

Harry Wharton & Co. in: "PUTTING PAID TO PROUT!"

The Best School Story of the Week—Inside!

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HIS LORDSHIP
on the WAR-PATH!

PUTTING PAID TO PROUT!

By
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Face at the Window!

THAT old ass, Prout—"
"That old chump, Prout,
is—"
"That cheeky old chump,
Prout—"

"That terrific and ludicrous old fat-head, Prout—"

Mr. Prout frowned.

Really it was enough to make any man frown.

No Form-master could have been expected to smile at hearing such descriptions of himself. And Mr. Prout just at present was not merely a Form-master; he was temporary headmaster of Greyfriars, in the absence of Dr. Locke.

Always important, he was now more important than ever. Yet the juniors in the Rag were describing him as an old ass, a frump, a chump, and a fat-head, as if he were of no importance at all.

Mr. Prout stopped dead.

He stood speechless under the open window of the Rag.

Prout did not intend to listen to words not intended for his ears. There was nothing mean about Prout. He was portly, he was pompous, he was obtuse; he was, beyond question, rather an ass. But he was no eavesdropper. It was quite by chance that he was taking his walk under the windows of the Rag that fine and frosty winter day. And he stood speechless, because his breath was quite taken away for the moment by astonishment and wrath.

"That old ass!" went on the voice of Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remove. "That old fooler! Does he think we're going to scratch football matches for the rest of the term?"

"We're jolly well not, whatever he thinks!" growled Johnny Bull.

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry emphatically.

"Does he think at all?" came the

Billy Bunter's peculiar gift of being able to imitate voices has earned him many more kicks than ha'pence. This week, however, his efforts are more successful . . . for he not only saves Loder's bacon, but he puts paid to Prout into the bargain!

jeering voice of Herbert Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars. "Has the old duffer anything to do it with?"

"The thoughtfulness of the esteemed old ass is not terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, he's got to begin to think," said Frank Nugent. "He's got to get it into his silly old napper, somehow, that he can't keep the Remove in detention on half-holidays when football matches are played on half-holidays. We can't scratch with Rookwood."

Mr. Prout gasped under the window.

Prout was not a tall gentleman. Sideways, he was extremely well developed; but his height was not imposing. His head barely reached to the window-sill. So the Remove fellows within did not see him, and had no idea that he was there. Certainly they would not have expressed themselves so frankly had they even dreamed that their remarks were falling on the majestic ears of Prout.

Prout stared up at the open window, and gasped.

"The old ass!" went on Wharton. "He's got to let us off detention on Wednesday. He must. We've got to play Rookwood."

"What about asking him?"

"Lot of good asking that obstinate old ass!" said the Bounder. "He's given the Remove detention for the term, because he jolly well knows that a lot of us are in the Greyfriars Secret

Society. And he will stick to it, footer or no footer. That's the kind of obstinate old idiot he is!"

"Something's got to be done. We've got to get over to Rookwood on Wednesday."

"And we're going to!" said Vernon-Smith. "Prout or no Prout, we're going! We shall have to cut, and Prout can make the best of it."

"Upon my word!" gurgled the plump Form-master, under the window. "Upon my word!"

Prout found his voice.

He stepped closer to the window, put his plump hands on the frosty sill, and raised himself on his toes.

By that means he was able to lift his plump chin over the level of the sill, and look into the room.

A group of Remove fellows were standing near the window in rather excited discussion.

Football fixtures were rather important matters to the Remove men; and one of the most important was the fixture with Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood.

There was plenty of time, so far as that went, to write to Rookwood, and scratch. But nobody wanted to scratch. The Remove footballers wanted to play the match, and, somehow or other, they were determined that they were going to do so.

How, was quite another matter! Mr. Prout had sentenced the whole Form to detention for every half-holiday that term. That was a result of the activities of the Greyfriars Secret Society.

And there was no appeal from the sentence of Prout. While Dr. Locke was away he reigned supreme.

"We're going to cut!" repeated Smithy, unconscious of the plump face now looking in at the window. "Prout can go and eat coke! On Wednesday we'll jolly well walk out of detention; walk out of the school, and get the train to Rookwood. And that's that!"

"Loder of the Sixth will have an eye on us."

"All the worse for him. We'll up-end the cad, and walk over him, if he tries to stop us."

Evidently the Bounder was prepared for drastic measures.

"Might ask Prout," said Harry Wharton thoughtfully.

"No good asking him."

"Well, we could put it nicely, and try to make him understand. If we put it in words of one syllable, even Prout might understand."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"After all, Prout's only an ass!" went on the captain of the Remove. "His bark's worse than his bite. He's got a swelled head through fancying himself as headmaster now the Head's away—just as Loder's got a swelled head through barging into old Wingate's place as captain of the school. We might be able to make Prout see reason. He doesn't really mean any harm. And, after all, the man can't help being a fool."

"Wharton!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Harry Wharton spun round at that unexpected voice through the open window.

Every other fellow in the group spun round.

Every eye fixed on Prout's plump, portly, wrathful face in horror.

Hip-pip-pip

Hurr-a-a-ah!

Grand

The ghost of Prout could not have startled them more.

"Prout!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Pip-pip-Prout!" stuttered Johnny Bull.

"Oh crikey!"

"Oh jiminy!"

"Prout!"

Prout's face was crimson with wrath. His eyes gleamed. The celebrated wrath of Achilles, to Greece the direful spring of woes unnumbered, was a mere nothing compared with the wrath of Prout at that awful moment. He frowned, he glared; he fairly trembled with wrath.

The Removites gazed at him.

It was clear that it was of no use to ask Prout to let them off detention on Wednesday now. That was very clear. Prout did not look like letting fellows off anything.

"Boys!" gasped Prout.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned the captain of the Remove. "Sorry, sir! I—I—I never knew—never dreamed—"

Wharton really was sorry, not only on his own account. Nothing would have induced him to speak of Mr. Prout so disrespectfully had he dreamed that that gentleman was within hearing. Prout was an ass, and an exasperating ass; but there was a limit. But it could not be helped now.

"You—you—you disrespectful young rascals!" gasped Mr. Prout. "You—you—you—" Words failed the indignant Prout.

"We—we never knew—" stammered Bob.

"We never knew you were listening under the window, sir," said the Bounder, with cool impertinence.

Smithy was the first to recover his coolness; and it was like him to make matters worse.

"W-what?" stuttered Mr. Prout.

"What?"

"Shut up, Smithy!" snapped Harry Wharton.

"Vernon-Smith, how dare you suggest—how dare you imply—" Prout choked. "I say, how dare you?"

"You silly fathead, Smithy!" breathed Bob Cherry.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Go to my study!" gasped Mr. Prout.

"All of you—go to my study! Wait for me there! Not a word! Go!"

Prout's crimson face disappeared from the window.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another.

"Well," said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath, "we've done it now! We've been, and we've gone, and we've done it!"

"The donefulness is terrific!"

There was no doubt about that! And in dismal silence, the Remove fellows made their way to the Head's study, to wait there for Prout.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Just Like Smithy!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"B-r-r-r-r!"

"But, I say—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

Billy Bunter blinked at the six Removites through his big spectacles in surprise. He had met them on their way to the Head's study.

The Owl of the Remove was short-sighted. But even Bunter's limited

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vision did not prevent him from noticing how extremely down in the mouth Harry Wharton & Co. looked.

They could hardly have looked more dismal if they had been going to execution.

"I say, you fellows look like a lot of moulting owls," said the fat Owl. "I say, where are you going?"

"Head's study!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"Oh crikey! Has Prout found out that you're in the Greyfriars Secret Society?"

"Shut up!" hissed Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

The six juniors marched on. The Famous Five were dismal and doleful, realising that it was all up with the Rookwood match now. The Bounder was rather enraged than dismal. His eyes were glittering under his knitted brows.

All six were booked for trouble; but five of them were satisfied with the trouble on hand. Smithy was thinking of more. With a licking in prospect, and the Rookwood match washed out, the Bounder's thoughts were already turning to vengeance.

Billy Bunter blinked after them. Then he rolled in pursuit into Head's corridor. Bunter was uneasy.

"I say, you fellow—" he gasped.

"Oh, sheer off!" exclaimed Bob. The chums of the Remove were in no mood to be bothered by the fat and fatuous Owl.

"But, I say," urged Bunter. "If you're up before Prout because of that secret society stunt, you know, mind you don't mention me. That's important!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"Beast! I never wanted to join the secret society, as you jolly well know!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm. "You

made me join, just because I found you out, and you wanted to make me keep it dark. You can jolly well tell Prout so! See? Or, better still, tell him I never had anything to do with it. That's better. All of you give him your word that I never knew anything about it—"

"You blithering fat ass, it's nothing to do with that!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in exasperation. "Sheer off, and shut up!"

"And take that with you!" added the Bounder, reaching out with his foot, and landing it on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars School.

"Yaroooo!" roared Bunter, as he took it.

"And that—"

"Whooooop!"

Billy Bunter fled. The Bounder made a stride after him, to land another kick, apparently finding satisfaction in it. But Harry Wharton caught him by the arm and jerked him back.

"Chuck that!" he said tersely. "No good kicking that fat frump!"

The Bounder gave him a fierce look, and wrenched his arm away. Bunter, going strong, disappeared round the corner.

Vernon-Smith scowled, and followed the Famous Five to the Head's study. The half-dozen juniors entered that apartment to wait. The Bounder glanced from the window and gave an angry grunt.

"Look at the old ass!" he sneered.

Mr. Prout was in view from the study window. He had stopped to speak to

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Mr. Woose, the master who had taken Mr. Quelch's place with the Remove.

Prout was speaking emphatically and excitedly. Mr. Woose was making soothing gestures. Apparently Prout was telling the Remove master of the outrageous, unprecedented, and unparalleled conduct of certain members of his Form.

"The silly old ass!" said Vernon-Smith. "He can't come in and get it over! He's bound to jaw!"

"The jawfulness of the esteemed Prout is always terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, I'm not in a hurry to be whopped!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Oh rats!"

Vernon-Smith glanced round the room.

"What about ragging the study while we're waiting?" he asked. "We're for it, anyhow, and a fellow may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently. "We've got enough trouble on hand, without asking for more."

"Funky?" sneered the Bounder.

"Oh, shut up!"

"I've a jolly good mind—"

"Chuck it, Smithy!" said Bob. "We're going to get six each for letting Prout know what we think of him. We don't want to turn it into a flogging!"

The Bounder gave an angry snarl. He was reckless enough for anything, and quite in a temper to wreck the study, for the wreckage to greet Prout's eyes when he came in. But the other

fellows had no intention of allowing him to do anything of the kind.

There was a step in the passage. It was not Prout's elephantine tread—he was still in view in the quad.

The juniors looked round. Trotter, the page, came in, and glanced at them, as he laid a letter on Mr. Prout's desk.

Apparently that letter had arrived for Mr. Prout by the morning post, and Trotter had brought it to the study for him. The Head's study was Prout's while Dr. Locke was away.

Trotter gave the Removees a rather suspicious look. Perhaps he suspected that they were there for a "rag."

Bob Cherry grinned. "All serene, kid," he said. "We're waiting for Prout! Special invitation from the old bean."

Trotter chuckled. "I 'ope he won't lay it on 'ard, sir!" he said.

"Same here!" said Bob. "The samefulness is terrific!"

"P'raps Mr. Prout won't be 'Ead much longer, sir!" said Trotter comfortingly. "I've 'eard that Dr. Locke's coming back before the end of the term, sir, and it ain't far off now."

"I wish he'd hurry up!" sighed Frank Nugent.

"P'raps that there letter means that he's coming soon," said Trotter, with a nod towards the letter he had placed on the desk. "It's in the 'Ead's 'and, sir."

And with that encouraging remark, the page left the study.

The juniors glanced at the letter.

It was addressed to Mr. Prout in the well-known handwriting of Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars.

Their faces brightened.

There were few fellows at Greyfriars who were not anxious for the Head to resume his duties at the old school.

Mr. Prout was satisfied that he filled the Head's place well—indeed, better than Dr. Locke! But Mr. Prout had that belief entirely to himself!

Under Prout's rule there had been trouble all the time. He had an unbounded, and extremely misplaced, faith in Loder of the Sixth, his head prefect, whom he had appointed captain of the school. It was Loder's tyranny that had called into existence the Greyfriars Secret Society, and it was the activity of that society that had caused the sentence of detention on the Remove—which, in its turn, was the cause of the present trouble.

"By gum!" said Bob Cherry. "I hope the Head's coming back soon! I'm fed-up with Prout!"

"Yes, rather!"

"That letter may mean that he's coming back in a day or two!" said Harry Wharton. "Let's hope so, at any rate!"

"The Beak would feel flattered if he knew how much everybody wants him back!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"Is that old ass ever coming?" snorted the Bounder.

He scowled from the window at Mr. Prout, still in conversation with little Mr. Wooso in the quad. Prout's talks were never short.

So heavy has been the demand for the new Children's Bournville Cocoa, in every tin of which one of the Cococubs is presented free, that grocers have had to be rationed. Messrs. Cadbury Bros., Ltd. inform us, however, that every effort is being made to catch up with the demand; the toy makers are working day and night, and it is anticipated that full supplies will be available shortly. Ask Mother to arrange with the Grocer to reserve a tin of Children's Bournville Cocoa for her, should his stock run short. Two million Cococubs have been ordered, and they are being popped into the tins of cocoa as fast as they are delivered.

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"The old dummy! Keeping us on tenterhooks!" said Vernon-Smith, between his teeth. "Look here! I'm not standin' it! I'm not hanging about here, waiting for a whopping and doing nothing. Let's rag the room!"

"Fathead!"

"Cheese it!"

"Dry up!"

The Bounder's eyes glittered.

"Well, if you're funky, I'm not!" he snapped, and he started by kicking over a chair.

"Stop that, Smithy!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Mind your own business!"

"Look here——"

"Rats!"

The Bounder grabbed a pile of papers from the desk with the evident intention of throwing them into the fire.

Harry Wharton, with an angry exclamation, wrenched the papers away from him.

"Stop it, I tell you——"

"You meddlin' fool!" shouted the Bounder. He made a snatch at the papers, and the captain of the Remove held them behind him with one hand and pushed Vernon-Smith back with the other.

It was rather a hefty push, and Smithy staggered against the desk with a gasp. As he leaned on the desk, his hand touched the letter laid there a few minutes ago by the page.

In an instant he grabbed it up and tossed it into the fire!

"Smithy——" shouted Bob.

He made a jump after the letter. But it had dropped into the midst of the glowing coals and was consumed in a second.

With a jeering laugh, the Bounder snatched up three or four books, with the intention of throwing them after the letter.

But this time he was stopped.

The Famous Five all grasped him together, and he came down with a bump on the floor of the Head's study.

"Let go!" yelled Smithy, struggling fiercely.

"Keep the fool there!" said Harry Wharton savagely. "You've done harm enough, Vernon-Smith—you've burned the Head's letter——"

"Hang the Head's letter! "Leggo!"

"Sit on him!" said Bob Cherry.

"The sitfulness is the proper caper!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

And Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull sat on the Bounder, keeping him pinned down on the carpet, while Wharton set the overturned chair on its legs and put the papers tidy on the desk again. The Head's letter had vanished from existence, and nothing could be done about that.

"Will you let me get up, you rotters?" hissed the Bounder.

"Not till Prout comes, old bean!" answered Bob cheerfully.

"You rotter!"

"Go it!"

"I'll smash you!" howled the Bounder.

"Get on with it!" grinned Bob.

But that was precisely what the Bounder was unable to do. And he remained on the Head's carpet with two juniors sitting on him to keep him there, till Prout's elephantine tread was heard at the door.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Goal!

GERALD LODER, of the Sixth Form, grinned. That day was Saturday, and it was a half-holiday for all Greyfriars except the Remove.

Half-holidays for that unfortunate Form were things of the past.

While the rest of the school did that which was right in their own eyes, the Remove had to do that which was right in Prout's eyes—which was detention in their Form-room.

Loder was standing at the door of that Form-room ready to let the detained juniors in. They came along with glum faces. And six of them wriggled as they walked—which was the cause of Loder's grin. The Famous Five and the Bounder looked as if they had been through recent painful experiences—as, indeed, they had! Prout had dealt with them faithfully in the Head's study.

Glum as the Remove already looked, they looked glummer at the sight of Loder by the Form-room door.

"I say, you fellows, we're going to have Loder!" groaned Billy Bunter.

"Rotten!" murmured Peter Todd.

"The rottenfulness is terrific."

Loder opened the Form-room door and the juniors marched in. The bully of Greyfriars followed them in as they went to their places. He had his ashplant under his arm, doubtless in expectation that it would be wanted in the Remove that afternoon.

Generally, Mr. Wooso took his Form in detention, but naturally he did not want all his leisure taken up by that thankless task. Sometimes there was extra French from Monsieur Charpentier, sometimes extra maths from Mr. Lascelles, and sometimes Sixth Form prefects took turns.

Any prefect was preferable to Loder—even Walker or Carne. But this time it was Loder.

The Bounder gave him a bitter and evil look as he sat down at his desk. If there was any of Loder's bullying that afternoon, Smithy was not in a state of mind to stand it patiently.

Smithy's temper was not always good—and now it was very bad indeed. That afternoon he would have been playing football, but for detention, and he was keen on the winter game.

A Form match with the Fourth had had to be scratched. But that was a mere nothing compared with scratching the Rookwood match on the following Wednesday. And after the incident of Prout at the window of the Rag, it was obvious that there was not a ghost of a chance of playing the match at Rookwood.

Added to that, the six juniors had had a severe—a very severe—caning from Prout. None of them liked it—but Harry Wharton & Co. could, at least, take it philosophically. After what Prout had heard them saying, they expected to be whopped—and they could hardly blame Prout for handing it out hard and heavy.

But the Bounder did not look at it in the same philosophic way. He was angry and resentful and vengeful.

Likewise, he had had it harder than the others, as he fully deserved for his reckless insinuation that Prout had been cavedropping at the window of the Rag on that unfortunate occasion.

He was irritated, too, by the opposition of the Co. to his harebrained idea of ragging Prout's study while they waited. And they had told him quite plainly what they thought of his act in throwing the letter into the fire—which the five agreed was utterly rotten. And the fact that he was, in his heart of hearts, rather ashamed of that action, only added to Smithy's angry resentment.

Altogether, he was in a mood for a fierce provocation—and he rather wished, than otherwise, that Loder would give provocation.



"Prout's an ass!" said Harry Wharton. "He's got a swelled head through fancying himself as headmaster. He doesn't really mean any harm, and, after all, the man can't help being a fool——" "Wharton!" "Oh, crumbs!" Every fellow in the group spun round, and every eye fixed on Prout's plump, portly, wrathful face, as he looked into the room!

To his surprise, and to the relief of most of the Form, Gerald Loder appeared to be rather less unpleasant than usual.

He set the Remove to work, which consisted of long and rather dreary Latin papers prepared for them by Mr. Woose. Then he went to the door of the Form-room and chatted with his friends, Walker and Carne, who came up the passage.

He was in official charge of the detention class, but he was not making work of it. Loder had his own ways of performing his duties.

He had the detention to supervise for an hour, at the end of which time Mr. Woose was coming in. Evidently he found it a bore.

On previous occasions Loder had relieved the monotony by bullying and generally making things unpleasant all round. Now that he seemed to be in a better humour than usual, he was simply bored.

After about ten minutes he glanced round into the Form-room.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, Loder!"

"I'm clearing off for a few minutes! Keep order here."

Without waiting for an answer, Loder walked away with his Sixth Form pals. Billy Bunter gave a fat chuckle as soon as the door was shut.

"I say, you fellows! Loder can't smoke here! He, he, he!"

"That's Prout's favourite prefect!" said the Bouncer, with a sneer. "Gone off to smoke in his study with his pals."

"Horrible!" said Skinner. "No Remove man ever smokes in his study!"

Some of the fellows laughed, and the Bouncer scowled. Smithy was rather

given to smoking cigarettes in his study in the Remove!

"Well, I'm not doing this dashed Latin!" said Vernon-Smith sullenly. "If Prout wants it done, he can see that it's done. The old ass!"

"No good sitting here doing nothing, Smithy!" said Tom Redwing. "And Woose is going to look at the papers when he comes."

"Blow Woose!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bolsover major. "Bother Woose! Anyhow, Woose never makes a fuss—he's afraid of us, more than he is of Prout."

The Bouncer lounged out of his place. Several other fellows followed him. There was a general cessation of work.

Bob Cherry went to the window, clambered up, and looked out. Far in the distance, figures could be seen on the football ground. Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Fourth, had fixed up a pick-up, as their match with the Remove had been washed out. It was a fine, clear, cold afternoon, and Bob eyed the footballers longingly.

"Better keep your places, you men!" advised Lord Mauleverer. "Loder may come bargin' in any minute."

"Who cares for Loder?" sneered the Bouncer.

"Well, Loder only wants half an excuse for handling his ashplant," said Harry Wharton. "It's not much use asking for it."

"You may be as funky of Loder as you are of Prout! I'm not funky of either of them!" retorted the Bouncer.

"You cheeky ass——"

"What about footer?" asked Bob Cherry, dropping back from the window. "We can use that cushion off Quelch's chair——"

"Better keep quiet!" said Harry.

"Well, dash it all, Loder's in charge, and if he walks off, he can't expect us to sit still!" argued Bob. "And Woose will pretend not to notice anything about the Latin papers—he's the man for a quiet life!"

Herbert Vernon-Smith jerked the cushion off the chair at the Form-master's desk. He kicked it across the Form-room.

"Play up!" he shouted.

Bob Cherry kicked it back. Squiff and Tom Brown, Peter Todd, and Bolsover major joined in the game at once.

"Look here, that's better fun than sitting still!" said Johnny Bull. And he joined the footballers.

Next, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and Frank Nugent left their places, and joined up. And Harry Wharton, not caring to remain out of it when all his friends were joining in, ceased to set a good example, and joined up also. That was a signal to the rest of the Remove.

Only two fellows remained in their places—Lord Mauleverer and Billy Bunter. And they only remained because they were too lazy to move.

"Pass that ball!"

"Play up!"

"Hurrah!"

"Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The game was soon going hot and strong. In a Form-room, with desks in the way, and a cushion for a ball, it was not very much like Soccer. But it was fun, and it was fast and furious, and quite hilarious. And there was no doubt that it was an improvement on

Some of the fellows expected Loder to come back at once with other prefects.

But he did not come.

The rebels were left to themselves.

Now that they had cooled down a little they could not help realising that the outbreak had been, to say the least, reckless, if not harebrained.

The Bouncer had led the Form into it, and he seemed to be rather pleased at what he had done. But less reckless fellows were not pleased.

What was going to happen now was a troublesome problem.

The secret society, working in secret, were safe from the sack. But there was no secret about this—the Bouncer, in his recklessness, had thrown away all the advantages of strategy. Half the Form had handled Loder, and he could name the fellows who had taken the lead if he liked. It was scarcely to be doubted that he would like.

Prout already suspected those very fellows of being the ringleaders of the Greyfriars Secret Society. Was he not certain to jump at this provocation and sack them? It looked like it.

Footsteps came along the passage at last.

But it was only Mr. Woose who came in.

The Squeaker blinked at the Remove over the gold-rimmed glasses that slanted on his nose. He seemed rather relieved to find them quiet.

Apparently he had heard nothing of the trouble with Loder. At all events, he made no reference to it.

Football in the Form-room had ceased, by common consent. Even the Bouncer did not want to be thus engaged when Prout came.

But Prout did not seem to be coming.

Mr. Woose called to Wharton to collect the Latin papers, which the head boy duly did.

There was little in any of those papers to satisfy the least exacting Form-master. But Woose's easy-going ways were well known—very different from the ways of Henry Samuel Quelch!

Leaving the pile of extremely unsatisfactory papers for future examination—or more probably no examination at all—little Mr. Woose turned on English literature as the next lesson.

He had an uncommonly quiet class for a detention class. Once or twice the Bouncer banged a desk-lid or dropped a book—but nobody in the Form was willing to back him up in more ragging.

Mr. Woose had the Remove for an hour—an unusually quiet hour. Then Mr. Lascelles came in.

Larry Lascelles had them for another hour in maths. Larry was not a man to be ragged, if the Remove had been in ever so truculent a mood. The third hour of detention passed off peaceably.

Then the Remove were dismissed.

Every fellow in the Form was in a state of amazement as they left the Form-room. Nothing had been heard from Loder—nothing from Prout!

It seemed impossible that the bully of Greyfriars had failed to report what had happened to the headmaster.

Ever since he had become captain of the school in Wingate's place, he had been down on the Remove. He had suffered severely at the hands of the secret society. He had lost no opportunity of setting Prout against them. It seemed impossible that he would lose a chance like this.

Yet nothing had happened!

"Blessed if I make it out!" said Bob Cherry, when the Famous Five gathered for tea in Study No. 1 in the Remove passage. "What's the matter with Loder? He can't be going to take it lying down."

"Hardly!" said Nugent.

"He's got something in store for us, I suppose," said Harry. "We can't have heard the last of it. He's not chucked being a rotten bully."

"The esteemed leopard cannot change his idiotic spots, nor the venerable Ethiopian his absurd skin!" remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, it's coming!" grunted Johnny Bull.

If it was coming, it seemed to be lingering on the way. After tea, there was a kick at the door of Study No. 1, and it flew open. Vernon-Smith looked in.

The Famous Five all looked at him together inquiringly.

"Heard from Prout?" asked Bob.

"No!"

"I say, you fellows——" Billy Bunter looked in, at the Bouncer's side. "I say, Toddy thinks that Prout is going to have the whole Form up after tea."

"Shouldn't wonder!" said Bob.

"And I say," went on Bunter anxiously, "don't you fellows forget to mention that I had nothing to do with it——"

Vernon-Smith made a motion with his boot, and the fat Owl of the Remove jumped away just in time.

"Beast! Look here——" roared Bunter.

(Continued on next page.)



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Smithy came into the study and slammed the door on the fat Owl. There was an expression on his face that Harry Wharton & Co. did not quite understand—and did not quite like. They looked at him in silence. The Bounder had evidently come to the study to say something, and they wondered what it was.

"Nothing from Prout, so far," said Vernon-Smith, "and my belief is that there won't be anything. Loder hasn't reported to him what happened in the Form-room this afternoon."

"Why shouldn't he?" asked Bob.

"He's got a reason." A sneer came on the Bounder's sardonic face. "He's afraid of us—that's the reason. Ever since he's been top dog, Loder's lost no chance of getting one over at us. He's made life hardly worth living in the Remove—and we've given him back as good as he's handed out, and better, through the secret society. He's in a funk, and dare not carry it on. And if you think for a minute, you'll know the reason."

"Mean to say you think that Loder will let it drop?" asked Bob.

"I'd put ten to one on it."

"Well, if he does, all the better. We don't want the trouble to go on, if Loder doesn't," said Harry. "But—"

"The butfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head.

"You don't catch on?" sneered the Bounder. "Well, I can tell you that I've got Loder in the hollow of my hand, and he knows it—and he's in a blue funk. He never meant to cut up rusty to-day in the Form-room. He lost his temper, or he wouldn't have let himself go. His temper's as rotten as ever—no mistake about that. But he's got to toe the line—and he knows that, too!"

The Famous Five stared blankly at the Bounder.

They did not catch on, and they liked less than ever the expression on his hard face.

There was a streak of hard unscrupulousness in the Bounder of Greyfriars, of which they were only too well aware.

Smithy was a fellow to play the game, so long as the other side played it. But if the other side took the gloves off, Smithy was the man to take them off, too!

"I tell you we've got him on toast!" went on the Bounder, as the chums of the Remove stood rather uncomfortably silent. "And we're going to toast him. We're playing Rookwood next Wednesday—"

"Not much chance of that now!" said Harry.

"All right, if Loder helps us with his influence over Prout," said the Bounder coolly. "He's got Prout in his pocket, all the school knows that. He can pull the old fathead's leg to any extent."

"We all know that," said Bob impatiently. "That's the cause of most of the trouble this term. But Loder's not likely to use his influence over Prout to please us."

"He is—if he's made to," said Vernon-Smith.

"Made to?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes."

"You ass, how can you make him?"

"I'll put it in words of one syllable, suitable to the intellect of this study," said the Bounder sarcastically.

He drew a folded cardboard from his pocket.

The Famous Five stared at it.

It was a "Thumb-print Recorder."

Opening it on the study table, the Bounder pointed to a thumb-print, marked in one of the white squares.

"That's Loder's!" he said.

"We know that. I didn't know you'd kept it," said Harry. "But what—"

"That's where we have Loder on toast. You haven't forgotten what happened a few days ago, I suppose," said the Bounder irritably. "We ragged Prout's study—Toddy painted it with white paint. Later, somebody barged into that study, and left fingerprints and thumb-prints in the paint, and—"

"That's ancient history—"

"Let a fellow speak! Mauleverer had had a tip of a tenner from some jolly old aunt, and Prout had it locked up in his desk, keeping it back till the end of the term. That tenner was pinched by the blighter who left the thumb-prints."

"But—"

"Prout believed—and still believes—that it was done by a pal of Mauly's in the Remove to get the tenner back for him."

"I know. But—"

"But we knew it wasn't. We bagged Loder, made him put his thumb-print here, and compared it with the photographs I'd taken of the thumb-prints in the study. He owned up."

"He had to own up; he couldn't get out of the thumb-print," said Harry slowly. "It was Loder who took Mauly's tenner from Prout's study. We know that. But he never pinched it. The silly ass fancied that he was going to borrow it for a time—"

"What's the difference?" sneered the Bounder.

"Well, there's not a lot of difference, I suppose, except that he never meant to steal, and he let Mauly have the tenner back. That's all over, and done with."

"Is it?" said Vernon-Smith. "Well, it isn't. So long as we've got this thumb-print as proof we've got Loder on toast, and we can make him dance to our tune. And that's that!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Limit!

THERE was a dead silence in Study No. 1 in the Remove.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at the Bounder.

They did not speak.

He seemed rather to have taken their breath away.

A sardonic grin was on the Bounder's face. His eyes were gleaming. It was only too clear that the unscrupulous streak in the Bounder's nature had the upper hand now. He was taking the gloves off—with a vengeance!

Harry Wharton found his voice at last.

"Smithy! You—you mean—"

"Beginnin' to understand?" sneered the Bounder. "It's time you did! Loder got that tenner out of Prout's drawer in the study for some of his betting stunts. Mauly thinks he's more fool than that rogue. But you can bet on what Prout would think, if he knew."

"Prout won't know!"

"Loder knew what he would think," grinned the Bounder. "We bagged him in his study and made him cough up the thumb-print we wanted. He knows now that we're in the Secret Society. Has he done anythin' about it? Not a thing! He fairly cringed, and begged for mercy! He knew that we had him on toast—and he knows it now."

Wharton set his lips.

"We did that," he said quietly, "to clear up what had become of the tenner, and get it back for Mauly. Loder gave it back. What he did was as good—

or as bad—as stealing. But he never meant to steal, and when he owned up, and the tenner was given back, we chucked the whole thing."

"You did," sneered Vernon-Smith. "I did not."

"You should have, Smithy," said the captain of the Remove. "I never even dreamed that you were keeping that thumb-print up against Loder. That sort of thing's not in the game."

"Is it in the game for Loder to pull Prout's leg, and make him down on us, get us detentions all through the term, and muck up our football matches?" sneered Smithy.

"No. Loder doesn't play the game. But I suppose you're not advising us to take Loder for a model?"

"If the other man takes the gloves off, I take them off, too!" said the Bounder. "That's fair."

"Up to a point," assented Wharton. "But there's a limit. You never seem to understand that there's a limit, Smithy."

"Let Loder keep to the limit, and I'll

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follow his example!" said Vernon-Smith, shrugging his shoulders. "As the matter stands, we've got him on toast. If Prout knew that Loder was the man who left those thumb-prints in the paint in his study, Loder's number would be up. We can prove it—if we like. Loder knows it."

"You think he knows that you've kept that evidence against him?"

The Bounder laughed.

"Of course he does! Has he whopped one of us since it happened? Has he bullied us, and ragged us, as he always did? Has he reported us to Prout for anything?"

The juniors were silent.

It was true that there had been a change in the bully of Greyfriars since the incident of the banknote in the Head's study. Loder of the Sixth had not changed his spots, so to speak, but he had certainly let the Remove alone. His savage temper had broken out that afternoon, but it could hardly be denied that he had had provocation.

It looked as if the Bounder was right.

Loder, it seemed, was letting that riot drop. He had been kicked out of the Form-room, yet he was doing nothing!

There appeared to be only one explanation—that given by the Bounder! He was afraid of the Removites.

He had reason to be, as a matter of fact. The Famous Five and Lord Mauleverer had dismissed that matter of the banknote from their minds. But Loder could not know that. And the Bounder, in whose hands the evidence remained, had not dismissed it. Loder dreaded that tell-tale thumb-print might be made use of against him, and, so far as Vernon-Smith was concerned, his dread was well founded.

There was a long and troubled silence in the study.

The Bounder glanced from clouded face to face, and the sardonic sneer intensified on his own.

He had the bully of the school on toast, as he expressed it. Loder was in the hollow of his hand. The chums of the Remove, especially Lord Mauleverer, had taken a merciful view of what Loder had done. Having let them off, they had dismissed the matter. That was not the Bounder's view, at all. Having his enemy on toast, he was prepared to toast him. And the grim disapproval in the faces of the Famous Five only irritated him.

He broke the silence at last.

"Well, what about it?"

Harry Wharton made a gesture towards the study fire.

"Chuck that away, Smithy."

"You fool!"

"Loder's a bully, and a rotter, and a brute! But there's a limit! Holding a thing over a fellow's head like that won't do!"

"No fear!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific!"

"Chuck it, Smithy!" said Bob Cherry.

"Play the game, old man!"

The Bounder set his lips. He replaced the thumb-print recorder in his pocket.

"So that's your idea?" he jeered.

"That's it!" said Harry. "Look here, Smithy, be a sensible chap! What you're proposing to do is what's called blackmail!"

"Can't be done, old chap!" said Bob Cherry, shaking his head. "For goodness' sake chuck it away and think no more about it!"

"Play the game, you know!" said Nugent.

"Let Loder set the example!" said the Bounder, between his teeth. "Loder started this trouble. It's through Loder that our match with Rookwood is going to be scratched on Wednesday. I'll tell you what I'm going to do! I'm going to make Loder get us off on Wednesday."

"I'm going to ask Larry Lascelles, as games master, to speak to Prout," said Harry.

"Try that on, if you like; if it's successful, let it go at that!" said the Bounder, with a sneer. "But we're going over to Rookwood on Wednesday—that's settled! If Larry can get us leave, I'll be glad. If he can't, Loder can—and shall!"

"Smithy—"

"That's enough!"

The Bounder strode to the door and dragged it open savagely. There was a loud slam as it closed after him.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another in silence. The Bounder was gone—in a savage and obstinate temper.

"I'll go and speak to Larry now," said Wharton at last.

And he went down to see the games master.

He found Mr. Lascelles sympathetic.

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He promised to speak to Prout, and do his best for the Remove footballers.

But that night, before dorm, the captain of the Remove heard from Mr. Lascelles that he had spoken to Prout—and spoken in vain.

Prout was adamant.

Nothing would induce him to give that troublesome Form, the Remove, leave from detention—football match or no football match!

That was that!

"Any news from Larry?" the Bouncer asked, with a sneer, in the Remove dormitory that night.

"Nothing doing!" answered Wharton briefly.

The Bouncer made no rejoinder; but the look on his face was enough. The power was in his hands, and he was going to use it.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Way of the Transgressor!

"T-O-NIGHT?" asked Carne.

"No!"

"Why not?"

"Oh rats!"

"Gerald's turning over a new leaf!" yawned Walker.

"I can see him doing it!" grinned Carne.

Loder of the Sixth scowled.

It was Monday, and the three black sheep of the Sixth had had tea in Loder's study. They were smoking cigarettes after tea, with the door locked—one of their happy customs of which Mr. Prout had no suspicion.

Gerald Loder did not seem in a good temper.

For some days past his temper had been rather uncertain. It seemed to his pals that he had a worry on his mind.

No doubt he had cause for worry. As head prefect and captain of the school he had a free hand to carry on very much as he liked. He had indulged his natural propensity to blackguardism without limit, and the result had been serious enough in a financial way. Billiards at the Three Fishers, banker at the Cross Keys, and backing losers had put Loder in a hole.

He owed more money than he could possibly pay that term, and his sporting friends were growing rusty and peevish about it.

Moreover, he was coming to the end of his reign. Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth were away that term, owing to the motor accident in which they had been involved at the same time as Dr. Locke. But they were coming back the next term—and break-up was near at hand now.

Next term Wingate would resume his old place, and Loder would sink back into the insignificance that was his natural sphere.

Indeed, his reign might not last even till then, for it was rumoured that the Head was coming back before the school broke up for Christmas.

Mr. Prout had every confidence in Loder, and backed him up all along the line. But it was improbable that Dr. Locke would take the same view. It was quite probable that the return of the Head meant a disagreeable change for Loder. All the school looked forward to Dr. Locke's return—excepting Loder and Mr. Prout. They certainly were not keen on it.

Prout was far from pleased by the knowledge that he might receive, any day, a letter from Dr. Locke announcing the date of his return to Greyfriars. Loder shared his dislike of the prospect.

But these little matters were not all

that worried Loder. His pals could see that there was something else, though they did not know what it was.

And they did not like it!

Hitherto Loder had been the guiding spirit in the blackguardly outbreaks of the sporting set at Greyfriars. Now he was, so to speak, very backward in coming forward.

He seemed to be fed-up with the whole thing; which was, naturally, very surprising and very irritating to Walker and Carne.

They watched him curiously as he threw away his cigarette half smoked.

"Have another?" asked Walker.

"No!"

"Well, look here, what's the matter with a little trip to-night?" asked Carne sulkily. "I've had a remittance, and if you're still stony, Gerald, I can lend you a quid."

"I'm not goin'!"

"Well, why not?" demanded Carne.

"Oh, it's a lot of silly rot!" exclaimed Loder irritably. "The fact is, we've been a set of silly goats! What's the good of goin' on playin' the fool? I tell you I'm sick of it!"

"I told you Gerald was turnin' over a new leaf!" grinned Walker. "He's got a scare about somethin'. Has Prout heard yet that the Big Beak's comin' back, old bean?"

"Not that I know of!" growled Loder.

"More rows with the jolly old junior secret society?"

"Oh rats!"

"Well, I'll look in again when you're a bit more cheery!" growled Carne, and he left the study and slammed the door after him.

James Walker rose to follow him. But he paused and gave Loder a curious look.

"Look here, Gerald, what's up?" he asked. "You've been like a bear with a sore head for days—ever since that big rag in the Head's study, in fact. Even the fags have noticed something—you've hardly whopped a fag since then! I've heard some of them talking about it. What's up?"

"Find out!" snarled Loder.

Walker shrugged his shoulders and left the study, slamming the door as Carne had done.

Loder, left alone, took out another cigarette; but he did not light it. He crumpled it idly in his fingers.

His friends—and even, according to Walker, the fags—had noticed that there was something "up" with him.

Undoubtedly there was.

Loder had had the scare of his life. He could not forget those bitter moments when he had had to ask for mercy from a bunch of juniors.

But that was not the worst. He had been in danger of disgrace and ruin, and he had been spared. But worse than that was the knowledge of what he had done—or almost done!

He had taken Mauleverer's banknote from the drawer in Prout's study, with the intention of "borrowing" it for a time! He wondered now how he could ever have deceived himself with that miserable argument.

But for the intervention of the juniors he would have parted with that banknote—he would have been a thief!

Little had Loder dreamed that he would ever feel thankful to the Greyfriars Secret Society. But from the bottom of his heart he was thankful that they had saved him from that.

Very nearly he had gone over the brink. It made him giddy to think how near he had been! And that terrible experience had opened his eyes to the folly and guilt of his ways. For the time, at least, Loder was in a repentant

mood, and resolved, if he could, to break off old bad associations, and do better!

But it was not only remorse and self-disgust that worried him. There was a lurking fear at the back of his mind.

The Remove fellows knew. Harry Wharton & Co., and Peter Todd, and Lord Mauleverer, and Herbert Vernon-Smith knew!

They had said nothing. Not one of them had made the slightest reference to that scene in his study when he had cringed before them and pleaded with them to keep his wretched secret and give him a chance. He might, indeed, have supposed that they had forgotten the whole episode.

And they could so easily have taken advantage of it! They had not done so! And that fact caused something like gratitude, something like kindness, to awaken in Loder's hard heart.

It was not, as the Bouncer cynically believed, wholly dread that had made him leave the Removes alone, and cease bullying and browbeating. There had been better feelings, too.

And yet—and yet—Fear lurked in the back of his mind. Would Herbert Vernon-Smith have acted as he had acted on Saturday afternoon but for what he knew?

Loder had let that affair drop! He dared not do otherwise. If that was all, it mattered little! But if the juniors, who knew his dismal secret, chose now to repay his insolence, his tyranny, his overbearing oppression, what then?

It was no wonder that, with such a fear in his heart and his mind, Gerald Loder was in no mood for banker in the study, or billiards at the Three Fishers. It seemed to Carne and Walker that they had lost their pal—and, for the time, at least, they certainly had.

Tap!

Loder gave an angry grunt. He did not want visitors in his study—he wanted to be left alone with his troubled thoughts. If it was that old ass, Prout, coming for another of his endless talks—

It was not Prout. It was Herbert Vernon-Smith who opened the study door and stepped in.

Loder stared at him.

He did not speak. As the Bouncer quietly closed the door Loder knew why he had come; and his heart was like lead in his breast. Lord Mauleverer, Harry Wharton & Co., he could trust to play the game, even when he failed to give them honourable dealing. Vernon-Smith was a fellow of another sort—more of his own sort, in actual truth.

Exactly what Vernon-Smith wanted he did not know. But he knew that Smithy had come there to use his power. And he knew that he dared not resist.

In silence he gazed at the hard face of the Bouncer. He waited for Smithy to speak.

"Not interruptin', I hope?" said the Bouncer, with sarcastic politeness.

Loder shook his head.

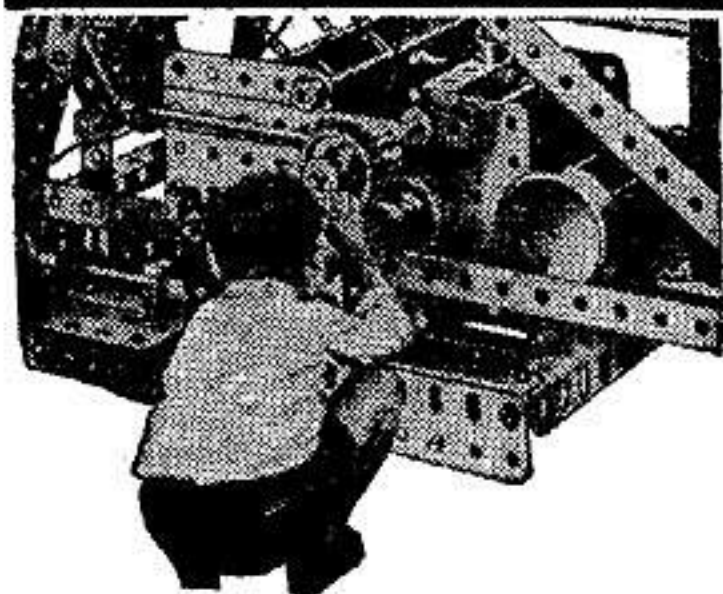
He was a senior, a Sixth Form man, and a prefect—and he had to sit quiet under the cool insolence of a Lower Fourth junior. The way of the transgressor was hard!

"You may happen to know that we're booked for an away match at Rookwood, the day after to-morrow," said the Bouncer. "If we're detained on Wednesday it's all up. Wharton got Lascelles to speak to Prout on Saturday, and it was 'N. G.'"

(Continued on page 12.)

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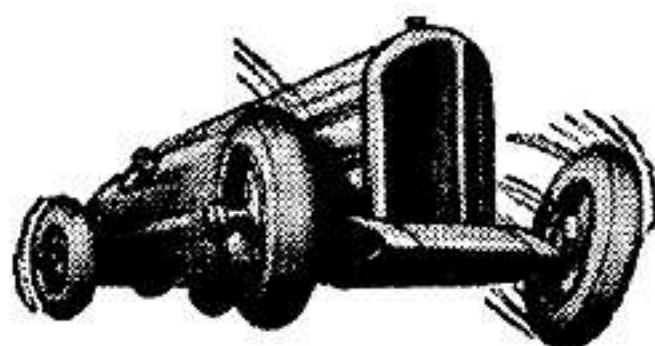
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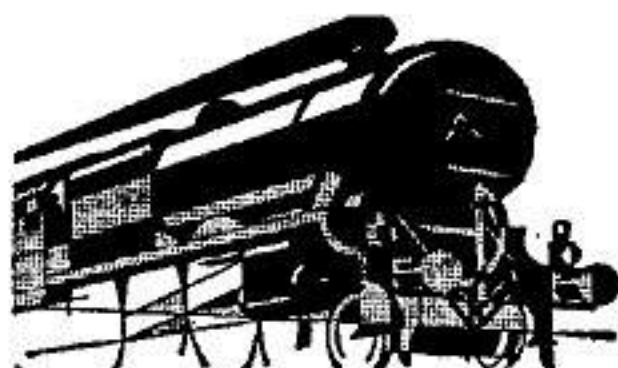
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Loder remained silent. He began to guess what was coming.

"I needn't beat about the bush," went on Smithy. "You've got Prout in your pocket! You've pulled his leg ever since the old ass barged into the Head's place and started playing headmaster and assing about generally. He jumps to your pulling the strings—like a monkey on a stick. If you ask him he will let us off on Wednesday. Will you ask him?"

Silence.

"You know we never ought to have been detained," said Vernon-Smith. "It was the secret society stunt did it—and you know that you brought that about by your rotten bullying and bullyingragging! You got us into it—you can get us out of it! It's up to you. Will you do it?"

No threat was uttered—no hint of a threat! But the threat was plain enough behind it all. Vernon-Smith could not have come to Loder's study and talked like that, but for the hidden power in his hands.

Loder spoke at last.

"I'll try!"

"If you try hard enough you'll succeed!" said Smithy. "Every man in the school knows that you pipe for Prout to dance."

"He's got his back up over something he heard you juniors say about him on Saturday morning in the Rag. He's obstinate. I'll try, but I can't answer for the result."

An ugly look came over the Bounder's face.

"Leave it at that, then!" he said.

"If we get leave to go over to Rookwood, all right! If not, you'll be seeing Prout again about something else! That's all!"

Loder caught his breath.

"You mean—" he muttered huskily.

"You know what I mean!" said Herbert Vernon-Smith coolly, and he opened the door and walked out of the study.

Loder leaned back limply in his chair and wiped the perspiration from his brow. The way of the transgressor was hard—hard and thorny!

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

His Lordship's Wa:l

LORD MAULEVERER came along the Remove passage and stopped at the door of Study No. 4 after prep that evening.

Fellows who observed him, glanced at him a second time as he passed. Mauly was not looking his usual urbane self.

Generally his noble face expressed sleepy good-nature. Now it was curiously hard in its look, and his lips were set.

Seldom, or never, did his lazy lordship take the trouble to get his "rag" out. Seldom, or never, was he known to be "shirty." But it looked as if something had happened now to rouse the quiet temper of the schoolboy earl.

He tapped at Study No. 4 and entered.

The juniors in that study—Vernon-Smith and Redwing—had finished prep. Redwing had a worried look on his face; the Bounder a sardonic grin. It seemed as if there had been some argument in that study.

"Trickle in, old bean!" said the Bounder, as Lord Mauleverer appeared in the doorway. "Find yourself a pew."

Loder Mauleverer closed the door.

But he did not sit down. He stood

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looking at the Bounder, with a thoughtful expression on his face.

Redwing gave him a rather uneasy look. He scented trouble—though it was extremely unusual for trouble to proceed from Lord Mauleverer.

"Anything up, Mauly?" he asked.

"Yaas."

"Somebody sat on your best silk hat?" asked the Bounder.

"No."

"Lost your fancy waistcoat?"

"No!"

"Well, give it a name! You look as if you've come here for a row," said the Bounder, laughing. "A bit of a new departure for you, Mauly, if that's the case—but you've come to the right shop if you want a row! I've never said no to one."

"Mauly, old man, what on earth's the trouble?" asked Tom Redwing uneasily.

"Smithy is!" said Mauleverer. "I hope I haven't come here for a row; but it depends on Smithy!"

"With or without gloves?" asked the Bounder.

"You've got gloves in this study?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, we may want them! But let's talk first!" said his lordship amicably. "I'd rather talk with a chap than scrap with him, any day. After all, it may only be one of your ghastly jokes."

"Mind explainin' what you're talking about?" asked the mystified Bounder. "I'm as ready for a scrap as the next man; but I'm dashed if I see what you've got to quarrel with me about. I suppose you're not gettin' your back up because I think you a silly ass and a brainless nincompoop? You've known my opinion of you long enough."

Lord Mauleverer nodded amiably.

"Every fellow has a right to his own opinion," he assented. "Think what you like, old chap. Why not? You think I'm a bit of an ass; I think you're a bit of a rotter! Live and let live, what?"

"You silly fathead!"

"That's all right—I don't mind! I didn't come to this study in search of polished manners," said Mauleverer. "To come down to brass tacks, Smithy, did you think of makin' use of that business about Loder, or was it only a weird kind of a joke?"

"Loder will find that it's no joke if he doesn't get us leave from Prout on Wednesday!" said Vernon-Smith. "Have they been gabblin' about it in Study No. 1?"

"Yaas, we've talked it over," said Lord Mauleverer. "Wharton's friends and Toddy and me—we were all in it with you, you know, in handlin' Loder and fixin' that tenner bizney on him. Loder's spoken to Wharton about the footer—he says he's asked Prout, and the old boy is as hard as iron and won't budge an inch."

"Loder had better find a way of making him," said Vernon-Smith. "It will be worse for him if he doesn't."

"Smithy—" muttered Redwing.

"Oh, ring off!" said the Bounder.

"You've told me what you think, and I'm fed-up-with it! I know what I'm going to do."

"So it's not a joke?" sighed Lord Mauleverer.

"Hardly."

"Then I shall have to give you a bit of a sermon, old bean. It won't do! You can't hold a thing like that over a man's head. It's foul!"

The Bounder's eyes glittered. That opinion had been expressed, in more or less plain English, by every fellow who was concerned in the affair. Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent,

Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had spoken plainly—Peter Todd had spoken still more plainly—and Tom Redwing had been very frank. That general condemnation of his methods had not moved the Bounder one whit. It had only made him more obstinately determined.

"Foul, is it?" he said, between his teeth.

"Yaas!"

"Sort out those gloves, Reddy!" said the Bounder. "We shall want them."

Redwing did not stir.

"We had to clear it up about that banknote," said Lord Mauleverer. "We pinned Loder down to it. He owned up, and we agreed to take the view that he never meant to pinch—that we'd let him off, and give him a chance, and wash the whole bizney out. It's got to stay washed out, Smithy!"

Smithy shrugged his shoulders.

"Loder's been a bit tamed since then," went on Mauly. "We've had no trouble with him, and the jolly old secret society has practically gone out of business. That's all we wanted—"

"Because he's afraid?" sneered the Bounder.

"I don't think it's wholly that!" said Lord Mauleverer. "There's some good in Loder, as there is in everybody! Why, my dear man, there's good in you."

"What?"

"There is!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Not a lot—but some."

Redwing grinned, and the Bounder glared.

"But never mind that," went on Mauly. "If Loder begins his knavish tricks again, the secret society can start business once more, and put paid to him. But we can't play foul!"

"You'd better measure your words in this study, you nincompoop!"

"I'm measurin' them, old chap. I'm not callin' you any of the names I might—such as rotter, worm, or black-mailer," said Lord Mauleverer calmly. "But I've got to make it clear that it won't do! There's a whole lot of us mixed up in this—and by disgracin' yourself, you disgrace us, too! You see that?"

"I'll knock that back into your mouth, with the rest!" said the Bounder, getting out of his chair.

"Let's talk it over first—lots of time to scrap before dorm! You've got Loder's thumb-print, and the photographs of the thumb-prints you took in the Head's study. I took it for granted that you'd chucked the lot in the fire, after we'd got through with Loder—but it seems that you kept them, to have a hold on the brute! A bad step, Smithy! Clever and all that—but that's the way a fellow starts when he's going to the giddy bow-wows. When you make a false step, old bean, step back quick—don't keep on out of sheer obstinacy, or just to show how dashed clever you are! Step back quick!"

"That's a good tip, Smithy!" said Redwing.

"You can shut up!"

The Bounder snapped that answer over his shoulder, as he sorted boxing gloves out of the study cupboard. His face was set and savage.

"I'm going to ask you a favour, Smithy," said Lord Mauleverer gently. "Will you chuck those thumb-prints and things into your study fire?"

"And leave Loder to carry on as he likes?"

"Yaas."

"Likely, isn't it?" sneered the Bounder.

"I hope so! Any fellow but you would do it—I mean, any decent fellow."



As Loder opened the door of the Remove Form-room, a dusty cushion, whizzing through the air like a bullet from Vernon-Smith's foot, smote him full in the face. Biff! "Oh!" spluttered the head prefect.

And you're a decent chap, Smithy, when you give yourself a chance."

"Is that the lot?"

"You won't do it?" sighed Mauleverer.

"No!"

"Will you after I've thrashed you?"

The Bounder laughed.

"If you can thrash me, you burbling noodle, you can do as you like with the things. I shouldn't be able to stop you, anyhow. But you've set yourself a bit of a job."

"Don't I know it?" said Lord Mauleverer. "You're a tough nut, Smithy, and I'm not at all sure I shall whop you. I did once, you remember, when we had that row at High Oaks. But it was rather a strain on a fellow. I'd rather tackle any other man in the Remove, exceptin' Bob Cherry. But if you're determined on it, what's a fellow to do?"

The Bounder threw the boxing gloves on the table.

"There you are!" he said.

"Look here, you fellows—" began Redwing.

"You can see fair play, old bean," said Lord Mauleverer, "and keep time. We don't want an audience. Shove the table over by the window! Takin' your jacket off, Smithy?"

Vernon-Smith threw off his jacket. Lord Mauleverer followed his example. Tom Redwing dragged the table and chairs out of the way. Plenty of room was left for the combat.

"Ready, you howlin' ass?" snapped the Bounder.

"Yaas."

"Keep time, Reddy!"

"All right!"

"You won't do the decent thing, Smithy, without a scrap?" yawned Lord

Mauleverer. "Frightful waste of energy, you know."

"Gettin' funky?" sneered the Bounder.

"Not at all! Why not be decent, old bean? Give me those things to chuck in the fire, and let's call it a day!"

"You silly ass!"

"Here goes, then!"

"Time!" called Redwing.

And the fight in the study started.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Called to Order!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter fairly yelled into Study No. 1.

Six Remove fellows were gathered there with rather worried looks—the Famous Five and Peter Todd. Mauly had been there, but he was gone—though the other fellows did not guess where he had gone—and why!

The chums of the Remove looked worried—and felt worried. They had had a faint hope that Vernon-Smith, on Saturday, had been "talking out of his hat," and that the general disapproval of his scheme would cause him to forget it. Instead of which, it was plain that he had gone on with it, for Loder of the Sixth had told Wharton that he had done his best with Prout, and failed. And on Loder's face there had been an expression that brought the colour to Wharton's cheeks. Loder fancied that all the Co. were in this with the Bounder.

As football captain in the Remove, Wharton was, of course, very keen to get away on Wednesday to Rookwood. But there was a limit—and the

Bounder's method was the limit. Smithy, no doubt, had satisfied his own conscience; but this was the kind of thing that was "not done."

The fellows who knew Loder's miserable secret, were discussing the matter—only Lord Mauleverer having withdrawn from the study—when Bunter barged in, in a state of great excitement, and bawled.

"Oh, buzz off, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"I say, you fellows, they're scrapping!" yelled Bunter.

"Let 'em scrap, whoever they are!" snapped Toddy. "Bother them, and bother you! Blow away!"

"Oh, really, Toddy! I say, you fellows, do you think Mauly can lick Smithy? I say, I fancy he's asked for more than he wants!"

"Mauly! Smithy!"

"Yes, they're scrapping in Smithy's study—"

That was enough for the chums of the Remove. They rushed out of Study No. 1 in a body—and Billy Bunter, whose movements were slow, did not get out of the way in time. He gave a roar as he sat down, and the Famous Five and Toddy passed over him.

They left him roaring, and ran up the passage to Study No. 4.

Already a good many fellows had gathered there.

Prep being over, some of the Remove had gone down; but those who were still in the studies were drawn to the spot by the news of a fight in Study No. 4.

"Fancy, Mauly!" grinned Skinner, as the chums of the Remove came breathlessly up. "Old Mauly on the warpath!"

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(Continued from page 13.)

What on earth can have got his rag out?"

Harry Wharton stared, or, rather, glared, into the Bounder's study. The door had been opened by some of the fellows in the passage to witness the scrap.

The scrap was going strong.

Lord Mauleverer and the Bounder, in their shirtsleeves, with the gloves on, faced one another in the middle of the room. Redwing, watch in hand, was keeping time.

It was already the second round. Both the combatants were rather flushed, and there was a thin streak of red from Smithy's nose, while one of Mauly's eyes was winking. The Bounder's brows were knitted with anger, his eyes gleaming under them; but Mauly looked as cool and placid as ever. Neither of them heeded the staring crowd in the passage.

"Look here! Stop that!" rapped the captain of the Remove.

He stepped into the study. His friends followed him in. Bob Cherry shut the door—amid a roar of protest from the fellows outside, whose view was now cut off.

"Open that door!" roared Bolsover major angrily.

"Let's see the fun!" exclaimed Skinner.

"I guess it's a sight for sore eyes to see Mauly rousing up like this!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish. "I'll say I want to see the rookus!"

"Shove that door open!"

"Cheeky ass!"

Five or six fellows barged on the door. But Bob Cherry had turned the key inside; and they had to content themselves with hammering and kicking at the panels.

"Time!" called Redwing.

The fight stopped, for the minute's rest. And as it stopped the Famous Five pushed between the combatants.

"Stop this!" snapped Wharton.

The Bounder gave him an evil look.

"Mind your own bizney!" he snarled.

"Who asked you into this study? Get out of it, the whole mob of you!"

"Put us out!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Have you come here to prevent that silly ass gettin' what he's asked for?" sneered the Bounder.

"This isn't going on!" said the captain of the Remove curtly. "Look here, Mauly—"

"My dear man, blow away!" said his lordship gently. "I've got to thrash Smithy! He won't give up that rubbish of his till I've whopped him, will you, Smithy?"

"You silly ass, Mauly!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Thanks! I've had that from Smithy!"

"Look here, Vernon-Smith—"

"Time's up!" said the Bounder. "Are you calling time, Redwing?"

"No!" snapped Tom. "Let Wharton speak—"

"Wharton can go and eat coke! If you won't call time, we can manage

without. You ready, Mauleverer, you fool?"

"Yaas."

"Come on, then!"

The Bounder advanced on Lord Mauleverer, with his hands up. Harry Wharton's eyes gleamed at him. He was fed up with the Bounder's arrogance—right up to the chin!

"Stand back, Vernon-Smith!" he rapped.

"Rats to you!"

"Collar him!"

"My dear men," protested Lord Mauleverer, "leave it to me!"

"Fathead!"

"Hands off!" yelled the Bounder furiously, as the Co. grasped him. But it was not hands off; it was hands on; and they grasped hard.

Smithy hit out on all sides, his eyes blazing with rage. But he was promptly pinned, and Bob Cherry held one arm, Johnny Bull the other. In the grasp of two fellows, either quite as hefty as himself, the Bounder was powerless.

"Hold the fool!" said Wharton curtly. "Now, Vernon-Smith, we've been talking over that precious scheme of yours. We've told you it won't do; and you've taken no notice. Now you've got to chuck it!"

"Get out of my study!"

"Will you chuck it?"

"No!" yelled the Bounder.

"Then you'll be made to. Loder's spoken to me—and he looked at me as if I was dirt, when he spoke!" said Harry savagely. "He thinks we're all in this—practically blackmailing a man! It's going to be chucked—right on the spot. And we're going to stop it."

"Lend me a hand, Redwing, you rotter!" yelled the Bounder, struggling fiercely.

Redwing shook his head.

"You're in the wrong, Smithy! You're doing a rotten thing, though you don't seem to understand it."

"You preachin' fool!"

Harry Wharton picked up the Bounder's jacket, which lay on the table. He shook it, and from the inside pocket dropped the cardboard case, with the recorded thumb-print inside and the set of photographs the Bounder had taken of the prints left by Loder in the Head's study.

The captain of the Remove picked them up. In his hand he held the proofs of Loder's guilt. The Bounder's eyes blazed at him.

"Those things are mine!" he panted.

"Don't you dare—"

"Rights of property, old bean!" murmured Lord Mauleverer. His lordship was sitting on the corner of the table watching the proceedings with a faintly amused smile on his noble countenance.

"Quite!" said Harry. "These things are yours, Smithy, though you've no right to use them as you've been doing. Being yours, you can throw them into the study fire, if you like."

"You fool!"

"Will you do it?"

"I'll watch it, you dummy!"

"You'll be whopped with a fives bat till you do! You're a member of the Greyfriars Secret Society, and members have to toe the line. Hand me that bat, Franky! Now lay him over the table, you men."

The Bounder, struggling furiously, was laid face down across the study table. Redwing looked on in grim silence; Lord Mauleverer, smiling genially, made room for the Bounder. Kicking and struggling, Herbert Vernon-Smith was held there, and Wharton grasped the fives bat.

"You—you—you rotter!" panted the

Bounder. "You rotter! Keep that bat away! I tell you—Yaroooh!"

Whack!

"Oh crumbs! You rotter! Ow!"

Whack!

"Oh! Ow! I'll—"

"I'll keep this up as long as you do, Smithy!" said the captain of the Remove grimly. "You're going to do the decent thing, whether you like it or not."

"You fool!" panted the Bounder. "We've got Loder on toast now! What do you think he will do when he knows he's safe?"

"Let him do as he jolly well likes! We'll keep our end up against him, by fair means, not foul!"

"You dummy!"

"Smithy, old chap—" urged Redwing.

"Shut up, you dummy!"

Whack, whack, whack!

The captain of the Remove was in deadly earnest. So were the other fellows. Outside the study there was a buzz of excited voices, and a banging on the door. But the fellows inside did not heed. The fives bat rose and fell with hefty whacks.

"Stop it!" yelled Vernon-Smith. Tough as he was, the Bounder had enough of that method of persuasion.

"Let him go!"

The Bounder wriggled off the table. He snatched the papers from Wharton's hand. For a moment he stood, panting with rage; then, with a savage gesture, he flung them into the fire.

The proofs of Loder's guilt flared up and disappeared from existence. The Bounder, trembling with rage, pointed to the door.

"Get out!" he said thickly.

"Yaas, let's travel," yawned Lord Mauleverer. "Smithy's not enjoyin' our company. Glad you men barged in—saved me a lot of fag! Smithy, old bean—"

"Get out, you fool!"

"Yaas, but there's goin' to be supper in my study—will you come?"

"Idiot!"

"Thanks! Come along to supper, won't you?"

The juniors left the study, and the Bounder, raging, was left alone. The crowd in the passage stared at them as they came out.

"Scrap over?" demanded Skinner.

"Yaas."

"I thought you'd soon have enough!" sneered Skinner.

"Did you, old thing? Now, the fact is, I haven't had quite enough," said Lord Mauleverer urbanely. "I'll have some more with you, Skinner!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Put up your paws, old bean! Why, where are you goin', Skinner?"

Skinner did not explain where he was going. He went!

The crowd in the passage broke up. Half an hour later there was quite a cheery supper-party in Lord Mauleverer's study. But the Bounder did not join it. It seemed that he was sulking in his study, like Achilles in his tent. Which did not worry the chums of the Remove at all; and they cheerfully left him to get on with it.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Smithy!

LODER of the Sixth had a clouded brow the following morning.

Walker and Carne found him so snappish and savage that they carefully avoided his company. His friends in the Fifth, Hilton and Price, gave him an equally wide berth. Loder

did not waste a thought on any of them. He was wondering, that morning, whether he would still be at Greyfriars School when the sun went down.

That was the outcome of his career as a sportsman—he was at the mercy of a mob of juniors, whom he had persecuted, and who could, if they liked, get him sacked from the school.

In morning break Loder tramped under the leafless elms in the quad, his brow black, his hands driven deep into his pockets, the prey to dismal and miserable reflection. Cigarettes in the study could not comfort him now!

He looked up with a glitter in his eyes at the sight of Harry Wharton coming towards him.

"You young rotter!" he breathed.

Wharton smiled faintly.

"I've come to tell you something, Loder," he said quietly. "You needn't worry over that—that affair any longer. Smithy chucked those papers into his study fire last night."

Loder stared at him blankly.

"Everything's gone," said Harry. "That affair in the Head's study is washed out now—dead and done with. Nobody could do you any harm now if he wanted to. There's no proof left."

"You—you mean that?" muttered Loder.

"You can take my word, I suppose? Anyhow, there it is. The whole thing's washed out. That's all."

Wharton turned to go.

"Hold on!" muttered Loder. "Look here, I—I—" he stammered. "The relief from his haunting fears was so great that it made him almost giddy. 'I—I— Look here, it's jolly decent of you, kid! Look here, I really did the best I could with Prout, but he's as hard as iron—'"

"That's all right," said Harry.

"But, look here, I'll try again," muttered Loder. "I'll speak to Prout again to-day and see if anything can be done. If I can possibly get you leave for to-morrow, rely on me to do it."

Wharton looked at him rather curiously.

He had expected Loder to be immensely relieved when he learned that he was safe, but he had not expected anything else. The bully of Greyfriars seemed in rather a chastened mood.

Some ray of gratitude, perhaps, had touched his hard heart; certainly he seemed in earnest now.

"I say, Loder, we'd all be jolly glad if you could do that for us," said Harry more cordially than he would ever have dreamed that he would be speaking to the bully of the Sixth. "Between ourselves, you know jolly well that we ought never to have had that detention; and that's an excuse for Smithy, though he—he's changed his mind since. You know how keen we are to get over to Rookwood to-morrow."

Loder nodded.

"You haven't scratched?" he asked.

"No," said Harry slowly.

Loder grinned faintly. He hardly needed telling that the Remove footballers still entertained a hope of getting over to Rookwood on the morrow, and that there was little at which they would have stopped to get away with it.

"Well, leave it to me," he said. "I'll try Prout again and do the very best I can. You've acted decently to me, and you'll find that I'm not ungrateful."

"Right-ho!" said the captain of the Remove, and he left Loder in a surprised but much more hopeful frame of mind.

"Not whopped?" asked the Bounder sarcastically, meeting him in the quad.

"Whopped?" repeated Harry. "What do you mean?"

"You've told Loder?"

"Yes."

"Then he knows he's safe now?"

"Yes."

"Then I should have expected him to hand out a whopping first thing. Nothing to stop him now," sneered Vernon-Smith.

"Well, Loder isn't such a brute as all that, Smithy," said Wharton. "And he's told me that he's going to try again with Prout and do his best for us."

"What on earth has he told you that for?"

"Because he means it, I suppose!" answered Wharton sharply.

Smithy shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll believe that if we get leave to-morrow," he said. "We'd have got it all right if you'd left me to carry on. You had to barge in, and now you've dished us for the Rookwood match."

"If Loder does his best for us he may as well do it without being threatened," answered Wharton dryly.

"If!" sneered the Bounder.

"Well, we'll see."

The Bounder sneered. He had little faith in human nature—especially in Gerald Loder's nature. He fully expected that now that Loder knew himself safe he would recommence the old game at once—bullying and persecution, and all the more bitterly because of the terror he had been through.

But in that, at least, Smithy was mistaken.

When the Remove went in for third school Loder of the Sixth was in the passage. He beckoned to Vernon-Smith. The Bounder breathed hard as he approached him. Loder had his official ashplant under his arm, and Smithy had not the slightest doubt that he was going to invent some pretext for using it.

"I think you have lines for me, Vernon-Smith?" said Loder quietly. "They've been standing over rather a long time."

"Quite!" sneered the Bounder.

He had quite a lot of lines to do for Loder, dating from a week ago, but he had not thought of doing any of them since the affair of the banknote in Prout's study; and Loder had not asked for them—he knew why.

But he could ask for them now. He could double them if he liked, or he could whop the junior for not having handed them in. He had nothing to fear from Smithy now.

"Well, never mind them," said Loder. "You needn't do the lines, Vernon-Smith. Wash it out!"

Having said that Loder walked away. He left the Bounder staring after him blankly.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Smithy.

"I say, you fellows, what's the matter with Loder?" asked Billy Bunter. "I say, Smithy, why has Loder let you off your lines?"

"Ask me another!" said the Bounder.

He went into the Form-room in a state of great astonishment. Loder of (Continued on next page.)

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the Sixth had his old power in his hands again, but he did not seem so keen on using it. The Bouncer could only wonder. He did not believe that the leopard could change its spots, or the Ethiopian his skin, but it certainly looked as if Loder of the Sixth was trying a new tack.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Loder Keeps His Word!

I SAY, you fellows, come and listen to Prout!

"Prout!" repeated Harry Wharton.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

"He's jawing Loder!" he said.

"Jawing Loder!" said Bob Cherry.

"You fat ass, he never jaws Loder! Loder's his dear little favourite, and Prout thinks no end of him."

"Well, he's jawing him now!" chuckled the fat Owl of the Remove. "His window's open, and you can hear him in the quad."

It was after dinner, and the Famous Five, walking in the quadrangle, were discussing the one topic that had keen interest for the Remove now—the match at Rookwood School on the morrow.

If that match was not going to be played it was evidently high time to let Jimmy Silver & Co. know. Already it was left late enough, for a letter could not reach Rookwood before the morning—on the day of the fixture.

Yet the matter was still undecided. The Remove footballers were hoping against hope, as it were.

Loder had promised to do his best with Prout—and, surprising as it was for Loder to be good-natured, they were rather disposed to put faith in him.

As a last resource, if everything else failed, there was a possibility that they might "cut," as the Bouncer urged and advised, taking all risks of consequences, and clearing off to play football, in spite of Prout and all his works.

But that was a rather desperate resource—obviously one to be left till the very last, when all else had failed.

Indeed, it was doubtful whether even such a resource would be successful, apart from the dire consequences. Prout would know where they were gone, and he was not the man to let them get away with it if he could help it. It was quite on the cards that if he found that they had cut he might follow by the next train to shepherd them home again—which, even the reckless Bouncer admitted, would be irreparably disastrous.

"I say, you fellows, leave off gabbling football, and come and listen to Prout!" urged Billy Bunter. "First time we've heard him jawing Loder. I say, he's got his back up!"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked towards the window of the Head's study. It stood open in the winter sunlight of the afternoon. Even from where they stood at a considerable distance they heard the faint echo of Prout's boom. It seemed that the temporary headmaster of Greyfriars was going rather strong.

It was rather amazing if his favourite prefect, Loder, was the object of his wrath. Loder was always in his good graces. Only once, so far as the juniors knew, had Prout lost his temper with Loder. That was on an occasion when Loder inadvertently had led him into a booby-trap which the secret society had prepared for Loder himself. Prout had been bonneted by a bucket of tar, which had had a deteriorating effect on his temper. It was rumoured that in his wrath he had smacked Loder's head.

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But that was only a momentary ebullition. Since then Loder had been in as great favour as ever.

"There's fellows going to the circus!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Harry Wharton laughed.

Prout, in the study, had probably forgotten that the window was open and that his powerful voice could be heard out of doors. The window-sill of the Head's study was high, and below it a number of fellows were gathering to listen to the boom—going to the circus, as Bob Cherry expressed it. Among them was the Bouncer, and Temple of the Fourth, and Hobson of the Shell.

"I say, you fellows, come on!" urged Bunter. "Come and listen to the band! He, he, he!" And the fat Owl rolled off to the entertainment.

Harry Wharton & Co. followed him more slowly. Some of the fellows under the window were grinning. But the Bouncer had a very curious expression on his face, and he signed to the Famous Five to draw near.

"What on earth's up, Smithy?" asked Bob, sinking his voice, though there was little likelihood of Prout hearing anything but his own boom. "Is Loder up before the old bean? Bunter says so."

"That's it! It's rather weird—"

"Prout spotted him at last!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Caught him coming away from the Three Fishers or the Cross Keys?"

Vernon-Smith shook his head.

"It's weird," he said. "I can't make it out! I—I'm rather glad you fellows barged in last night in the study, after all."

"But what—" said Harry, mystified.

"Hark!"

Prout's booming voice, rather like the trumpeting of an elephant, came loud and clear from the open window.

"I am surprised at you, Loder! I repeat, I am surprised at you! I have said, Loder, that I am surprised, and I say so again! I am very much surprised indeed!"

"But, sir—" came Loder's voice, in meek tones—the meek tones he always used to Prout.

But meekness seemed of no avail now. The soft answer failed to turn away wrath. Prout's angry boom ruthlessly interrupted Loder.

"I have said, Loder, that I will not change my decision! I told you so yesterday, Loder! I told you so again this morning! It should be unnecessary, Loder, for me to tell you so again this afternoon! I am surprised, Loder, that you should renew the subject."

"If you'd let me—"

"Nothing you can say, Loder, will induce me to rescind the detention of the Remove for a single occasion. Nothing! I am amazed that you should ask it! Absolutely amazed!"

"It's rather a special occasion for the juniors, sir! A football fixture, fixed up long ago—"

"They should have thought of that, Loder, before they offended! You are perfectly well aware of that, Loder!"

"Oh, certainly, sir! I see that! But—"

"I am glad you see that, Loder! I am very glad!" There was a note of sarcasm in Prout's boom. "I trust that you also see, Loder, that there is no excuse for the rebelliousness, the mutinous ill-conduct, of these disrespectful boys. They have had the audacity—the unparalleled audacity—to form a secret society in the school. Proof cannot be obtained, but there is no doubt that the ringleaders of this lawless association are to be found in the Remove."

"As there is no proof, sir—"

"What do you mean, Loder? You have expressed it as your opinion, your conviction, again and again, that the ringleaders are in the Remove. I have no doubt of it. And the Form is sentenced to detention until these members of it are revealed. Nothing will induce me to rescind the sentence, and I am surprised, amazed, that you should think of asking favours for these young rebels."

The juniors under the window looked at one another. They did not wonder that Prout was surprised! They were surprised themselves!

"I might," Prout went on booming—"I might have considered a respectful request! I am not, I trust, a hard man, but these boys have themselves placed it out of my power to make any concession. I have told you, Loder, how I heard them speaking of me a few days ago. One boy, Vernon-Smith, actually declared that they would take french leave, and that I could do as I liked about it! In my hearing, Loder! After that, can I make any concession?"

Prout paused.

But he did not pause for a reply. When his chin was going he had no use for replies. He paused for breath.

"I understand, sir! But—"

"Say no more, Loder! So far from giving the Remove leave to-morrow afternoon, I shall take every care that they do not evade detention. I shall place you, Loder, in personal charge of the detention class, and your orders are strict, Loder, not to allow them to leave the Form-room before five o'clock!"

"Very well, sir! I—I only thought that—"

"Nonsense!" boomed Prout. "Nonsense! I am surprised at you, Loder—very much surprised indeed! I am beginning to wonder, Loder, whether you are, after all, deserving of the trust I have placed in you."

"Oh, sir! I—"

"Say no more, Loder! You may leave my study!" boomed Prout. "Not another word on this subject! Leave my study!"

A door was heard to open and shut. There was a scattering of the interested crowd under the window. Now that Loder was gone, it was possible that Prout might look out—and nobody wanted to catch his eye.

"Well, my hat!" said Bob Cherry, when the juniors were at a safe distance. "Gentlemen, chaps, and sportsmen, it looks to me as if Loder's playing up like a little man; and if he keeps on like this the jolly old secret society may as well put up its shutters!"

"That old ass Prout!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"That old fathead Prout!" said the Bouncer.

"Well, Loder said that he would do his best for us, and it's plain enough now that he's done it!" said Harry Wharton.

"The donefulness is terrific!"

"I own up!" said Vernon-Smith. "Beats me hollow—but I own up! There must be some rag of decency somewhere in Loder! You fellows were cheeky asses to barge in as you did, but I'm glad! Only—the Bouncer's face set grimly—"Loder's done all he can, so far as I can see, but it all comes to nothing! That old ass is as obstinate as a mule!"

"He can't get over hearing our genuine opinion of him!" said Frank Nugent, with a grin.

"Well, what's going to be done?" demanded Smithy. "We're not scratching with Rookwood—that's settled! We're going to play Rookwood to-morrow, if we have to bag Prout first, and lock him up in the coal-cellar!"



The Bounder worked his way through the defence and klieked for goal. Right at the citadel shot the leather—only to meet the fist of the Rookwood goalie. As the leather shot out again, Smithy met it with his head and deflected it into the net, well out of the goalie's reach!

"Oh, my hat!"
 "We're not scratching!" said Harry Wharton decidedly. "We've got to manage it—somehow! We're going to play Rookwood. At the worst, we can let them have a wire at the last minute! But—"

"We're going!" said the Bounder savagely.

"You heard what Prout said," grunted Johnny Bull. "Loder's going to be in special charge of us—under strict orders! He's not even trusting it to Woose—he's leaving it to his dear reliable Loder! The old bean has got his back up, and no mistake."

"If Loder tries to stop us—"

"Well, there's not much doubt that he'll try, after what Prout's said to him!" said Harry.

"Then we'll handle him. We've done it before, and we can do it again. We're going to Rookwood to-morrow!" said the Bounder. "We'll leave Loder tied by his neck to Quelch's desk if he gives us any trouble. And if Prout barges in we'll treat him the same! And that's that!"

And the Bounder swung away with knitted brows. The chums of the Remove were left in anxious discussion. They were not likely to adopt the drastic suggestions of the Bounder; but, somehow, anyhow, they were going over to Rookwood to play Jimmy Silver & Co. at Soccer. It remained to decide "how"—and that was a problem which, so far, beat anything in Euclid.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Rookwood Day!

BUNTER!"
 "Oh lor'!"
 Billy Bunter was standing by the table in the Rag.

As he heard Loder's voice at the door he popped down under the level of

the table top and hunted cover. He hoped that Loder would not see him, or guess that he was there.

Loder of the Sixth looked in at the doorway. As the table was between him and Bunter, he did not see the fat Owl of the Remove.

A dozen fellows who were in the room could see the fat, crouching figure. Some of them grinned, but they said nothing.

It was morning break on Wednesday, and Harry Wharton & Co., instead of punting a footer about in the quad, as they would have liked to do that fine, frosty morning, had gathered in the Rag—to discuss the urgent, pressing topic of the game that day. Bunter had rolled in, not to discuss footer, but because there was a fire in the Rag. Frowsting before a fire was Bunter's favourite way of spending "break" on a cold morning.

"Bunter!" repeated Loder at the door.

Bunter, crouching by the table, made frantic signs to the juniors not to reveal his presence.

What Loder wanted him for Bunter did not know. But he had no doubt that it meant trouble. The bully of the Sixth seldom wanted a fellow for anything else.

True, Loder seemed rather to have changed his manners and customs of late. His ashplant had not been so busy as usual.

But Bunter felt that that was rather a frail reed to lean upon! It seemed safer to keep out of sight.

"Where's that fat fool?" exclaimed Loder angrily. "I thought he was here! Have you seen Bunter?"

"I saw him in class this morning!" said Vernon-Smith.

Loder's eyes gleamed.
 "Don't be a cheeky young ass,

Vernon-Smith! If you're asking for a whopping—"

It was quite the old Loder! He slipped his ashplant down from under his arm, scowling at the Bounder. If a leopard could change his spots it was undoubtedly a slow and difficult process!

But Loder checked himself. He put the ashplant back under his arm and gave Smithy no further attention.

"Wharton, do you know where Bunter is?" he asked.

The captain of the Remove did not answer. Certainly he knew where Bunter was, as the scared fat Owl was crouching by the table only a couple of yards from him. But he did not intend to tell Loder so.

Loder breathed hard and came tramping into the Rag! As he passed the end of the table he spotted the Owl of the Remove.

"Bunter!" he hooted.

"Oh crikey!"

Billy Bunter bounced up.

As Loder came along the long table Bunter circumnavigated it at the other end, moving with unaccustomed speed.

"I—I say, Loder, it wasn't me!" he gasped.

"What?" snapped Loder. "What wasn't you, you fat duffer?"

"Oh! Anything! I—I mean, nothing!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say—"

The fat junior made a bolt for the door as Loder grasped at him.

"You young ass!" roared Loder.

He rushed after Bunter and caught him by the collar.

Bunter, in fearful apprehension of the ashplant, wriggled and yelled.

"I say, you fellows! Rescue! Yarooooh! I say—"

Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one
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another and at Gerald Loder of the Sixth.

They were not feeling pleasant towards him just then. It was true that, in his unexpectedly repentant mood, he had done his best for them with Prout. Even the Bounder could no longer doubt that.

But it was equally true that but for Loder and his tyranny there would have been no detention at all, and the trouble would not have arisen. He had tried to undo the harm he had himself done, and he had failed. And now it looked as if he was at the old game of bullying again.

"Look here, Loder—" began Harry. "I say, you fellows, help!" yelled Bunter. "I say, collar the beast! I'm not going to be whopped! Help!"

"You young ass!" roared Loder. "I'm not going to whop you, you fat little idiot! I want to speak to you, that's all."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

Loder led him out of the Rag with a hand on his collar. Harry Wharton & Co. looked after them rather blankly. But they soon forgot both Bunter and Loder in the discussion of that thorny topic, the Rookwood match. The Bounder was urging his views on the Famous Five, and they were more and more inclined to agree with him.

"You haven't forgotten what we did on Highcliffe day!" urged Vernon-Smith. "That old ass Prout detained us then—all through Loder, the same as now. We cut and played the match—"

"And every man in the Form was flogged when we got back!" said Johnny Bull.

"If you're afraid of a floggin' you can stand out!" snapped the Bounder.

"If you want your cheeky head punched you can say that again!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, don't rag!" said Wharton impatiently. "It's different now, Smithy. I know what we did then—we tied Loder up in the Form-room and cut—and took our flogging afterwards. But that chicken won't fight now. Prout was out that day, and never knew anything about it till he came in. Think he'll take his eyes off us to-day when he knows what's on—and actually heard you suggesting that we should cut?"

"He'll keep his jolly old optic on us!" said Bob Cherry. "Bet you he takes jolly good care that Loder doesn't let us slip."

"The carefulness will be terrific!"

"I know all that as well as you do!" said the Bounder. "We've got to put paid to Prout! Tie him up, too!"

"That wouldn't mean a flogging—that would mean the sack!" said Frank Nugent. "I'm not in a hurry to leave Greyfriars."

The Bounder gave an angry snort.

"The secret society have got to get to work again!" he said. "Loder's leavin' us alone and we can leave him alone. Prout's making himself obnoxious, and Prout's got to have it. I tell you, we're going over to Rookwood if we have to lock him in the coal-cellar."

For once the Bounder's wild and reckless counsels found patient hearers, at least; though he did not quite convince them. The discussion was interrupted by the bell for third school.

In a grim, glum, and worried mood Harry Wharton & Co. went to the Form-room. Something had to be done—something was going to be done—but they had not yet been able to decide what. It was fixed in their minds that they were not going to sit in detention that afternoon—they were going over to Rookwood to play Jimmy Silver & Co.

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But how it was going to be contrived was still an unanswered riddle.

One place was vacant in the Remove at third school. Billy Bunter was not there.

Bunter was often late for class—indeed, under Mr. Woose's mild rule he was generally late.

But this time he was rather unusually late. A quarter of an hour passed, and then Mr. Woose called to Wharton.

"Where is Bunter, Wharton?"

"I don't know, sir."

"I will not allow such unpunctuality!" said Mr. Woose crossly. "I certainly will not allow it! I shall cane Bunter!"

"Loder called him, sir," said Harry.

"Oh, Loder!" said Mr. Woose, and he said no more. Woose did not want any trouble with Prout's favourite prefect. If Loder had given Bunter something to do that kept him away from class little Mr. Woose did not mean to make a fuss about it.

Apparently Loder had—for third school went on without Bunter.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Mystifying to Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER blinked apprehensively at Loder of the Sixth. Loder had marched him into the prefects' room. That apartment was associated in the minds of the juniors with whoppings!

There were three or four seniors in the room, and they glanced at Bunter. But they were called away to class in a few minutes, and the fat Owl was left alone with Loder.

He was uneasy, apprehensive, and puzzled.

Loder had said that he only wanted to speak to him. And if he had brought him there to whop him there was no reason why he should not have got on with the whopping without waiting till the other seniors had gone. Still, Bunter was very uneasy. In Loder's presence he felt like one of the little pigs in the presence of the big bad wolf!

"I—I say, Loder, there's the bell!" gasped Bunter. "I say, I shall be late for class!"

Loder, who was looking over some papers, did not heed.

"I—I say, Loder, can I go?"

"No."

"I say, I shall get lines from Woose!"

"I'll speak to him; that will be all right."

"Oh, all right then!" said Bunter, taking comfort.

He was glad to cut as much class as possible if it came to that, and he was beginning to realise that whatever Loder had brought him there for it was not a whopping. But he wondered more and more what it was.

Loder kicked the door shut. As head prefect and generally monarch of all he surveyed Loder out class when he chose so to do. And there was no doubt that a word from him to Woose would make it all right for Bunter.

"Now, Bunter," said Loder quietly, "I want you to do something for me. I've heard all about you playing ventriloquial tricks in the Remove—"

Bunter was alarmed again at once.

"Oh, no!" he ejaculated. "Not at all, Loder! I—I've never done anything of the kind! I—I—"

"Shut up, you young ass! I remember you playing a trick once, locking a master's door and imitating Monsieur Charpentier's voice outside and making a row between two beaks! You were whopped for it."

"I say, that was last term!" exclaimed Bunter. "I say, you're not

going to rake that up again, Loder! Besides, I never did it! It was all a mistake—"

"You're the fattest and silliest ass at Greyfriars," went on Loder. "But you've got that trick of imitating voices. That's what I want you to do now."

Billy Bunter stared at Loder of the Sixth till his little round eyes almost bulged through his big, round glasses.

"You — want —" he stammered.

"Yes! That's what you're going to do! There's a cake in my study you can have if you work it all right!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

He was absolutely astounded! But he was keen now! Bunter had no objection to playing ventriloquial tricks—if he was not to be whopped for them! With a cake in prospect, assuredly Billy Bunter did not object to showing off what a fearfully clever fellow he was!

"You can imitate the Head's voice, I suppose, as well as any other," said Loder, quietly.

"Dr. Locke's!" gasped Bunter.

"Yes."

"Easy as falling off a form," said Bunter, with a fat grin. "Old Locke's toot is a bit out of the common, you know—sort of squeak with an Oxford accent. Anybody could imitate it. I mean, I'm fearfully clever at imitating voices, and I could do it, and I don't suppose anybody else could—"

"There's a telephone here!" said Loder.

Bunter understood now why he had been brought to the prefects' room. He was to imitate Dr. Locke's voice on the telephone! Why, he had not the faintest idea.

"The Head may be coming back any day now," resumed Loder. "I happen to know that Prout has been expecting a letter from him every day for the last week, to give the date. The letter doesn't seem to have come yet; but Prout won't be surprised to get a telephone-call instead."

"Prout!" gasped Bunter.

He grasped the fact that he was to telephone to Prout, in Dr. Locke's name, imitating the Head's voice. It was very mystifying; and Bunter was growing very curious; in fact, as Alice remarked in Wonderland, "curiouser and curiouser."

A jape like this was all very well for juniors; but it was amazing in a Sixth Form prefect—Prout's head prefect and favourite! Billy Bunter really could hardly believe his fat ears.

"The idea is"—Loder sank his voice, though there were only Bunter's fat ears to hear—"I want Prout off the scene this afternoon."

"Oh!" gasped Bunter.

"If he got a call from old Locke—or believed that he got it—it would work the oracle," said Loder. "Suppose the Head phoned that he was coming to the school to-day—"

"But he won't, will he?" asked Bunter. "If he hasn't written—"

"Idiot! You will phone, making out that it's the Head speaking—"

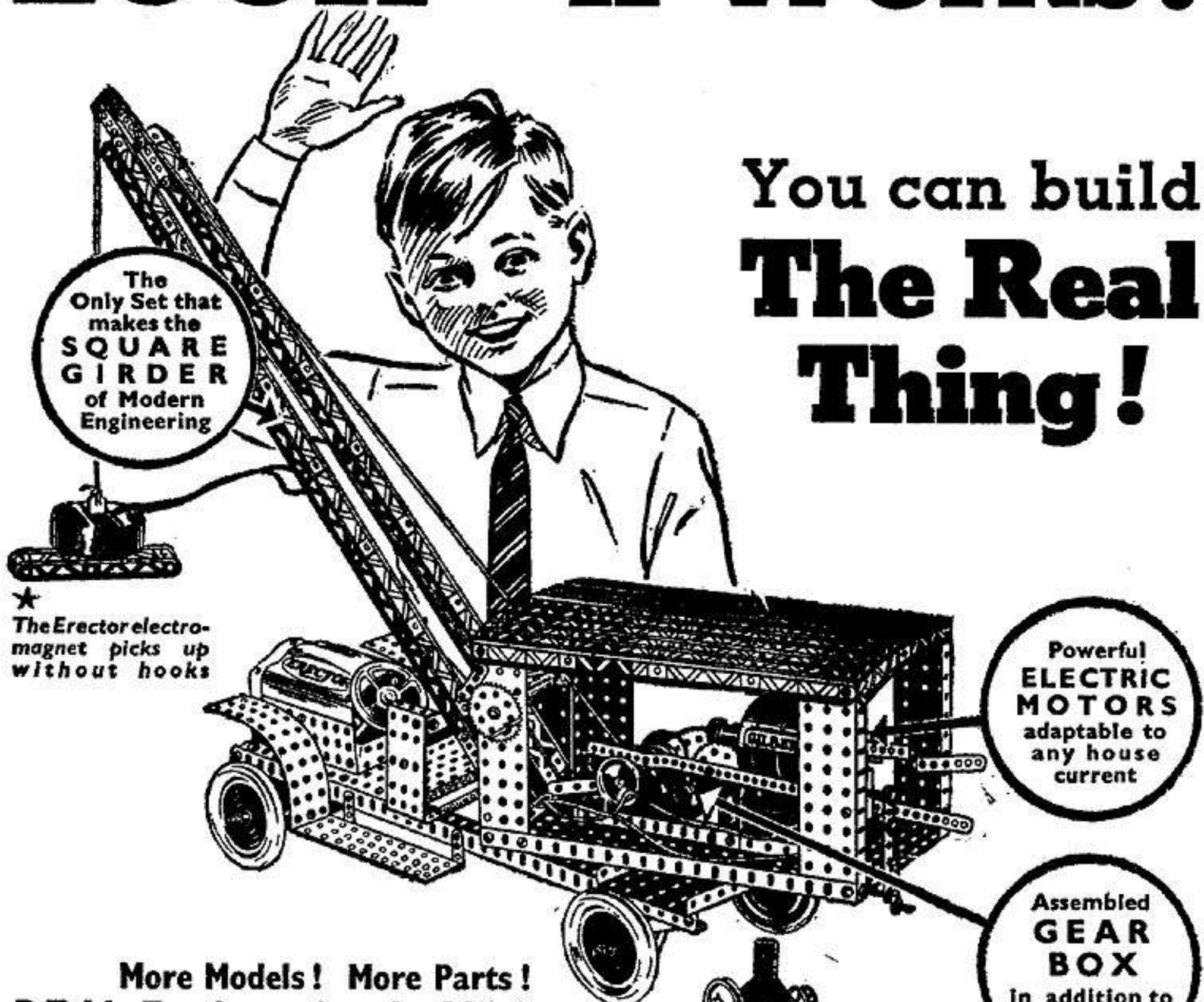
"Oh! Yes! I see!"

"You put it that the Head has lost the connection at Lantham Junction," went on Loder, who had evidently been thinking this out. "Being hung up at Lantham for a train, he phones to Prout. His car was left here when he went away to the nursing-home—well, he asks Prout to come over for him in the car. That will sound natural enough."

"Ho, he, he!"

"Prout is to call for him at the Hotel Royal, and wait for him if he's delayed," (Continued on page 22.)

LOOK—it Works!

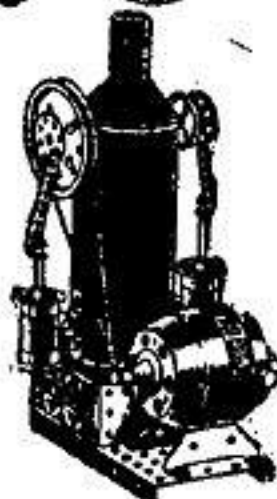


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as he's making a call in Lantham," pursued Loder.

"Right as rain!" grinned Bunter.

"That will keep Prout busy most of the afternoon, I think. The Head won't turn up, and Prout can't very well come back without him—not till he's sure the old bean isn't there at all."

"He, he, he! Safe as houses!" said Bunter. "You'll be all right this afternoon, Loder! Prout won't spot you at your little games."

Loder stared at him.

"What?" he ejaculated. "What do you mean, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter winked—a fat wink!

"I get you, Loder!" he said breezily. "You've got some game on this afternoon—a card-party in the study, what? And you want Prout safe off the scene! He, he, he! Rely on me, old chap! I'll make it all right for you."

That was Billy Bunter all over! He grinned and winked familiarly at Loder of the Sixth! He was, in fact, feeling quite friendly.

But the head prefect of Greyfriars had no use for friendliness from William George Bunter. Neither had he any use for grins and winks from that fat and fatuous youth. Loder was, in fact, about the last senior at Greyfriars to take cheeky familiarity from a cheeky junior.

He rose to his feet and picked up his ashplant from the table.

Bunter, in alarm, jumped up.

Swipe!

"Yaroooh!"

There was a terrific roar, as the cane whacked on the tightest trousers at Greyfriars.

"Ow! Wow! Yow! Ow!" roared Bunter. "I say—yaroooh!"

Loder gave him a glare.

"Want any more?" he demanded.

"Ow! Wow! No! Ow!" gasped Bunter.

"Then don't be a cheeky little scoundrel," said Loder, laying down the cane. "I want you to do this for me—and you're going to do it. If you say a single syllable about it, outside this room, I'll cut the skin off your fat carcass. Understand that?"

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

"Get to the phone, then!" growled Loder. "If you pull it off, there's a cake in my study. If you don't I'll give you six! Here's Prout's number."

Billy Bunter wriggled into the chair at the telephone. He took the receiver and gave the number of the Head's telephone to the exchange. He had to wait a few moments, and then the voice of Trotter, the page, came through, inquiring what was wanted.

"Dr. Locke speaking!" said Bunter, in so startling an imitation of the voice of the Head of Greyfriars, that Loder jumped as he heard it. "Request Mr. Prout to come to the telephone."

"Oh, yessir!" answered Trotter.

"Mr. Prout's in his Form-room now, sir, but I'll call him if you 'ang on, sir."

"Lose no time, Trotter!"

"Yessir!"

Billy Bunter hung on.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Pulling Prout's Leg!

MR. PROUT grunted angrily. He grunted at Trotter, as if it was Trotter's fault, which it really was not!

Trotter had to take the telephone-call, and he had to come to tell Mr. Prout, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,400.

"I say, you fellows, I'm the BIG NOISE in next week's grand—"

when the caller on the phone was so important a person as Dr. Locke, the headmaster of Greyfriars.

But Prout was not pleased.

He did not like class being interrupted, and he was busy with the Fifth. He was engaged, at the moment, in slanging Coker of the Fifth, who had been making his usual blunders, and he disliked being cut short in the middle of a "jaw." Neither was Prout in a good temper that day; to begin with—the offences of those young rascals, the Removites, were fresh in his mind, and he was deeply annoyed by Loder—his trusted Loder—having so far forgotten himself as to speak in favour of those young rascals. To crown all, Trotter brought the news that it was the Head on the phone—which could only mean that the date of Dr. Locke's return was near.

That was the unkindest cut of all.

Prout did not want to hand over his authority. He liked authority. He loved it, in fact! He grudged handing it back where it belonged.

Not having received the expected letter from Dr. Locke—a circumstance that the Bunder could have explained

"COME INTO THE OFFICE, BOYS!"

I'VE got some real good news for you this week, chums. It concerns next week's Special Christmas Number of the MAGNET which, you can take from me, is going to be a real bumper one! It will be filled with good things—the right kind of things you expect to find in a Christmas Number.

Frank Richards tops this bumper bill of Christmas fare with:

"CHRISTMAS AT HILTON HALL!"

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YOUR EDITOR.

had he liked—Prout had begun to nourish a hope that Dr. Locke would stay away the rest of the term. The news that Dr. Locke was on the phone rather dashed that hope.

So Prout grunted, and grunted again, and gave Trotter a glare, instead of thanking him for bringing the message.

However, he had to go to the telephone. Great man as Prout was, in the absence of his chief; his greatness became a mere nothing when that revered chief barged in!

He left the Form-room, much to the relief of Coker of the Fifth, who was tired of Prout's "jaw," if Prout wasn't.

He proceeded to the Head's study, with slow, ponderous steps. That study was his while the Head was away—in that Olympian apartment he exercised Olympian authority. It was rather sad to feel that the glory was departing, so to speak. Prout was far from feeling amiable, as he went into the study with his elephantine tread, and picked up the receiver.

"Dr. Locke?" he asked into the mouthpiece.

"Mr. Prout! Is that Mr. Prout speaking?" came a voice he knew well, or, at all events, fancied that he knew well.

"Prout speaking!" he grunted.

"You have kept me waiting, Mr. Prout! You have kept me waiting several minutes!" came the voice on the phone sharply.

Prout breathed hard.

Ever since the Head had left, he had called people over the coals—boys and masters! He had called Quelch over the coals to such an extent, that the Remove master had left, to stay away till the Head came back. He had almost forgotten what it was like to be called over the coals himself! Now that he was reminded, he did not like it a little bit.

"I am sorry, sir!" said Prout, in a deep, deep voice. "As I was in the Form-room, sir—"

"Oh, quite!"

"Naturally, sir, I did not expect you to ring me up during class," said Prout, feeling that he was entitled to get that one in.

"That is for me to decide, Mr. Prout!"

"Oh! Quite so!" gasped Prout.

His greatness was slipping from him. He had played Head, and enjoyed playing Head! It was most unpleasant to feel himself only a Form-master again. No longer a Great Panjandrum, with a dutiful and respectful staff—merely a member of that staff—merely that and nothing more! It was rather horrid.

"The fact is, Mr. Prout, I intended to arrive in time for lunch—"

"This is somewhat sudden, sir."

"What!"

"I understood, sir, that I was to receive a written communication from you giving me a few days notice of your return. Certainly you gave me to understand as much."

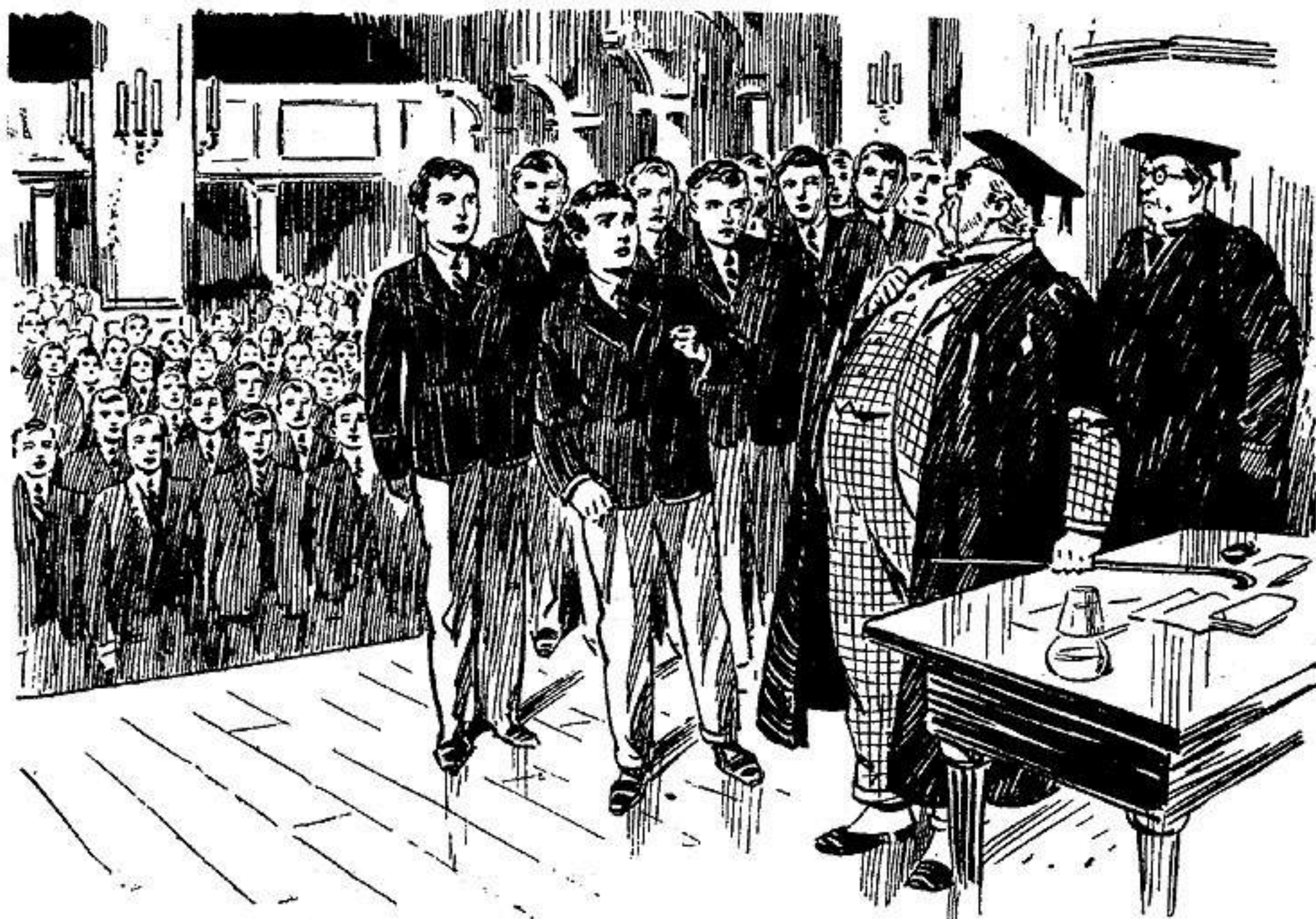
Prout spoke with a sense of injury. Really, this was rather thick, though Prout, of course, would not have described it in those words.

"No doubt, Mr. Prout. However, I presume that I am at liberty to make my own arrangements, sir!"

"Oh, quite!" gurgled Prout.

This sort of talk was unusually sharp from Dr. Locke, generally an extremely courteous old gentleman. It looked as if his long stay in the nursing-home had not improved his temper or his manners.

"I am speaking from Lantham. I have lost the connection, and have



"You boys have broken detention during my absence this afternoon," said Prout, taking up the cane in his plump hand. "As ring-leader to this act of rebellion, Wharton, I shall expel you from Greyfriars! The others will be flogged!" Wharton stared blankly. "I don't understand you, sir!" he answered. "Loder gave us leave to go!" "What?"

decided to lunch at the Hotel Royal here."

"Very good, sir!" said Prout, rather relieved. The later the Head came the better, in Prout's opinion, though he was rather surprised that Dr. Locke should ring him up to tell him this.

"I desire you to come over and lunch with me, Mr. Prout! I am—er—eager to hear about—er—how things have gone during my long absence. Kindly come over in the car, and do not be later at the hotel than half-past one! Half-past one precisely, if you please!"

"Very good, sir!" said Prout. He had no objection to lunch at the Hotel Royal in Lantham; they had good lunches there.

"I shall come back with you in the car, Mr. Prout."

"I understand."

"As I am delayed in Lantham I shall make a call while I am here. If you do not find me at the hotel, Mr. Prout, do not wait lunch, as it is possible that I may lunch with my friend, and join you later."

"As you please, sir."

"I hope I make myself clear, Mr. Prout."

"Quite, sir! I shall reach the Hotel Royal, in your car, sir, at precisely half-past one," said Mr. Prout stiffly. "I am, of course, entirely at your commands."

"Perfectly so! Good-bye, Mr. Prout."

"Good-bye, sir!"

Prout put up the receiver.

He stood frowning at the telephone. He could not help feeling that Dr. Locke was lacking in courtesy and consideration towards a senior Form-master who had filled his place during his absence from the school.

True, Dr. Locke was his chief, but

he seemed to think that he could order him about as if he was Gosling, the porter, or Mimble, the gardener. Prout frowned with indignation.

Prout had done a lot of ordering about during the Head's absence. But that was the sort of thing that it was more blessed to give than to receive. He did not like it himself.

Prout was in a rather fuming state when he got back to the Fifth Form-room. His Form got the effects of it.

The Fifth were glad when class was over, and gladder still that it was a half-holiday, and that they were done with Prout for the day.

Prout was cross and irritated; but what he would have felt like had he known that that telephone-call came from the prefects' room at Greyfriars, from a fat junior imitating the Head's voice, was really unimaginable.

Fortunately, Prout was not likely to guess that.

He had no idea that any fellow was out of class during third school. Bunter, however, was! While the Remove went through that lesson with Mr. Woose, Billy Bunter was busy with a cake in Loder's study—making sure of his reward before Loder had time to change his mind.

Just before the school dinner, Mr. Prout sent for Loder, to the Head's study; the last time, he felt sadly, that he was to interview "his" head prefect in that study.

"I find, Loder, that I have to be absent this afternoon!" he said. He did not tell Loder why, and little dreamed that he knew! "I shall leave you in charge of the Remove. You have my strictest orders to keep them under observation, and take every care that they do not absent themselves from

detention. You understand me, Loder?"

"Quite, sir!" said Loder.

At one o'clock the Head's car was brought round, and Mr. Prout stepped into it and rolled away for Lantham.

Fellows who noticed him go noticed that he was looking very grave and grim. Only one junior knew why, and where, he was going. And that fat youth indulged in a chortle. And only the terror of Loder's ashpant prevented Billy Bunter from telling the world that he, William George Bunter, was the cause of Prout taking that trip. The Owl of the Remove chortled, but he had to keep the joke to himself.

Loder of the Sixth stood at the gates and watched the car go. He walked back into the quad with a thoughtful expression on his face.

"Wharton!" he called.

"Yes, Loder!"

"Prout's gone out and left me in charge of the Remove. I've decided to give the football team leave to go over to Rookwood."

Harry Wharton stared at him dumbfounded.

"You understand?" said Loder irritably. "If you want to clear off to Rookwood you can clear. I give you leave! That's all."

He walked on to the House.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped the captain of the Remove.

He ran after Loder.

"I—I say, Loder—"

"Well?" snapped Loder.

"I say, thanks—we're awfully obliged—I say, it's jolly decent of you!" stammered Wharton.

"That will do!" grunted Loder.

Loder went into the House, and Harry Wharton rushed away with the

good news to his comrades. It was a cheery party that packed into the express at Courtfield a little later.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Rookwood Match!

JIMMY SILVER & CO., at Rookwood, gave the Greyfriars footballers a cheery greeting. They were glad to see them, and the Greyfriars fellows were glad to be there—though they were still surprised to find themselves there!

All sorts of drastic and desperate measures had been discussed to get away to play that match, and none of them had been needed!

The Bounder, at least, had been prepared to handle Prout himself—all the fellows had been ready to handle Loder—and cut detention! Instead of which they had leave to go from the prefect Prout had left in charge of them.

It was pretty clear that Loder had coolly disregarded the instructions Prout had left, and very probable that he would have to answer for it. That added to the surprise of the Remove footballers. But there it was, they were at Rookwood, and all was calm and bright!

Dismissing other matters from their minds, Harry Wharton & Co. went cheerily into the field, to beat Jimmy Silver & Co. on their own ground—if they could!

That did not prove an easy task.

The Rookwooders, as usual, were in great form, and the first goal came to Mornington, of Rookwood, and the second to Jimmy Silver.

But the Bounder put the pill in just on half-time, leaving Rookwood leading by one goal at the interval.

Bob Cherry chuckled as he sucked a lemon at lemon-time.

"We're here, anyhow!" he remarked.

"The herefulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Blessed if I can make it out, though!" said Vernon-Smith. "I know jolly well that Prout left orders with Loder to keep us in detention."

Harry Wharton nodded.

"Not much doubt about that," he said. "After all, Loder's a bit of a sportsman in his way. He seems to understand that one good turn deserves another."

"That's it, I suppose!" said the Bounder. "Queer that Prout should have cleared off like that and given him a chance. Good luck for us."

"What-ho!"

"Pull up your socks, you men," said the captain of the Remove, as they went back into the field. "After all this bother, we've got to beat Rookwood, now we're here!"

And with that object in view, the Remove men put their beef into it in the second half.

The ball went in from Harry Wharton's foot, with a quarter of an hour still to go.

Those fifteen minutes were packed with excitement. The Rookwood crowd round the field watched eagerly for another goal.

Twice it nearly came, and Jimmy Silver & Co. swept down on the visitors and attacked their citadel hotly. But Squiff, in goal, was all eyes and hands and feet, and the goal failed to materialise. Twice, thrice, and again, the junior from New South Wales saved the side, and the game swept away to midfield; and then came a fierce attack on the home territory.

Many eyes were turned on the time when the Bounder worked his way

through the defence and kicked for goal. Right into the citadel shot the leather—only to meet the fist of Rawson, of Rookwood. As the leather shot out again, Smithy met it with his head and deflected it into the net, well out of the goalie's reach.

"Goal!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Pheep! went the whistle.

Rawson stared at the ball, which he had missed by the fraction of an inch. But a miss was as good as a mile—there it was!

"Goal!"

The Bounder grinned breathlessly.

Then he yelled, as Bob Cherry rushed up to him and gave him a thump on the back, expressive of exuberant delight.

"Good man!" roared Bob.

"Ow! Don't bust my backbone, you ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Goal!"

It had been a close win, right on the stroke of time, but a win was a win! Greyfriars had won that match, and that was that!

It was a merry party that was entertained to tea after the match by Jimmy Silver & Co. and the Greyfriars footballers were in great spirits when they packed into the train for home.

But as they drew near their destination, they could not help wondering what sort of a reception they were going to get.

They had had leave from Loder—that was certain! But how Prout was going to take it was quite another matter.

"Anyhow, we've played the match!" said Bob Cherry. "We've jolly well played it, and we've jolly well won it! And Prout can't alter that if he gets up on his hind legs and roars!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Blow Prout!"

"Bother Prout!"

The footballers were still happy and glorious, so to speak, when they arrived at Greyfriars.

Billy Bunter met them as they came into the House.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, old fat bean!" roared Bob Cherry. "We've won, fatty! Three to two, old barrel, if you're anxious to know!"

"Eh! Have you?" said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you're for it! He, he, he! I say, Prout's got his hair off! He, he, he! You're going to have the time of your lives! He, he, he——Yaroooh! Leave off kicking me, you beasts! Whoop!"

Having kicked Bunter, the footballers marched in, to take what was coming to them.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Climax.

HALL was crowded.

Mr. Prout stood with a brow of thunder.

It was past the usual time of calling-over. At call-over there had been many missing.

That, of course, was inevitable when a football eleven was playing an away match at a distance. Leave for the match covered it. Nevertheless, it had come as a surprise to Prout—who was happily unaware that the Remove Eleven had been given leave to go to Rookwood.

Prout had, in fact, had a day of surprises, and none of them had pleased him. He had been surprised by that telephone call from Dr. Locke in the

morning. He had been still more surprised not to see the Head at Lantham.

He had lunched in solitary state at the hotel there, expecting Dr. Locke to appear afterwards. Dr. Locke had not appeared.

After which Prout had hardly known what to do. His chief—as he believed, at least—had given him definite instructions to wait for him at the hotel in Lantham. He had hinted that he might be delayed. So Prout waited.

He waited long!

But the Head did not come!

That was easily explained by the fact that the Head had not telephoned at all, and had been nowhere near Lantham. But Prout, of course, was unaware of that fact.

He waited—he worried—and he fumed! He walked about the hotel—he walked up and down the High Street—but there was no sign of the Head! His irritation and indignation grew as he waited.

After holding supreme authority at Greyfriars so long, it was disconcerting, humiliating, to be treated in this off-hand way himself! Really, it resembled the way he had treated Quelch, causing that gentleman to retire from the school so long as Prout reigned there. But Prout, of course, was a far more important man than Quelch—in his own esteem, at least! So his indignation grew and grew, like the little peach in the orchard, as he hung about waiting for the chief who did not come.

He had tea at last.

Still the Head did not come. By that time Prout realised that he could not be coming. He still did not suspect a trick on the telephone—he had recognised the Head's voice on that valuable instrument!

He could only suppose that something had happened to prevent Dr. Locke from keeping his appointment at the Hotel Royal. It was not the way Prout should have been treated—far from it! It was irritating—exasperating!

Still, there was a silver lining to the cloud! If it meant that Dr. Locke was not, after all, coming back yet, Prout's reign at Greyfriars would continue! That was so much to the good!

He drove back to the school at last in the car. It was evidently futile to wait longer.

Prout was not in a good temper when he got back to Greyfriars. And when he took calling-over, and found that nearly half the Remove were absent, he fairly boiled over.

They had cut detention!

That was clear! Taking advantage of his absence, they had cut detention and gone off to Rookwood to play football. Loder, in spite of his strict instructions had been careless, and they had gone!

And it was too late to stop them! Had he known earlier he would have intervened. He would have telephoned to the headmaster of Rookwood, thus very effectively putting a spoke in the wheel of the rebellious young rascals. But it was too late for that! By the time Prout knew they were missing the football match was over, and the Removites already in the train on their homeward journey.

Prout's wrath boiled up, to greet them when they came. In the meantime, he had come ready for Loder! But Loder was not there!

Head prefect had a right to cut call-over if he liked—and on this occasion Loder liked! In point of fact, he was

not anxious to face Prout after what he had done!

Loder was prudently keeping off the scene till Prout had had time to cool down!

Unfortunately, instead of cooling down, Prout grew more and more wrathful. His wrath, like wine, improved with keeping.

He had been disobeyed—disregarded! On the one hand he had been treated, as he supposed, by careless offhandedness by the Head. On the other, he had been flouted by a set of rebellious juniors!

Now, as he stood on the dais, facing a silent and almost breathless school, it was no wonder that Prout was in a boiling state.

The truant Removites were back now; they stood in their places in their Form.

Loder had returned at last, and stood in his place with the Sixth, with a somewhat uneasy expression on his face.

"Mr. Woose!" came Prout's deep, booming voice.

"Sir!" squeaked Mr. Woose.

"Are all your boys present?"

"They are, sir."

"Send up the boys who were absent from calling over. Is my cane here? I gave instructions— Oh, here it is! Send up the boys, Mr. Woose."

Woose called the names and fifteen Remove fellows walked up the Hall, amid a breathless silence—the football eleven and four who had gone with the team.

Harry Wharton & Co. faced the temporary headmaster of Greyfriars in a body, with grave faces. It had not dawned on them yet that Prout did not know that Loder had given them leave to go.

Prout took the cane in a plump hand.

"Wharton!"

"Yes, sir," said Harry quietly.

"You have broken detention during my absence this afternoon!" said Prout, in a voice that almost trembled with anger. "This is the second time that it has occurred. On the former occasion, I administered a flogging to all the offenders. Now I feel it my duty to be more severe. As ring-leader in this act of rebellion, Wharton, I shall expel you from Greyfriars. The others will be flogged."

Harry Wharton stared at him blankly.

"I don't understand you, sir," he answered. "We had leave to go to Rookwood to play football."

Prout glared.

"How dare you say so!" he boomed. "How dare you! I left you in detention, with the strictest instructions to a prefect to keep you under observation—"

Wharton gasped. He realised now that Loder had not told Prout. He looked round at Loder's uneasy face among the Sixth.

"But—but we had leave, sir!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Loder gave us leave to go—"

"Loder did!" ejaculated Mr. Prout.

"Certainly he did!" said Bob hotly. "I suppose he's told you—"

Bob broke off as he realised, all of a sudden, that Loder hadn't.

Prout seemed to stand transfixed for a moment or two. Then he gasped:

"Loder! Come here, Loder!"

Gerald Loder left his place and came up the Hall. There was a dogged expression on his face.

"Loder, these boys state that you gave them leave from detention!" boomed Prout.

"I did, sir!"

"You—you—you—you did!" gasped Prout.

Loder breathed hard.

"As head prefect, sir, in charge of a detention class—"

"I gave you the most explicit instructions, Loder, that the Remove were to remain in detention!" boomed Prout. "Is it possible, is it imaginable that you have taken it upon yourself to disregard my explicit instructions?"

Loder breathed harder.

"In the circumstances, sir, the football fixture—"

"No circumstances can excuse you, Loder!" roared Prout. "I am amazed, astounded, at your impertinence—your insolence! You are no longer my head prefect, Loder! I doubt whether I can allow you to remain a prefect at all! How dare you disregard my instructions, Loder!"

"I did as I thought right, sir," said Loder. "I am sure that if the Head were here he would approve."

"Loder," gasped Prout, "how—how dare you! Stand back! I will deal with you later, Loder! Not a word more! Stand back, and be silent!"

Prout gripped the cane.

"Wharton, it appears that you have the pretext, the flimsy excuse, that you had a prefect's leave this afternoon. But you were well aware that Loder gave you this leave against my explicit instructions—you cannot fail to have been aware of that. I shall not expel you. But I shall flog you with the rest. Every boy that broke detention to-day will be flogged!"

Harry Wharton drew a deep breath.

There was a deep silence in Hall. Through the silence came the sound of a taxi in the quad. But no one heeded it.

"Wharton, bend over at once!" rumbled Prout.

Wharton hesitated. There was a breathless pause, and in that pause the great, oaken door of the Hall swung open. Every eye turned on it and stared at an unexpected figure that appeared there. And there was a general gasp: "The Head!"

"The Head!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"I say, you fellows, it's the Beak!"

It was Dr. Locke. He glanced over the crowded Hall at a swarm of surprised faces, seemingly puzzled himself by the surprise he saw there.

There was a general murmur of voices; then silence again as Dr. Locke walked up the Hall.

Breathlessly the Greyfriars fellows watched their headmaster, who had returned so unexpectedly at such a dramatic moment.

"Mr. Prout—"

"Dr. Locke—"

"I am sorry," said the Head, "that I appear to have arrived at a moment when punishment, it seems, is about to be inflicted. I am somewhat surprised that my arrival does not seem to have been expected."

"By no means, sir!" gasped Mr. Prout. "I waited for you, sir, the whole afternoon at Lantham, after receiving your telephone call—"

"My telephone call, sir!"

"Yes, sir, and—"

"There appears to be some mistake," said Dr. Locke. "I have not telephoned to you, Mr. Prout!"

"You—you—you have not, sir!" gurgled Mr. Prout.

"Certainly not."

"But—but—but I received a call this morning—your name was given—and—and I thought I knew your voice," gasped the bewildered Prout.

"I cannot understand that, sir. Certainly, I have not telephoned," said Dr. Locke. "I did not consider it necessary, as I stated in my letter to you that I should be returning to-day, and gave you the time of my train at Courthfield, and requested you to send the car to the station—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"As the car was not there I took a taxi," said Dr. Locke.

"But I have received no letter from you, sir!" gasped Mr. Prout.

(Continued on page 28.)



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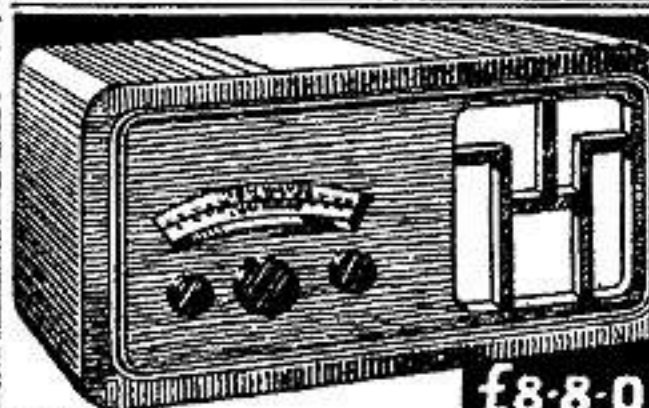
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OUR STIRRING STORY OF ADVENTURE IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS!

CAPTAIN CRIMSON!

By
MORTON PIKE.

WHAT'S GONE BEFORE.

In spite of the activities of Dan Hickerman, an Excise-officer, Tom Roke, the most daring smuggler in Widewater, succeeds in landing many a rich cargo. Determined not to be outdone, however, Hickerman informs the Press-gang that Roke is about to marry Nancy Jepp, daughter of the local innkeeper, and that the occasion offers a fine opportunity to rope in a hundred or more stout fellows as well as Roke himself. Meanwhile, Nancy's brother Billy, together with his chum, Jack Lennard, set out on a fishing expedition, having promised Tom Roke to be back in time for the wedding.

(Now read on.)

The Warning!

THE two chums started fishing, and the time slipped by very pleasantly. It was good to be out there on the shimmering river, feeling a tug on the line every now and then, with a plump codling as the result. When the fish were no longer biting, they changed their pitch, and tried their luck farther downstream.

"When you come to think of it, Billy, Tom's been mighty lucky to escape Hickerman and his men so long," said Jack, smiling at the recollection of the times they had helped the daring smuggler.

"You can call it luck, if you like," assented the innkeeper's son. "But when a fellow has as many friends as Tom, it takes a better man than Hicky to run him to ground. Do you remember when Hickerman first came here, and how he was going to put a stop to the 'free-traders in a couple of months?'"

"Shall I ever forget it? The blustering ass! Nor will he forget how he missed Mr. Percival's diamond, Billy—thanks to us. What a night that was! Have you made up your mind what you're going to do with your share of the thousand guineas the captain sent us?"

Billy Jepp laughed.

"Not yet," he answered. "Father's taking care of it for me. What are you going to do with yours?"

"Wait until the doctor puts some more to it and buys me a cornet in the dragoons," was the prompt reply, and then he added: "Do you know, Billy, I believe I'd give half the money to find out who Captain Crimson really is."

"I'm not going to say I'd go quite as far as that, Jack," laughed his chum. "But I'd love to be able to tell him what a fine fellow I think him—highwayman though he be. A man who can ride like he does, and snap his fingers at death every time, would be worth knowing!"

"You're right, old fellow," nodded Jack Lennard. "And that black horse



"Listen, Billy!" panted Jack. "Here's a warning from Captain Crimson!"

of his would be worth looking at by daylight!"

The two chums continued fishing until Billy gave a sudden jump that rocked the boat, and made Jack sit up with a start.

"Do you hear that?" shouted Billy. "Odds rabbit it! Why there's one o'clock striking from St. Mary's now, and half an hour's pull before us! We shall only just do it, and I've got to put on my new suit into the bargain!"

It was a hard pull upstream, and when eventually they ran the boat's nose on to the muddy foreshore behind the inn garden, both sweating like bulls, and jumped out, they exchanged a look.

Hickerman and the dragoon officer were in close conversation on the river wall, and both stopped talking as the chums passed them.

"Hickerman was supposed to spend the day in London. I wonder what's made him change his mind and come back?" whispered Billy, opening the garden door. "Look sharp, old fellow; I'll be outside in ten minutes."

"Right you are!" replied Jack, and as he ran through the yard of the Black Bear, he saw the four greys, gay with ribbons and rosettes, already waiting to convey Miss Nancy Jepp and her father to the church.

When Billy spoke of that "ten minutes," he had been "reckoning without his host!" although the brand-new suit of bright blue cloth was laid out on the bed in his room, the window of

which gave him an exasperating view of the flag flying on the tower half a mile off. To wash and change into new stockings and buckled shoes, put on your breeches, and wriggle one's arms into a pair of tight sleeves in that short space of time, was almost a physical impossibility, and Billy was making desperate efforts to tie his rebellious hair into a decent bow at the nape of his neck, when the door of the room burst open, and Jack sprang in, white as a sheet.

"The chaise had gone before I could stop them; listen to this!" he panted. "It's from 'Captain Crimson,' of all people in the world, and it came to our house soon after we left. He says: 'The wedding must be postponed. Tell Tom Roke to make himself scarce, and warn the others. Hickerman is bringing the Press-gang, and will take every able-bodied man in Widewater as they leave the church. Resistance is folly, and will mean bloodshed. All rests with you and Billy to save your friends. Your well-wisher, 'Captain Crimson'—'"

"Great Heaven!" gasped Billy. "The scoundrel! We're too late!"

"We're not! I've got a plan if we can get there before Hickerman!" said Jack, holding out the blue coat in hands still covered with fish-scales. "Now the other arm; come on—we'll foil the dirty dog yet!"

The winding street was deserted as they ran their hardest, seeing no one but a few ancient dames at their cottage

doors, too decrepit to hobble to the church. But they caught a glimpse of redcoats, and the glint of steel half-way down Bull Lane!

At the bottom of the long High Street stood St. Mary's church, its square, brick tower surmounted by a funny little wooden spire which served as a seamark for vessels coming up the river, and from each corner of the tower a line of gay flags had been stretched to the churchyard beneath.

The bride's chaise was just pulling up in front of the gate in the tall red wall as, squeezing through the crowd of onlookers, the messengers of ill tidings passed between two rows of children in their Sunday best, each one carrying a nosegay and wearing a bright smile.

Old Reuben, the head postboy, had walked his horses up the steep hill from the bridge, and Jack's heart smote him as he saw pretty Nancy waiting for her father to assist her out of the chaise when the steps were lowered.

From the high box-pews in the crowded church expectant heads bobbed up as the two chums entered; the parson in wig and gown was waiting, and Tom Roke, the brass buckle of the belt that secured his snow-white petticoat-breeches under the short blue jacket shining like gold, turned to look down the aisle.

"Tom," said Jack, in a low voice. "the Press-gang will be here in a moment! You must fly! Billy is warning your mates—it's Hickerman's doing!"

Tom Roke started, but fortunately remembering where he was, stifled the hot oath that sprang to his lips. The next moment the blushing bride came in on the arm of Mr. Jepp, who wore a wedding-favour the size of a small cabbage.

"Stap my vitals if I stir a step until the ring is on Nancy's finger!" exclaimed the young smuggler stoutly. "After that, I'll settle accounts with Master Hickerman!"

"Oh, Tom, they'll take you this time!" implored Jack, his voice louder than he realised in his excitement. "There's a squad of Marines with bayonets fixed, and the High Street's full of seamen. For Nancy's sake listen to reason before it is too late!"

"What is the matter?" asked the parson frowning.

"Nothing's the matter," replied Tom Roke. "But will your reverence please carry on?"

Jack, returning down the aisle on tiptoe, felt his sleeve plucked, and saw it was Mr. Falcon, the retired East India merchant who had stopped him.

"Is something amiss?" he queried.

"Very much so, sir!" said Jack, and his voice quivered as he told his news. "All the same, I am on my way to see if the door across the chancel is guarded, if it is, there is the tower. They dare not try to take them in the church!"

Mr. Falcon shook his head doubtfully, knowing that the Navy did not stick at trifles when the King wanted men.

Jack joined Billy behind the curtain that hid the bell-ringers, waiting to sound a joyful peal when the service should be over!

He had peeped through a window on the south side, and what he had seen was not at all to his liking.

"Sergeant and six men on guard yonder!" he whispered in Billy's ear, at the same time taking out his pocket-knife. "Come on!"

He opened the little door that led to the bell-chamber overhead.

A few minutes later, when Gaffer Twitchgrass felt his own particular rope slide most unaccountably through his

knotted fingers, he looked up with wide-mouthed amazement, to see it rapidly disappearing through one of the holes in the floor of the bell-chamber above.

"Drat they young warmints wi' their monkey-tricks!" he cried. "An' how do they think we're going to ring a proper peal now, I'd like to know?"

The simple service was over; the wedding-party were signing the register in the vestry, and a buzz of inquiry filled the church where rumour had spread like wildfire that something unusual was happening.

As Tom Roke put the quill pen down, he found Jack at his elbow, with a face as red as the coats of the Marines, who having rudely pushed the school children out of the way, had made a double avenue from the gate to the porch.

"All's ready, Tom!" said Jack. "The pews will hide you, and Mr. Falcon bids you make for the cellars under the Abbey Farm by the lane at the back of the town!"

Tom Roke smiled, and turned to his bride.

"Be brave, Nancy," he said, "and don't hurry, so as to give us more time. All will be well, never fear!"

Bending down, he ran along the south aisle to the tower, followed by his crew, and half the male population of Wide-water, as the bells jangled noisily overhead.

Frustrated!

"**T**HEY'RE coming!" chuckled Dan Hickerman, as he and the Naval officer stepped from their concealment behind the big brick pier at the churchyard gate. "If he shows fight, men, use your clubs, for he's a dangerous villain, I warn ye!"

There had been no need for Tom's warning, and it was a thousand pities he was not there to see his charming bride as she sailed proudly from the porch, still on her father's arm; a radiant smile on her face which had never looked so pretty, and a condescending bow as though she were acknowledging the presence of the Marines as a personal compliment to her.

Perhaps it was those discordant bells that made the jackdaws circle out of the thick ivy—or was it something else which the stout buttress hid?

Certainly Hickerman, blinded by his triumph, saw nothing out of the common until the pair reached the gateway.

"Odds life, Mrs. Roke!" he demanded. "Where's your husband?"

"Where it will trouble you to find him!" retorted Nancy, with a scornful flash of her blue eyes.

"And see you here, Mr. Hickerman!" cried the indignant parent, boiling with wrath. "Set foot in my house again, and ye'll find the horse-trough will fit ye nicely!"

The Excise-officer recoiled, clutching his loaded whip.

"Forward, men, the smugglers are skulking in the church!" he roared.

As the Press-gang, crouching along the wall, sprang into view and followed him, a loud murmur went up from the crowd surrounding the chaise.

The bevy of ladies in their quilted gowns and furbelows, parted hurriedly, leaving Mr. Falcon and the rector there. The latter raised his plump hands in protest.

"No brawling in this place, gentlemen, I beg of you," he said.

Hickerman, however, pushed by him and entered the church.

"Zounds! There's not a man here!" he cried, striding to the opposite door where the guard of Marines met him.

"No one has passed this way, sir!" said the sergeant.

"We'll get them, though!" shouted Hickerman. "The dogs are either in the tower or down below in the vaults!"

Thrusting the whip into his boot-top the Excise-officer drew his hanger, and led the way, boldly enough, to the short flight of steps, the whereabouts of which he knew, having more than once searched beneath the church for contraband, without success. But though he shouted: "In the King's name, come forth!" and the seamen descended into the dank, ill-smelling place, nothing more formidable than a squeaking rat did they unearth, and their lieutenant's patience began to give out.

"They've had wind of our coming, that's plain," he said gruffly, as they came under the tower, where the ringers were still busy.

"Cease that infernal hubbub!" cried Hickerman savagely.

"Nay," countermanded the leader of the Press-gang, cocking a pistol. "We shall come upon them in the bell-chamber without a doubt, and the sound will muffle our approach. Lead the way, bo'sun!" and he opened the low, Norman door at the foot of the winding staircase.

Jack and Billy were leaning over the battlements, eagerly watching something in the distance, where the London road dipped out of sight at the other end of the long High Street.

"There go the last of them!" cried Billy as three running figures vanished beyond the crest of the hill.

The next moment the two chums looked round with a start as the scrunch of feet came from the leads behind them, and an inquiring visage with a very blue shave protruded from the angle of the wooden spire.

"Sink me, lootenant!" exclaimed the bo'sun to someone in his rear. "'Tis the first time I knew that smugglers had wings! Couple o' boys, and naught else for our trouble."

A hand pulled the bo'sun roughly aside and the face of the Excise-officer appeared, purple with rage, and the steep climb.

"You here?" he roared, scarcely able to make himself heard above the din of the bells. "Where are Roke and his rascals? What do you know of this business?"

"That will tell you more than we can," grinned Jack, pointing to the stout rope.

With a cry like a wild animal balked of its prey, the man stepped to the parapet and looked down.

One glance at the broken ivy, and the trampled grass below was sufficient.

"If I thought you had had a finger in this pie!" he began fiercely, turning on the boys as the bells stopped.

But the Naval officer tapped him sharply on the shoulder.

"The fault is your own, and a pretty mess you've made of things!" he said, with a cold sneer. "Had I done as I wished and surrounded the building without listening to you, we'd have nabbed the lot! Now, we've had our march for nothing and are still sixteen miles from Colchester. The plague on your cleverness, Hickerman, you haven't got the brains of a rabbit!"

(Well, Hickerman's backed another loser, chums! But he's not given up hopes yet! Look out for more exciting situations in next week's bumper **CHRISTMAS NUMBER** of the **MAGNET**!)

PUTTING PAID TO PROUT!

(Continued from page 25.)

"Surely, sir, you received my letter on Saturday—Saturday last—"

"Oh, my hat!" breathed the Bounder.

He remembered the letter he had recklessly tossed into the study fire!

He had hardly given it a thought since, and certainly had not guessed that it contained the announcement of the Head's return on Wednesday!

"You ass, Smithy!" murmured Bob Cherry.

"You did not receive that letter, Mr. Prout?" asked the Head.

"Certainly not, sir! I have had no letter at all!"

"In that case, naturally, you did not expect me to-day!" said the Head. "I was surprised not to find the car at the station, but I understand now, of course, if my letter was lost in the post. It is a matter of little moment, however." The Head dismissed the little matter with a gesture. He glanced at the bunch of Removites, and then glanced at Prout. "You were about to administer a flogging, sir?"

His eye lingered on the cane.

"Yes, sir," gasped Prout. "A most flagrant breach of discipline, sir—"

Harry Wharton & Co. exchanged glances. This was a chance too good to be lost. They had a right to appeal to their headmaster.

"If you please, sir—" began the Bounder.

"This matter is in Mr. Prout's hands, Vernon-Smith!" said the Head.

"Yes, sir, but—"

"You need say no more."

"We had leave from detention, sir!" said Harry Wharton. "A prefect's leave—"

Dr. Locke frowned.

"Absurd!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Prout

would not be punishing you if you had a prefect's leave, Wharton! Absurd!"

"I gave them leave, sir," said Loder of the Sixth.

Dr. Locke started.

"You did, Loder?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!"

"Mr. Prout!" exclaimed the Head, in surprise.

"I gave the juniors leave, in Mr. Prout's absence from the school, sir, as it was the date of a regular football fixture, the match with Rookwood," said Loder. "I thought that you, if you had been here, sir, would have approved, as I have mentioned to Mr. Prout."

"Certainly!" said the Head. "Mr. Prout! Surely you were not intending to punish boys who acted on leave from a Sixth Form prefect during your absence?"

Prout had laid down the cane. His portly face was purple.

"In the—the circumstances, sir," he stammered. "Loder disregarded my explicit instructions, in giving these boys leave from detention—"

"That hardly alters the fact that he gave them leave, Mr. Prout, and that they were fully entitled to act upon it."

"I—I—I—"

"In view of this, sir, I hope you will decide that these juniors should not be punished," said Dr. Locke.

That was putting it very politely. The Head was a very courteous old gentleman. But a "hope" from the Big Beak was tantamount to a command!

"As—as you think best, sir!" gasped Prout.

"Thank you, Mr. Prout!"

Prout made a gesture to the Removites.

"You may go!" he articulated.

Harry Wharton & Co. went back to the Remove. Grinning faces greeted them as they arrived at their Form.

"Some luck!" murmured the Bounder.

"The luckfulness is terrific!"

"I say, you fellows! Look at Prout! I say, I believe he's going to burst!"

There was a suppressed giggle in the Remove. Mr. Prout's complexion, always ruddy, was now the richest shade in purple. Really, he looked on the verge of explosion.

His eyes gleamed at Loder. Loder was smiling—rather maliciously.

"Dr. Locke! As—as you say, the—the juniors—perhaps—" Prout gasped. "But this Sixth Form boy, sir—a prefect—who had deliberately disobeyed my most explicit instructions—"

"That is a very serious matter, Loder!" said the Head.

"Yes, sir!" said Loder meekly. "But the date being that of a regular football fixture, sir, I thought that, as a prefect, sir, I might use my own judgment, in Mr. Prout's absence. As head prefect, sir—"

Dr. Locke nodded.

"Certainly, that appears to be very reasonable," he said. "Mr. Prout, if you have allowed Loder to act as head prefect of the school, you will surely allow him to use his own judgment in such a matter. Probably you will think it best to dismiss the whole matter."

Prout did not think it best. Not by any means. But he had no choice. He bowed—he was past words—and hurriedly left the Hall. It was left to Dr. Locke to dismiss the school—and there were many smiling faces as the Greyfriars fellows marched out.

THE END.

(Next week's bumper CHRISTMAS NUMBER of the MAGNET will contain, in addition to other fine features: "CHRISTMAS AT HILTON HALL" the first of a splendid series of yarns featuring Harry Wharton & Co. on holiday. Make sure of this splendid treat, chums, by ordering your copy WELL IN ADVANCE!)

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THE NEW Greyfriars Herald



No 115 (New Series).

EDITED BY HARRY WHARTON.

December 15th, 1934.

YUNG ARISTOCRATT

Bored with fashionable life, is willing to adorn lesser mortals' Xmas parties with his distinguished presence. No fee charged, provided the grub is good snuff!—W. G. BUNTER, Study No. 7, Remove.

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"FISH FORGING AHEAD!"

Says OUR FIGHTING EDITOR

Readers who had a shock last week on learning that Fisher T. Fish had made up his mind to become a champion boxer in time for his uncle's visit to Greyfriars this Christmas, will be still more surprised this week to hear that the lad from Noo York is actually sticking it out.

The big problem, it seemed to me at the beginning of the week, was to give him a bit of self-confidence. Fishy had only to see another fellow wearing boxing gloves to collapse lifelessly on the floor out of sheer funk. If only he could be induced to believe in his own scrapping ability, I argued, there was no reason why he shouldn't make just as good a fighter as any other chap of his own weight.

So I set about giving him self-confidence.

The way I did it was, to say the least of it, novel. I went round on the strict q.t. and got Fishy's sparring partners to agree to help me in a little subterfuge. The idea was to give Fishy the impression he was a good boxer by allowing him to lick them all hollow!

The wheeze worked wonderfully well. Bulstrode was the first to oblige, and he played his part like a true artist; the way he trembled and blinked would have given even the keenest-eyed critic the idea that he was in a state of sheer, undiluted terror!

Fishy, of course, was bewildered at first. But, gradually, he woke up to the fact that the usually ferocious Bulstrode was actually registering fear, and as he

realised it, a broad grin spread slowly over his hatchet features. Suddenly he made a rush, his arms working like the sails of a windmill, and the spectators were soon being treated to the unusual sight of one of the best boxers in the Form in wild retreat before one of the worst!

At the end of a dizzy chase Fishy managed to give his quarry a light tap on the nose. Bulstrode immediately slumped to the floor, to all appearances knocked clean out, and Fishy almost fell over himself with delight.

"See that guy go down?" he chorled. "Say, I reckon I'm a killer, if ever there was



one! Any more of you bozos like to be put to sleep?"

Squiff and Morgan and Delarey expressed their willingness, and Fishy duly put them all to sleep—or so he fondly imagined!

I must say I was delighted with my new recruit's progress. He still hadn't the

first idea about boxing, of course, but he was so brimful of self-confidence that it was a pleasure to watch him dancing round the ring!

The only drawback was that our little bit of play-acting couldn't go on for ever. Eventually, I put him up against Tom Brown, and told Brown, in a whisper, to give him a tap or two to see how he reacted. When Brown did so, the change was painful to behold!

At the first tap Fish stood still and blinked, as though unable to believe his senses. At the second he emitted a great howl of fear, turned tail, and ran for his life!

As a result, most chaps think he's now right back where he started.

Personally, I'm not of that opinion.

For the first time in his life Fishy has experienced the thrill of following a losing opponent round the ring and giving him the k.o., and I firmly believe that, having tasted blood, he'll want more.

Fish is forging ahead, chaps, believe me—or, at any rate, he'll be doing so shortly.

Your Fighting Editor is going to have something rather pertinent to say to him, if he doesn't—and it will be said without the gloves on!

SWAPPING PRESENTS?

If so, I'll take a box of choos for the brand-new hosiery I'm expecting. Smithy says he'll give me socks if I turn up at his place—and I can't very well tell him I don't need them, can I?—S. J. SNOOP, c/o "Greyfriars Herald."

"Lickham!" cried Dr. Birchmell, the headmaster of St. Sam's, one bright morning, applying a jew-jitaw grip to the master of the Fourth Form and jerking him neatly into his sanktum. "Do you happen to have any hunting clobber, such as riding-breeches, red coat, top-boots, et settera, you can lend me for a few hours?"

Mr. I. Jolliwell Lickham stared at his superior agast. "No, I haven't," he said.

"But tell me, sir, does this mean you're thinking of following the hounds to-day?"

"It do, it does—or, to put it vulgarly, yes!" said the Head of St. Sam's, then, slightly alarmed by the worried look on his assistant's face, he added: "Anything wrong with the idea, Lickham?"

"Nothing much, sir!" said Mr. Lickham, with a sigh. "Eggsept that you'll be lucky to come back alive!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Hunting is a sport for the yung—not for doddering old buffers like you, sir," said Mr. Lickham, respectfully. "I don't mind telling you, sir, that you'll fall off the average hunter before you can say 'nife'!"

Dr. Birchmell looked awfully troubled.

"This is jolly awkward, bust me if it's not!" he said. "I certainly don't want to break my neck or anything like that. But I've invited the Muggleton Hunt to meet in the quad this morning, and if I don't join them Sir Frederick Funguss will be as mad as a hatter—and I can't afford to incur the displeasure of Sir Frederick!"

Just as the Head concluded his remarks, he happened to look down on the floor. He was startled to see, protruding

THE HERO OF THE HUNT!

By Dicky Nugent.



from under the table, a pair of feet!

"Bless my soul!" he eggclaimed, and then made a dive for the protruding heels.

The result of his dive was surprising. Beneath the table were hidden no less than three St. Sam's juniors, whom the two boys, nicknamed at once as Jolly Merry, and Bright, of the Fourth Form.

At the sight of that selly-brated trio and the pail of sooty water they had brought with them, the Head looked very black, though not so black as he would have looked if Jack Jolly & Co. had carried out their evident intentions!

"I suppose it's hardly necessary for me to inquire what you were going to do with this here pail!" he said sternly, his grammar still faultless, despite his annoyance. "Were are souper-fluous, in the cits. The only thing to do is to give you all a jolly good wacking! Lickham! My cane!"

"Half a minute, sir!" cried Jack Jolly.

Dr. Birchmell frowned majestically.

"It is no good you argewing the toss, Jolly!"

"I'm not argewing to," said Jolly. "Far am argewing

the toss, I was just going to suggest a way of getting you off the horns of your dilemma over this hunt bizziness!"

Dr. Birchmell started.

"It seems hardly possible that you can help, Jolly, but if you can—"

"You will gladly let us all off, sir?" grinned Jack Jolly.

"Good! Well, I think I can help. My suggestion is that instead of riding on a real horse, you ride on an imitation horse!"

"An— an imitation horse?"

"An imitation horse made up of two fellows disguised!"

grinned Jack Jolly. "Fortunately, there are two fellows named Forsyte and Hynd who can do it awfully well, because they've been rehearsing it for weeks for the Fourth Form Christmas Panto. Forsyte takes the front part and Hynd the rear, and in their make-up, sir, I can tell you, they look so much like a real horse that Steve Donnagew himself wouldn't be able to tell the difference!"

Dr. Birchmell's eyes began to gleam with a new-born hope.

"My hat! That's a brane-wave!" he eggclaimed. "Of course, needless to say, Forsyte and Hynd would take care not to shake me off?"

"They are as safe as houses, sir!" grinned Jack Jolly.

"You leave it to me, and if you want a hunting rig-out,

we can lend you that, too, out of the Dramatic Society's props!"

"Done!" cried the Head.

He flung his cane into the far corner of the room, and Jack Jolly & Co. breathed a sigh of relief.

Later that morning the Muggleton Hunt duly assembled, and the old quad at St. Sam's echoed to the neighing of the hounds and the tooting of the horses and the barking of the huntsmen's horns.

There was a sensation when Dr. Birchmell appeared. The hunting outfit he had borrowed from the Fourth Form Dramatic Society fitted him perfectly, eggsept that it was about a duzen sizes too small. As for his gallant charger, apart from the fact that its leg-joints were in the wrong place, which gave it a nock-need appearance, it looked eggstremely like a horse. Altogether, the Head and his steed made a picturesk pair.

"Hah! Glad to see that you have turned up, Birchmell!" snorted Sir Frederick Funguss. "It would have gone hard with you had you failed me without a jolly good eggcuse, egad!"

Dr. Birchmell felt very glad that Mr. Lickham's warning had not caused him to withdraw altogether.

A ringing bark from the huntsmen's horns was the signal to move off. Most of the horses meely trotted, but Forsyte and Hynd broke into a gallop, which soon took their rider out of sight.

Suddenly the Head uttered a yell of fear.

Just round a bend in the lane ahead of him he had spotted a masked footpad holding up an old gentleman, who was just in the act of passing over his watch!

"Forsyte, in the front of the 'horse," spotted the criminal at the same moment. Dr. Birchmell tried to turn him back, but Forsyte was not the kind of fellow to be turned from the path of duty by a pair of rains, and he galloped right up on the scene!

Crash! Bang! Wallop! went the forelegs of the Head's steed against the footpad's pants, and a howl of pain and fear went up from the sneak thief.

"Mersy!" he cried, thinking his attacker was Dr. Birchmell. "I'll go quietly, guv'nor!"

Handing back the old gentleman's watch, the footpad put up his hands in a token of surrender!

Needless to say, the Head's fear left him then, and by the time the remainder of the hunt had caught up with him, he was almost bursting with self-esteem.

"Alone I did it!" he chorled, as the rest came

trotting up. "One blow from my fist and one look from my peering eyes, and this ferocious footpad was quelled."

Cries of surprise and admiration from the ladies and gentlemen of the hunt greeted this announcement.

"Birchemell, I congratulate you!" said Sir Frederick Funguss. "I don't mind admitting now that when I invited you to the hunt I looked upon you as a cad and a funk, who couldn't ride a horse, let alone tackle a footpad! But now, egad, I know better! You're not only a jolly good horseman, but you are also the Hero of the Hunt!"

S. Q. I. FIELD

Says: TRADE REALLY IS BOOMING

At the special request of the Editor of the "Herald," I have just been on a tour of the school to find out the state of trade. As a result of that tour, I can say without fear of contradiction that at Greyfriars, anyway, trade really is booming.

Interviewing business men of all kinds, I couldn't help being impressed by the wave of optimism that seems to be sweeping over the place. Mr. Bunter, of the Remove, for instance, told me that the keyhole-peeping line had never been better, while the postal-order-expectancy business was reviving in a way he had looked on as impossible at one time.

Here are a few samples of the hopeful views I collected during my tour:

Mr. P. BOLSOVER (Remove): The revival in the Bullying Market has been long overdue, but, thank goodness, there's no doubt that it's here now!

Mr. C. R. TEMPLE (Upper Fourth): Swank is well on the up-grade, by gad, an' the Upper Fourth is confident that the Highbrow Business is comin' into its own at last!

P. P. PROT, Esq., M.A.: The slump in the Grizzly-Bear-Hunting-Yarn trade has been alarming, but the tide has turned at last and once more I am finding customers for it!

Mr. H. VERNON-SMITH: We've had a slack time in the Beak-baitin' world, I can tell you, but now things are wakin' up in a most remarkable way!

Mr. H. SKINNER (Remove): Yes, old top, even the Cad trade is turnin' the corner, an' we're lookin' forward to somethin' like our old-time prosperity.

Mr. H. J. COKER (Fifth): Things have been pretty rough in the Completely Idiotic department, I can tell you, but we're full of hope for the future.

No mistake about it, chaps, Greyfriars has weathered the depression in great style, and trade is booming with a vengeance again now.

Don't be surprised, by the way, if some of the fellows I've quoted start denying that they said anything of the kind.

Business men have notoriously short memories, haven't they?

HUNGRY?

If you are, take our tip and trot along to the Shell Form-room to hear Hoskins' great piano recital next Monday evening. Our positive information is that Hoskins is in funds, and will stand treat all round to his patrons.

N.B.—A "Greyfriars Herald" representative will be on the door to distribute ear-plugs.

DENIAL

Bolsover major wishes to deny that he has been letting off fireworks in his study. The noise was merely the result of his dropping a few plain hints to Dupont on study etiquette.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?



Sir Jimmy Vivian still has memories of the days when he was a wail in the dubious care of a roving band of gipsies. He took his study-mate, Lord Manleverer, on a long tramp over the heath the other day—and "Manly" stood up to it remarkably well!

When Wingate found Billy Bunter astride the school wall after "call-over," Bunter denied that he was going to break bounds. Wingate was so astounded at Bunter's athletic performance in getting up on the wall unaided, that he forgot to punish him!



William Gosling, the gate porter, is very fond of cider, after which he gets a trifle sleepy. Vernon-Smith tells how, presenting "Gossy" with a case of cider, he "broke bounds" for several nights without detection! Henry thing was in "apple-pie" order!



Emileon Dupont claims the status of his "la belle France," scholar superior to ours. "Nap" learned for the South of France when he first came to Greyfriars. When Skinner hatched a little plot to get Bob in trouble with the "beaks," it was Wun Lung who ferreted out the truth.



Wun Lung has a sincere regard for "handsome Bob Chelley," who protected him from bullies when he first came to Greyfriars. When Skinner hatched a little plot to get Bob in trouble with the "beaks," it was Wun Lung who ferreted out the truth.



Bunter has been bottom in every possible subject this term—beating Snoop for the honour! Peter Todd says Bunter's lack of industry is due to the fact that, sitting in the bottom form, Bunter is able to "snooze" happily against the wall!