never knew the old fool was out at all!" groaned Loder. "I—I was expecting somebody else—"

"Somebody else!" repeated Wingate blankly. "You were waiting for somebody else, and got Wiggins by mistake in the dark? Is that it?"

"Yes!" breathed Loder.

"Not a master, do you mean?"

"Yes! As if I'd touch a master!" muttered Loder. "It was an accident—a mistake—I never dreamed of hitting Wiggins—I own up that it was rotten, and—and I was sorry afterwards, but—but I never meant to hit Wiggins—"

"Whom did you mean to hit?" asked Wingate very quietly.

Loder did not answer.

"That was the night I was out, after a run up to town to see my pater," said Wingate in the same quiet tone. "I was in ten minutes after Wiggins. I might have got in before him, if he'd been a little later back from the lecture at Courtfield Hall. Is that it, Loder?"

Loder groaned.

There was no need for him to answer.

Wingate stood looking at him with a scorn in his face that drew a flush to the Sixth Form bully's colourless cheeks.

"You unspeakable worm!" said the Greyfriars captain. "So that was it! You were nursing your grudge against me, and lying in wait for me in the dark—and old Wiggins got what you meant for me? You unmitigated cur!"

"Call me what you like," muttered Loder. "But—but—you know now that it wasn't a case of an assault on a master!"

There was a long silence. Loder had told the truth at last, with a faint hope that it might serve his turn.

Wingate spoke at last.

"You cur! You've saved your bacon, so far as the Head is concerned. You did not mean it for Wiggins—I see that now! If you'd meant it for any man in the school but me I'd see that you got your gruel just the same. But—that makes a difference."

Loder looked up.

"You'll—keep it quiet? It concerns you, not anybody else—all the rest was an accident—"

"I see that! It concerns me, and I shall handle the matter myself!" said George Wingate. "Get your hat!"

Loder stared.

"We're going for a walk," said Wingate grimly. "We're going as far as the spinney in Friardale Lane. And there—"

"There—what?"

"I'm going to thrash you within an inch of your life."

Skinner of the Remove was called into Wingate's study after prep that evening and duly "whopped." It was rather severe; but it was a relief to Skinner, who had been in terror of a Head's flogging. Officially he was whipped for having broken bounds after lights-out; but Skinner was well aware that Wingate laid it on extra hard on account of his dealings with Loder. That game, Skinner realised, was played out, and he sagely made up his mind to give Loder of the Sixth a wide berth afterwards. Whether Wingate believed, or did not believe, his accusation against Loder, Skinner could not make out—certainly the Greyfriars captain did not seem to have acted on it. So far as Skinner was concerned, he was only too glad for the matter to be dropped—and dropped it was.

Who had whopped Wiggins was still a mystery and a topic at Greyfriars; but as a topic it was put in the shade by what appeared to have happened to Loder of the Sixth. Loder—or so he stated—had had a fight with a tramp—and, to judge by Loder's looks, that tramp must have been a hefty man, for Gerald Loder was an absolute wreck. Wingate said nothing on the subject, though fellows who noticed signs of damage about his face wondered and surmised whether Loder's adversary really had been a tramp. There was much speculation on the subject, and for some time the question, who had whopped Wiggins took second place to the more interesting question, who had whopped Loder?

Neither question had received a satisfactory answer when Greyfriars School broke up for the summer holidays; but one fellow, at least, knew that justice had been done—and that was Loder of the Sixth.

THE END.

(Next week's MAGNET will contain: "BILLY BUNTER'S BAD LUCK!"—the first of a series of yarns dealing with the holiday adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. Make certain of your copy by ordering it WELL IN ADVANCE!)

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Birchemall—The Banned Bandman!

By DICKY NUGENT.

what they saw made them farily blink with amazement.

"M-m-m hat!"

"He's—he's playing a saxophone!"

"Dr. Birchemall—m-e-w-i-c-a-n!"

chortled Jack Jolly, and there was a yell!

"He, ha, ha!"

The scene on which they were gazing was certainly enough to make a cat laugh.

Dr. Birchemall was sitting on the edge of his desk, his lips glued to the mouth-piece of a saxophone, and his eyes glued to a sheet of music in front of him. From the saxophone were coming the most garish sounds you could possibly imagine.

Dr. Birchemall had been too much rapped up in what he was doing to notice Mr. Lickham's arrival. But the yell of laughter brought him out of his dream, and he looked up with a start.

"What the merry dickens—!" he ejaculated.

"M-m-m, my fiddy aunt!" stuttered Mr. Lickham. "So that's it, is it—a giddy saxophone! And I thought it was some-one dying!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Head put down his instrument of "mewic" and glared.

"If you're trying to be funny, Lickham—!" he began.

"Nunno!" gurgled Mr. Lickham. "But you are, of course, sir! And I must say, I think it's awfully comical. The site of you sitting there making weird noises through that tube is enough to make any man bust his sides!"

"You—you—" gasped the Head, glaring at them almost wolfishly.

Then he descended from words to deeds. Picking up a handy birch, he made a terrific rush at the hysterical crowd, lashing out right and left.

Bang! Crash! Wallop!

The yells of laughter changed suddenly to yells of agony. Mr. Lickham and the boys ran for their lives, howling with pain and fear.

In a couple of seconds the passidage was completely cleared.

After that, the Head, scowling savagely, returned to his "mewical" labors, and the air of St. Sam's was once more filled with the fearful din.

Blare! Toole-toot! Blare!

II.

"I cannot go on like this!"

Jack Jolly made that remark after dinner the following day. Since the crowd's amazing discovery in Dr.

"Would you believe it?"

Jack Jolly, it's well worth trying. Let's find a public teller, and we'll see how it works!"

The chums of the Fourth soon reached a public teller, and Frank Fearless promptly got through to the Head.

Assessing a deep, horse voice, he briefly stated that, having heard what a wonderful saxophonist Dr. Birchemall was, he had decided to make him an offer. Would he care to join the dance band at the George Hotel at a commemorative salary of a thousand a year?

Dr. Birchemall fairly jumped at it. Thanking the bogus manniker again and again, he promised that he would turn up that very afternoon for the tea-dance, and show the world that the rumors about his remarkable ability were not a bit exaggerated!

Grinning all over their dials at the success of their little jape, Jack Jolly & Co. returned to St. Sam's.

They were just in time to see the Head come galloping out of the Skool House and cannon into a distinguished-looking old butler with such force that he knocked him flying.

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