

Exciting Cover-to-Cover Story of Schoolboy Adventure, featuring
HARRY WHARTON & Co. By Frank Richards

The Magnet ^{2^D}



**THE CONVICT
WHO CAME BACK!**



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS - AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. A stamped, addressed envelope will ensure a reply.

A FEW weeks ago, my chums will remember, I referred in my chat to a letter I had received from a reader whose nom de plume was "Bloater" and who was not altogether pleased with the introduction of girls in our Greyfriars yarns. Since then I have received quite a shoal of letters from both girl and boy readers of the MAGNET. I only wish I had the space at my disposal to print them all. Really, they are most interesting.

The opinion seems to be that the average boy and girl likes to read something about the opposite sex. This is what Mr. F. G. Cook (of South Ealing) writes: "A suggestion by one of your readers that girls should be eliminated from the Greyfriars yarns seems to me to be all wrong. I trust that Mr. Frank Richards will think fit to introduce our female friends in his future yarns. Your grateful reader for the last six years." The foregoing is typical of the majority of letters I have received.

Strange to say, however, Miss Doreen Davenport, who, by the way has sent me her photograph, entirely agrees with "Bloater." "Since the introduction of girls in the MAGNET stories much of the 'slap-stick' fun has disappeared," writes Miss Davenport. "You are being unfair to your girl readers by thrusting girls—with their petty, spiteful quarrels—on to us. Put the question to the vote and let us see what other readers think."

I disagree entirely with my girl chum in saying that the "slap-stick" fun has disappeared. Take our circus series, for instance: it was chock-a-block full of amusing situations. The idea of putting this question of "girl interest" to the vote is certainly a good one. I should be glad to have the candid opinion of readers who have not yet written me on this point. The heavy post-bag will be a great strain on the postman, I know, but he's got a broad back!

DO YOU BUY YOUR OWN COPY

of the MAGNET? A good many of my readers are kind enough to lend their friends a copy of the good old paper. This is very nice of them, and I am sure any boy or girl whose attention is drawn to the MAGNET in this way is really grateful. At the same time, parting with your copy may have its disadvantages. The MAGNET is not merely twopenny-worth of reading matter to be skimmed through in a couple of hours and then thrown away. Think how nice it is to be able to re-read the stories later on. Be wise and keep your copy of the MAGNET each week. You cannot do this, of course, if it is a borrowed copy. If you have been content to read the paper on loan from a chum, I strongly advise you to do better by buying your own copy every Saturday. It only costs twopence, and no other paper on the market to-day is giving better value for money!

Talking of reading stories of the past, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,494.

look how well the stories dealing with the early adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. are "going down" in our companion paper, the GEM. This week's yarn,

"HARRY WHARTON'S SACRIFICE!"

is really a top-notch! Peter Hazeldene, the cad of the Remove, is in the clutches of a moneylender. In his desperate plight he tries to stave off disaster, only to find himself further in the mire! Here's a yarn that will gain your interest throughout. Make a point of reading it.

It's been

FIVE SHILLINGS WELL SPENT!

That's what you'll say when you've got your copy of the HOLIDAY ANNUAL. The 1937 issue, now on sale, is packed from cover to cover with rollicking fine school stories, humorous articles, sparkling verses and numerous other fine features. I make no apologies for once again telling you to order your copy at the earliest opportunity. To be late is to risk disappointment—to order early is to avoid being disappointed!

I THINK everyone has heard about radium, but I wonder how many people know what it looks like? A Lancashire reader has written to me to ask

WHAT IS RADIUM?

It looks rather like ordinary salt, and is extracted from a rare substance known as pitch-blende, which is found in silver, lead and tin mines. The amount of radium which can be extracted is only a grain or so to the ton of pitch-blende. A piece of radium is really a miniature sun, and even the tiniest speck of it will give out rays of heat and light for a considerable length of time. The entire quantity of radium so far extracted can be reckoned in ounces, but it is valued in terms of millions of pounds.

Readers of Western stories will be interested in the following answer to a query sent in by Bert Harris, of Margate. He asks

WHAT IS A COYOTE?

The word comes from a Mexican word "coyotl," meaning a prairie wolf. The coyote can claim to be the champion howler of the world, and it has an extremely wide range of howls. It can howl in any key, and can laugh, sneer or defy merely by changing its howls. It is something of a ventriloquist, too, and can make its howl appear to come from miles away when, actually, the coyote is quite near at hand. What is more, coyotes can converse with each other at great distances, merely by howling! Here's another Western query: this

time from Jim Parker, of Wigan. He wants to know

WHY COWBOYS ARE CALLED COW-PUNCHERS?

In the early days of America there were no fences on the ranches, and the cattle roamed around free. As different herds got mixed up, it was necessary to have some mark to distinguish the cattle belonging to different owners. Generally it was a brand or a cut on the animal's flank or ear. One of the first jobs a cowboy had to do was to brand or "punch" the cattle, hence he soon acquired the nickname of "cowpuncher." It isn't always an easy job to "punch" cattle. When the cowboys start off to brand the young calves the old cows sometimes object, and go for the cowboys. Often they gore the cowboys' horses, and frequently unseat the riders and break their legs.

We don't brand cattle in this country, but we brand swans. The men who carry out this job once a year are called

"SWAN UPPERS,"

and their job is to mark the young cygnets which are born on the Thames. When the cygnets are old enough, the "swan uppers" start up the river in boats, round up the swans and cygnets, and then mark the youngsters with the same marks as their parents have. The King's swan uppers go first, and are followed by representatives of two of the London livery companies. If you think it's an easy job to mark a swan, you ought to see the swan uppers at work! A swan can put up a pretty good fight, and an inexperienced man can quite easily get an arm or a leg broken by a vigorous blow from a swan's wing!

Tom Rogers, a Barnet reader, wants to know why we call ruffians "hooligans." This dates back to the days of

THE HOOLEY GANG,

which was a band of gangsters who terrorised the slums of the Borough district of London. They were led by a man whose name was Hooley or Hooligan—he used both names. There were so many street fights that the hospitals and police courts were kept busy dealing with the matter, and almost every day the newspapers recorded more doings of the Hooley gang, until the name "hooligan" became to mean a rough, lawless gangster. The Hooley gang were eventually broken up by the police, but the name, by that time, had passed into common use as the English equivalent of the apaches of Paris, or the larrikins of Australia.

Gee! I'd almost forgotten to mention a word or two about next week's super cover-to-cover story of the chums of Greyfriars, which is entitled:

"THE SPY OF THE SIXTH!"

Installed in Greyfriars as temporary games master in the enforced absence of Larry Lascelles, James Loder, the escaped convict from Blackmoor, is counting on absolute safety. Behind the scenes, however, the rascally Gerald Loder, unaware of the fact that the man is actually his cousin, is spying on his every movement in the hope of tripping him up! Boys, this yarn is a real corker and one of the finest Frank Richards has given us. The "Greyfriars Herald" wants some beating, too, you can take it from me. My tip to you all is to go round to your newsagent right now and ask him to reserve you a copy of next Saturday's MAGNET!

YOUR EDITOR.

The CONVICT WHO CAME BACK!



At Blackmoor Prison, James Loder was known as Convict No. 22. But at Greyfriars, he is games master in the name of his ruthless enemy—the man who sent him to prison!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Man Who Ran!

"HERE, you!" Harry Wharton did not look round.

Perhaps he did not know that Coker of the Fifth was addressing him. Or perhaps he did not care? Anyhow, he did not look round, and remained seemingly deaf to the powerful voice that woke most of the echoes of the towpath along the Sark.

"Here, you!" roared Coker.

Coker of the Fifth was standing in a boat, which rocked by the school raft. It was a fine September afternoon, and a half-holiday at Greyfriars School, and Coker, apparently, was going up the river that afternoon.

For five minutes Coker had been standing in that boat, staring past the boathouse towards the school. Clearly, he was waiting for somebody to join him in the boat—somebody who was in no hurry to arrive.

Coker was not the man to wait one minute patiently. Now he had waited five; so, naturally, Coker was getting a little excited.

And so, when Harry Wharton, of the Remove, came along by the boat-house, Coker shouted to him. And as the junior did not heed, Coker shouted again, and yet again, putting on more and more steam.

"Here, you young sweep, are you deaf? You cheeky little tick, do you hear me?"

Harry Wharton certainly heard—Coker could have been heard at quite a considerable distance. But he did not heed.

He had been about to enter the boat-house; but something, at a distance on the towpath, caught his eyes, and he stopped to look at it.

Three or four running figures had suddenly emerged from Popper Court Woods, and were racing along the towpath, and Wharton watched them coming, wondering what was up.

Coker did not glance in that direction. He was glaring at the junior on the school raft.

"Wharton!" he roared.

Addressed by name, at last, the captain of the Remove took note of the existence of Coker of the Fifth. He glanced round towards the Fifth Form man standing in the boat.

"Hallo, old bean!" he said politely. "Did you yell?"

"I called you, you cheeky little rotter!" growled Coker. "I've called you half a dozen times! I'm waiting for Potter and Greene. Go and tell them I'm waiting for them, and buck up!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

He was amused, partly by Coker's fancy that he could give orders to Remove men; partly by the fact that he had seen Potter and Greene, of the Fifth, going down to football practice before he came out.

If Coker was waiting there for his pals in the Fifth, he seemed to be booked for a long wait!

"Don't cackle at me!" hooted Coker. "Cut back to the school and tell Potter and Greene I'm waiting! The silly asses seem to have forgotten that I told them we were going up the river this afternoon."

"Perhaps they don't want to be reminded!" suggested Wharton.

"Don't be a young ass! Cut off! Keeping a man waiting like this!" fumed Coker. "They were gabbling some rot about games practice, but I told them plainly to wash it out—they can't have forgotten. Still, it looks as if they have. Cut off and tell them."

"Bow-wow!"

"What!" roared Coker. "What did you say?"

"I said bow-wow!" answered the captain of the Remove. "If you're getting hard of hearing in your old age, Coker, I'll say it again! Bow-wow!"

Horace Coker breathed wrath.

He was already very much annoyed. Plainly he had told Potter and Greene to wash out footer that afternoon, as he wanted them in the boat. He had got the boat out—he had waited five minutes—and still Potter and Greene were not in the offing. It was more than enough to annoy Coker; and cheek from a Lower Fourth junior was the last straw.

He jumped out of the boat, with the intention of dealing with that cheeky junior as a cheeky junior ought to be dealt with.

First, however, he had to tie the painter. He did not want the boat to float off on the current of the Sark while he was dealing with that cheeky Removee. He grabbed the rope to tie it.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton suddenly.

He was not looking at Coker.

His eyes were fixed again on the running figures coming along the river-bank. They were nearer now, coming on fast, and he could make them out plainly.

One of them was a little in advance of the others, running desperately. It was clear that he was a fugitive, and the others in pursuit.

He was a man of athletic frame. His face was grimy, gaunt, and stubbly, with unshaven beard. But what fixed Wharton's attention was his garb. The torn and tattered clothes bore the mark of the broad arrow.

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"The convict!" exclaimed Harry. It was some days since James Loder, No. 22, of Blackmoor Prison, had been seen in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars School.

Most of the fellows supposed that he had cleared off and sought safety in some other direction. Loder of the Sixth fervently hoped so; for it was distinctly unpleasant to have an escaped convict about whose surname was the same as his own!

Evidently, however, he had not cleared off, for here he was, rooted out of some hiding-place in Sir Hilton Popper's woods.

Three men were in chase—one a Courtfield constable in uniform, the other two keepers. They were running hard; but the hunted man had a good lead, and he was keeping it so far.

But Wharton, as he watched him coming nearer, could see how he was panting for breath, the sweat thick on his stubbly face. He was keeping up the pace, but he was getting near the end of his tether.

A voice rang from the distance:

"Stop him!"

The pursuers had spotted Wharton standing by the boathouse. The convict, seeing him, also slackened speed for a moment or two. Then he came on as fast as before, with desperation in his face.

"Blow!" said Coker of the Fifth.

Coker was seeing nothing of the hot chase along the Sark. Coker was busy with the boat's painter. It had slipped from his hand, and Coker had to grab the boat to keep it from floating off.

He grabbed it, held it, and said "Blow!" in emphatic tones. Holding the boat with one hand, Coker fished for the painter with the other. He was far too busy to heed anything else that might be going on.

Harry Wharton, who had forgotten Coker's existence, watched the nearing chase breathlessly.

The hunted man was quite close to him now. Fast on his track came the constable and the keepers. The police-officer was shouting to Wharton. A delay even of a minute meant the capture of the fleeing man—and Wharton was in the way of his flight.

The Greyfriars junior drew a deep breath. Any member of the public, called on by an officer of the law for aid, had no choice in the matter—he had to play up. The captain of the Remove jumped directly into the path of the running man, ready to stop him.

No. 22, of Blackmoor, came straight at him, at full speed, and Harry braced himself for the shock.

But, at the last moment, when the man was almost upon him, he changed his direction, swerved to the right without reaching Wharton, and ran out on the raft.

To the pursuers, it looked as if they had him; for beyond the school raft rolled the wide river, and the convict could hardly have hoped to escape by swimming.

But the desperate eyes had lighted on Coker and his boat. Coker was still stooping, groping after that elusive painter.

He had not got hold of that rope yet. He never got hold of it. For a sudden push sent Coker rolling over on his back on the planks, with a roar of surprise and rage. And as Coker rolled and roared, the convict leaped into the boat—the impetus of his leap, as he landed in it, sending it shooting out a dozen yards into the river.

A few moments later the pursuers

were panting, on the edge of the raft, glaring at No. 22, of Blackmoor, safe beyond their grasp.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Race on the River!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

"The convict!" shouted Johnny Bull.

Four Remove fellows were arriving at the boathouse, as No. 22, of Blackmoor, made his desperate leap. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, ran quickly forward and joined Harry Wharton.

"It's the convict!" exclaimed Nugent. "Where on earth did he spring from?"

"They seem to have rooted him out of the woods," answered Harry. "He must have been hiding about here ever since we saw him that day on the Pike."

"A boat!" shouted the constable.

Coker scrambled to his feet, red with rage.

"Who? What? Who?" he spluttered.

"I say—Oh, my hat! That dashed convict in my boat!" Coker of the Fifth stared blankly at the man in the boat out in the middle of the river. "Oh crumbs!"

"A boat!" roared the Courtfield constable. "A boat—quick!"

The convict had grasped a pair of oars and sat down to row. It was clear at a glance that he was an oarsman; the oars crashed into the rowlocks and dipped, and the boat shot into motion with a long, strong pull.

The convict went with the current down the river in the direction of Friar-dale and the sea. Luckily for him, there was no other boat afloat at the raft at the moment, or pursuit would have been instant.

The constable and the two keepers rushed to the school boathouse. The boatkeeper was there, and in a very few moments he was helping them put out a boat. But the fugitive had gained minutes, and he was well on his way down the stream, pulling hard.

With the two keepers pulling, and the constable sitting at the lines, the pursuers shot after him.

From the school raft the Famous Five watched. It was one oarsman against two; but the man from Blackmoor rowed well, and was keeping ahead. Doubtless he hoped to gain distance and take to the land again; but, though he kept ahead, he did not look like gaining.

"Come on, you men!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We're in this!"

"Yes, rather!"

Harry Wharton & Co. had intended to pull up the river that sunny afternoon to Popper's Island, but they changed their plans at once. The excitement of the chase drew them, and they rushed their boat down to the water to follow on.

"My boat!" Coker of the Fifth was stuttering with wrath. "That cheeky convict's bagged my boat! Why, I'll smash him! Here, you fags, make room for me! I'm coming in that old tub of yours!"

"Buzz off, fathead!" said Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five's craft was a roomy old boat, and there was room for Coker in it, so far as that went; but Coker was not wanted on board, getting in everybody's way.

The juniors jumped in, and as Coker was about to follow, Bob Cherry shoved off, jamming his oar against Coker's manly chest for the purpose.

The boat shot away, and Coker went

over backwards, roaring as he hit the planks.

Nugent took the lines, and the other fellows the oars, and four blades dipped as one. "Tub" as it was, the Remove boat made swift way.

Coker sat up spluttering.

"Here, you!" he roared. "You cheeky fags! Come back! I want a lift in that boat, you young idiots! Do you hear?"

Four oarsmen grinned back at him, and Nugent waved a hand in farewell. Horace Coker was left shaking a leg-of-mutton fist.

Then he started running along the towpath to keep pace with the chase. A dozen other Greyfriars fellows, drawn to the spot by the excitement, started running also. If the convict landed on the Greyfriars side of the river there would be plenty of hands ready to be laid on him.

Other fellows were getting out boats. Temple, Dabney, & Co. of the Fourth were in one; Hobson and some Shell fellows in another. And Vernon-Smith of the Remove ran out his light skiff and started alone. But all these were far behind, and did not look like being in at the death—except, perhaps, Smithy, who made his little skiff fairly fly.

Harry Wharton & Co. pulled hard and drew close behind the police boat. In the latter the Courtfield constable sat, his eyes fixed on the stubbly, desperate face of the man ahead rowing as if for his life.

The constable started up suddenly and waved and shouted. Some distance ahead there was a punt on the river, and standing up in it was old Joyce, the woodcutter, staring at the craft sweeping down towards him.

"Stop him!" shouted the officer. "Get in his way! Stop him!"

Old Joyce waved his hand, grasped his punt pole, and poled out into the Sark, right in the way of the fugitive.

"They've got him now!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "It's old Joyce; he's shoving his punt in front of him!"

Ceasing to pull, Harry Wharton & Co. glanced over their shoulders. They caught their breath as they watched.

The convict could not, of course, see the punt ahead, as his back was to it. All he knew, from the constable's waving and shouting, was that something was getting in the way of his flight.

But he seemed to sense where it was. A swift swerve, and he wound round the punt, barely escaping a collision.

He passed so close that he had to pull in an oar to keep clear. Old Joyce made a lunge at him with the pole, missed, and sat down in the bottom of the punt with a bump and a gasp.

At the same moment No. 22 of Blackmoor jammed his oar on the punt, giving it a violent shove that sent it spinning across the bows of his pursuers.

Crash!

The pursuers were not so lucky in avoiding a collision. The police boat hit the punt, rocked, shipped water, and capsized; and in a moment its three occupants were in the water, clinging to it.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Pull!" shouted Johnny Bull.

The Removes bent to their oars again. The Remove boat shot onward fast after the fugitive, while old Joyce, picking himself up dizzily in his punt, poled to the rescue of the constable and the keepers.

In a few moments they were dropped far behind as Harry Wharton & Co. raced on after the convict.

No. 22 pulled hard. Four oars were pulling in the Remove boat—but it was,

undoubtedly, rather an old tub, and the juniors did not gain. But they were not, at all events, losing ground, and they kept on gamely. From astern Smithy's light skiff came shooting after them.

The Bounder grinned at them as he passed.

"My game!" he shouted.

"Stick to him, Smithy!" yelled Bob.

"We won't be far behind!"

Smithy flashed on.

On the towpath the running crowd were dropping back. The constable's boat was out of the race. Harry Wharton & Co. were keeping pace with the man from Blackmoor. But Herbert Vernon-Smith, going all out, was making his skiff skim the river, and he was gaining on the convict. And the convict,

any fellow's duty to lend a hand in securing an escaped convict—but Smithy probably was thinking less of that than of the excitement of a breathless chase and of getting his man. But if he had stopped to reflect, it was no light matter to bar the escape of a desperate convict—a hunted man who for more than a week had been on the run, and who had shown on one occasion at least that he was prepared to fight fiercely for his liberty.

It was only a few days since Mr. Lascelles, the game-master of Greyfriars, had spotted him on the rocky slopes of the Pike and tackled him there. They had fallen over a cliff in fierce conflict—and Larry Lascelles was now in a nursing-home, with a broken leg.

But Herbert Vernon-Smith was not

It was a hard knock, and it threw him completely off his balance. He went headlong over the gunwale into the water.

Splash!

Smithy disappeared under the shining surface of the Sark.

He was up again in a moment, struggling feebly.

The Bounder was as good a swimmer as any fellow in the Remove. But the knock on the head had dazed him, and his senses were spinning. His hands were thrown up helplessly from the water.

Another moment, and he would have gone down again. In that moment, Convict No. 22 reached over the gunwale, dropping his oars, and grasped



With the pursuers hard on his heels, the convict made a dash for the school raft, where Coker was about to tie up his boat. A sudden push sent the Fifth Former staggering. Next moment, the convict leaped into the boat—the impetus of his leap sending it shooting out into the river!

as he pulled with every ounce of his strength, glared back at the Bounder with a black and bitter brow.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Bounder's Peril!

SMITHY'S eyes danced. Light as a feather, seemingly, his skiff shot like an arrow—and shot past the fugitive labouring at the oars in Coker's boat.

The Bounder had passed his quarry. Now he slackened speed, his eyes on the convict. Harry Wharton & Co. were hardly fifty yards away. What Vernon-Smith had to do was to stop the man till they arrived, and the convict's game was up. Half a dozen sturdy Greyfriars fellows were more than a match for the heftiest convict of Blackmoor—and James Loder, No. 22, was almost spent.

The thought of danger hardly crossed the Bounder's reckless mind. The thrill of the hunt was strong on him. It was

thinking of that—or of anything, except getting the convict. The Bounder had unlimited pluck, and he was utterly reckless.

He had his skiff now directly in the way of the fugitive, and the Bounder was not likely to be disposed of so easily as old Joyce.

As if he could see with the back of his head, the man from Blackmoor swerved to dodge the skiff, but Smithy was not to be dodged.

He ran his skiff recklessly in, crashed on Coker's boat, and leaped headlong into it, leaving his skiff to run whither it would.

"Pull!" yelled Frank Nugent, his eyes on that startling scene; and the Co. pulled with all their beef.

Smithy stumbled over in the convict's boat. In a second he would have been up again and grasping at the fugitive, effectually stopping his flight.

But an oar, swinging round, struck the side of his head as he was rising, and the Bounder pitched sideways.

him by the collar. Smithy's eyes fixed wildly on the convict's haggard face.

The Remove boat came sweeping up. The convict did not give it a glance. Exerting what remained of his exhausted strength, he was dragging Vernon-Smith into his boat.

Smithy landed there, drenched and dripping, in a pool of water. Dazed and dizzy, he sprawled helplessly, blinking at the grimy, stubbly face that was bent over him.

"You young fool!" Like a fellow in a dream, he heard the convict's panting voice. "You would have been drowned—"

Bump!

The Remove boat jarred alongside, and Frank Nugent caught on with a boathook. Harry Wharton & Co. were all on their feet now.

The convict turned from the gasping Bounder. He grabbed up an oar and swung it over his head with both hands.

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His eyes were on the Greyfriars juniors, with the fierce glare of a hunted animal.

But the next moment he flung the oar down with a crash. Vernon-Smith lifted himself on one elbow.

His head was aching horribly, and he was dazed and dizzy; but he knew well enough what had happened. He knew that, but for the helping hand of the hunted man, he would have gone down into the depths of the Sark, with little chance of ever seeing the sunlight again.

Hunted and desperate, the man from Blackmoor had thrown away his last chance of escape to save him. Now that the Famous Five had overtaken him, his game was up.

The Bounder panted. "Leave him alone, you fellows! You saw what he did—leave him alone! I tell you, leave him alone!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stood uncertain. As they stood, the convict, with a sudden spring, leaped from the boat and struck out for the bank.

Smithy sat up, his hand pressed to his head. He stared after the swimmer.

"By gum!" muttered Bob Cherry. "He's a queer sort of bird for a convict! He could have got away—we should have had to stop for Smithy—"

"We should have been too late for Smithy!" breathed Wharton. "I—I'm not going to touch him now."

"Same here!" said Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific!" muttered Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"We ought to get him!" said Johnny Bull.

"We couldn't have if he hadn't stopped for Smithy—"

"Yes, but—"

"Leave him alone!" snapped the Bounder. "He hasn't much of a

chance—those fellows on the bank will get him, ten to one. Leave him what chance he's got."

It was difficult for the juniors to decide what they ought to do. In less than a minute, it was too late to do anything. The swimmer had reached the bank, and was clambering on the towpath.

Down the towpath from the direction of Greyfriars came an excited mob of fellows, Coker of the Fifth in the lead.

"There he is!" bawled Coker. "He's landed—look! Come on! We've got him now!"

The drenched man stood staring up the towpath for a moment, gulping in breath. From the boat, Harry Wharton & Co. watched him. Convict as he was, malefactor as it seemed certain that he must be, they could not wish, at that moment, that he would be caught. Anyhow, the matter was out of their hands now.

Coker came barging on, red with exertion, spluttering for breath. After Coker came Hilton of the Fifth, Sykes and Walker of the Sixth, and strung out behind them, nine or ten more fellows. If they reached him, the man from Blackmoor had not the remotest chance; and they were coming on full pelt.

The convict darted suddenly across the towpath, and ran into the wood that bordered it.

In a moment he was out of sight. "This way!" roared Coker.

Hardly a minute after the fugitive, he turned into the wood and disappeared among the trees. After him went the whole crowd, whooping, and Friardale Wood swallowed them from sight.

"Well!" said Bob Cherry, with a deep breath. "That's that!"

"Ow!" mumbled the Bounder. He rubbed his aching head. "Wow! He's made my napper sing—but I'm dashed if I don't hope he'll get clear! He's a queer fish, and no mistake."

"He can't be a bad man, convict or not!" said Harry Wharton. "That day Larry Lascelles crooked his leg on the Pike, that convict carried him down on his back—though Larry had been trying to bag him! And now—"

"Whatever he is, he's not a bad sort, or he wouldn't have stopped to fish me out!" said the Bounder. "I'm not taking a hand against him any more! Ow!"

Shouting and whooping could be heard, from various directions, in the wood along the Sark. The hunt was close at the heels of the man who had escaped from Blackmoor, and whose life since had been a series of desperate escapes. But the chums of the Remove were not disposed to join in it further; and they took Coker's boat and Smithy's skiff in tow and pulled back up the river.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Coker Asks a Civil Question!

GERALD LODER of the Sixth Form hastily dropped a cigarette, and put a foot on it, as a knock came at his study door.

He scowled at the opening door. Scowls were very frequent on the brow of Loder of the Sixth these days. His temper, never good, had been worse than ever since James Loder, No. 22 of Blackmoor, had turned up in the vicinity of Greyfriars.

It was rumoured in the school that James was a relation, or a connection of some sort, of Loder's.

That rumour was all the more unpleasant because it was founded on fact. Loder, at least, knew that the man who had escaped from Blackmoor was his cousin James. That knowledge made him so touchy on the subject that he had as good as given it away.

Loder was a bully, and generally unpopular, and there were, in consequence, plenty of fellows who were glad enough to find any sort of a stick to beat him with. No. 22 came in useful for that purpose!

Fellows who had wriggled under Loder's ashplant found it amusing to discuss such subjects as convicts and broad arrows in his hearing. And the more Loder displayed annoyance and exasperation, the more he convinced the Greyfriars fellows that No. 22 was a member of his own particular branch of the Loder tribe.

Even among his friends in the Sixth, Loder was not safe from sly allusions to the painful topic. And juniors, whom he had whopped not wisely but too well, made the most of it. Once he had found broad arrows chalked on his study wall! Worse than that, he had found, as he believed, the convict himself hiding in his study one evening, and had been in awful dread lest other fellows should see him and learn that he had called to see his cousin! He had never learned that that "convict" was a Remove japer!

He was thinking over that very matter now, when his study door opened, and Coker of the Fifth came in.

He scowled at Coker. Coker was not on visiting terms in that study. Loder had nothing to do with him, and wanted nothing to do with him. The burly Horace, who made no secret of the fact that he did

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not think much of the Sixth, was not popular with the men of that Form. "Oh, here you are, Loder!" said Coker. He came in and shut the door, and sat down on the edge of the table, facing Loder in his armchair.

"What the thump do you want?" growled Loder.

He was in a mood to pitch Coker neck and crop out of his study. Had Coker been a less hefty fellow, no doubt he would have done it. But Coker of the Fifth was so big and brawny that even Sixth Form prefects treated him with some tact.

"I've just been after that convict!" explained Coker.

Loder's eyes gleamed. It did not seem to occur to the happy Horace that, in mentioning No. 22 to Loder of the Sixth, he was waving a red rag to a bull. Loder's gleaming eyes wandered to his ashplant.

"I dare say you've heard," went on Coker. "From what I hear, the man was in Popper Court Woods, and they rooted him out, and he cut along the towpath. He had the cheek to bag my boat to get away in. Nerve, you know."

"I don't want to hear——"

"I thought you'd be interested!" said Coker. "It can't be pleasant for you, Loder, having that man hanging about the school—what? You'd like to see him snaffled, I should think. Look at the talk it's causing all over Greyfriars! I can tell you, we jolly nearly got him this afternoon. He dodged us in Friar-dale Wood somehow. But——"

"Oh, cheese it, and clear!" grunted Loder.

Coker stared at him.

"I haven't explained yet," he said. "Now, look here, Loder, it's not your fault if the man's a relation of yours, and——"

"He's not a relation!" hissed Loder.

"It's the same name," said Coker. "Of course, there are lots of Loders, I know. It's not an uncommon or distinguished name—like Coker, for instance! But the way you've carried on about it, Loder, has given a pretty general impression that you know something of the man."

"Will you get out?"

"I'm not finished yet. I've been reading the case up in the newspapers," continued Coker. "From what I read, this man, James Loder, was a games master at a school called Okeham, in Devonshire, and there was a robbery there, and——"

"I've never heard of it."

"Then I'll tell you," said Coker cheerfully. "He's only a young fellow, under thirty, and he seems to have had a good reputation before the trouble happened. But what he did was pretty thick. He pinched something, and a man caught him at it, and he knocked him on the head—hurt him, rather. He got three years——"

Loder's hand went to the ashplant which was leaning on his chair.

Coker, unaware of his danger, rattled on cheerily:

"The man he damaged was another master in the same school, who spotted him at it—that is mentioned in some of the papers. You see, I've been looking it up."

"You can't mind your own business!" snarled Loder.

"It's everybody's business to get hold of a brute like that," said Coker. "And look what he did to Larry Lascelles, our games master, last week! Lascelles is a bit of an ass; he could never see what a footballer I am, and he always agreed with Wingate in leaving me out of the eleven! Still, he's a jolly decent chap in his way; and now he's laid up for

weeks or months with a bandy leg in a nursing-home. We're getting a new games master while he's away; the man's coming this week."

"I don't care——"

"Well, never mind that," conceded Coker. "To come back to the convict—— What are you scowling at, Loder?"

Loder did not explain what he was scowling at. But he scowled like a demon in a pantomime.

"To come back to the convict," resumed Coker. "He's got old Larry a bandy leg, and he bagged my boat to-day, and pitched me over to get it. And that isn't all. You may feel sorry for him, as your relation——"

"He's not my relation!" shrieked Loder.

"Well, everybody seems to think he is, from the way you've cut up rusty about it. But, even if you feel sorry for him as your relation, you can see that this won't do—a Greyfriars man's relative in broad arrows hanging about the school. It's jolly bad for the school, you know. With a relation here, he ought not to have come this way when he bolted from Blackmoor. It's not playing the game to get our school talked about!"

"You fool!"

"What I mean is, the sooner he's bagged, the better for all concerned," explained Coker. "Even if you feel sorry for him as a relation, you can see that. The question is, can you help?"

Loder stared at him.

"I! How can I help, you idiot? It's for the police to hunt down escaped convicts."

"Suppose you know something about him, though?" suggested Coker. "As his relation——"

"I'm not his relation!" yelled Loder.

"You keep on saying that!" said Coker peevishly. "But everybody jolly well knows you are, from the way you've carried on. Now, as his relation, you might know something. Price of the Fifth was saying——"

"Hang Price!"

"But he was saying——"

"I don't want to hear what he was saying!"

"He was saying that the convict hanging about Greyfriars looks as if he thought there was somebody here who might give him a hand—see?"

Loder started as if he had been stung.

"I hadn't thought of that myself," went on Coker. "But when I heard Price saying that, you know——"

"You silly idiot!"

"Well, you can see how it looks," urged Coker. "Now, what I want to point out to you is this—the man's hanging about the school——"

"He's doing nothing of the kind!" howled Loder. "He happened to head in this direction, and he can't get away again, because all the roads are watched for——"

"That's all very well!" said Coker obstinately. "But what I mean is this—if you know anything of him——"

"Fool!"

"If you're in touch with him——"

Loder gasped with fury.

"You—you—you burbling dummy! If I knew anything about the scoundrel I'd put the police on him at once. How should I know anything about him?"

"Well, I mean, as his relation——"

Coker of the Fifth was suddenly interrupted. Loder, in a goaded state, grasped his ashplant and leaped from his chair. He came at Coker, with an expression on his face that was really alarming.

"Here, I say——" ejaculated Coker. "Oh, my hat! Yaroooooh! Keep off, you mad idiot! Yoo—hooooop!"

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

The ashplant fairly sang on Coker of the Fifth. Loder did not seem to mind where the swipes fell. He just swiped with all the force of his arm.

Coker, yelling, rolled off the table.

He stumbled over, and caught the ashplant again across his back. He dodged round the table, and caught it again on his ear. Coker's frantic yell rang the length of the Sixth Form passage.

"Yaroooooh! Keep off! Have you gone mad?" shrieked Coker. "I say—Whoop!"

Swipe, swipe!

Loder charged round the table after him, swiping. Coker, in a state of wild confusion, dodged to the door.

Twice the ashplant landed on him before he reached it. Again it landed as he got the door open. Again it caught him as he dodged into the passage.

Half a dozen Sixth Form men came out of their studies in startled surprise. Loder's door slammed with a terrific bang.

"Ow! Yow! Wow!" roared Coker, staggering in the passage. "Ow! Ooooooooh!"

"What on earth's the row?" exclaimed Wingate.

"Ow! Oooogh! That mad idiot Loder—— Ooooooh!"

"You've come here rowing with a prefect?" demanded Gwynne.

"Ooooooh! I wasn't rowing!" gasped Coker. "I don't know what's the matter with Loder! He's gone mad, I think! I was asking him a civil question or two about his relation, that convict——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Coker. "I suppose a fellow can ask a fellow a civil question——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the silly idiot suddenly grabbed up a stick and went for me!" gasped Coker. "Goodness knows why!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Sixth Formers.

"You can cackle!" hooted Coker. "But I'm jolly well not standing it! I'll jolly well go back into that study and mop it up with Loder—see?"

"You jolly well won't!" grinned Wingate. "You'll jolly well get a prefect's beating if you don't clear off, you fathead!"

"Look here——"

"You mustn't ask a man questions—even civil questions—about his relations who may happen to be convicts!" chuckled Gwynne.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly well——"

Coker made a stride towards Loder's door.

Wingate and Gwynne promptly pinned his arms and walked him away. And as Coker objected strenuously, they tapped his head on the passage wall as they led him away. After which, Coker of the Fifth decided to go quietly—and he went.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Knows the Name!

"LAGDEN!" said Bob Cherry. "Lagden!" repeated Skinner. "I've heard that name before."

"Well, that's the name of the jolly old games master who's coming to take Larry's place!" said Bob. "I heard it from Wingate."

"Where does he come from?" asked Skinner.

"Leggett & Teggers! That's the firm! Temporary beaks provided while you wait!" grinned Bob.

"I don't mean that, you ass! I know

he would be sent from Leggett & Teggers. Don't you know anything about him?"

"Not a thing!"

"When is he coming?" asked Harry Wharton.

"This afternoon, Wingate said. I hope he'll be as decent as old Larry," said Bob. "Rotten rough luck old Larry getting knocked out like that! I suppose the Head had to get a jolly old substitute, as Larry can't come back this term. We shall miss Larry!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific."

All the Remove were agreed on that. Mr. Lascelles, the games master, had been very popular. Everybody was sorry that he had been knocked out in his attempt to capture the fugitive convict on the Pike. And all the footballing fellows were rather keen to see the man who was to take his place at Greyfriars for the term.

Skinner of the Remove was not a footballing fellow, when he could help it. But he seemed very interested to hear of Mr. Lagden.

It was the day after the chase on the Sark. Bob Cherry, having heard the news from Wingate, had brought it along to the Remove fellows, in the quad, after dinner.

The name of Mr. Lagden was new to most of them. He was coming from Leggett & Teggers, the scholastic firm who supplied temporary beaks when required. But no one seemed to know anything about him—unless Skinner did. Skinner had a very thoughtful expression on his face.

"I've seen that name somewhere lately!" declared Skinner. "I fancy it was in the newspapers."

"What rot!" said Johnny Bull. "How could the man's name get into the newspapers?"

"Can't have anything to do with the races!" remarked Squiff, sarcastically, and there was a laugh. When Skinner of the Remove looked at a newspaper, it was generally to find his favourite "geo-gee" in the also rans.

"I've been reading up the newspapers lately, to get the news about that jolly old convict!" said Skinner. "Some of them give an account of him, and— Oh, my hat!" Skinner broke off, with a startled exclamation.

"That's it!"

"That's what, fathead?"

"That's where I've seen the name!" exclaimed Skinner excitedly. "That's the name of the man the convict punched."

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Rot!"

"I tell you, I remember it now!" exclaimed Skinner. "James Loder was copped busting the headmaster's safe at the school where he had a job—Okeham School, in Devonshire. A master caught him at it, and James knocked him out—and his name was given as Lagden—Stephen Lagden."

"Can't be the same man!" said Harry Wharton, shaking his head. "This Lagden is coming here as games master. Well, he can't have been games master at Okeham, if James Loder was."

"No, he was some other sort of a beak," said Skinner. "But he might be a games master now, all the same. Beaks take any job they can get, in these hard times."

"Well, I suppose it's possible—"

"By gum! If it's the same man, we shall get the news about Loder's jolly old relation at first-hand!" chuckled the Bounder. "Loder will be glad to see

him! He's so fond of hearing about his relation from Blackmoor."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Loder!" grinned Bob. "Whether James is his relation or not, he will hate to have a man here who's connected with him. I believe Loder's getting tired of the subject of that jolly old convict."

"I say, you fellows," exclaimed Billy Bunter eagerly, "this Lagden man will know whether Loder's a relation of that convict or not. Let's ask him as soon as he comes."

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Bet you it's the same man!" said Skinner. "Did you hear what the man's front name was?"

"No; Wingate said his name was Lagden, that's all."

"Well, I expect he knows," said Skinner. "We can jolly well ask him that. If this man's name is Stephen, that settles it. There can't be a lot of Stephen Lagdens about," Skinner chuckled. "I'll ask him before Loder! I'm sure Loder will be pleased."

"Oh, chuck it!" said Harry. "Loder's heard enough about No. 22."

"Rats to you!" answered Skinner. "Loder gave me six yesterday for smoking. He smokes in his study himself. I couldn't mention that, but I can mention an Okeham beak if I like, I suppose, and a Blackmoor convict, too! Loder says that the man's no connection of his, so why should he mind?"

"The whyfulness is terrific," grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the mindfulness is preposterous."

"Well, I'm jolly well going to ask!" said Skinner.

Wingate of the Sixth was in the quad, in conversation with Loder, of that Form. Wingate had a rather worried expression on his rugged face, and Loder was speaking angrily and emphatically. From which anyone who had observed them might have guessed that Gerald Loder was urging his claim to a place in the first eleven.

Skinner walked coolly across towards the two prefects. Some of the Removes followed him, curious to hear what was going to be said. They did not doubt that Loder would get his "rag" out.

As Loder denied emphatically that there was any connection whatever between him and the man of the same name at Blackmoor, there really was no reason why he should get excited on the subject. Nevertheless, it was a fact that he showed signs of intense exasperation at every mention of the name of James Loder.

As Skinner came up, Loder scowled at him, but Wingate seemed glad of the interruption. The Greyfriars captain was rather tired of explaining to Loder the many and various reasons why he was not entitled to a place in the first eleven.

"What do you want?" snarled Loder. "Clear off!"

"Oh, let the kid speak!" said Wingate. "What is it, Skinner?"

"I've just heard about the new games master who's coming to-day, Wingate," said Skinner meekly. "His name's Lagden, I've heard—"

"Yes, that's right."

"Is he Stephen Lagden?"

"I believe so," answered Wingate. "Yes, that's it, Stephen Lagden. Know anything about him, kid?"

"He was at Okeham, wasn't he?" asked Skinner, with the corner of his eye on Loder.

Loder gave a start.

Before the escape of No. 22 from

Blackmoor, Gerald Loder had known little or nothing about his cousin James. But no doubt, since the man had become the talk of Greyfriars, he had learned more. It was clear that the name of Okeham School was familiar to him, at least.

"I don't know," answered Wingate, staring at Skinner. "I don't think I've ever heard of Okeham. Where is it?"

"It's a school in Devonshire," said Skinner. "There was a master there named Stephen Lagden—it's mentioned in the papers—"

"Is it?" said Wingate in astonishment. "Something to do with football do you mean, or what?"

"Oh, no! In connection with that convict, James Loder!" explained Skinner. "James Loder knocked a man out, and his name was Stephen Lagden, and— Yaroooooh!"

Smack!

Skinner had argued, quite reasonably, that a fellow could mention a man who had escaped from Blackmoor, if he liked. Probably thousands of people were discussing the elusive man who had been dodging his pursuers for more than a week since he got away. Loder of the Sixth had absolutely no right to smack his head for mentioning such an item of news.

Without having any right to do it, however, Loder of the Sixth did it. He smacked, and smacked hard.

Skinner yelled and staggered.

"Loder!" exclaimed Wingate.

"Ow! Wow! Oh! Ow!" roared Skinner.

There was a chuckle from the Removes who had followed Skinner. They had wondered what the result would be, and now they saw it, it was more amusing to them than to Harold Skinner.

Loder, his face dark with rage, made a stride at the staggering Skinner, his hand upraised to repeat the smack.

Wingate caught his arm, just in time.

"Stop that!" he snapped.

"Let go, you fool!" shouted Loder.

The Greyfriars captain gave him a grim look. Instead of letting go, he compressed his grip, and Loder gave a yelp of pain.

"Cut off, Skinner!" said Wingate briefly.

Skinner was glad to cut off. He rubbed his head as he went, and the other fellows followed him, grinning.

Then Wingate released Loder's arm. The bully of the Sixth gave him a black look. He clenched his hand, but unclenched it again, under Wingate's steady glance.

"You'd better keep cool on that subject, Loder!" said the Greyfriars captain, quietly. "Can't you see that by flying out like this when anybody happens to mention that man from Blackmoor, you are practically owning up to a connection with him?"

"There's no connection—" muttered Loder, in a choking voice. "How dare you suggest—"

"If there's not, you're making every man at Greyfriars believe that there is!" snapped Wingate; and he turned and walked away, and joined Gwynne and Sykes in the quadrangle.

Loder, with a black brow, tramped away towards the House. It was rather unfortunate for Billy Bunter of the Remove, that he grinned as Loder passed him. Whether Bunter was grinning at Loder, or whether he was not, Loder did not waste time in inquiring. He reached at Bunter, nipped a fat ear between a finger and thumb, and pulled.



"I say, Loder, you tick, who's got relations at Blackmoor?" Billy Bunter was hooting through Loder's keyhole, when Loder himself came striding down the corridor. The Sixth Former leaped at Bunter and let out his foot. Thud! "Who—yoooooop! Whooooop!" The fat junior gave a fearful yell as the boot landed on his tight trousers.

"Wow!" roared Bunter.

Loder went into the House, leaving the fat Owl of the Remove rubbing a burning ear and glaring after him with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Billy Bunter on the Warpath!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"That beast Loder's gone to his study!" said Billy Bunter.

"Has he?" asked Bob.

"Well, I saw him go down the Sixth Form passage, so he must have gone to his study!" said Bunter. "I say, the beast pulled my ear, just because Skinner checked him about his convict relations. I say, all the Sixth are out—there's nobody there but Loder. See?"

"Not quite!" said Bob, staring at the fat Owl. "Suppose you explain what you mean, old fat man. That is, of course, if you mean anything."

"Well, it would be rather a lark to lock the beast in his study, and leave him sticking there when the bell goes for class!"

Harry Wharton & Co. laughed.

"Quite a lark," agreed Johnny Bull.

"Trot along and do it!"

"Well, I was thinking that one of you fellows might do it," explained Bunter.

"Think again!" suggested Nugent.

"There's absolutely no risk!" said Bunter, blinking seriously at the Famous Five through his big spectacles. "If there were any risk, I'd do it like a shot, of course. I've got pluck, I hope."

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast," said Bob Cherry, solemnly; and his comrades chuckled.

"Safe as houses," urged Bunter.

"You go, Bob—you see, you step quietly along the passage—"

"Do I?" murmured Bob.

"All of a sudden, you open Loder's door, and grab the key from the inside—"

"Um!"

"Jam it in the outside, and lock the door," said Bunter. "Easy as falling off a form! Loder will only see your hand, if he sees anything—and he can't know a fellow by his hand. You leave him locked in. He will have to get out of the window when the bell goes—and he will be late for class—and the Head will jaw him—and very likely give him lines. See?" Bunter chuckled. "No end of a lark on Loder, what?"

"No end!" agreed Bob.

"And it will serve him quite right for pulling a fellow's ear!"

"Quite right!"

"Then you'll do it, old chap?" asked Bunter, eagerly.

"I'll wait till Loder pulls my ear," said Bob.

"Oh, don't be an ass! He's pulled my ear!" yapped Bunter. "I say Wharton, if Bob's funky, will you go and lock Loder in? You're captain of the Form, you know."

"It isn't one of the Form Captain's duties to lock prefects in their studies," answered Harry. "Give it a miss, fathead!"

"I say, Nugent, you've got more pluck than Wharton and Cherry! I say, will you go and lock that beast in?"

"Hardly!"

"What about you, Bull?"

"Fathead!" answered Johnny Bull.

"Inky, old man, you've got tons of pluck—"

"The tonfulness is terrific!" grinned the Nabob of Bhamipur. "But the esteemed and infuriated Loder is safer left alone, my absurd Bunter."

"Beast!" said Bunter.

Bunter was annoyed.

Locking that unpleasant prefect in his study seemed, to Bunter, a jolly good idea. Having thought out that jolly good idea, Bunter was prepared to place it at the disposal of the Famous Five, and leave them to carry it out. But it seemed that no member of that Co. was prepared to act as a catspaw.

"Let's see you do it, old fat man!" suggested Bob Cherry.

Bunter rubbed his ear. There was still a pain in that fat ear.

"Blessed if I don't," he said. "I'll show you fellows that I'm jolly well not afraid of that bully, so, yah!"

And Bunter, taking his courage in both hands, so to speak, rolled away towards the Sixth Form studies.

The Famous Five, grinning, followed him there. They did not expect to see Bunter carry out that jolly good idea. They fully expected him to change his fat mind when he arrived in the Sixth.

Bunter paused at the corner of the passage, and blinked along it. Not a Sixth Form man was to be seen.

Really, it looked safe.

Loder was in—but everybody else seemed to be out. There was a senior games practice going on, on Big Side, which drew most of the Sixth. Five minutes ago Bunter had seen Loder walk into that passage, and had no doubt that he had gone to his study, probably to smoke a cigarette.

For a long minute, Bunter stood blinking along the passage through his big spectacles, the Famous Five watching him, with grinning faces.

Then the fat Owl tiptoed down the passage.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob. "He's going it!"

Bunter's progress was slow. The
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nearer he drew to Loder's door, the more his courage, such as it was, oozed away.

A sound from any of the studies would have sent him scuttling. But there was no sound from any of the studies.

He reached Loder's door at last.

From the end of the passage, the juniors watched him, quite curiously. Billy Bunter, with a pain in his fat ear, was on the warpath. But his courage had oozed away more and more; and at Loder's door, there was a long wait.

Twice they saw him raise a fat paw to the door-handle—and drop it again, without touching that door-handle.

Then, screwing up his courage, the fat Owl suddenly grabbed the door-handle, turned it, and groped inside.

Bunter really was "going it."

His fat hand whisked out, with the key in it. He jammed it, in frantic haste, into the outside of the lock, and turned it.

Billy Bunter was not usually quick in his motions, or deft in his actions. But terror of the bully of the Sixth made him both rapid and deft on this occasion. Almost in a twinkling, he had captured the key, and locked Loder's door on the outside.

He gasped with relief when it was done.

"Oh, crumbs!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "He's done it!"

"The donefulness is terrific."

Billy Bunter grinned along the passage at the Famous Five. He had done it—there was no doubt that he had done it. Loder's door was locked on the outside; and it was the masterly work of Billy Bunter.

The next item on the programme would naturally have been a roar of wrath from Loder's study. But there was no roar.

It was amazing that a fellow in the study had not seen what had happened, though it had happened too quickly for intervention. But it seemed that Loder could not have noticed it, as there was no sound from the study.

Bunter grinned.

On the safe side of a locked door, Billy Bunter was not afraid of Gerald Loder, or anybody else.

He stooped to the keyhole, and called into the study.

"I say, Loder! Beast, bully, rotter! I say, how many relations have you got in chokey?"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry.

Bunter was going strong. With great artfulness, he was speaking through Loder's keyhole in a disguised voice. Nobody inside the study would know what fellow was speaking. It was a chance for the fat Owl to tell Gerald Loder what he thought of him; and Bunter was not missing the chance.

"I say, Loder, you rotten bully! I say, you sneaking tick! Who goes down to the Cross Keys after lights out?" hooted Bunter through the keyhole. "Who's got relations in chokey? Yah!"

There was no answer from the study.

"Loder can't be there!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I say—Oh, crumbs! Look!"

A door further up the passage opened.

It was Walker's study door.

But it was not Walker who came out! It was Loder! Walker followed him.

The Sixth Form studies were not so deserted as Bunter happily supposed. And Loder, evidently, had not gone to his own study, but to Walker's. In that study, he had heard Bunter.

"Beast! Bully! Rotter! Swob!"

Bunter was hooting through Loder's keyhole, as Loder came out of Walker's study and stared at him. "I say,

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Loder, you tick, who's got relations at Blackmoor? Who—yooop! Whooooop!"

Loder reached him with a bound.

Walker stayed in his doorway, grinning. Loder leaped at Bunter, and let out his foot.

Bunter, stooping at the keyhole, was favourably placed to receive it.

Thud!

The fat Owl gave a fearful yell as Loder's boot landed on his tight trousers. He rolled over headlong in the passage.

"Yoo o o-h o o o p! Yarooooooo!" roared Bunter. "I say—ow! Oh crikey! Is—is—is that Loder! Oh lor! I say, it wasn't me—"

"Lend me your ash, Walker!" yelled Loder.

"Here you are!"

"I say—yaroooh! I say, I never—yooop! It—it wasn't me, Loder—ow! Help! Fire! Murder!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Billy Bunter squirmed, and wriggled, and roared. The swipes of the ash came down on him like rain.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooh! Oh crikey! I say, you fellows—whooooooo!" Bunter bounded to his feet and fled for his fat life. "Owl! Yow! Wow!"

Loder, scowling, went back into Walker's study to finish his interrupted cigarette there. Billy Bunter headed for parts unknown, letting out a fearful yell at every bound.

"Poor old Bunter!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five walked away, the entertainment being over. Billy Bunter was no longer on the warpath! It was likely to be long, long before he went on the warpath, with Loder of the Sixth for his game!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Guilty Man!

"THE game's up!"

It was James Loder, No. 22, of Blackmoor, who muttered the words.

On that sunny September afternoon, while the Greyfriars fellows were in class, Convict No. 22 lay hidden in a thicket on Courtfield Common.

Unshaven, stubbly, grimy, haggard, the wretched man was feeling at the end of his tether.

The hunt had been long, and it had been hard.

Now, as he lay hidden in the thickets and heard a footstep approaching by the footpath across the common, he told himself that the game was up.

He had no doubt that it was the step of one of the searchers; the innumerable searchers who were combing the countryside for him.

Nearly two weeks had elapsed since No. 22 had escaped from Blackmoor prison, far away in the west. In his desperate flight, he had crossed the southern counties, hoping to shake off pursuit, the further he got from the grim prison on the western moors.

But it was hopeless—and he knew that it was hopeless. Like Ishmael of old, his hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against him.

Again and again he had been traced; again and again he had been seen. On the coast of Kent, he had a faint hope of getting away in some craft, but the hope had failed him: the hunt was too close.

A few days ago he had hidden in the rocks of the Pike, over Pegg Bay. Mr. Lascelles had found him there, and attempted to capture him—with disas-

trous results for the games master of Greyfriars. But he had had to flee from that refuge: and he had skulked in Popper Court woods, till the keepers traced him, and he had to flee again. Yesterday, only Coker's boat on the Sark had saved him. Now the woods were being beaten for him, and he had taken to the open common: and it was clear that it could not last much longer. He had put up a hard fight; but the game was up.

James Loder, No. 22, had less chance, in fact, than any other escaped convict might have had. Not one deed of violence had been traced to him, all through the days and nights of desperate flight.

Even in the struggle with Larry Lascelles on the Pike, he had only defended himself, and it was a fall from a cliff that had injured the Greyfriars games master.

Whether he was, or was not, guilty of the crime for which he had been sent to Blackmoor, No. 22 had added no crime since.

He was still in the tattered garb of a convict—he was hungry and forlorn and at the end of his tether. Yet, as he peered from the thicket and saw a man of about his own size coming along the footpath through the bushes, he did not think of seizing on him and obtaining by force the change of clothes he so sorely needed for his own safety.

He had said that he was an innocent man; and he acted, at all events, like a man averse to crime.

He feared that it was a police officer on the path. But as he peered through the brambles like a hunted animal, he saw that it was a civilian—a man of about thirty, well-dressed, carrying a suitcase.

No doubt some passenger who had arrived at Courtfield Station by train, and was walking to Greyfriars School, or some place in that direction; the footpath across the common being a short cut.

His clothes, his suitcase, would have been an inestimable prize to No. 22. But the hapless man shrank from the thought of the deed of violence that would be needed to possess himself of them.

With haggard eyes, keeping in cover, he watched the man draw nearer, and waited for him to pass.

But as the man approached, and his face was more clearly seen, a strange change came over the convict.

His eyes gleamed, his face paled. Evidently the man with the suitcase was no stranger to his sight.

"Lagden!" breathed the convict. "Stephen Lagden!"

His eyes, from the thicket, were fixed on the man with a stare of deadly intensity; his hands clenched convulsively.

The man was about his own age, his own size; sturdy in build, elastic in movement. His face was good-looking, but for a weakness in the chin and a trace of shiftiness in the eyes.

He came swinging along the path, and would have passed the hidden convict unseen. But, as if moved by an uncontrollable impulse, No. 22 suddenly leaped out into the path and confronted him.

The man came to a sudden halt with a startled exclamation. His eyes bulged at the sudden sight of the haggard, tattered convict.

There was a stick under his arm, and he leaped back a pace or two and slipped it into his hand, grasping it.

"Who—who are you?" he panted.

"Stand back!"

"You do not know me, Stephen

Lagden?" asked No. 22, in a tone of concentrated bitterness.

The man with the suitcase stared at him.

"How should I know you?" he exclaimed. "Who are you? You look like an escaped convict—stand back! Keep your distance, or I will knock you senseless."

He half-raised the heavy walking-stick.

"You do not know me?" repeated James Loder. "You do not read the newspapers, Lagden—"

Lagden gave a violent start.

"You are—are—"

"I have changed since I was games master at Okeham and you were a Form-master there!" said No. 22 bitterly. "Look at me, Lagden—look on your own handiwork! Look at what you have made of me!"

Lagden was looking at him with an intense gaze. His face was pale, and drops of perspiration started out on his forehead. His grip on the stick was convulsive. But the convict made no movement to attack him.

"You!" said Lagden at last.

"I, James Loder, sentenced to three years at Blackmoor for your crime, Lagden," said No. 22. "Are you proud of your work now that you see it?"

Lagden licked his dry lips.

He cast a quick, furtive glance to right and left before he answered. But the spot was solitary; there were no cars to hear.

"You should not have meddled," he answered. "Had you left me alone that night, you would have kept clear! Who asked you to meddle?"

"I heard a thief in the night—I came down to prevent a robbery," said No. 22. "I found you with a mask on your face at the open safe. What was an honest man to do?"

Lagden's lip curled.

"You look like an honest man—now!" he sneered.

The convict's eyes burned at him.

"You are not wise to taunt me," he said. "Your stick would not save you from my hands! If I chose to become what you have done your best to make me, you would be in terrible danger now, Stephen Lagden."

"Keep your distance, or—"

"I shall not hurt you!" said No. 22 contemptuously. "Wringing your rascally neck would not help me. Nothing will help or, or save me, but your confession."

"That is likely!" sneered Lagden.

"No! Yet even you, bad man as you are, must have been tormented with remorse, from the knowledge that you sent an innocent man to a living death in your place. Some day remorse may be too strong for you, and you will speak!"

Lagden shrugged his shoulders.

"It was you or me!" he said cynically. "You should have kept clear! You caught me in the very act—you left me no choice. You struck me down. I have the mark of your blow on me now. You asked for what followed!"

"And what followed?" said the convict hoarsely. "We struggled, and in the struggle you contrived to slip into my pocket the bundle of banknotes you had taken from the safe. I never knew. I thought you must be mad, when they all came crowding and you accused me—me!—of being the thief, and claimed that you had interrupted me in breaking into the safe!"

"Presence of mind!" sneered Lagden. "But for that I should have gone to Blackmoor! You asked for it!"

"I thought you must be mad—till the police came, and they searched, and found the banknotes on me!" said Convict No. 22 hoarsely. "After that, all that I could say was useless. It was my word against yours, and the stolen banknotes were in my possession! And the blow I had given you—the blow that kept your jemmy from cracking my skull—that was called violence—the violence of a thief—"

"You asked for it!"

The convict made a convulsive movement, his eyes blazing. Lagden backed away and lifted the stick.

"Keep your distance, you fool! I've no wish to hurt you, but if you lift a finger, I'll stun you and hand you over to the police!"

"Will you help me?"

"Help you!" repeated Lagden.

"Is it not up to you?" said the convict bitterly. "I went to Blackmoor in your place! I have served a year of the sentence that should have been yours. I am a hunted man. You have clothes in that suitcase! You know what I need!"

"You must be mad, I think!" said Lagden. "I cannot help you if I would! You're mad! Of course, I cannot help you—and will not! Keep your distance!"

(Continued on next page.)

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He backed another pace, but the convict followed him up, and halted again. Gripping the stick, he watched the hunted man warily.

"If I were fool enough to help you, and it came out, the tale you told at Okeham would be remembered. I might be in danger! I've not left the best of reputations behind me at Okeham!" added Lagden, with a sneer. "Something came out—long after you were gone—about my affairs on the Turf."

"You've left Okeham, or you would not be here."

"I was politely asked to leave!" sneered Lagden. "If it's any comfort to you, I've not had a good time. I never got another berth; and I've been glad to put my name down at Leggett & Teggers, and jump at the chance of a temporary post at Greyfriars." He laughed. "From what I've seen in the papers, you got me the job."

"What can you mean?"

"I'm going there as games master, for the term, in the place of a man who was knocked out a week ago—by you!"

"I never knocked him out!" said No. 22 fiercely. "He collared me, and we fell over a cliff together. I carried him to safety afterwards—at what risk to myself you can guess."

"Yes, I saw that in the papers—you always were a fool!" said Lagden. "But never such a fool as in asking me to help you! Stand aside—I am going on! I cannot risk being seen in talk with an escaped convict!"

No. 22 panted.

"You are asking for it!" he muttered, between his teeth.

"Stand back!"

"I'm not going to touch you!" said James Loder scornfully. "I have suffered as an innocent man—and may do so again—but I will never suffer as a guilty one! If you have a rag of decency, a tincture of compassion for the man you have wronged and ruined, leave that suitcase here, and give me a chance!"

"Stand back!"

The man from Blackmoor stood looking at him for a long moment in silence. Then he stepped back into the thickets. "Go!" he said. "Go—while you are safe!"

Without another word, Stephen Lagden went, passing him quickly, and breaking into a run, towards the road, as soon as he was past the spot where the convict stood. His running footsteps died away, and were lost to the ears of the hunted man.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Hand of Fate!

"I AM lost!"

James Loder, No. 22 of Blackmoor, muttered the words aloud as he stood on the footpath through the hawthorns, where the new games master of Greyfriars had left him.

There was utter despair in his worn, haggard face.

An irresistible impulse had moved him to confront Lagden when he saw him. Now, when he had spared the man who had injured him, and allowed him to pass in peace, he could scarcely believe that the man was base enough to refuse him help.

For a year he had served the sentence that should justly have been Stephen Lagden's, and the remainder of it awaited him when he was retaken—and the cold-hearted man left him to his fate.

He had not made matters better, but

worse, by revealing himself to the man he had known in other days.

Desperate as his situation was, he had thrown the pursuers, for the moment, at least, off his track, and had a breathing space. But that was over, now that he had been seen.

If Lagden betrayed him—

It was any other man's duty to help the police to secure him. But it was not the duty of the man who had done the deed for which he suffered. Yet in his heart he felt that Stephen Lagden would not merely leave him to his fate, but would give information where he was to be found! And that was the man he had spared!

If it was so, if the man's baseness went to that length, his game was up.

The whole countryside was being scoured for him. It was useless to attempt to flee again. Where he was he might lurk unseen till dark, and then make another attempt to get clear. But that depended on Lagden's silence. Would he be silent?

James Loder plunged through the thickets, to a spot where a tall oak tree grew high over the hawthorns. He clambered actively into the tree, and from a high branch scanned the open common, in the direction Lagden had taken.

Lagden had run till he was clear of the thickets, in the evident fear that No. 22 might change his mind, and attempt to take what he needed by force. But at a distance he dropped into a swift walk, and James Loder could see him, tramping along, with the suitcase swinging in his hand.

Twice he turned his head to look back, as if in fear of pursuit; but he was relieved to see nothing of the convict. He did not see the haggard face that watched from the thick, high branches of the oak.

He reached the road that ran across the common.

The gaze of the man in the oak grew intense. If Lagden, on the road, turned to the right—the direction of Greyfriars School—he had a chance yet. It would mean, or, at least, might mean, that the man would be silent, and leave him his last chance, such as it was. If he turned to the left, it meant that he would walk back to Courtfield, whence he had come—and that could only mean that he intended to inform the police where Convict No. 22 was to be found.

James Loder watched him in an anguish of anxiety.

He was at the end of his tether—his game was up. Yet he clung passionately to the last, remotest chance of keeping his liberty. It was all he had; he had lost everything else. Would his enemy leave him even that?

Lagden stepped out into the road from the common, and halted. He stood for a moment or two, as if undecided.

Then he moved restlessly to and fro, his stick under his arm, as if in uncertain thought.

The convict in the oak, watching him across the expanse of grass, could read his thoughts! He was thinking of going back to Courtfield to lay information. Some rag of conscience, some twinge of remorse, made him hesitate. How would he decide?

On his decision depended all that the hunted man had left. He watched the man on the road, with throbbing heart.

Lagden turned at last in the direction of Courtfield.

James Loder gave a groan as he saw it. But, after a few steps, the man hesitated again, and stopped. Once more his conscience, such as it was, gave him pause.

From the direction of Greyfriars a

car came in sight, driven at a reckless speed. Four men, loudly dressed, with flushed faces, smoking cigars, were packed in it.

It was some rowdy party from the Wapshot races. There was little traffic on the road over the common; and perhaps, on a clear road, the racing men felt it safe to let the car out—or, more probably, they did not care. Anyhow the car came rocketing along, wildly and recklessly driven, more than once zigzagging across the road. Had there been any traffic, an accident could hardly have been avoided.

But the road was clear, except for the figure of Stephen Lagden. He had his back to the car, and did not see it; and the driver, perhaps, did not see him, for he sounded no warning.

James Loder, from the oak, watched the car come tearing along. Instinctively, forgetting that the man was his enemy, he shouted a warning to Lagden to look out.

But the distance was too great for his voice to carry. Lagden did not hear him.

For a minute or more the new games master of Greyfriars had been standing still—yet in doubt! Then suddenly he started walking—towards Courtfield!

His mind was made up.

He was going back to the town—and James Loder, No. 22, knew what that meant, and could only mean, that he had determined to do what would have been a guiltless man's duty—inform the police where No. 22 was to be found!

The convict gave a groan.

It was the end!

And then, the next moment, a cry of horror burst from him.

The wildly driven car, packed with racing roughs, came rushing on and overtook Lagden. At the sound of it, close at hand, he turned suddenly. Even then it would have passed him with a foot to spare, but in turning he stumbled on a loose stone and pitched forward.

A careful driver would have avoided an accident. But the careless, reckless road-hog who was driving the car had no chance of that. Instantly, it seemed, as Lagden stumbled forward, the car struck him, and he was hurled bodily to the roadside, falling in a heap.

He did not stir after he had fallen.

"Good heavens!" breathed No. 22, his face white as chalk under its grime and stubble.

The car swerved, and slowed.

He saw four startled, fear-stricken faces looking back at the fallen man by the roadside.

But it was only for a moment. Then the car accelerated, and vanished along the road, in a cloud of dust.

James Loder stared blankly.

He had not expected that—though, from the looks of the ruffians in the car, he might have expected it!

They had knocked down a pedestrian, they had little doubt that he was killed, no doubt at all that he was badly injured, and they had fled immediately to save themselves from the consequences, abandoning the man they had knocked down!

"Oh heavens!" breathed James Loder.

The car, roaring all out, disappeared in a few moments. The long, lonely white road was left untenanted, save by that still figure that lay on the grass verge, the fallen suitcase close beside it.

No. 22's eyes were fixed in horror on that figure.

Lagden did not move.

He had brought his fate upon himself. But for his determination to betray the man he had already cruelly



Instead of meeting the ball with his foot, Coker met it with his nose. "Ow!" he gasped. From the window the games master watched with a smiling face. There was no doubt that Coker's quality as a footballer had caught his eye.

wronged, he would not have had his face to Courtfield and his back to the oncoming car. He would have seen his danger in time, and evaded it. It was his own ruthlessness that had struck him down.

But James Loder was not thinking of that. As he looked at the distant, still form, stretched by the road, he was feeling thankful that, in spite of all his bitter wrongs, he had not raised his hand against the man. From the bottom of his heart he was glad of that.

Standing up on the branch, holding to a high bough, he scanned the common and the road. The dastardly crew in the car were gone. Was there no other help for the man who lay there?

Not a living form was in sight.

The convict breathed hard.

He could not let the man—obviously terribly injured—lie there without helping him. He could not!

If it cost him his last chance of liberty he had to help the man who had been his unscrupulous enemy. If he was dead, as he looked, he could not help him; but if he yet lived, he could—and must!

He scrambled down the tree and ran across the grass towards the road. He crossed the distance swiftly, and dropped on his knees beside the man who lay so still.

"Lagden!" he panted.

The man neither spoke nor stirred. His face was terribly cut and bruised, and covered with blood. He hardly seemed to breathe.

There was no enmity in the convict's heart now. There was only pity for the man who had wronged him, the man who, a few minutes ago, strong and up-standing, now lay, a shattered wreck, before him.

He groped over the man's heart. It was still beating. Stephen Lagden, at all events, yet lived.

He lived—and might yet live if he

had help, care, medical attention! Convict No. 22 swept the lonely road with his eyes.

No one was in sight. Leaving the suitcase where it lay, he picked up the insensible man and carried him bodily across the grass to the patch of thickets where, only a quarter of an hour ago, they had stood and talked. At a short distance from the footpath was the pond. He laid the insensible man down by the water's edge, took a handkerchief from Lagden's pocket, dipped it in water, and bathed his face and forehead.

It was all he could do. For long, long minutes he tended the senseless man.

But Stephen Lagden's eyes did not open—no sound came from his lips; no motion from his inert limbs. And No. 22 had to realise that he was not merely stunned, it was a case of concussion, and it might be days, or even weeks, before those shut eyes opened again to knowledge of life.

With the wet handkerchief in his hand he stood and stared at the battered, insensible face of the man who had sent him to a living death! The man was on his hands—helpless, in need of immediate care, and he was a hunted man, liable to instant arrest as soon as he was seen!

What was he to do?

To abandon the man, to leave him to his fate, as he knew only too well Lagden would have done in his place, was easy, but impossible. But what was he to do?

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

A Change of Identity!

JAMES LODER stirred at last. He looked out of the thickets—over a wide expanse, solitary, deserted. On the road a motor-bus roared by, too far for a call, even

if Convict No. 22, in his tattered garb of broad arrows, dared to let himself be seen. It roared on and disappeared.

No. 22 cut out of the thickets to the road and picked up the suitcase and ran back with it.

He had decided what he was going to do.

He was going to get help for the man who had wronged him. But he was not going to hand himself over to the grip of the law—the law that in his case, if in no other, had erred so terribly.

In Lagden's suitcase, he hoped, at least, would be a change of clothes. He would be able to appear, without betraying the fact that he was a convict, and send help to the insensible man.

The suitcase was locked, but he easily found Lagden's key-ring and a key to fit, and unlocked it.

Then his stubbly face darkened with disappointment.

It was not a large suitcase. No doubt the games master had a trunk, which was being sent on by the railway.

In the suitcase were only a few shirts, socks, pyjamas, shaving materials, and such things; no more than a man might need till his baggage arrived.

No. 22 breathed hard.

He had to change his clothes before he could let any eye fall on him. He was thinking, as was natural, of his own chances of escape; but he was thinking quite as much of the wretched man who lay there like a log, and who would surely die if he was not cared for.

There was only one thing to be done, and the convict, with a gentle hand, stripped Lagden of his outer garments. These he donned in place of the tattered broad arrows.

The tattered convict garb he placed

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(Continued from page 13.)

on the insensible man—the only garments available for him.

The grim thought crossed his mind as he did so, that there was retributive justice in this, for had the truth been known, it was Stephen Lagden who would have been branded with the broad arrows.

It was quickly done, and he laid the senseless man, now clad in the tattered convict garb, as comfortably as he could on a bed of fallen leaves.

Then he hurriedly sorted out soap, brushes, and razor from the suitcase. He set the shaving mirror up on a gnarled tree-trunk, and, with water from the pond, washed and shaved.

The difference it made in his appearance was amazing.

Years dropped from him. Ten minutes ago it would have been difficult to tell his age. Now he looked a handsome man, under thirty.

He smiled faintly at his reflection in the mirror.

What he saw there was a pale but handsome face and a sturdy figure, well dressed in well-cut clothes.

At Blackmoor Prison, perhaps, he would have been known as No. 22; but even that was doubtful, for he had left the upper lip unshaven, and a moustache made a considerable difference to his appearance, as it was known at Blackmoor.

Larry Lascelles, had he seen him, would never have dreamed that this was the man with whom he had struggled on the Pike; Harry Wharton & Co. would never have thought of guessing that he was the man they had chased on the Sark.

It was the man who lay on the bed of leaves, with disfigured face and garbed in broad arrows, who would have been taken for the convict had anyone chanced on the spot.

No. 22 smiled. He had a sense of elation, of renewed hope, as he found himself clean and decently dressed once more.

But his face grew grave again as he turned to Lagden. There was no sign of returning consciousness in the battered face of the new games master of Greyfriars. He breathed, and that was all.

There was pity in James Loder's look; but in his heart of hearts he could not help feeling that this was a judgment on the doer of wrong. For the evil-doer there is always a reckoning, come it slow or fast; and Stephen Lagden's reckoning had come! Mercilessly, he had sent an innocent man to prison in his place; ruthlessly he had determined to rob him of his last chance of freedom—and the outcome was—this!

Quietly, the convict repacked the articles he had taken from the suitcase, locked it, and slipped the key-ring into his pocket.

Lagden had told him that he was going to Greyfriars as a temporary master, for the term, supplied by the scholastic agency, Leggott & Teggors. It

was very unlikely that he was known in Courtfield, where he had arrived only an hour or two ago, by train. The man who wore his clothes, his hat, his boots, his wrist-watch, could safely use his name—if it was necessary to give a name.

There was no time to lose. Now that No. 22 was ready for his venture he lost no time. Stooping over the senseless man, he lifted him gently.

Leaving the thickets, he crossed the common to the roadside.

To carry the insensible man miles on his back was impossible; and even had it been possible, it would be quicker to flag a passing car, even if he had to wait some time for one.

He laid Lagden in the grass by the road and waited.

It was ten minutes or more before a car appeared in sight—a large, handsome Rolls. It was driven by a liveried chauffeur, and inside sat a tall, angular gentleman with a bristling white moustache and an eyeglass stuck in his eye.

No. 22 had seen that angular gentleman before, while lurking in Popper Court woods, and had heard a keeper address him as Sir Hilton. It was, in fact, Sir Hilton Popper, the lord of Popper Court.

James Loder stepped into the road and waved to the driver. The car slowed down, and Sir Hilton's eyeglass gleamed from the window.

"What is it?" he barked. "Who are you, sir, and what do you want? Why have you stopped my car? Good gad!" Sir Hilton Popper broke off as his eyes fell on the figure by the roadside. "Is—is that the convict?"

"The man has been knocked down by a car which did not stop for him, sir!" said No. 22. "If you will give him a lift into Courtfield—"

Sir Hilton gave a snort.

He was rather a particular old gentleman, and disinclined to give a lift in his magnificent car to a tattered convict.

"He is seriously injured, sir!" said No. 22 quietly. "He has not moved or spoken since he was knocked down."

Another snort from Sir Hilton! But he was, at heart, a humane man, in his own way; moreover, he was a magistrate, and as such, it was his duty to secure the escaped convict!

He snorted—but he snorted assent.

The chauffeur descended, and he and James Loder between them lifted the insensible man into the car.

"You had better come also!" snapped Sir Hilton. "I will drive you to Courtfield Police Station. You had better give an account of this. Step in."

No. 22 hesitated a moment.

Then he stepped into the car.

He had nothing to fear from Stephen Lagden. It was out of the power of his enemy to denounce him now.

And, little reason as he had to feel kindly towards the man who had so bitterly wronged him, he was anxious to know whether Lagden would live.

It was later, as he sat in the car rushing on towards Courtfield, that another thought came into his mind.

If Lagden remained unconscious, if it was, as it looked, a case of serious concussion, he was safe in his enemy's clothes and his enemy's name, and could take his own time in making future plans. It was necessary for him to know.

If Lagden did not speak, and obviously he could not for a long time, there was no doubt that he would be taken, unquestionably, for the escaped convict when he was driven in Sir Hilton's car to the police station.

He was in the convict's garb, and his face was battered out of all recognition. There could be no doubt!

Certainly Inspector Grimes was not likely to suspect that the convict was the well-dressed, well-spoken man who had flagged Sir Hilton Popper's car, and brought the injured man in!

Again it seemed to James Loder that he saw in this the hand of fate!

If Lagden was taken for the convict—taken to Blackmoor—as it seemed now that he must be, it was stern justice—the justice that would have been done by the law, had the judges known the facts! And so long as he remained unable to speak, the man he had wronged would be at leisure to seek safety at a distance—he would be secure by the time they learned at Blackmoor that they had the wrong man!

The baronet's car ran into Courtfield High Street. Outside the police station as it stopped a constable saluted Sir Hilton; and No. 22 recognised him as the man who had been upset in the river the day before. He felt a chill for a moment under the officer's eyes; but in those eyes there was no recognition—and James Loder breathed again.

He was no longer Convict No. 22, of Blackmoor—for a time, at least, for days, and perhaps for weeks, the guilty man was to take the place of the innocent one—a strange and amazing turn of fortune of which he could hardly have dreamed!

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Startling News!

"I SAY, you fellows! Has Lagden blown in yet?"

"Haven't seen him!" answered Bob Cherry.

"He was coming this afternoon!" said Bunter peevishly. "He ought to be here by now, bother him!"

"Fearfully anxious to get on to games practice?" grinned Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Not! Besides, even if he's a beast, as I suppose he is, he can't be beast enough to start on us first day!" said Billy Bunter. "I say, I want to ask him about whether he knows Loder's relations, you know."

"You fat ass!" said Harry Wharton. "You'd better not ask him anything of the kind."

"Well, I want to know," said Bunter. "He's sure to be able to tell us, if he were at Okeham when Loder's relation was sent to chokey—if he knew James Loder, I dare say he knew whether he had a relation at Greyfriars—see? Anyhow, I'm jolly well going to ask him."

"Fathead!"

"Yah!" retorted Bunter.

Billy Bunter was not the only fellow by many a one who was curious to see the new games master.

For a week or more the escaped convict had been the chief topic at the school, mainly owing to the fact that he had the same surname as Loder of the Sixth, and that Gerald Loder was so excessively "shirty" on the subject.

The fact that the new games master was the man he had "knocked out" at Okeham School, in Devonshire, naturally interested all the fellows.

And there was no doubt that Stephen Lagden was the man who had been mixed up in the Okeham affair with James Loder. It was certain that he knew James Loder—and it was quite possible that he might know something

of James' family, and whether he had a relative at Greyfriars.

After class that day the fellows expected to hear that the new games master had arrived; but he had not yet turned up. It was learned that he had been booked to arrive at Courtfield by the three o'clock train; which gave him ample time to get to the school, even if he walked.

But there had, apparently, been some delay, for nothing was seen of him; and when Gosling was asked, he answered that Mr. Lagden had not yet come.

Having nothing special to do till tea-time, the Famous Five walked up the road towards Courtfield common, with the idea of meeting Mr. Lagden on his way, if he was walking.

They were rather keen to make the acquaintance of the new games master; though they certainly had not, like Billy Bunter, any intention of asking him impertinent questions.

They reached the common, and stopped at the spot where the footpath branched off, which was a short cut to the town.

Nobody was in sight at that spot, except a boy on a bicycle, who, as he came nearer, they recognised as Solly Lazarus, of Courtfield.

"That man Lagden must have lost his train and another train after it," remarked Bob Cherry. "No sign of him about! If he's walking, old beans, is he walking by the road, or by the footpath? Guess?"

"Well, as he's a stranger here, I suppose he would walk by the road," said Frank Nugent. "He wouldn't know the footpath."

"But if he's got a tongue, and very likely he has, he could ask the way before he started!" said Bob. "Anybody could tell him."

"That's so!" said Harry. "Which ever way we go, he will be on the other, ten to one, and we shall miss him."

"The missfulness will probably be preposterous!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"There comes Solly, of the tribe of Lazarus!" said Bob. "Let's ask him if he's seen a benighted stranger mooching about."

Solly, as he spotted the Greyfriars juniors, slowed down, and jumped off his machine.

"I thay, you fellows, heard the newth?" he asked.

"What's the jolly old news, if any?" asked Bob.

"They've caught the convict!"

"Oh, my, hat! No. 22 caught!" exclaimed Bob.

All the Famous Five were interested at once by that news. It had been expected hourly; but No. 22 had been so elusive that it came as a surprise, expected as it was.

"Yeth—they've got him!" said Solly. "Everybody in the town is talking about it. They've got him thafe now!"

"Well, I suppose we ought to be glad to hear it!" said Harry Wharton slowly. "But—but I can't help feeling sorry for him. He was a convict—but I'm sure that he was not a bad man."

"He had some jolly good points, anyhow!" said Johnny Bull. "Look at what he did for old Larry—and then for Smithy in the river!"

"How did they get him, Solly?" asked Nugent.

"He was knocked down by a car, and a man found him on the road, from what I've heard!" said Solly. "Old Popper put him in his car and took him along to the poleeth station."

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry. "Not badly hurt, I hope?"

"Yeth!"

The juniors' faces became very grave. Convict or no convict, they could not help having a kindly feeling for No. 22. The man who had carried Larry Lascelles down the Pike on his back, who had risked everything to fish Smithy out of the river, could not be all bad, whatever he had done.

"Where is he now?" asked Harry.

"In the prison hospital," answered Solly. "He was awfully knocked about—he can't be taken back to Blackmoor yet, I hear. I've heard that his face was so cut about that they wouldn't have known him, except by his clothes."

"Poor chap!" said Bob.

"Rotten!" said Nugent. "How did it happen, Solly?"

"Nobody theems to know that," answered Solly. "The car that knocked him down must have driven on. Perhaps they were afraid of thtopping, when they saw he was a convict—or he might have tried to hold up the car, you know, to get away in it—nobody knows! He was found on the road and taken to the station in old Popper's car, inthensible."

"Well, that's that!" said Bob. "I dare say it's better for the poor chap to be caught—he must have had an awful time since he got away. But I'm awfully sorry he's been hurt."

"The sorrowfulness is terrific!" Solly put a leg over his machine again.

"Hold on a minute," said Bob. "Seen a man on the road, Solly—"

"Thix or theven!" answered Solly.

"Well, we want only one!" said Bob.

"Man we're expecting at Greyfriars, but he's late."

"What's he like?"

"Goodness knows—never seen him," answered Bob. "He's never been to Greyfriars before. But as he came by train, probably he would be carrying a bag or something. Seen any sportsman with a bag or anything?"

Solly shook his head.

"No, I haven't theen him," he answered.

And, with a nod to the Greyfriars fellows, Solly rode on his way.

The chums of the Remove were left with very serious faces. The news of what had happened to the convict was a shock to them.

"Well, are we going on, waiting here, or trotting back?" asked Bob. "If we keep on, it's even chances of missing Lagden."

"Hang on here a bit," said Harry Wharton. "If he's coming at all, he can't be much longer."

"That's so," agreed Bob.

There was a wayside seat at hand, and the juniors walked to it, to sit down while they waited. A few minutes later a Sixth Form man from Greyfriars came in sight. He stared at the juniors on the long wooden seat.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Jolly old Loder!" murmured Bob. "I say, think he's on the same trail?"

The juniors grinned. It occurred to them that Gerald Loder might be still more interested in the new games master than they were themselves.

Loder of the Sixth came to a halt and stared at them surlily.

"What are you fags hanging about here for?" he asked.

"Waiting for Steve," answered Bob affably.

"Who?" exclaimed Loder.

"Steve!" said Bob.

"What do you mean, you young idiot?"

"Stephen Lagden," explained Bob. "I fancy our dear old new games master may have lost his way, and we're going to guide him, gently but firmly, to Greyfriars. See?"

Loder scowled.

"You're going to do nothing of the kind!" he snarled. "Go back to the school at once!"

"It's not near lock-up yet, Loder!" said Harry Wharton quietly.

"I've told you to go back to the school!" snapped Loder. "If you're going to argue with a prefect, I'll take you to the Head as soon as I come in. I've no doubt you're hanging about looking for a chance of a row with Higheliffe fellows."

"Nothing of the kind! We came out to meet Mr. Lagden—"

"Rubbish! Go back to the school at once!"

The Famous Five exchanged glances.

Then slowly they rose from the seat. Loder of the Sixth was a prefect, and there was no choice about the matter. He had his excuse for ordering them back to the school. It was true that they were not looking for a row with the Higheliffians; but it was quite likely that there would have been a row if Ponsonby & Co. had come along. A prefect was entitled to use his own judgment—and if Loder chose to judge that they were there looking for trouble, that was that!

"Come on!" said Harry curtly.

The chums of the Remove walked slowly back towards the school.

Loder scowled after them and sat down on the seat. But, as well as if he had told them, they knew that Loder wanted to see the new games master before anyone else at Greyfriars saw him—and the delay in Mr. Lagden's arrival gave him his opportunity. And they could easily guess Loder's reason.

Gerald Loder watched them, scowling, till they were out of sight. Then he sat with his eyes alternately on the road and the footpath. No more than the juniors did he know which way Stephen Lagden would come; but whichever way he came, he would intercept him at that spot and have a word with him before he went on to the school. And on that, Gerald Loder was very keen indeed.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

What's In A Name?

JAMES LODER, No. 22, stopped on the footpath among the Hawthorns, and stood looking at the suitcase that lay there, where he had left it when he carried the injured man to the road.

Clean, well-dressed, a handsome and stalwart young man, James looked utterly unlike the forlorn man who had lurked in the bushes when Stephen Lagden came along there from Courtfield.

Only that same afternoon—but it seemed to James years ago already, so much had been packed into a couple of hours!

Two or three hours ago he had been a hunted and desperate man, at the end of his tether.

Now he was safe!

The hunt was over! The law had got its man—or so the law believed. James Loder was as safe as any man who walked the highways of the county of Kent—till the man in the prison hospital could speak.

And he could not speak!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,494.

The man who had changed his identity, had gone through the ordeal at Courtfield coolly, easily, and safely. Not the faintest suspicion had been aroused.

How could it be?

A respectable, well-dressed man had found the wretched convict insensible on the road, knocked down by a car, and helped to take him in to the police station. How could suspicion fall on such a man?

It was chiefly from anxiety for the injured man that James had lingered to hear the doctor's report on his condition. Bitterly as Lagden had wronged him, he pitied the man on whom so terrible a judgment had fallen. He had been genuinely glad to hear that Lagden's life was not in danger.

He would live, and he would recover.

But whether he would ever recover his senses was another matter. It was a case of concussion—severe concussion—and the man might lie in his present comatose condition for weeks, perhaps for months. Long before that he would be taken to Blackmoor, where James had been in his place, and where now, with more justice, he would be in James' place. By so strange a freak of fortune the law had got its own!

He was the convict's size, he was in the convict's broad-arrow garb, and his face was unrecognisable. There was no doubt on the subject.

Not for a moment would James Loder have dreamed of allowing it to go on in the case of any other man. But Stephen Lagden was the man the law wanted, if the law had only known it. He was guilty of the crime for which a sentence of three years' penal servitude had been passed. Only by treachery had he landed it on another man. Now he was going where he belonged. There was nothing to weigh on No. 22's conscience in that. Lagden was going where he would have gone, had the truth been known. The guilty was taking the place of the innocent.

That was as it should be!

And he could not speak. Even when consciousness came back, when he could speak, it was doubtful whether he would know or remember anything—even his own name! He would live—but that was all!

Justice, in the strangest and most unexpected way, had overtaken him, and put him in the place of his victim.

And now—

The world was before the man who had been hunted! But it was a world that he had to begin again. Except for the clothes he stood in, he had nothing.

Old friends and acquaintances he could not approach without revealing what had happened. Never again could he use his own name. Never could he allow anyone to learn who he was. He had parted with his own identity—and he had parted with it for ever.

At Courtfield he had had to give a name—an address! He had given the name of Stephen Lagden, the address of Greyfriars School, where Lagden was going to take up a temporary post as games master. In that he had had no choice.

One name was as good as another, since he could not use his own—and the name he had taken he would keep. Stephen Lagden owed him a year of his life, that had been spent at Blackmoor, and it was little enough compensation to make!

But after leaving Courtfield—a free man, unsuspected—other thoughts were working in James' mind.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,494.

He had nothing—and he had to get work. A few hours ago he had been thinking only of keeping his liberty. Now his liberty was secure, and he had to live.

A place was open to him, his to take—the place of temporary games master at Greyfriars School!

He had been games master at Okeham, in the days that seemed so long ago; he would be glad to get back to his old job.

He had to live. He had rich relations—his uncle, Major Loder, was rich, but had never concerned himself about him, and in any case, he could not approach any of his relations now. They, so far as they knew anything of him at all, believed him a guilty man.

Why not walk straight on to Greyfriars School, where Lagden was a stranger, and where Lagden was expected?

That was the thought working in his mind as he stood in the hawthorns, staring down at the suitcase.

He had to go somewhere. He had to work in order to live. He had been driven to borrowing Lagden's clothes and his name, for the injured man's own sake. For his own sake he would keep on as he had started. A haven of rest for a few weeks, and then—the future was on the knees of the gods.

Where was the harm? He was an honest man, ready to do honest work, and certainly a better man, and a more honest one, than Lagden, who had been going to take up that job.

The headmaster of Greyfriars, had he known all, would undoubtedly have preferred James Loder to Stephen Lagden.

Why not?

For a long time the man who had been hunted stood there, in doubt, turning the matter over in his mind.

His mind was made up at last.

He picked up the suitcase and walked out of the hawthorns, following the footpath to where it joined the road.

By the roadside was a long wooden seat, on which a fellow was seated, who looked like a senior schoolboy.

James, as he drew nearer, saw that fellow rise from the seat and stare at him with a keen, searching and intent gaze.

His heart beat quickly.

He had never, so far as he knew, seen this fellow before. Why was he regarding him so intently?

Had he miscalculated? Was there, after all, something about him that gave him away?

It taxed all his nerve to walk on with an air of unconcern, as if unconscious of that intent gaze.

He stepped into the road, and turned towards Greyfriars, affecting not to notice the fellow who was searching him with his eyes.

But as he was passing the wayside seat, Loder of the Sixth stepped forward.

"Excuse me," he said. "Are you Mr. Lagden?"

No. 22 caught his breath for a moment, and then smiled. His uneasiness had been quite groundless.

This, of course, was a Greyfriars fellow, who had heard that the new games master was coming that afternoon. He had been looking at him so intently, not because he supposed that he was James Loder, but because he supposed that he was Stephen Lagden. Possibly he had walked out to look for him, as he was so late—Mr. Lagden must have been expected at the school long before this!

He smiled.

"You belong to Greyfriars?" he asked easily.

"Yes," said Loder. "We're expecting Mr. Lagden, but he seems to be late. If you are Mr. Lagden—"

"I am your new games master!" said No. 22 with a smile. "I have been rather delayed, owing to some unforeseen circumstances."

"I—I wanted to see you, before you got to the school!" said Loder, with a flush coming into his cheeks. "I dare say you'll guess why, when I tell you my name."

"Yes?" said No. 22 in wonder.

"My name's Loder!"

The man with the suitcase gave a violent start.

"Your name is—is what?" he exclaimed.

"Loder! Of course, you know the name!" said the Greyfriars Sixth Former bitterly. "You're not likely to forget the name of Loder!"

No. 22 stood very still, looking at the Greyfriars senior. He was not likely to forget the name of Loder—his own name! But what did it mean?

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Cousins!

LODER of the Sixth stood looking at the man before him, his face growing darker and more bitter.

He could see that the man had been struck by the name of Loder.

That was natural enough, if he was Stephen Lagden who had once been a master at Okeham, and had known James Loder there.

Up to that moment, Loder had nourished a faint hope that this Lagden was not the same Lagden—not the Lagden of Okeham. It seemed to him the roughest, rottenest luck, that a man who had known his cousin James, should be coming to Greyfriars.

But he could have no doubt now. The start the man had given, the expression on his startled face, showed that the name of Loder was only too familiar to him.

"You—you know the name?" muttered Loder.

"Yes, I know the name!" said No. 22 quietly. "It was once very familiar to me, in fact."

"I've no doubt of it," said Loder bitterly. "It's the name of a scoundrel who's dodging the police—"

"Eh?"

"A rascally convict who has escaped from Blackmoor—"

"A—a—a rascally convict! Oh! Exactly!" gasped No. 22. "I quite understand! The name has been in the newspapers rather, of late!"

"Oh, those rotten newspapers wouldn't leave it alone, of course," said Loder savagely.

No. 22 smiled.

"You do not seem to have a very high opinion of our glorious Press!" he remarked.

"I'd like to see all the rotten rags suppressed!" growled Loder. "Think a fellow likes to see his name all over the shop because it happens to be somebody else's name, too!"

"Quite unpleasant, I've no doubt!" said No. 22 with an amused smile. "But there must be many people who have the same names as—as rascally convicts. There must be many people named Loder—"

"That's all very well," grunted Loder. "But, you see, fellows get hold of a thing like that, and if you know anything about schools, as I suppose you do, you can guess the jaw that goes on when a fellow has enemies."

There are fellows at Greyfriars who like to make out that that scoundrel, James Loder, is a relation of mine."

"Relationship to such a scoundrel would be very disagreeable, I should think," remarked No. 22 gravely.

Loder gave him a quick, searching look. Did this man know of the relationship? If he did, Loder wanted to ask him to keep it dark. If he did not, Loder did not want to tell him! It was rather a dilemma.

"Well, look here," said the Greyfriars prefect, at last, "you were a master at Okeham School, in Devonshire—I-I think—"

"That is correct!"

"You knew James Loder there, of course?"

"Perfectly well—very well indeed!" answered James Loder, with a glimmer of amusement in his eyes. "Perhaps I may say that I knew him better than anyone else at Okeham."

"You were mixed up in a scrap with him on the night of the robbery, weren't you?" asked Loder.

No. 22 paused a moment.

"I was mixed up in that scrap!" he answered. "But what—"

"Well, you knew him jolly well," said Loder. "I—I suppose you may have known about—about his relations?"

"Yes, I knew something of them."

"His—his uncle—"

"I believe he had an uncle."

"Did you know his uncle's name?"

Loder, in his eagerness to learn whether Stephen Lagden knew of the relationship or not, did not pause to think how very peculiar all this questioning must seem to a stranger—a man to whom he had never spoken before in his life.

But the handsome man with the little moustache was perfectly amiable and polite, and did not seem to mind.

"I think his uncle was Major Loder!" was his answer. "Yes, I am sure he had an uncle called Major Loder."

Loder of the Sixth could have groaned. If that much was known, all was known; for everybody at Greyfriars knew that Loder's father was Major Loder.

"I think, however," went on No. 22 blandly, "that James had very little to do with his uncle the major. So far as I know, he never visited him."

"He was a poor relation, and we had precious little to do with him, any of us!" said Loder. "Look here, Mr. Lagden, I'll speak out plain."

"That is always a good system."

"I've told you my name is Loder. Major Loder is my father, as any man at Greyfriars could tell you if you asked. So, as you know that he was James' uncle, you can see—"

No. 22 started.

It dawned upon his mind that this senior man of Greyfriars, whom he had never seen before, was his cousin Gerald—the son of his rich uncle.

He looked hard at Loder.

In the rather hard face of Gerald Loder, he could read his thoughts easily enough, and he knew now why the Greyfriars man was waiting there to meet "Mr. Lagden" before he arrived at the school.

For a moment or two James' own face hardened. But that quickly passed. If Gerald hated the thought of him, loathed any connection with him, it was natural. His disgrace had not been his own fault, but it had been a black and overwhelming disgrace, reflecting on all who bore his family name. He could hardly blame any fellow for not wanting it to be known that he was related to a convict at Blackmoor.

"You—you see—" stammered Loder.

"I think I see!" said No. 22. "This—this unspeakable outsider James Loder, is your cousin, if you are Major Loder's son. I quite understand that you do not desire the matter mentioned at your school. Believe me, I should never dream of allowing a word on the subject to pass my lips."

Loder looked relieved.

"You've guessed what I was going to ask you, Mr. Lagden," he said. "I—I hoped you'd look at it in that light. Of course, nobody's likely to ask you any questions, but a careless word—"

"I shall certainly utter no careless words!" said No. 22. "The connection is disagreeable for you, but it is certainly no fault of your own, and so far as I am concerned, no one will ever hear

of it. Indeed, I myself ask nothing better than to forget the existence of James Loder—a man of whom I hope never to hear again."

"You're awfully good," said Loder. "Of course, there are black sheep in every flock, and my Cousin James seems to have been an awful rotter—nobody knows that better than you, I suppose, Mr. Lagden, as from what I hear, you caught him in his rascality. I never knew much about him before this affair of his escape from prison; but since then, of course, it's been fairly dinned into my ears. I've never even seen the man in my life."

No. 22 smiled.

In other days, there had, perhaps, been a little soreness in his heart, over

(Continued on next page.)

GREYFRIARS INTERVIEWS

Whatever the nationality—they all come under the eagle eye and prolific pen of our clever Greyfriars rhymester.

This week he selects as his target

WUN LUNG,

the Chinese junior in the Remove.

(1)

"Too plentees muchee finee day,"
I shouted in my jolly way,
When I looked in just now to pay
Our Chinaman a visit.
Wun Lung responded with a grin,
Politely beckoning me in,
So in I went and said: "Chin, chin!"
Which wasn't too explicit.

(3)

Though Wun Lung cooks, as all agree,
Extremely appetisingly,
Unless you know the recipe
He happens to be using,
It's hardly safe to take a bite,
For snails and frogs are his delight,
He flavours them to taste all right,
And thinks it most amusing!



(6)

"D'ye know what I believe?" said I.
"You eat each other on the sly!"
You're cannibals!" He made reply:
"You say we eat each other,
The other day you say so, too,
I hear you! Well, perhaps it's true!
Some Chinese velly often do,
If hungry—eat his blother!"

(8)

He stood there stirring, stirring still,
Till I was feeling downright ill.
And then I watched him, with a thrill,
Take out a fearful hatchet!
Said he: "Now stew, him fit to eat!"
And I am leady for the meat!
Now keepee firmly in your seat!
I jumped and yelled: "I'll watch it!"



(10)

And then I knew it was a fake.
Wun Lung said: "There is some
mistake,
I choppee up this piece of steak,
No need for any funkies!"
The story seemed to please the crowd,
They cackled long and cackled loud,
And as I crawled away, I vowed,
I'd slay that Chinese monkey!

(2)

"I wantee muchee talk with you,
A nicee little intelview.
What's that you makee—nicee stew?"
I asked him, interested.
"A stew!" he nodded. "Velly nice!"
He shovelled in a plate of rice.
"What else is in it—rats and mice?"
I thereupon requested.

(4)

"No lats and mice this time," he said.
"No meat at all!" He shook his head.
He walked about with stealthy tread,
The gravy smelt delicious.
He softly locked the study door,
Then padded back across the floor.
I sat there, feeling rather sore,
And just a shade suspicious.



(7)

I shuddered. It was growing hot.
I started sweating quite a lot.
He stood there, stirring up his pot,
His silence was provoking.
I heard him murmur to the wall:
"Not yet—no meat in it at all."
He say I am a cannibal—
I cried: "But I was joking!"

(9)

I beat the door and howled with fright.
"Help, help!" I yelled with all my might.
I'd give the heathen beast a fight
Before my life was ended.
A crowd came rushing at my call,
The door, flung backwards, hit the wall!
He hadn't locked the door at all!
He'd only just pretended!



the extreme care with which the rich Loders kept at a safe distance from the poor Loders. But he was glad of it now. Had Gerald Loder ever met his Cousin James, he would hardly have taken him, at the present moment, for Stephen Lagden!

In making his plans that afternoon, after he had known for certain that Lagden would be silent, James had never dreamed, for an instant, of anything like this!

That he had a relation—a near relation—at Greyfriars, was entirely a new discovery to him. So little did he know of the wealthy branch of the family that he had never known the name of the school to which Major Loder sent his son. Possibly, had he known it, it would have made a difference to his plans. But such an idea had never crossed his mind.

"I've never seen him, and, of course, don't want to!" went on Gerald Loder. "I only wish they'd get him! I hope every minute to hear that he has been taken." Loder gritted his teeth.

No. 22 gave him a curious look.

"In that case, Master Loder, I think I can give you some welcome news!" he said evenly. "The man who committed the robbery at Okeham has been taken." Loder jumped.

"Taken! They've got him! Oh, my hat! That's splendid! I shall be rid of the brute, at least. How do you know?"

"I had a hand in it!" said No. 22, smiling. "I stopped a car on the road to convey an injured man to Courtfield—a man in convict dress, who had been knocked down by a car and left where he fell. He was injured, and was still unconscious when I left him in the hands of the police."

"Oh!" exclaimed Loder, with a deep breath. "I see—that's why you're so late. I say, that's ripping news! I suppose there's no mistake—they've got the right man? They're certain it's the man?"

"They appeared to be, at least."

"But you would know, of course, Mr. Lagden," said Loder. "You knew the scoundrel better than anybody else. You're sure—"

"I am sure, absolutely certain, that the man I handed over to the police was the man who committed robbery at Okeham a year ago!" answered No. 22. "On that point, there is no doubt whatever."

"Oh, good!" said Loder, in great relief. "There won't be so much jaw on the subject, once he's gone back where he belongs. Shall I walk with you to the school, Mr. Lagden?"

"I shall be very glad."

"This way, then!" said Loder.

Gerald Loder's face was bright as he started for Greyfriars, walking by the side of the man with the suitcase. It was an immense relief to him to learn that the convict had been recaptured at last.

His companion's face was a little clouded. This was his first meeting with his cousin Gerald—who had not the remotest suspicion that he was his cousin.

No. 22 had learned tolerance by hard experience. He did not expect Gerald to feel kindly toward a convicted relation, and one he had never even seen. He realized that almost any fellow would think chiefly of the shame of the connection. Yet, after all, James was near relation—and blood was said to be thicker than water. Loder evidently did not care a straw about the "convict's" accident—he had not even asked

whether the wretched man was seriously hurt or not. Surely a little compassion, a tincture of pity, would not have been out of place.

But there was no sign of it in Loder. Only too plainly he was thinking entirely of himself, and had no thought to waste on the man who lay in the prison hospital. True, he believed him guilty—but James knew Lagden to be guilty, and yet could pity him. Gerald had a harder heart.

No. 22 was glad when they reached the school. Old Gosling looked at them as they came in, glimpsed the initials "S. L." on the suitcase, and touched his ancient hat.

It was not yet lock-up, and a good many fellows were in the quad. Many of them glanced at the handsome, up-standing young man who walked in with Loder of the Sixth, and some of them noted the initials on the suitcase. And the news was not long in spreading that Mr. Lagden, the new games master, had arrived at last.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The New Games Master!

"LOOKS a decent chap!" said Bob Cherry.

"He do—he does!" agreed Johnny Bull.

All the Co. nodded assent.

Harry Wharton & Co. were in the quad when "Mr. Lagden" came in with Loder of the Sixth.

They regarded the new games master with some interest; and, on his looks, rather liked him.

He had rather a boyish face and manner, looked cheerful and good-tempered, and was evidently athletic and very fit.

Harry Wharton's eyes lingered on him, as he passed with Loder, at a little distance from the Famous Five.

There was a slightly perplexed expression on the face of the captain of the Remove.

"That must be Lagden!" he remarked, slowly.

"Of course," said Bob. "Loder's met him, and walked him home. His initials are on the suitcase he's carrying."

"I've never seen him before, and never even heard his name before to-day," said Harry. "But—"

"But what?"

"Well, it's odd, but I've a sort of feeling that I've seen him before, though I certainly never have!" said the captain of the Remove. "I can't have, as I've never met anybody named Lagden. But—"

He fixed his eyes intently on the handsome profile of the new games master, passing on towards the House with Loder.

There was something familiar in that handsome face—familiar, but elusive.

"You've seen somebody like him," said Nugent. "You can't ever have seen Lagden—he's never been here."

"That must be it, I suppose!" said Harry, with a nod.

The man who was walking with Loder glanced at the juniors. It seemed to them that he looked at them rather intently.

But he walked on and went into the House with the prefect.

It came rather strangely into Wharton's mind, that not only had he seen Mr. Lagden somewhere before, but that Mr. Lagden had also seen him and remembered him.

Still, that was scarcely possible; and he dismissed the matter from his mind.

Lord Mauleverer of the Remove, was standing near the Famous Five, and regarding the new games master with some interest, as he went in. Bob Cherry gave his lordship a slap on the shoulder.

"Like him, Mauly?" he asked.

"Ow! Don't break my back, fat-head!" said Mauleverer. "Oh, yaas, I rather like the man, on his looks. Looks quite decent. But—"

"But what?" asked Harry Wharton with a laugh. "Think he looks as if he'll make you work at games, Mauly?"

"Yaas, I'm afraid so!" assented Mauly. "Still, Lascelles did that! But that's not what I was thinking of. Did you notice his trousers?"

The Famous Five grinned. They were not quite so keen to notice a man's clothes as the dandy of the Remove.

"Not specially," said Bob. "Wer'n't they properly creased, Mauly? Mean to say he's come here without having his bags properly creased?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not exactly," said Lord Mauleverer, seriously, "but he ought to change his tailor. I must say that the bags ain't badly cut, but they look as if they were made for a rather smaller man. His tailor hasn't fitted him. A man can't be too particular about his bags."

"Of course, that's fearfully important!" agreed Bob, with great gravity. "But being a games master, he might think Soccer more important than trousers!"

"The mightfulness is terrific!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Well, clobber's clobber!" said Lord Mauleverer, shaking his head. "A man ought to see that his tailor plays up. That chap's clothes don't fit him. They're not bad clobber—but they don't fit him. A man oughtn't to wear clobber that doesn't fit him. Otherwise, he looks a very decent chap, and I rather like him."

Lord Mauleverer probably was the only fellow in the Remove who noticed that the new games master's clothes were not a precise fit. It was the kind of thing that leaped to Mauly's eye.

The Famous Five went up to Study No. 1, to tea. They were in that celebrated apartment, when the Bounder looked in.

There was quite a curious expression on Herbert Vernon-Smith's face.

"You men seen Lagden?" he asked.

"Yes, we saw him come in with Loder," answered Harry. "Like his looks?"

"Oh, yes, he looks all right!" said Smithy. "He seems to have got in jolly late. He was expected before we were out of class. Did you fellows get a good look at him?"

Harry Wharton gave the Bounder a quick look. Some elusive trace of familiarity in the new man's features had struck him, and he wondered whether it had struck Smithy also.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob. "Wharton thinks he's seen the chap before somewhere, Smithy. You seen him, too?"

"Oh, Wharton thinks that, does he?" said Vernon-Smith. "Where do you think you have seen him, Wharton?"

"Well, I don't think I have, really, as I really can't have," answered the captain of the Remove. "But something about his face, and I think, something about the way he carries himself, struck me. I suppose I've seen somebody like him."

The Bounder laughed.

"You don't remember who?" he asked.

"Haven't the foggiest!" answered Harry.



"I—I say, leggo, Loder!" stuttered Bunter, as the Sixth Former grabbed him by a fat shoulder. "I—I'll tell all the fellows that that convict ain't your cousin James if—if you'll let go my shoulder. Yooo-hooooop!" Smack! Loder's open palm smote the fat junior's ear, and Bunter fairly yelped.

"He might have been dressed differently when you saw him before, if you've ever seen him!" suggested Smithy.

"Possibly, if I've ever seen him—but I don't think I can have," said Harry. "From what I've heard, he's quite a stranger in this part of the country—but I may have seen somebody like him in the holidays. One sees a lot of people in the hols, and forgets them afterwards."

"You don't think you've seen him lately?"

"Not that I know of."

Smithy nodded, and strolled up the passage.

Bob Cherry stared after him, and glanced at his friends.

"Smithy was driving at something," he said. "But what the thump was he driving at?"

"Goodness knows," said Nugent. "Where's the toasting-fork?"

The Famous Five dismissed the matter and gave their attention to tea.

Herbert Vernon-Smith had a very thoughtful look as he went along to his own study, No. 4—went in, and shut the door after him.

His study-mate, Redwing, was there, poaching eggs at the study fire.

"Hallo, Reddy!" said the Bounder. "Seen the new games beak?"

"Yes—looks rather decent!" said Redwing.

"Yes, that's so!" agreed Smithy.

He was about to speak again, but he checked himself. He crossed to the study window, and stood looking out into the quad.

"It's impossible!" he said to himself, inaudibly. "Don't be an ass, my boy. It's just impossible, and you know it."

It was impossible, and he knew it! And yet—and yet, Herbert Vernon-Smith knew in his heart of hearts, that he had seen that handsome face before,

when it did not look so handsome—he had seen it bending over him from a boat, when a helping hand dragged him back from death in the deep river. It was impossible—wildly impossible—his common sense scouted the idea—and yet, at the back of his mind, he was certain all the time.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Impossible!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Too late!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tea was over in Study No. 1, when Billy Bunter barged in. Only one single solitary doughnut remained on the table.

"Oh, really, you fellows!" said the fat Owl. "I haven't come to tea. I'll have that doughnut, though, if you like." Without waiting to ascertain whether the owners of the doughnut liked, Bunter annexed it and went on. "I say, you fellows, have you heard the news? Lagden's come—"

"Ancient history!" yawned Bob.

"That isn't all!" announced Bunter.

"I say, they've got him!"

"Who have?"

"The police!" said Bunter dramatically.

"Got him in chokey!"

"Got Lagden in chokey?"

"No, you ass! Lagden's here—but he helped to get him from what I hear.

He got him and he was taken to Court-field in old Popper's car, I hear, and he let him put him in the car, and he—"

"Hold on a minute!" gasped Bob. "Let's know who is he, and who is him. Which is which?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Do you mean that somebody's got old Popper?"

"No, you fathead! Old Popper came

along in his car, and he let him put him in the car, you see, because he was there with him, and he had been knocked down by a car!" explained Bunter, lucidly.

"Oh, my hat! Anybody know the answer to that one?" asked Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! I'm jolly glad they got him," said Bunter. "I never felt safe while he was about."

"Who?" roared the Famous Five with one voice.

"Eh! The convict, of course! Didn't I say the convict? They've got him!"

"Oh, they've got the convict, have they?" grinned Bob. "My dear porpoise, we know that years ago!"

"Oh, you've heard it?" asked Bunter, rather disappointed. Bunter liked to be the purveyor of early news. "I say, did you know that Lagden got him?"

"No, we never knew that!" said Harry.

"And we don't know it now!" grinned Bob. "Where did you get that from, Bunter?"

"It's all over the shop!" said Bunter. "I haven't heard all the details, but, from what I hear, Lagden fell in with the convict on his way from the station, and there was a fearful struggle—"

"Gammon!"

"That's why he was so late. The convict sprang on him like a tiger, and Lagden had to fight for his life!" said Bunter impressively. "There was an awful, desperate struggle—"

"Was that before the convict was knocked down by the car, or after?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Well, it must have been before, I think," said Bunter. "You see, the convict couldn't have struggled after he was killed—"

"Killed?"

"Well, jolly nearly killed!" said Bunter, moderating his transports, as it were. "Not quite killed, or—or he'd be dead, you know."

"Yes, that sounds probable," admitted Bob. "People are generally rather dead after they're killed. Quite a usual result."

"Well, old Popper was going by in his car, and he rushed out into the road—"

"Old Popper rushed out of his car?"

"No, you fathead—Lagden rushed! He rushed out into the road, and shouted 'Stop!' Or else 'Halt!' I forget which—"

"And which did Popper do?" inquired Bob. "Did he stop, or did he halt?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! He stopped—"

"Might as well have halted!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass! They picked up the remains, and put them in the car," went on Bunter. "Lagden got into the car with old Popper. You see, he had to go to the police station and hand him over."

"What had old Popper done?"

"Eh? Nothing!"

"Then what did Lagden want to hand him over for?"

"Not old Popper, you ass! He handed over the convict! I fancy old Grimey was jolly glad to get him!" said Bunter. "Why, that convict's been hanging about here more than a week, and they never got him. Now our new games master comes along and captures him while he's walking from the station. I bet it made old Grimes look a bit green! I say, you fellows, do you think Loder of the Sixth may have to go and identify him? Being his relation, you know—"

"You'd better ask Loder that!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I don't think I'll speak to Loder about it. He's fearfully shirty on the subject of that convict," said Bunter. "Look how he pulled my ear to-day, and then pitched into me with Walker's cane, because he made out that I'd locked his study door! I say, you fellows, it's rather a coincidence, Lagden

capturing the convict, isn't it, when he's the same man that got him at Okeham, before he went to chokey? I dare say that's why the convict attacked him—"

"Did he?"

"Oh, yes, there was an awful struggle!"

"I wonder if Lagden had anything to do with it?" remarked Bob. "If he had, that might be why he came in so late."

"Haven't I just told you?" hooted Bunter. "I tell you, they had a fearful, awful, terrific struggle—"

"Bow-wow!"

"Beast!"

The Famous Five left the study, and went down to get the news. Billy Bunter's news was thrilling, but unreliable.

They found that a good many fellows had heard the story. It was known now why Mr. Lagden had arrived so late. The facts were not so thrilling as related by Bunter. It transpired that Mr. Lagden had found the convict lying injured by the roadside, having apparently been knocked down by a car, and left where he fell. Harry Wharton & Co. knew that already, from Solly Lazarus, with the exception of Mr. Lagden's part in the affair.

Billy Bunter, meanwhile, looked into Study No. 4, where the Bounder and Tom Redwing were at tea.

"I say, you fellows heard?" demanded Bunter.

"Heard what, fathead?" grunted the Bounder.

"They've got the convict!"

Vernon-Smith jumped up from the table.

"They've got him?" he exclaimed. He stared at Bunter in blank amazement. "Impossible!"

Billy Bunter grinned. The Famous Five had not been at all properly impressed by his news. Smithy was impressed, that was clear. He looked wildly startled.

"Tain't impossible, Smithy!" grinned Bunter. "They've got him all right! You see, Lagden—"

"Lagden!" repeated Smithy.

"Yes, I suppose you've seen Lagden, the new games beak. He came in about

an hour ago, with Loder. Loder went to meet him, I believe, and you can guess why—"

"They—they—they've found him out?" gasped Vernon-Smith.

"There wasn't much finding out about it," said Bunter. "Of course, he was known at once by his clothes—"

"His—his clothes?"

"Yes, of course, the broad arrows, you know—"

"The broad arrows!" repeated Vernon-Smith mechanically. "What do you mean, you fat idiot? Have they got the convict, or not?"

"Yes, rather! Lagden—"

"They've been here?"

"Here! No! Why should they come here?" asked Bunter, in astonishment. "Lagden found him—"

"Lagden found the convict!" yelled Smithy.

"Yes, on the road over Courtfield common!"

"You potty porpoise—"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

"Where's the new beak now?" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

"I believe he's in his rooms—Lascelles' old rooms, you know. It was before he got here, of course. You don't think he found the convict here, do you? He, he, he! He found him—"

"Have they really caught the convict?" asked Redwing.

"Yes, rather! They've got him in Courtfield, and— Yarooooo! Leggo! You gone mad, Smithy, you beast? Leggo! Yarooooo!"

Vernon-Smith made a jump at Bunter, grabbed him by the collar, and banged his head on the study door. Then he twirled him into the passage, and slammed the door on him.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

In the Remove passage, Billy Bunter's voice was raised loudly, but not melodiously. Why Smithy had cut up so rusty, when a fellow took him the latest news, Bunter could not begin to guess.

Tom Redwing was surprised, too. He stared at Smithy as the Bounder went frowning back to his chair.

"What the dickens did you pitch into Bunter for, Smithy?" he asked.

"Trying to pull my leg with his idiotic yarns!" growled Vernon-Smith. "You know what that convict did, when I was in the river yesterday! I was running him down, and he stopped to save me! I don't want to hear that he's caught!"

"Well, that's all right," said Redwing. "But you can't expect Bunter to guess all that; and he only came to tell us—"

"It's only one of his silly yarns!" snapped Smithy. "The convict's not caught, and I know it."

"Well, I don't see how you can know it!" said Tom. "He may be caught any minute, anyhow; and it's surprising that he's not been caught already. How do you know he's not been caught, as Bunter says?"

"Well, I do know it!" grunted the Bounder.

And he said no more. What he suspected, what he felt he knew, was not going to pass his lips. But he was absolutely assured that, so long as the new games master was at Greyfriars the convict was not caught.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" came from the passage. "Beast! Ow! Wow! Yow!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a cheery roar. "What's the row, old fat bean?"

"Ow! That beast Smithy!" howled Bunter. "Banging a fellow's head— Ow!"

"What rot!" said Bob. He banged on the door of Study No. 4, and looked in. "Hallo, hallo, hallo, Smithy! Didn't you know they'd got No. 22?"

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"No!" growled Vernon-Smith. "I know they haven't!"

"Eh? They jolly well have!" said Bob. "I'm rather sorry for the chap, but there's no doubt about it—they've got him."

"Oh, don't be a fool!"

Bob stared at him.

"Thanks!" he said dryly. "What I like about you, Smithy, is your nice polished manners. Chesterfield had nothing on you!"

"Well, don't talk rot!" snapped Vernon-Smith. "The convict isn't caught, and can't be. I know that!"

"You know a lot in this study, then," grinned Bob. "If you step down to the Rag you'll find about fifty fellows who will tell you that he is caught. Lagden, our new games beak, found him on the road over the common, where he had been knocked down by a car, and got him to the police station."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"Fathead!" said Bob, and he slammed the study door and departed.

"Blessed if I make you out, Smithy!" said Tom Redwing in wonder. "You know that it is so if Bob says so."

"I know that it isn't so!"

"Oh, rubbish!"

Redwing left the study and went down to gather news. It was easy enough to gather; nearly everybody in the House was talking of the capture of Convict No. 22, and the part Mr. Lagden had played in it.

The Bounder remained unconvinced. With that strange belief regarding the new games master in his mind, he could not be convinced.

But a little later, when Smithy came down and heard the news on all sides, he had to be convinced. Every fellow at Greyfriars knew by that time; and there was no doubt, at all events, that there was a man at Courtfield police station whom the police believed to be James Loder, No. 22 of Blackmoor.

The escaped convict had been captured; the new games master was at Greyfriars. Obviously, therefore, they could not be one and the same man. The Bounder had to admit it; he had to be convinced. In the face of overwhelming certainty he could no longer doubt.

And yet—

And yet, in spite of certainty, in spite of common sense, he felt in his bones that the face of Stephen Lagden, the new games master of Greyfriars, was the face of the man who had looked down on him from the boat on the Sark when the hand of Convict No. 22 had dragged him from the deep waters. It seemed to Smithy himself a mad belief; but, mad or not, it remained in his mind and would not leave him.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Catching His Eye!

"I'M glad, in a way!" remarked Coker of the Fifth.

After class the following day Coker was walking in the quad with his friends Potter and Greene; there was a thoughtful shade on Coker's brow, which looked as if Coker was thinking.

He glanced up at a face that looked down from an open window; it was a handsome face with a little moustache—the face of the man who was known at Greyfriars School as Stephen Lagden.

That face looked very cheerful.

The new games master had been a day at the school, and in the course of that day he had become rather generally liked.

In Common-room the other beaks had

rather taken to him. Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was pleased to approve of him.

Prout, who had had more birthdays than he liked to remember, had rather a suspicious eye on younger masters. Lagden was young; but he was not, Prout told the other members of the staff, bumptious—like so many young men in these degenerate days—he was properly respectful to his elders. Prout quite liked him. Capper and Wiggins liked him; even Hacker, the master of the Shell, generally regarded as an acid drop, found the young man's pleasant manners hard to resist.

Wingate of the Sixth, who had already had a talk with him about the school games, told the other footballers that Lagden was the goods all right. The juniors, so far as they had seen anything of him, thought him a very decent chap, so he seemed on the way to winning golden opinions from all sorts of people.

Which pleased—and, perhaps, a little amused—the man who twenty-four hours ago had been a hunted fugitive and outcast.

Coker, glancing up at him as he sat at the window of the room that had been Mr. Lascelles', had an approving eye also.

"I'm glad, in a way," he repeated, as Potter and Greene failed to inquire the cause of his gladness. Potter and Greene could see that Coker was thinking, but they did not ask him of what, lest he should tell them. But it booted not; Coker was going to tell them, anyhow.

"I'm sorry for Lascelles, of course," went on Coker. "Hard luck on him to be laid up with a bandy leg and all that. Still, I'm glad, in a way. Lascelles was a bit of a fool."

"What the thump do you mean?" grunted Potter. "Larry was as good a man as ever stepped on a footer field."

"I'm not saying he wasn't," answered Coker. "But a games master, after all, ought to know something about games."

"And didn't Larry?" asked Greene.

"He never advised Wingate to give me a chance in the football," said Coker. "That was his job, really. When a football captain makes mistakes, it's for a games master to give him a tip not to make a fool of himself."

"Oh crikey!" said Potter and Greene together.

"That's why I'm glad, in a way," explained Coker. "With a new games master here, we may see a difference. Wingate's bound to listen to his advice, and he may advise him to leave you out of the eleven, Potter—"

"Eh?"

"And put me in—"

"Oh!"

"What I mean is, he looks a sensible chap," said Coker. "I think it may be all right. See? What do you think, Potter?"

"You'd better let him see what you can do," said Potter, with deep and withering sarcasm; and Greene grinned.

"That's my idea," assented Coker, blind and deaf to sarcasm. "Catch his eye, and let him see my quality. Wingate never gives me a chance; and Blundell won't even put my name down for a Fifth Form pick-up if he can help it. They pass over good men here. Clear off, you cheeky fags!" added Coker wrathfully, as a footer whizzed by him, and a mob of juniors rushed after it.

Harry Wharton & Co. were punting an old footer about in the quad before tea. From his window the games master looked down on them, with a smiling face.

But Coker of the Fifth did not smile.

The cheeky juniors had come between the wind and his nobility, as it were, and Coker frowned.

Heedless of Coker's frowns, the Removites rushed after the ball. Vernon-Smith reached it and playfully kicked it back at Coker.

Any fellow but Coker would have met it with a foot; Coker shot out a foot that missed it by a yard, and met it with his nose.

Coker sat down.

"Ow!" gasped Coker as he sat, and the footer rested on his knees. "Ow!"

Potter and Greene chuckled.

If it was Coker's idea to catch the games master's eye, and let him see his qualities, he was getting away with it. Glancing up at the face at the open window, Potter noticed that the young master's smile had broadened. There was no doubt that Coker's quality had already caught his eye!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Send us that ball, Coker!" roared Bob Cherry.

"When you've done nursing our footer, Coker—" called out Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker heaved himself to his feet.

"You cheeky young swob!" he roared, addressing the Bounder. "You kicked that ball at me!"

"Guilty, my lord!" answered Smithy.

"Kick it back, can't you?"

"I jolly well will—and I'll jolly well let you have it in the neck!" hooted Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

The idea of a football travelling in any direction in which Horace Coker intended it to travel made them yell. If Coker kicked that footer at Smithy, any man at Greyfriars was in danger from it, except Smithy!

"Hold on, Coker!" exclaimed Potter hastily. "Don't start kicking a footer so near the House. You broke Prout's window once—"

"My foot slipped that time!" snapped Coker.

"It might slip this time—"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"For goodness' sake, Coker—" said Greene anxiously.

"Shut up, Greene!"

Coker placed the ball to kick; the juniors stood back, grinning. Smithy, in whose neck Coker had threatened to land that footer, did not seem nervous: he waited, grinning. But Potter and Greene backed hastily away. As they were out of the line of fire they were in danger. When Coker started a footer on its way, it might fly to any point of the compass, except the one aimed at by Coker.

Coker was rather surprised to see the Bounder cheerfully awaiting his shot, but he was pleased; he was going to let that cheeky junior have it right in the neck.

This was not only because Smithy deserved it for his cheek; it was to catch the games master's eye, and show him Coker's quality.

It was not an easy kick—if Coker brought it off. He was going to bring it off. And then Larry Lascelles' successor would see that Coker was the goods. He would not agree with Wingate, as Larry had done, in leaving Coker out of matches. Once Coker caught his eye, with his quality, he would see that Coker had justice in the matter of games. This really was a great opportunity for Coker.

He kicked.

After all the care he had taken in placing the ball and planning the kick with a careful, calculating eye, it was rather unfortunate that Coker's foot missed the leather by about six inches.

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Meeting with no resistance, Coker's foot swept onward and upward, travelling skyward. His other leg, taking all Coker's weight suddenly and unexpectedly, failed to prove equal to the strain, and Coker sat down with a bump that was heard at quite a considerable distance.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do that again, Coker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Ow! Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker scrambled up, his rugged face red with annoyance. He did not look up at the games master, but he had an impression that that young man was grinning. That was not what Coker had intended at all.

"My foot slipped!" he said to Potter and Greene, but with the intention of conveying that explanation to the man at the window.

And Coker restarted after the interval.

This time he landed a tremendous kick on the waiting leather. When Coker of the Fifth did land a kick there was plenty of beef in it, and it made the leather move. That football moved. It soared and crashed, and there was a loud yell.

For a moment Coker did not know where it had crashed. It had crashed on somebody, who yelled; but it certainly was not Vernon-Smith. Smithy was yelling, but it was with laughter.

"Where—" stuttered Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

He knew the next moment as the footer dropped, apparently from the sky. At the window, the games master was no longer grinning. He was clapping a hand to his eye, and spluttering.

Coker stared up at him in astonishment.

"What—" he gasped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Removites.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Potter.

"Oh crumbs!" stuttered Greene.

"You've caught his eye all right, Coker!"

"Right in his eye!" gurgled Potter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The new games master leaned from the window. One hand was still clasped to the eye that Coker had caught. The other was brandished at Coker.

"You young ass!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" gasped Coker. "Oh crikey! Did—did—did that footer hit you, sir? I—I never meant—"

"I believe you have blacked my eye! You clumsy young ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The new games master disappeared from the window. Probably he was in a hurry to bathe the eye Coker had caught before it blackened.

Coker gazed at the vacant window in horror. How the footer had travelled there, Coker did not know. It was almost at right angles to his intended line of fire. Perhaps that was the reason. Anyhow, it had travelled there, there was no doubt about that, and the games master had got it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh gum!" said Coker.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites recaptured their ball and punted it away.

Coker looked at Potter and Greene. "There's nothing to cackle at!" he said crossly.

"Isn't there!" gasped Potter. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, there isn't! It's rather unfortunate," said Coker. "Accidents will happen, of course—"

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"They will, when you get near a footer!" agreed Greene.

"Don't be a cheeky ass! Accidents will happen," said Coker, "but it's rather unfortunate it should happen like this. I wanted to catch his eye—"

"Well, you caught his eye all right!" gasped Potter.

"Blacked it, most likely!" said Greene.

"Oh, shut up!" hooted the annoyed Coker. "I shouldn't wonder if the silly ass gets an impression from this that I can't kick a footer, and carries on like Lascelles! I shouldn't wonder at all."

Coker was right—the new games master did get exactly that impression. Coker had caught his eye—not wisely, but too well.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Skinner Wants to Know!

HAROLD SKINNER came up the Remove passage, wriggling almost like an eel. Some of the Remove fellows grinned and some looked sympathetic. It was clear that Skinner had had "six," and that the effect was painful.

"Ow! Yow! Wow!" remarked Skinner, as he came.

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Banter. "Had it bad, old chap?"

"The badfulness appears to have been rather terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"I'll make Loder sorry for it somehow!" muttered Skinner.

"Dear old Loder again?" said Bob Cherry. "I should have thought that Loder would be a bit better-tempered now they've run in the convict."

"Well, he's given me six for nothing," said Skinner.

"Nothing?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I simply asked Snoopey if he'd heard whether that convict Loder had been taken back to Blackmoor yet from Courtfield. Loder of the Sixth happened to hear me."

"You didn't know he would happen to hear you?" asked the captain of the Remove, laughing. "Better let that jolly old convict drop."

Skinner, scowling, went wriggling up the passage. But he did not go to his own study. He stopped at Study No. 6, which belonged to Wibley, Morgan, and Desmond. He pushed open the door and walked in—and a rather startling figure turned from the looking-glass.

It was a Remove junior up to the neck. Above the neck it was a man of about sixty, with grizzled moustache and grey hair.

But it was only William Wibley, the amateur actor of the Remove, trying on some of his theatrical gadgets. Skinner slammed the door, and stood staring at the rather weird-looking Removite.

"Look here, Wib," he said. "One evening last week you got up in that theatrical convict rig of yours and pulled Loder's leg in his study."

"What about it?" asked Wibley.

"Well, Loder's never said a word about it; he still thinks it was the convict who barged in," said Skinner. "If he knew it was a Remove jape, he would be after the japer fast enough. You took him in all right."

"I could take anybody in!" said Wibley complacently. "My dear chap. I could make up as you, and make you believe it was yourself."

"Fathead! Well, look here, the fact that Loder's kept it dark about the convict, as he supposes, barging into his study, is pretty clear proof that the convict is really a relation of his. He couldn't have any other reason."

"Well?" said Wibley.

"Well, did he actually let it out?" asked Skinner. "He must have, I think, as he must have taken you for the convict and the convict for a relation. But did he own up to it and mention the relationship?"

Wibley did not answer that.

Wib had pulled Loder's leg in his convict outfit and given the bully of the Sixth a rather hectic time. Loder, completely taken in, had undoubtedly given the relationship away. But Wib did not feel entitled to give it away in his turn. Wibley knew that James Loder, of Blackmoor, was Gerald Loder's Cousin James; but he had not mentioned the fact, and did not mean to mention it now.

"Can't you answer?" snapped Skinner.

"Well, no," said Wib. "You see, I was japing Loder, and that was all right; but it wouldn't be quite the game to repeat anything he might have let out, in the circumstances."

"Oh, rot!" snapped Skinner irritably. "If we knew just how the matter stood, we could rub it in. You've found it out—I know that."

"Well, if you want to know the details, you find it out, too!" said Wibley.

And he turned back to his looking-glass and his make-up.

Skinner gave the back of his head a black scowl, stamped out of the study again, and slammed the door.

There was no information to be got from Wibley. But Skinner was very keen to learn the details of that relationship, about the fact of which he had no doubt whatever.

After a little thought, he made his way to Mr. Lascelles' old rooms, now occupied by the new games master.

He tapped at the door, and the rather deep and pleasant voice of the new master bade him enter.

"Mr. Lagden" glanced at him as he came in. The new games master had now been several days at the school, and had made the acquaintance of all the Remove. In charge of games practice, he had not failed to pick out the sheep from the goats, and he had noted Skinner as a slacker and skirker. His opinion of that youth, therefore, was not high.

But he gave him a pleasant nod and smile as he came in.

"Yes; what is it, Skinner?" he asked.

Skinner hesitated a little. He had plenty of nerve and plenty of cheek, and both were needed if he were going to ask the new master questions about a matter that did not concern him. But he had come there to get information out of Mr. Lagden if he could, and he went ahead.

"I've heard from some of the fellows, sir, that you helped to get hold of that convict who has been hanging about here for the last week or two," he said.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Lagden, his eyes narrowing a little.

A few days at Greyfriars had made the new games master feel quite secure in his new position. But he was on his guard.

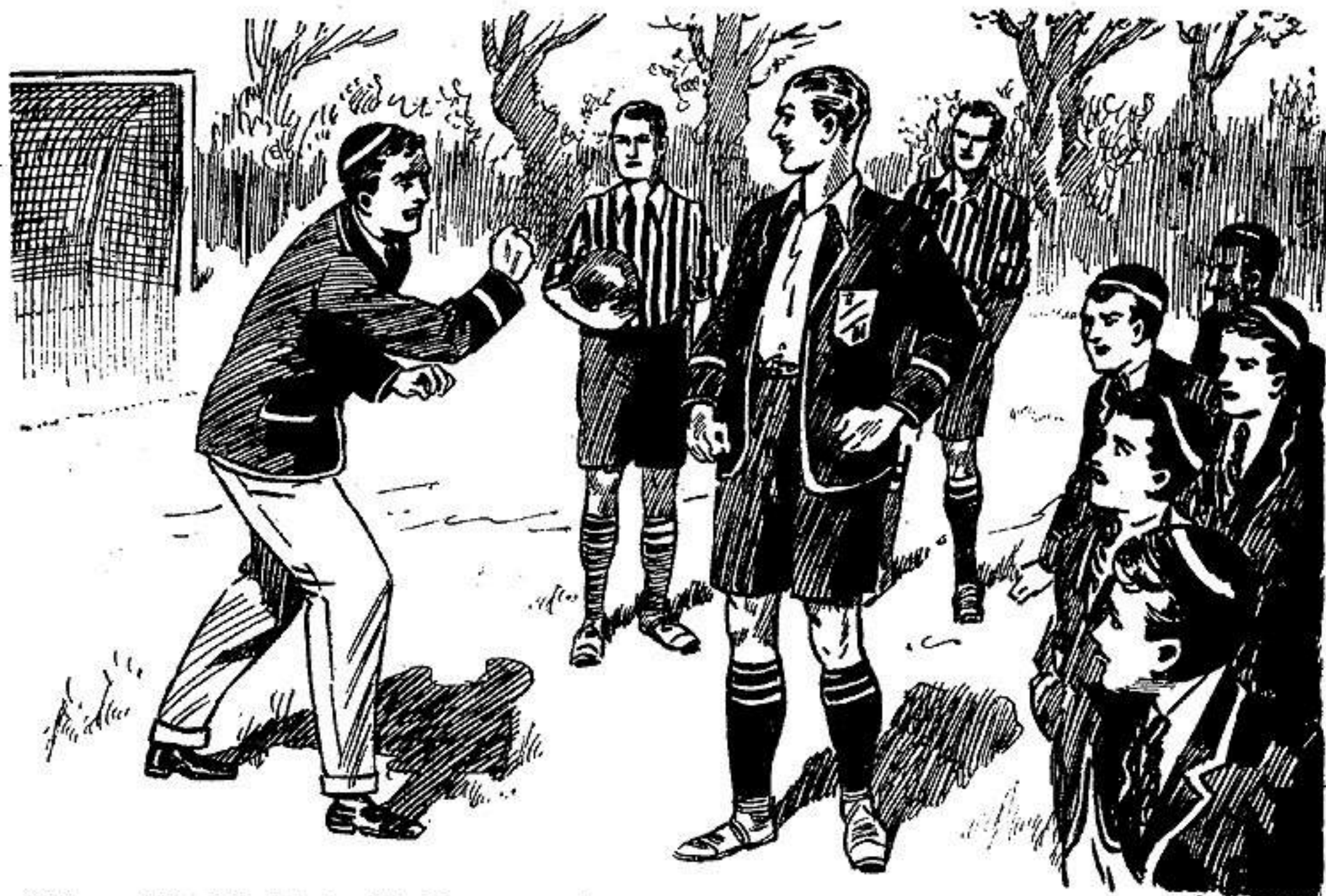
He had found a number of fellows in the school who had seen him as a hunted convict, half a dozen of them in the Remove. Skinner, so far as he knew, was not one of them. But the mention of No. 22 was enough to make him wary.

"They say that you knew him before he was a convict, sir," said Skinner.

"That is the case, certainly," said the games master.

"Wasn't he a master at Okham, sir, where you used to be?"

"Quite so."



"You cur!" exclaimed Loder, fixing his eyes savagely on the new games master. "Who's told everybody that the escaped convict was a relation of mine? Nobody knew but you! I asked you not to mention it, and you said you wouldn't! Now it's all over the school!" "Silence!" rapped the games master.

"I suppose you knew that he had a relation here, sir?" ventured Skinner.

"No," said the games master quietly. "When I was at Okeham, Skinner, I had no knowledge whatever that James Loder had a relation at this school. Why do you ask?"

Skinner breathed rather hard.

"The fact is, sir, that some of the fellows make out that Loder, of the Sixth Form here, is a relation of that convict," he said.

"Indeed!"

"If it's not true, sir, I'd like to be able to tell them so; it's rather unpleasant for Loder for such a story to get about," said Skinner meekly. "It seems to me that the sooner it's knocked on the head, the better. Don't you think so, sir?"

The games master gave Skinner a very penetrating look.

"Is that your reason for asking me, Skinner?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes, sir," said Skinner calmly. "It's being talked of, right and left, and if there's nothing in it I'd like to be able to tell the fellows so, and that would make an end of it. I dare say you know whether Loder of the Sixth is related to that convict or not, sir."

"I have told you, Skinner, that when I was a master at Okeham I knew nothing whatever about any relations James Loder may or may not have had, at this school or any other."

"But now you've seen him, sir," suggested Skinner, "I dare say you've noticed a family resemblance—"

"What?"

"I mean, you must have noticed whether Loder looks like James Loder."

"He does not resemble him in the very least, Skinner. He is no more like James Loder in appearance than he is like me."

"Oh!" said Skinner, disappointed.

He looked at the calm, handsome face of the games master. "Well, Loder's not like you, sir, except that his eyes are the same colour and his nose a bit like. You don't think that he looks like James Loder?"

"Not at all, Skinner."

"Still, relations don't always look alike!" Skinner was not beaten yet. "Some of the fellows noticed that Loder went to meet you, sir, the day you came."

"Indeed!"

"Some of them think he was going to ask you not to mention that he was connected with the Okeham man, sir."

"Indeed!" repeated the games master.

He rose to his feet.

"I think," he said, "that we had better go to Loder. I think that Loder of the Sixth Form will be able to answer your questions more satisfactorily than I can possibly do, Skinner. Come!"

Skinner fairly jumped.

"I—I— Oh, I—I don't want to go to Loder, sir!" he gasped. "I—I'd rather not speak to Loder about it, sir."

"Why not, when, as it appears from what you have said, you are acting in Loder's interests in this matter?"

"I—I—I—"

"Come!" said the games master, and, taking Skinner by the shoulder, he led him from the room.

In the passage outside, Harold Skinner's knees knocked together. The bare idea of being taken to Loder of the Sixth to raise the subject of his possible relationship to the Blackmoor convict, scared Skinner almost out of his wits.

"I—I—I say, sir—" he stuttered.

"Come!" said the games master.

"I—I—I— If you please, sir, I—I'd rather let the matter drop!" gasped Skinner. "I—I say, Loder gets into a fearful temper on that subject, sir. I—"

I—I— Pip-pip-please, don't take me to him, sir!"

Mr. Lagden smiled faintly. He released Skinner's shoulder.

"Very well," he said. "I fear, Skinner, that your motive in coming to me was an idle curiosity about a matter that does not concern you. I advise you, Skinner, to mind your own affairs. If I hear anything more from you on this subject I shall certainly refer you to Loder. You may go."

Skinner almost ran!

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Official!

BILLY BUNTER blinked.

He was surprised.

It was Saturday afternoon.

Billy Bunter had arrived in Mr. Quelch's study, with lines long overdue.

Those lines would have remained permanently overdue if the matter had been left to Bunter. But his Form-master, before going out that afternoon for a walk with Mr. Prout, had told Bunter what to expect if he did not find those lines on his study table when he came in.

So here was Bunter, with a collection of blots, and smears, and smudges, to lay on the Remove master's table. As Quelch was out, he supposed that the study would be unoccupied.

Instead of which, it was occupied by a Remove fellow, who was sitting at the telephone.

Bunter blinked—and grinned! Skinner of the Remove, it appeared, wanted the use of a phone, and had borrowed Quelch's while he was out walking with Prout!

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter.

Skinner stared round at him. He had THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,494.

sorted a number out of the telephone directory, and given it to the exchange. But he had to wait to get through on a long-distance call, and an interruption was rather alarming. He was glad to see that it was only a Remove fellow, but he scowled at the fat Owl.

"Get out, you fat ass!" he muttered.

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Shut the door after you!"

Billy Bunter laid his lines on the table and shut the door. But he remained on the inner side of it, grinning.

"Will you get out?" hissed Skinner. "Do you want me to come over there and boot you out, you fat frump?"

"He, he! I'd like to see you kick up a row in a beak's study!" grinned Bunter.

Skinner glared at him. He was not likely to risk a shindy in a Form-master's study. Billy Bunter was, as usual, inquisitive, and his inquisitiveness was going to be gratified. That Skinner was up to some trick on his Form-master's telephone Bunter had no doubt, and he was going to know what it was.

"You're through!" came a voice over the wires.

Skinner bestowed another glare on Bunter and turned to the instrument. He did not want a witness to his proceedings. Skinner preferred to play his tricks by stealth. But it could not be helped. It was not always easy to bag a telephone, and he did not want to lose this opportunity.

"Is that Loder Park?" he asked into the mouthpiece.

"Oh crikey!" breathed Bunter.

Skinner was telephoning to Loder's home!

Why, Bunter could not begin to guess. But he was more curious than ever. He drew nearer to the telephone to catch what was said from the other end. The deadly glares of Harold Skinner had absolutely no effect on the inquisitive fat Owl.

"Gerald speaking from Greyfriars!" went on Skinner. "Please ask my father to come to the phone."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

Skinner was going to speak to Loder Park as if it were Loder of the Sixth speaking! Bunter's little round eyes almost bulged through his big round spectacles. He was glad that he was not missing this.

There was a pause.

"Will you clear off?" breathed Skinner.

"No fear!" grinned Bunter. "I say, what's the game?"

"Shut up!" hissed Skinner.

There was a voice over the wires—a sharp, barking voice. Bunter's fat

head was bent near enough to catch it as it barked.

"What? Is that you, Gerald? Hey?"

"Yes, Gerald speaking!" answered Skinner, adopting a husky voice to disguise his real tones.

"Hey? I can't hear you. Have you got a cold? What—what? Can't you speak plainly, Gerald?"

"I've got rather a cold," mumbled Skinner. "I say, I thought I'd better ring you up and tell you the news."

"Eh! What news?"

"James has been caught!" said Skinner.

"Oh crikey!" gurgled Bunter.

He understood now.

If "James" was no relation of the Loders, obviously the old major's reply would make that clear. In which case, Skinner had simply to ring off and leave the matter where it was.

But if James was a relation of Gerald Loder's family, the reply would make that clear also. Skinner was after information; and he looked like getting it, one way or the other.

"James!" repeated the bark from the other end. "You young ass! I know that—don't you know it's been in the papers? What do you mean, Gerald? Do you fancy that the news had not yet reached me? Are you a fool?"

Skinner's eyes fairly danced over the telephone.

Billy Bunter chuckled.

This was information—straight from the horse's mouth, as it were. Major Loder at Loder Park, evidently knew James.

"Of course I've heard all about it," went on the barking voice, testily. "It's very unfortunate that it happened near your school, Gerald! I suppose you haven't been fool enough to mention the connection?"

"Oh!" gasped Skinner. "No!"

"The least said, the soonest mended!" snapped the major. "It's no fault of yours, or of mine, that James has disgraced himself and his family. But the less said the better. You know that."

"Oh! Yes, but—"

"But what?" barked Major Loder. "James will say nothing! From what I have heard of his condition, he cannot, if he would—he is suffering from severe concussion, and is not likely to recover for a long time, if at all. But in any case, you need not fear it. He has disgraced us, but if he has a rag of decency—he will say nothing on the subject of his relations."

"You—you—you think—" gasped Skinner.

"I am sure of it! Have you no sense, Gerald? Has he said anything so far? It is a year since he was sent to Black-

moor. At his trial, it never transpired that he was my nephew. Nothing was said. He had the decency to keep his relatives out of it. Don't you know that?"

"Oh, yes! I—I—I see!"

"You are nervous about nothing, Gerald! And it is very injudicious to speak about such matters on the telephone! Suppose you were overheard? You cannot keep a connection like this too secret. The disgrace is not ours, but it reflects upon us. Ring off at once!"

Skinner was ready to ring off.

He had served his purpose, and gained his end. He chuckled as he jammed the receiver back on the hooks.

"His nephew!" he breathed. "That means that he's Loder's cousin! If he's the nephew of Loder's father, he's Loder's cousin—Loder's Cousin James!"

"He, he, he!" from Bunter.

"His Cousin James," grinned Skinner. "Oh, my hat! I'm pretty certain that fool Wibley knew, but he wouldn't let on! Anyhow, all Greyfriars is going to know now! By gum! I'll make Loder sorry for whopping me, the rotten bully!"

"He, he, he! I fancy he will make you sorry if he finds out that you phoned his father!" chortled Bunter.

"You'd better keep it dark, Bunter," said Skinner grimly. "We're both in this. You had to butt in! If Loder ever finds out that anybody phoned Loder Park, he will find out that you had a hand in it."

"Oh crikey! I never—" gasped Bunter.

Skinner shrugged his shoulders and walked out of Mr. Quelch's study. The fat Owl rolled after him, rather regretting that he had lingered. What Loder of the Sixth would do, if he discovered the trick that had been played, made Billy Bunter's fat flesh cringe to contemplate.

Skinner looked out of the passage window. He had a view of Loder of the Sixth going out of the gates.

Having watched Loder disappear, he strolled away in the direction of Loder's study. He had something to do there, while Gerald Loder was safe off the scene.

Billy Bunter rolled out into the quad. He blinked round through his big spectacles, spotted the Famous Five, and rolled over to them.

The fat Owl realised that it would be wise to keep the telephone incident secret; as that beast Skinner was going to make out that he had a hand in it if it came out. But what he had learned, he simply could not keep to himself. He had to pass on the news, or burst!

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"I say, you fellows!" he gasped. "I say, it—it's come out!"

"Yes, I saw it come out!" said Bob Cherry. "That is, if you mean a porpoise that's just come out."

"Oh, really, Cherry! I say, about Loder!"

"Well, what's the latest about jolly old Loder?"

"His cousin James!" gasped Bunter. "I say, did you fellows know that the convict was Loder's cousin James?"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at the fat Owl.

"What on earth have you got hold of now?" exclaimed Nugent.

"It's true!" gasped Bunter. "I've just heard it! That's why Loder has been so shirty about it—the convict is his cousin! Fancy that, you fellows! A Greyfriars prefect with a cousin in chokery! He, he, he!"

Bunter rolled on to spread the news further, leaving Harry Wharton & Co. staring. By the time Loder of the Sixth came in, there were few fellows who had not heard of his cousin James.

THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Secret Out!

GERALD LODER came in at the school gates with a knitted brow.

He had walked down to Courtfield to make a little careful and judicious inquiry there in connection with the convict recently recaptured.

He was eager, anxious, to hear that the man had been taken back to Blackmoor. Once No. 22 was safe back in the prison on the moors in distant Devonshire, Loder hoped that he would be forgotten at Greyfriars. So long as he remained at Courtfield, the topic was kept more or less alive.

But Loder had been disappointed. He had learned that the captured convict was not yet in a state for removal, and was not likely to be for some time to come. He had not ventured to inquire in official quarters; but he was easily able to learn that much, the affair being the talk of the town.

He came back to the school in a sour and savage temper. Courtfield was only two or three miles from Greyfriars, and the convict's continued presence was a thorn in his side.

He noticed as he came in, that Gosling gave him a look. He noticed that Coker of the Fifth, in the quad, stared at him. He noticed that Dicky Nugent and some other fags of the Second Form grinned.

He scowled as he wondered whether anything fresh could have come out. Nothing could have come out, unless Lagden had talked too much. And the new games master had promised to say nothing.

"Pretty thick!" he heard Hobson of the Shell say to Hoskins of that Form. "Of course, it's not his fault, and if he wasn't such a brute, nobody would want to rub it in. Still—his own cousin, you know!"

Hobson's back was to Loder, but he broke off as Hoskins made frantic signs to him to be silent.

He glanced round, and started at the sight of Loder's scowling face. Loder made a step towards him—and then passed on. He could not, without betraying himself, take it for granted that Hobby's remarks referred to himself. But he knew that they did!

His cousin! Did they know that No. 22 was his cousin? How could anyone know that? Only Lagden knew, and he had said that he would say nothing about it.

Loder's glance fell on the stalwart

figure of the new games master in the distance, on the football ground. A senior football practice was going on, and the new master was there, with the footballers.

Loder fixed his eyes on the distant, athletic figure, with a black, bitter look.

Had Lagden, after his promise, given him away? Was the man a chattering fool who could not hold his tongue? He certainly did not look anything of the kind, but what else could it mean? Nobody, till this afternoon, had referred to No. 22 as Loder's cousin! Now they knew!

A fat, grinning face looked at him as he went to the House. But the grin died off Billy Bunter's fat face as he caught Loder's eye.

The next moment the bully of the Sixth grabbed him by a fat shoulder.

Bunter gave a squeak of alarm.

"I—I say, leggo, Loder!" he stuttered. "I say—"

"What were you grinning at, you fat toad?" asked Loder.

"Oh! Nothing! I—I don't know anything about it!" gasped Bunter. "I've never even heard of your cousin James!"

"I've got no cousin James!" muttered Loder between his teeth. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing! I—I know you haven't!" gasped Bunter. "I—I say, Loder, I—I'll tell all the fellows that that convict ain't your cousin James, if—if you'll let go my shoulder. Yooo-hooooo!"

Smack!

Loder tramped into the House, leaving the hapless Owl rubbing a smacked head. He met Walker and Carne as he went to the Sixth Form studies, and they looked at him very curiously. They had been speaking when he came along, but they stopped quite suddenly.

"What's this yarn going about now?" asked Loder, his face almost pale with rage. "I see that you've heard it."

"Well, a chap can't help hearing what everybody's saying," answered Walker uneasily. "If there's anything in it, Loder, you must be an ass to let it get out."

"And what is it?" hissed Loder.

"Well, there's been a lot of tattle about that convict being related to you," said Carne. "But somebody seems to have got hold of it now that the man is your cousin. Were you ass enough to mention it to anybody?"

"It's not true!" snarled Loder.

It was quite easy for him to see that neither of his friends believed that statement.

"Well, if it isn't, the sooner you knock it on the head, the better," said Walker. "It's dashed unpleasant for a fellow's friends to be supposed to have near relations in a convict prison."

Loder turned away and walked into his study.

Walker and Carne exchanged a very significant look.

"Not much doubt about it!" said Walker.

"Hardly!" said Carne.

"It's pretty thick, if you ask me!"

"I agree!"

And they walked away, quite agreed that it was extremely "thick" for a fellow, with whom they were pally, to have such an awful cousin. Exactly how Loder could have helped it they did not reflect. They agreed that it was "thick."

Loder's face was almost white with rage as he entered his study and slammed the door after him with a terrific slam.

The next moment his eyes fell on his looking-glass, and he gave a howl of fury. During his absence that afternoon somebody had chalked on the mirror:

"HOW'S COUSIN JAMES OF BLACKMOOR?"

Loder stared at that inscription.

It was the last straw!

Lagden, carelessly or intentionally, had betrayed him. He had not the slightest doubt of it. Only the games master knew, whatever anyone else might suspect, that James Loder was his cousin James; he was certain of that. Now it had become known to the whole school. Everybody was talking about it, and he was taunted with it in his own study. A games master—a hard-up outsider glad to take a temporary job for a few weeks—a nobody from nowhere—he had done this! Who else could have let out the secret? Lagden or nobody!

It was useless to deny it. Everybody knew it—and if there was any inquiry, inquiry could only prove that it was true! And the man had promised him to keep it dark! And he had let it out!

Loder trembled with rage.

He dragged open the door of his study, and was soon hurrying out of the House. His rage was at boiling point. He was going to see Lagden, and he went at once to find him—and the expression on his face made a crowd of fellows stare after him in wonder as he went.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Row!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Look at Loder!"

"What the thump—" "Something's up!" said Harry Wharton.

"Looks like it."

Gerald Loder passed the chums of the Remove without even seeing them. He was going down to the football ground, and he went straight on his way, almost blind with rage.

A moment's reflection might have warned Loder that whatever Mr. Lagden might or might not have done, it was folly to make a scene, and that the result of a scene could only be unpleasant for himself. But he did not reflect for a moment. He did not reflect at all. He was carried away by passionate, vindictive rage, and he strode straight on, with set lips and glinting eyes, looking neither to the right nor to the left.

A dozen fellows, who had observed him, and wondered what on earth was the row, followed, and the Famous Five joined them. Obviously, trouble was at hand, and they wondered whether it was going to be a row with Wingate. It was well known that Loder deeply resented his exclusion from the first eleven.

"Come on, my infants," said Bob, "we're not missing this! Dear old Loder's hunting for trouble! Let's bag front seats for the circus!"

Loder seemed unaware that surprised and interested fellows were after him. Perhaps he did not care.

He arrived on the football ground. The senior practice was over, and most of the men were heading for the changing-room. The games master stood in talk with Wingate and Gwynne.

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Loder marched straight up to the group, and Wingate and Gwynne looked round at him. Every fellow could see that some member of that group of three was the object of Loder's wrath; and the general impression was that he was looking for a row with the captain of the school. Wingate, probably, had that impression, for his face set grimly.

But Loder passed him unheeding, and stood directly in front of the new games master, fixing his eyes savagely on the handsome, surprised face.

"You cur!" he exclaimed, in a voice that was heard at a considerable distance.

The new master started, realising that it was he who was the offender, though he had not the faintest idea why.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He's not after Wingate—he's after the new beak! What the thump has Lagden done?"

Fellows who were going off the field stopped. A circle of staring, surprised faces surrounded the games master and the angry prefect. The new master was silent, from sheer astonishment.

"Did you address me, Loder?" he exclaimed at last.

"You know I did!" snarled Loder. "I called you a cur! A rotten cur! You made me a promise, and you've broken it, you rotter!"

"Are you mad, Loder?" exclaimed Wingate. "How dare you speak to Mr. Lagden like that?"

"I'll speak exactly as I choose, and you shan't stop me, either!" shouted Loder furiously. "And I'll speak to the Head, too, and ask him whether he got this man here to spread rotten tales about a fellow in the school."

The games master gazed at him blankly.

"You had better moderate your language, I think," he said quietly and contemptuously. "And you had better tell me what you mean! I have said nothing of you, as you ought to know."

"How did it get out, then?" roared Loder. "Every cad in the place has been trying to make out that that rotten convict from Blackmoor was a relation of mine! Who's told them that he was my cousin?"

"No one, that I know of!" answered the games master. "I certainly have told no one anything of the kind."

"Who knew, excepting you?" shouted Loder, hardly realising, in his tempest of rage, that he was admitting the fact in the hearing of more than fifty fellows. "Nobody knew but you! I

asked you not to mention it, and you said you wouldn't! Now it's all over the school."

"You're giving it a spot of publicity yourself," murmured Gwynne.

"You shut up!" snarled Loder. "I'm talking to that cad! You rotten rascal, you gave me your word to say nothing of my affairs here—"

"I have kept my word!" said the games master quietly. "Whatever I may have known of your affairs, Loder, not a word has passed my lips."

"Liar!" shouted Loder.

"That's enough, Loder!" interrupted Wingate gruffly. "Shut up!"

"I shall please myself about that! You rotter—you rotter!" Loder's voice rose almost to a yell as he glared at the new games master. "You know, and nobody else did! You lying rotter—"

"Silence!" rapped the games master. "Do you wish me to report your insolence to your headmaster, Loder? Silence, I say!"

"You—you—you—" The cool contempt in the calm, handsome face before him seemed to goad Loder

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beyond all self-control. He made a spring at the games master, striking at him with both fists.

There was a gasp from the spectators of that extraordinary scene. Wingate made a grab at Loder, too late.

But the games master was on his guard. His hands came up like lightning, and Loder's furious blows did not reach his face. Loder's fists were knocked aside sharply and swiftly.

The next moment the games master had gripped the enraged prefect by the collar. Loder, spluttering with helpless rage, swung in a grasp that was much too strong for him.

He was swept off his feet, and sagged like a sack in the grip that held him by the collar.

Shako, shake, shake!

"Urrrgh!" gurgled Loder.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Shako, shake!

It was the first time that the Greyfriars fellows had seen a Sixth Form prefect shaken like a small fag. It was a sight that nobody at Greyfriars School had ever expected to witness. But they saw it now.

Loder struggled wildly, frantically. But he was powerless in that hefty grip. Having shaken him, the games master held him at armslength with ease, in spite of his frantic struggles.

"Now, Loder! Listen to me!" he said quietly. "If your relationship to the Blackmoor convict has become known, as you say, it is not due to me. I told you that I would say nothing on the subject, and I have said nothing. There are many ways in which it may have become known, as you would realise, if you reflected coolly. I ask you to take my word on that."

"Let go my collar!" hissed Loder.

"Leave him to us, sir!" said the Greyfriars captain. And as the games master released Loder, Wingate grasped him by the shoulder and spun him round. "Now, then, get out of this, Loder! Get out of it! Do you hear? Any more of this, and I'll have you up in the Prefects' Room and give you six, like a fag that can't behave himself! Now get out of it!"

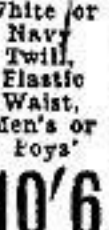
Loder stood panting with rage. But three or four of the Sixth Formers gathered round him and barged him away. He had to go—and he went. He went gasping for breath and realising, perhaps, that he had made a fool of himself. A grinning crowd watched him go, and he was rather glad to get to his study and shut himself up away from a sea of staring and mocking eyes.

The new games master of Greyfriars had made an enemy, and a bitter one. Even if it dawned on Loder, later, that it was probably not "Mr. Lagden" who had let out his secret, he was not likely to forgive or forget that scene on the football ground.

But, with the exception of Gerald Loder, there was hardly a fellow at Greyfriars who did not like the new master, and he was as popular as "Larry" Lascelles had been. Which was strange enough, and pleasant enough, to the man who, only a few days ago, had been No. 22 of Blackmoor, and a hunted man.

THE END.

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