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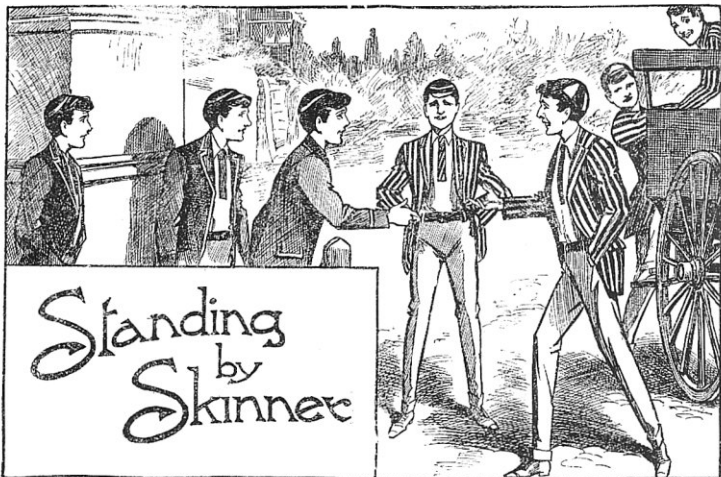
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A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bulstrode's Old Pal.

BULSTRODE of the Remore came into Harry Wharton's study, with a thoughtful frown on his face. Harry Wharton, the captain of the Remore, was scribbling on a sheet of paper at the table, and he looked up and smiled as he saw Bulstrode's knitted brows. He thought he knew the reason of that very thoughtful and troubled look.

"It's all right," he said.

Bulstrode started.

"All right," he repeated.

"Yes."

"You're in," explained Frank Nugent, looking up with a ruddy, glowing face from the fire, where he was making toast for tea.

"I'm in?" said Bulstrode.

"Yes," said Wharton. "Young Penfold has told me he wants to cut cricket for the afternoon on Wednesday; so if you want his place, it's yours."

"Oh, I see," said Bulstrode.

But the frown of troubled thought did not leave his face. Wharton looked at him in some surprise.

The cricket season was in full swing at Greyfriars. On the morrow, Wednesday, the Remore were playing a visiting team, the Wapford C. C. — a town eleven who were supposed to be somewhat above the weight of junior schoolboys, and who had accepted the challenge of the Greyfriars Remore in a somewhat condescending spirit. Wharton had met the Wapford skipper, a young gentleman of the name of Smythe-Poole, at Cliff House School. The young gentleman with the double-barrelled name had a sister at Cliff House School, and

Wharton had several friends there, and so they had happened to meet at a tea given by Marjorie Hazeldene in the school-room.

Wharton had been very much exasperated by Master Smythe-Poole's "swank" on the subject of cricket, hence the challenge to a match. Wharton had hardly expected the challenge to be accepted, for the Wapfordians averaged two years older than Greyfriars Remove, and had a very great opinion of themselves; but the acceptance had arrived from the Wapford secretary, and Wharton had devoted all his care to selecting a Remove team which would give Wapford the licking of their lives. There was keen competition among the Remove cricketers about getting into the eleven. And Wharton had picked out eleven fellows who could be relied upon to keep the Greyfriars colours flying.

When Bulstrode came into his study with that extremely thoughtful expression on his face, Wharton had no doubt that he was thinking about his chance of a place in the team. And Wharton was glad to be able to put him in. Bulstrode had been captain of the Remove himself once, and at that time he had been on the worst of terms with Harry Wharton. They pulled together very well now, however. Bulstrode had certainly changed very much for the better, and Wharton, perhaps, was a little more tactful than in his earlier days at Greyfriars.

But now there was evidently something else on Bulstrode's mind, as well as his place in the team for the Wapford match. He stood with his hand resting on the table, the troubled look deepening on his face.

"Didn't you come in to speak about the Wapford match?" asked Harry.

"Yes."
"Well, it's all right, as I said. You're in."
"I'm glad of that," said Bulstrode. "Of course, I wanted to play. And I didn't do so badly in the St. Jim's match, did I? But there's something else. I've had a letter from a member of the Wapford team."

"You have?" said Harry, in surprise. "Letters should be sent to Nugent, as secretary. I hope they're not scratching. I'm looking forward to giving them the biggest licking of their little lives. From the way that chap, Smythe-Poole spoke, I fancy that what he doesn't know about cricket would fill whole libraries. But as they're so much older than we are, it will be a bit of a tussle, I think. I don't know anybody in the team excepting the captain."

"You do!" said Bulstrode.

"Eh?"
"There's a fellow in the team you know—a fellow we all know. That's the fellow I've had a letter from."

Wharton looked astonished. Frank Nugent left off making toast, and rose from before the fire. The toast was done, and Frank was pretty well done, too, to judge by his complexion.

"You're jolly mysterious!" said Harry. "I don't know anybody in Wapford, that I know of. The members of the team are Wapford fellows, I think—some of them clerks in business houses there. Who's the fellow we all know, then?"

"An old Greyfriars boy."

Wharton whistled.

"Was he in the Remove?"

"Yes."
"Not an old boy—chap who's been through the school?" said Nugent. "He would be too old to play in a junior team."

"No," said Bulstrode. "He was in the Remove when he left."

"Chaps don't leave when they're still in the Lower Fourth, as a rule," said Wharton. "Do you mean that he was pushed out?"

"Yes."
"Oh, sacked!"

"Yes."
"Can't say that it's in the best of taste for him to come

back here with a visiting team, then," said Wharton. "Who is it?"

"Skinner!"
Wharton and Nugent looked very grave. They remembered Skinner well enough. Skinner of the Remove had been expelled from Greyfriars; and he had fully deserved to be expelled. Skinner had been very much "up against" No. 1 Study, as Bulstrode himself had been at that time. He had gone from the school, and very few of the fellows had regretted him. What had become of him since, Harry Wharton & Co. did not know. If he wrote to anybody at Greyfriars, it naturally was not to them.

"Skinner—eh?" said Wharton, after a pause. "Is he living at Wapford?"

"Yes. His father has a business there, and Skinner's in the office. He doesn't like it; but he's had no choice. After he was sacked from here, his father was awfully ratty with him."

"No wonder!"

"Well, he wouldn't send Skinner to school again, but shoved him into his office; told him, he would have to work, as he had chosen to get kicked out of school."

"Can't say I blame him," said Wharton. "Skinner ought to have thought of all that when he got what he was sacked for. He acted like a rotter, and the Head couldn't have done anything else."

Bulstrode coloured a little.

"Well, Skinner was a chap of value," he said. "I don't say I uphold what he did, but I don't believe in being down on a chap because he's said his 'ick. I don't think Skinner meant it to be so bad as it looked, and he certainly never expected to get the boot. And he's had a bad time since he left here. He was by accident of the chance of seeing Greyfriars again, and it was really he who induced Smythe-Poole to accept my challenge. Smythe-Poole was going to write me on Bulstrode's name, instead of accepting; but Skinner worked it."

"Good for Skinner," said Nugent. "He's given us the chance of kicking that crowd, anyway. And we're going to lick them. Quite enough, to have an expelled Greyfriars chap playing against Greyfriars."

"That isn't all," said Bulstrode. "Skinner's written to me, as I said; he wants me to help him."

"Help him? Bow?"

"He wants to come back to Greyfriars."

"To stay?"

"Yes."
"That won't be easy. The Head is not likely to take him. And, surely, it's a matter for the Head and Skinner's pater to settle. How can you help him?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Bulstrode. "But he's asked me to speak to his old friends, and to do what we can for him. He says he's sick of the office, and if he doesn't get out of it, he's going to bolt. He thinks we can do something for him. His pater would send him back here if the Head would take him. And he thinks we may be able to work it with the Head in some way."

Wharton and Nugent were silent. Bulstrode looked from one to the other.

"I know you fellows weren't friends of Skinner's—quite the reverse," he said. "But—but I thought I'd speak to you. After all, it's jolly hard on a fellow to be sacked, and to have his whole career mucked up. Skinner's had a lesson, and I think he would run straight if he got another chance. I suppose it's a cheek to ask you, under the circumstances; but if you fellows joined in we might do something for him. The Head is a good old sort, and if he understood that most of the Remove wanted Skinner, and—and—" Bulstrode paused.

Wharton looked very serious.

"That's a big order," he said. "Of course, if Skinner wants to go straight, I believe in giving him a chance; but it won't be easy to get him admitted to the school again. I don't suppose the Head would take much notice of what we want, even if we wanted him. But—"

"But you won't be against him, anyway?" asked Bulstrode.

"No. We can promise you that."

"That's understood," said Nugent.
"I haven't seen Skinner since he left," said Wharton. "Let's leave it over till we've seen him, and we can see what he's like. As a matter of fact, he impressed me as a fellow who couldn't possibly run straight; but I wouldn't be hard on him. Leave it till he comes here with Wapford, and we'll talk to him."

"Good!" said Bulstrode, looking relieved. "I can't ask you to say more than that. I hope you'll help me, that's all."

"Then you're going to stand by him, anyway?"
"I'm not going to desert an old pal who's down on his luck," said Bulstrode.

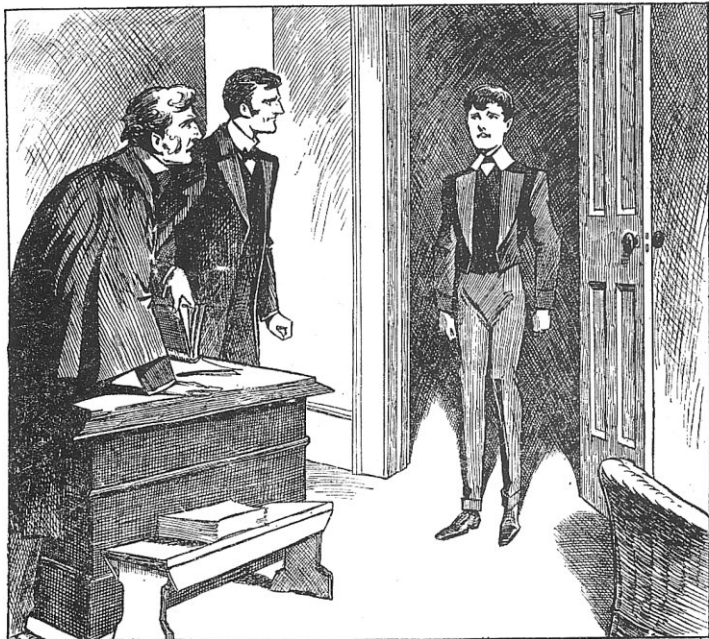
And he nodded to the chums of No. 1, and left the study.

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M
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"Well, my boy, what is it?" said Dr. Locke. "If—you please, sir, we—we're a deputation," began Bulstrode. He had prepared a little speech in advance; and in his confusion he was delivering it, notwithstanding the fact that he had entered the study alone. (See Chapter 3.)

Nugent buttered the toast, and Wharton finished scribbling the cricket list. Both of them were looking very thoughtful.

"It's decent of Bulstrode to stand by an old pal, Franky," said Wharton at last.

Nugent nodded.

"The question is whether Skinner's worth it," he said.

"Well, we shall see, I suppose; but I'd like to help Bulstrode. But what the dickens can we do? We can't ask the Head to listen to our advice."

Nugent chuckled.

"And he mightn't, even if we asked him to," he said. "Headmasters have a rotten habit of neglecting the opinion of the junior Forum."

"I can't help thinking that Skinner's got some of his blessed old tricks in his mind," said Wharton uneasily. "He knows it's not an easy thing to do. And if he's the same Skinner that we used to know, he wouldn't stop at much. But I don't see what he can do in the matter, any more than we can. But we shall see what we shall see, I suppose."

"Nous verrons ce que nous verrons, as mossoo says," grinned Nugent.

And with that the chums of No. 1 Study dismissed the matter, and talked cricket.

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THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Deputation of One.

THE news that Skinner, who had been expelled from the school, was coming to play the old college with the Wapford team was soon known to all Greyfriars. The fellows looked forward to seeing him again with some curiosity. His old friends in the Remove, Bulstrode and Stott and Snoop and Hazeldene made preparations for entertaining him, to show that they had not forgotten an old "pal." But Bulstrode was probably the only one who was really keen about the matter. Stott and Snoop and Hazeldene had almost forgotten him, until he was recalled to their minds. New fellows in the Remove, like Penfold and Lord Maulvever, were curious to see a fellow who had been in the Form before their time.

The fact that Skinner wanted to come back made most of the juniors sympathetic. Skinner had acted very badly, and he had got it, as Bob Cherry remarked, "in the neck"; but they naturally sympathised with a fellow who was down on his luck. But that the Head could be induced to rescind his decision was regarded as extremely improbable. Dr. Locke had not decided without reflection, and he was not likely to reverse his judgment.

"It's jolly queer that Skinner should think of anything of the sort," Bob Cherry remarked, when Wharton told him:

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his visit from Bulstrode. "He can't expect the Head to go back on his own word."

Wharton nodded, with a frown. "That's how it seems to me," he said. "I suppose it's not possible that Skinner has some dodge in his mind—you know he was always full of dodges—"

"I don't see how he could dodge the Head into taking him back into the school," said Bob, in surprise.

"Well, I don't, either," Wharton confessed. "But I couldn't help the idea coming into my head. I can't trust Skinner."

"Most likely he's just fed up with the office, and wants to get back," said Johnny Bull. "The wish is father to the thought, you know. Bulstrode has been talking about a deputation of the Remove chaps to the Head, to ask him to take Skinner back."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders. "That wouldn't be much good," he said. "I fancy the Head would cut them pretty short!"

"That's what I think; but Bulstrode's calling the Form together in the Rag, to get them to back him up. What are we going to do?"

"Keep out of it!" said Harry. "We can't go to the Head and say we want Skinner back, when we don't really want him. I'm sorry for him, but I don't see that it would be any good to Greyfriars if he came back. I sha'n't oppose him; but I can't go to the Head and ask him to be allowed to come back."

And the Famous Five agreed with their leader. As Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh put it, the agreeableness was terrific. But the chums of the Remove dropped into the Rag to see the meeting. Most of the Removites had turned up there, and a good many of the Fourth and the Shell, to see what was going on. When the Famous Five entered, Bulstrode was mounted upon a chair, addressing a crowd of fellows who were mostly grinning.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows!" said Bulstrode. "Some of you remember Skinner, and some of you don't—"

"I'm one of the don'ts, begad!" remarked Lord Maulverer. "Those who remember him, and remember what a good chap he was—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Russell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, he wasn't a bad chap!" said Bulstrode. "He came a mucker, and we all ought to be sorry for a chap who's come a mucker!"

"Might happen to anybody," remarked Vernon-Smith, with a grin. "Blessed are they who are not found out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, poor Skinny got the order of the boot," said Bulstrode. "Now he's stuck in an office, grinding away at figures and things. He wants to come back to Greyfriars, and if the Head would let him in, his pater would let him come. Now, if the Remove went in a body to the Head, and asked him to go easy with old Skinner, he might—"

"Give us lines!" suggested Bolsover major.

"Ha, ha! Very likely!"

"Well, he might," admitted Bulstrode. "But we ought to take the risk for the sake of an old pal!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rats!"

The answer of the Removites were very mixed.

"I call on you fellows to back me up," said Bulstrode. "I'm going to the Head. All the fellows who will come with me, come over here!"

And Bulstrode walked to the door.

Stott and Snoop followed him, and Trevor and Hazeldene. The other fellows remained where they were. They might sympathise with a fellow who had got it "in the neck"; but they did not want to venture into the lion's den, so to speak, and ask the Head to change his decision. It would be altogether too thick, as Vernon-Smith remarked. The Head was more likely to cane them for impertinence than anything else.

Bulstrode looked over the four fellows who had joined him, and sniffed.

"Dash it all! I think some more of you might come!" he said. "Skinner's an old pal, and he's down on his luck. I want twenty chaps at least!"

But the Remove fellows resisted that eloquent appeal.

"Won't you come, Wharton?" demanded Bulstrode. "You're captain of the Form, and that would have some influence with the Head, perhaps."

Wharton shook his head. "I can't very well, Bulstrode. If the Head asked me if I really wanted Skinner back, I couldn't tell him I did—it would be a whopper!"

"The whopperfulness would be terrific!" remarked Hurree Ram Singh.

"Won't you come, Bob Cherry?"

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry, promptly.

"You, Maulverer—"

"Begad, I don't know the chap!" said Lord Maulverer.

The door of the Rag opened, and Billy Bunter came in. The Owl of the Remove blinked round the meeting through his big spectacles. Bulstrode called to him at once.

"You'll come with me, Bunter?" he asked.

"Oh, certainly!" said Billy Bunter. "I'll come with pleasure, Bulstrode!"

"Good that's one more!" said Bulstrode. "I should think you fellows would follow where Bunter's willing to lead!"

"Not exactly the kind of leader I'm looking for, for one!" said Johnny Bull, with a snarl.

"Same here!" said Lord Maulverer.

"The samenessness is terrific!"

"Well, come on, Bunter—"

"Certainly, Bulstrode. Where is he?" asked the fat junior, Bulstrode stared!

"Eh! What do you mean?"

"I mean, where are you going?"

"Head's study, of course!"

"But the Head will be there!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Well, you ass, what would be the good of going there, if the Head wasn't there?" Bulstrode demanded. "Are you off your rocker?"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode! How can you possibly have a feed in the Head's study, and especially if the Head is there?"

"Feed!" said Bulstrode. "Who's talking about a feed?"

"You are, I suppose. What did you ask me to come with you for, if it's not a feed?" asked Bunter, in surprise.

There was a roar of laughter. Billy Bunter had evidently misunderstood.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob Cherry. "Tubby thought you were inviting him to a feed, Bulstrode. You can count Bunter out if it's not a feed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked round at the laughing juniors.

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at!" he growled.

"Isn't Bulstrode standing a feed?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Then what the dickens is he asking me to come with him for?" asked Bunter, puzzled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're a deputation to the Head, to ask him to take Skinner back!" shouted Bulstrode.

ANSWERS

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reply. Stott and Trevor and Hazeldene grinned, and Bulstrode knitted his brows.

"I rather think Snook's right!" Stott remarked, uneasily. "It's a bit thick to ask a headmaster to reverse his own decision, you know!"

"Same here!" murmured Hazeldene.

"Oh, come on!" said Bulstrode, quickening his pace, fearful his followers would all melt away before the Head's study was reached.

"By George!" said Stott. "I've forgotten to fag for Loder! I quite forgot—"

"Come on, Stott!" yelled Bulstrode.

"Sorry—couldn't possibly disappoint Loder—you know how ratty he would get!" And Stott was gone in a twinkling.

"Rotten funk!" growled Bulstrode. "You two fellows will stand by me, I suppose?"

"The fact is," said Trevor, "I—I think perhaps we'd better—better leave it for a bit! I'll go and ask Stott when he can come—"

"Stay here!"

But Trevor was already hurrying away. Bulstrode slipped his arm through Hazeldene's, Hazeldene was marched willfully. He made a slight effort to get his arm away as they neared the Head's study; but Bulstrode held him tight.

"I—I say, Bulstrode!" said Hazeldene. "I think—it's no good two of us going in—and if the Head's ratty—you know he was very waxy with Skinner when he sacked him—he may come down on us heavily—"

"We're going to risk that!" said Bulstrode.

"He knocked at the Head's door."

"Come in!" called out the deep voice of Dr. Locke. Bulstrode opened the door. Hazeldene jerked himself away as he did so, and scudded away down the passage. Bulstrode stood alone in the doorway!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Bulstrode Does His Best!

"COME in!"

Bulstrode hesitated. The deputation had melted away, and he was left alone; and he did not care about facing the Head without at least one comrade to back him up. Had the door been still shut, Bulstrode would probably have beaten a retreat himself. But the Head had seen him, and told him to come in. Bulstrode took his courage in both hands, so to speak, and entered the study.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was in the room, chatting with the Head. Mr. Quelch turned his keen glance upon Bulstrode. Mr. Quelch's eyes were generally compared to gimlets by his pupils, on account of their piercing quality. They seemed very much indeed like gimlets to poor Bulstrode at this moment; and the Head's glance seemed as sharp as Mr. Quelch's. Both the masters were looking at the boy; and Bulstrode stood red and hesitating, not knowing what to say.

"Well, my boy, what is it?" asked Dr. Locke, kindly, seeing that the lad was confused and uneasy. "What have you come to say to me, Bulstrode?"

"If—if you please, sir—" stammered Bulstrode.

"Yes. What is it?"

"If—you please, sir, we—we're a deputation!" began Bulstrode. Bulstrode had prepared a little speech in advance; but in his confusion he was delivering it, notwithstanding that he had entered the study alone.

Dr. Locke looked at him very curiously.

"I hardly understand you, Bulstrode. One person cannot be a deputation; and why do you speak in the plural when you are alone?"

"I—I—I beg your pardon, sir! I—I mean, I'm a deputation—that is to say, we—we've come alone—I mean—"

"Dear me!" said the Head. "You are very vague, Bulstrode. Have you come to see me about any matter of importance? I am always willing to give time to my boys; but you know that my time is valuable, Bulstrode."

"Yes, sir! I know, sir! Thank you, sir!"

The Head smiled.

"Tell Dr. Locke what you want, Bulstrode," said Mr. Quelch.

"Certainly, sir! It—it's about a chap, sir," stammered Bulstrode.

"Indeed?" said the Head.

"He—he did a rather rotten thing, sir."

The Head's brows contracted. He could not help concluding that Bulstrode had come to his study to "sneak" about someone, hence his confusion. And the Head of Greyfriars was very much opposed to encouraging tell-tales.

"You need say no more, Bulstrode," he said sharply. "I do not encourage tale-bearing, as you very well know."

"But, sir, but—"

"You may go, Bulstrode."

"Then—then you won't let him come back?" said Bulstrode. "What?"

"The poor chap's had a very hard time, sir, and—and—"

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"There seems to be some misapprehension," said the Head, more kindly. "Have you come here to tell tales about someone, Bulstrode, or to speak in someone's behalf?"

"I—I want to appeal to you, sir. It's about Skinner."

"Skinner!" repeated the Head.

"Yes, sir," said Bulstrode, going on more easily now that the ice was broken. "Skinner, sir—old Skinner. He used to be in the Lower Fourth with us, sir; but he was pushed out—I—I mean sacked."

"He was expelled for disgraceful conduct!" said the Head severely.

"He was expelled, sir. I know he did a rotten thing. I'm not saying he didn't; but he was a friend of mine."

"You are better off without such a friend, Bulstrode."

"He's had a rotten time, sir," said the junior eagerly.

"His father's shoved him into an office, and hasn't sent him to school again. He's changed a great deal since he's left Greyfriars—quite turned over a new leaf."

"You have seen him?"

"Well, no, sir, I—I haven't seen him."

"Then how do you know that he has changed and turned over a new leaf?"

"He—he told me so in a letter, sir."

"Ahem!"

"His pater was frightfully ratty at his getting sacked, sir. He won't send him to another school. But if you'd let him come back, his pater would let him come."

"What?"

The Head's voice was so sharp that Bulstrode involuntarily backed a couple of paces towards the door. It dawned fully upon the junior what a terrific "check" he was displaying in thus coming to the Head with such a request. But Bulstrode was made of the right stuff; he had his faults, many of them, but cowardice was not among their number. He stuck bravely to his guns, though he could already feel an anticipatory tingle in the palms of his hands.

"I—I hope you won't be angry at my asking you, sir," filtered the junior. "We're a deputation—I—I mean the Remove all want him back—that is to say, lots of the fellows would come and ask you, only they're afraid you'd be ratty."

"What!"

"I mean angry, sir. We think Skinny has had a rough time, and we—we want him back, sir. He's changed and turned over a new leaf, and—if you'd give him another chance, we would play the game like—like anything, sir."

"Am I to understand that Skinner has asked you to make this most astounding and unheard-of request to me?" exclaimed the Head sternly.

"Not exactly, sir. He asked me as an old pal—friend to do anything I could. So I came with the deputation."

"What deputation?"

"They—they bunked, sir," stammered Bulstrode. "I mean they skeddaddled, sir—I—I should say they cleared off before we got here, sir. They funked it. But—but I made up my mind to speak a word for old Skinner. And—and I don't care if you do cane me!" concluded Bulstrode desperately.

"It was certainly impertinent of you to think of coming here to ask me to change a decision," said the Head. "Do you think I decided without reflecting on the merits of the case?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Then how can you possibly ask me to reverse my sentence upon Skinner?"

"He—he wants to come back, sir."

"Very probably; but that is no reason why I should allow him to do so. He was guilty of dastardly conduct. I shall not cane you, Bulstrode, for speaking up for an old friend; but I shall certainly not entertain the suggestion for a moment. So long as I am headmaster of Greyfriars, Skinner has not the slightest prospect of being admitted to the school he has disgraced."

"But, sir, if you—you will listen—"

"I have heard quite enough, Bulstrode! You may go!"

The Head's voice was so decided that Bulstrode had no choice in the matter. He stammered something, and retreated to the door. Dr. Locke frowned as the door closed behind the Removeite.

"It is outrageous that Skinner should think of returning here," he said. "You agree with me, Mr. Quelch?"

"Undoubtedly, sir," said the Remove-master. "I doubt whether Skinner has altered since he left Greyfriars. I think it is very improbable. It was not for his first offence that he was expelled; he was given every opportunity of amending. I should certainly not counsel you to rescind your decision in the matter."

"It is impossible!" said the Head.

Bulstrode returned to the Rag with a moody brow. There was a general chorus of inquiry as he entered the room.

"How did you get on?"

"Licked?"

Bulstrode grunted.

"The rotters all cleared off, and left me to go in alone!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I wasn't licked; only the Head isn't taking any. There's no chance for old Skinner; that's what I shall have to tell him to-morrow," said Bulstrode. "It's rotten!"

"Blessed if I see how you could expect anything else!" said Tom Brown.

"Well, I've done my best," said Bulstrode. "I can tell Skinner that. And if any of you fellows can think of any dodge for helping old Skinner I'd be obliged."

"Now then, what offers?" grinned Dolsover major.

"But there were no offers. No one, apparently, felt equal to originating a "dodge" for helping old Skinner in that very difficult matter.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Arrival of Skinner.

THE Remove fellows had plenty to think of the following morning, as well as the lessons they were receiving from Mr. Quech. In fact, it is safe to say that they were thinking of other things more than of their lessons, most of them. The Wapford cricketers were coming over that afternoon, and all the fellows who were in the Form eleven were thinking of the match. Billy Bunter was thinking of the tea that would be "stood" for the visitors, at which he meant to be present. Bulstrode and some others were thinking of Skinner, and wondering about him. Skinner, in the old days, had been well known to be remarkably "deep," and there was a very general idea that he had some "dodge" in his mind for staying at Greyfriars when he got there, though how he could possibly work it was a puzzle.

Bulstrode had done his best for him, and he had failed, as he had more than half expected that he would. That was all the news he had for the expelled junior when he arrived.

After dinner that day, Harry Wharton & Co. turned out into the Close in their cricketing flannels. It was a splendid spring afternoon—just the weather for cricket. The junior pitch was in splendid condition. Harry Wharton always saw to that very carefully.

"Time they were here," said Bob Cherry, looking up at the clock in the old tower of Greyfriars, as he lounged outside the pavilion with the other fellows.

"Shouldn't wonder if they're late," growled Wharton. "Still, we shall have plenty of time to lick them, I think. It's only a single innings match, you know."

"When is Marjorie coming over, Hazel?" asked Bob Cherry.

"In time to see the match," said Hazeldene, who had the honour and distinction of being the brother of Marjorie Hazeldene, of Cliff House. "That fellow Smythe-Poole's sister is coming with her, and Clara, too."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called out Bob Cherry. "Where are you off to, young Penfold?"

Penfold of the Remove paused, and looked towards the pavilion. He flushed a little as the eyes of the fellows were turned upon him. Dick Penfold was a scholarship boy; and all Greyfriars knew that he was the son of the village cobbler in Friarade. That was not against him, excepting with a snobbish section of the fellows. And Dick Penfold was a "good man" in the Form-room and out of it. He had been given a place in the Form eleven, and there were few better cricketers in the Remove. But he had asked to be excused from playing that afternoon, for some reason best known to himself and Bulstrode had taken his place.

"You're going to see the match, ain't you, Pen?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"I fold shook his head.

"No; I'm going home for the afternoon," he said.

"Wharton said that he doesn't specially want me to play."

"That's all right," said Harry. "Bulstrode's a good man—

not much to choose between you, really. Sorry you can't play, that's all."

"But you can sit on the fence and shout for Greyfriars," said Bob Cherry severely. "We want somebody to cheer our exploits, you know."

Penfold smiled faintly.

"I'm going home for the afternoon," he said. "I'm sorry I can't see the match. But my father wants me."

Billy Bunter, who was rolling in an ungraceful attitude

on one of the seats outside the pavilion, burst into a chuckle.

"I jolly well know what your pater wants you for," he said.

Penfold looked at him calmly.

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"THE GENIUS LIBRARY,"

Every Wednesday.

"I am going to help him with his work, if you want to know," he said quietly.

"Stick to thy last!" chuckled Bunter. "He, he, he!"

"What are you going off like a Chinese cracker for, you fat rotter?" demanded Bob Cherry, with a frowning glance at the owl of the Remove.

"Well, I think it's rotten for a Greyfriars chap to go round mending old boots and shoes," said Bunter. "Reflects upon the college, you know. I really don't know what my father would say if he knew we had a cobbler's son here."

Penfold turned and walked away, without taking any notice of Bunter. Billy Bunter was not, worth liking, and the cobbler's son had other and more important things than the Owl of the Remove to think of.

"If the Wapford chaps come along the High Street, they'll be able to see Penfold in the cobbler's shop mending boots," said Billy Bunter, with a sniff of disgust. "Awfully disgraceful for Greyfriars, I think."

"Well, when they get here, they'll see you, anyway," said Bob Cherry. "After that, it will be no good Greyfriars trying to keep up appearances, will it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry?"

"Shut up, you fat oyster!" said Bob Cherry. "You make me ill! I wonder Penfold didn't punch your silly head!"

Bunter snorted.

"I hope Penfold would have too much respect for his letters, to think of laying hands on a gentleman," he said.

"There's a limit, even for these scholarship chaps who keep on coming to the school—fellows from cobbling shops and factories!" Owl.

A grip was laid upon the back of Billy Bunter's neck, and he was jerked round, to look into the angry face of Mark Linley of the Remove.

Bunter blinked with rolling eyes at the Lancashire lad.

"Ow! Leggo! I—I didn't see you there, Linley!"

The scholarship boy smiled contemptuously. Certainly the Owl of the Remove hadn't seen him, or his remarks would have been of quite a different order.

"I suppose you were referring to me as well as Penfold," said Mark Linley.

"Oh, really—oh, no! In fact, I wasn't speaking of you at all! I didn't allude to the factory you used to work in—I didn't really! I was thinking of—of factories in general, you know," stammered Bunter. "It was really a—a—a figure of speech, you know."

"Wallop him, Marky!" said Bob. "You can do it without laying hands on a gentleman!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Oh, really! I—I say, Linley, you—you mustn't misapprehend what I was saying," said Bunter, wriggling in the iron grasp of the Lancashire lad. "What I really meant to say was—that I had a very great respect for scholarship chaps, and I advise you awfully, you know. That's what I really meant to say, only you interrupted me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "I think Bunter could give Ananias twenty yards in a hundred, and beat him easily!"

"Leggo, Linley, old chap—ow! if you shake me—ow—yah!"

Mark Linley gave Bunter a spin, and the Owl of the Remove spun away and sat down in the grass. He sat there for several minutes blinking at the juniors, and gasping for breath; but he made no further remarks on the subject of scholarship boys. His opinion on that subject was reserved for the more congenial society of Snoop and Vernon-Smith.

There was a sound of wheels outside the school gates, and a big truck came up the drive.

The truck was full of fellows with cricket-bags.

Wapford had arrived.

There was a shout from two or three of the Greyfriars fellows.

"There's old Skinner!"

Bulstrode and Stott and two or three more ran up at once to shake hands with Skinner.

Skinner jumped down out of the brake, and greeted them warmly.

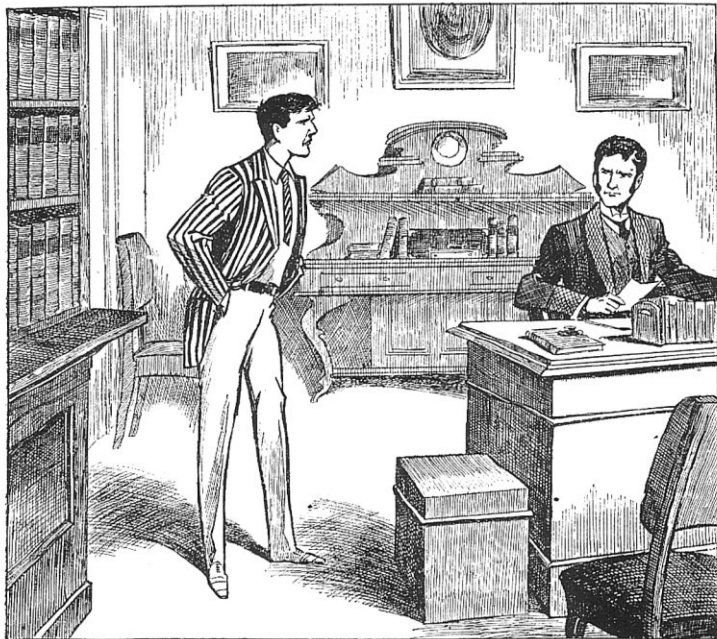
Wharton glanced at the old Greyfriars boy.

He was the same Skinner as of old, to all appearances—thin and wiry, and very keen and sharp in the face, with the same shifty look in his eyes. Judging by appearances, Wharton would not have said that Skinner had changed at all since the time he was expelled from Greyfriars School.

Smythe-Poole, the Wapford skipper, a slim and somewhat elegant fellow of about seventeen, shook hands with Wharton in a perfunctory manner. All Master Smythe-Poole's movements were perfunctory. Master Smythe-Poole cultivated a boots' air, which he regarded as very dogfish and like a man of the world.

"I'm afraid we're a little bit late," he said. "Sorry!"

"Oh, never mind!" said Harry.



"I miss the old school, sir, and the fellows I knew," said Skinner mournfully. "I want to come back, sir. I mean to go straight in the future. I've had a very severe lesson, sir. I hope you forgive me." (See Chapter 9.)

"Never do seem to get on time, somehow, Carton."

"My name is Wharton!"

"Sorry—quite forgot. It seems that you know Skinner!" said Smythe-Poole, looking in some surprise at the greetings Skinner was receiving from the Greyfriars juniors.

"He used to be here," said Harry.

"I remember—oh, yaas!" said Smythe-Poole. "He was a Greyfriars boy—yaas!" Smythe-Poole evidently did not know that Skinner had been expelled from Greyfriars, and no one there was inclined to enlighten him.

Skinner came up to Wharton in a rather doubtful manner, and held out his hand.

"You knew I was coming, Wharton?" he asked.

"Yes."

"No old grudges, I hope?"

"No!" said Harry. "I don't want to take up old troubles, I'm sure!" And he shook hands with Skinner heartily enough.

"Good!" said Skinner. "I'm glad to see Greyfriars again—it's ripping to be back in the old place, even for one afternoon. Queer to be playing against the Remove, though!"

"You used not to care much for either footer or cricket," said Harry.

"I'm very keen about it now—I've changed in some ways," said Skinner. "That's one of them!"

"Glad to hear it!"

"The gladfulness is terrific, my worthy Skinnerful friend!" said Hurree Janset Ram Singh, as he shook hands with the THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 274.

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expelled junior. "I should have much overjoyfulness if you could returnfully come back to your esteemed Form!"

"Thank you, Inky!" said Skinner.

"We're—er—ready to change—er—if you'll—er—show us to our dressing-room," said Smythe-Poole, languidly. "Horrible bore, changing!"

"This way!" said Wharton.

The Wapfordians went into the pavilion. The chums of the Remove looked at one another and grinned.

"And that—that—that dummy plays cricket!" said Bob Cherry, in intense disgust. "My hat! I could make up a team of Second-Form fags that would walk all over him!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. The Same Old Skinner!

SMYTHE-POOLE won the toss, and elected to bat first. Smythe-Poole went in to open the innings, with another fellow who looked a little more lively than himself, named Thompson. Smythe-Poole had a great manner at the wicket. He stood in an attitude of studied elegance, apparently thinking far more of that than of the necessity of keeping the ball off the sticks. Harry Wharton grinned as he tossed the leather to Hurree Janset Ram Singh for the first over.

"Scalp him, Inky!" he whispered.

Hurree Janset Ram Singh grinned.

"PETER TODD'S CHANCE!"

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"The scalpfulness will be terrific, my worthy chum!" he murmured.

And the nabob went on to bowl. The Greyfriars fellows gathered round to see the match. The waiting batsmen of the Wapford side stood in a group before the pavilion. Skinner among them. Skinner was talking to Bulstrode and Stott and Snoop, and some more of his old acquaintances.

"So you want to come back here to stay, Skinny?" said Snoop.

Skinner nodded. "Yes, rather. It's rotten being stuck in an office—hard work from ten in the morning till five in the afternoon—ugh!" "You never did like work, Skinny?" chuckled Snoop.

"And I don't like it now any more than I did," said Skinner. "But school work is a joke to office work. Fancy having to stick on a high stool all day long—with a view of a canal and barges from a grimy window all day—what?"

"Rotten!" said Snoop. "I'm going to work it to come back here somehow. The pater won't send me to another school—says I chose to muck things up here, and I must take the consequences. He's as hard as nails!"

"Well, you did come rather a mucker, you know!" said Bulstrode.

"I was an ass!" said Skinner. "I shouldn't do the same thing twice."

"You mean you're going to run straight if you get back here?" asked Bulstrode.

Skinner closed one eye. "I'm going to be careful!" he said.

Bulstrode coloured. "You'll have to make up your mind to do the right thing, if you want to get on here!" he said, rather sharply.

Skinner stared at him. "Bulstrode! Bulstrode!" Two or three voices were calling.

"Coming!" said Bulstrode. "You're keeping the field waiting!" said Harry Wharton, curtly.

"Sorry—I was talking to Skinner!"

Wharton very nearly said "Confound Skinner!" but he did not. Bulstrode joined the field, and the bowling commenced.

Skinner looked at Stott and Snoop in a puzzled way after Bulstrode had gone.

"What's the matter with Bulstrode?" he asked. "Has he gone dotty, or what?"

Snoop giggled. "Bulstrode's a bit different from what he was," he said.

"Turned over a new leaf, you know, and all that. He's very tick with Wharton these days!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Skinner. "Better be a bit more careful how you talk to him," said Snoop. "Pile it on about the reformation bizney, and all that, or he'll cut up rusty!"

"My only Uncle George!" said Skinner. "Fancy old Bulstrode turning out like that! I suppose it's spoof, ain't it?"

"Well, we thought it was spoof at first, but it seems to be lasting," said Snoop. "I should be rather tactful with him, if I were you!"

"Thanks for the tip!" said Skinner. "Same old Skinny?" grinned Snoop.

"Well, I'd turn over a dozen new leaves, or a whole giddy volume, to get out of that dashed office!" said Skinner.

"I'm going to get back here by hook or by crook, I can tell you that. Does the Head know about my coming here?"

"Yes—Bulstrode tackled him about you yesterday—asked him to have you back!"

"What did he say?" asked Skinner, eagerly. "Waitin' to listen to it!" Skinner grinned.

There was a sudden shout from the fellows round the field. "Well bowled, Inky!"

Smythe-Poole was experiencing the surprise of his life. He had lounged down to the wicket, prepared to knock the mere schoolboy bowling into a cocked hat, and to take as many runs as his languidness would permit—though concealing was, as he remarked to his friends, a horrible bore. But Smythe-Poole was not destined to be horribly bored with any run-getting in that innings.

Hurree Singh had taken his measure at once. He sent down a couple of easy balls to test the batsman, and Smythe-Poole just stopped them.

Then Inky sent down a regular scorcher, which would have been hard for the best batsman at Greyfriars to play; and which was miles and miles beyond the powers of the Wapford skipper.

Smythe-Poole made a wide swing with his bat, and he was THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 274.

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still beating the air when his balls went wide, and his middle stump was jerked out of the ground.

"How's that, my worthy umpire?" grinned Inky. "And the umpire grinned too."

"But—" "By Jove!" said Smythe-Poole.

He gazed down at his wicket in a dreamy way, as if he could hardly believe the evidence of his eyes. Then he said "By Jove!" again, and walked off.

"Hard luck, old man!" said Skinner. "Smythe-Poole shrugged his shoulders, "Stordinary fluke!" he said.

Some of the Greyfriars fellows heard the reply, and chuckled. Their opinion was that there would be some more flukes like that before the Wapford match was over.

Another man went in, and just succeeded in saving his wicket against Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, bowled the next over, against Thompson of Wapford. Thompson of Wapford was a better bat than Smythe-Poole, his elegant skipper, and he kept his end up better; but the last ball of the over sailed over to cover-point in the most enticing way in the world. Bob Cherry was at cover-point, and there was a shout from the fellows who were looking on:

"Now, Bob!" "But Bob Cherry's eyes had turned to three charming young ladies who had just arrived at the pavilion. They were Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevlyn, and Smythe-Poole's sister, from Cliff House School. Bob felt it rather hard that he should be fielding when Marjorie arrived, and debarred from greeting her. He turned his attention to the ball a second too late, and it slipped through his fingers and dropped on to the grass. And the fellows who were just going to shout, "Well caught!" didn't shout, after all. They stared at Bob Cherry in astonishment. Bob had never been known to miff an easy catch before.

But Bunter, who was looking on, snorted.

"See that?" he exclaimed. "Did you see that, Miss Marjorie? That's the chap they're put in the team, leaving me out—me! I'd wish you'd been at St. Jim's when I made my great catch in the match there. You would have stared—rather!"

Marjorie smiled. "Yes, it would be very surprising to see you make a good catch!" she agreed.

Bunter grinned; that was not at all what he had meant. The Remove captain clapped Bob Cherry on the shoulder, as the field crossed after the over.

"Going to sleep, Bob?" he asked. "What did you miff that catch for?"

Bob coloured. "Sorry!" he said. "I didn't see it coming—I won't miff the next! Won't make any difference to the match—we shall walk over these duffers!"

Harry Wharton laughed. "That's true enough," he said. "Still, we don't want to throw chances away. They're not all such rank duffers as Smythe-Poole!"

This proved to be the case; for all the wickets did not go down for ducks' eggs. But they went down pretty fast; the whole of the Wapford innings lasted under half an hour, which was a pretty good record for the Remove bowlers. Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh and Tom Brown did nearly all the bowling; the New Zealand junior performing the bet-trick in one over, amid cheering from his Form-fellows.

The Wapford score was at twenty when last man in was called. Skinner was last man in. He passed to speak to Harry Wharton as he came on the pitch.

"I don't quite like butting against the old school, Wharton," he said, in a low voice.

Wharton looked at him. "Why not?" he said. "It's all in the game? Anyway, surely you should have thought about that before you came over here with Wapford."

"I don't mean that. But they're an older team all round, and you can't expect to beat them, seriously."

"What rot! We're beating them hollow!"

"Look here, Wharton, I believe we shall lick the Remove; and I don't want to help beat my old Form. I'll tell you what," Skinner had sunk his voice still lower. "I can do you a good turn."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that when my wicket goes, we shall be all down."

"Naturally, as you're last man in."

"The man at the other end is the best bat in the team," said Skinner, "and if I back him up we shall pile up runs."

"Go ahead, then! The more the merrier."

"I want to do something for my old Form," said Skinner. "And I want you to understand that I'm not up against you as I used to be."

"I don't understand you."

'I should think it's plain enough,' said Skinner indignantly. His voice dropped to a whisper. 'I'm going to give you my wicket, that's all.'

Wharton stared at him blankly. It took him some seconds to realise clearly that Skinner was proposing to betray his team.

'You utter cad!' said Harry, when he found his voice.

Skinner started.

'Oh, draw it mild,' he murmured.

'You rotter!' said Wharton. 'Do you think we want you to play a dirty trick like that? If we were booked for the biggest licking in our lives, we wouldn't have it! We'd rather be licked fair and square than win by any filthy treachery like that!'

Skinner turned crimson.

'Don't shout, you ass!' he said uneasily. 'I don't want all the fellows to hear!'

'You cad! I can see that you've not changed since the old days!' said Wharton scornfully. 'I look here, you'll bat for Wapford the best you know how! If I see a sign of your giving the wicket away, I'll go over to Smythe-Poole on the spot, and tell him that you've done it on purpose, and offer to let him play a substitute for you!'

'You—you wouldn't do that?' muttered Skinner.

'I would; and will!'

Skinner gritted his teeth, and went on to the wicket. He did not give the wicket away. He did not understand Wharton's motives—they were far beyond the Harold Skinner's conception. But he understood that the Remove Captain meant what he said, and Skinner did not want to be shown up as a traitor to his side. He batted as well as he knew how; but, in spite of his assertion that he was now very keen about cricket, his batting was no better than the average of the Wapford team. He was caught out by Tom Brown, from a ball from Hurrece Singh, after making three runs.

Wapford were all down for twenty-three.

Skinner gave Wharton a quick look as the field came off.

'I did my best, Wharton,' he muttered.

Wharton turned his back upon him.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

An Old Pal!

HARRY WHARTON was chatting with Marjorie after the innings, when Smythe-Poole lounged over to him. There was a thoughtful expression upon the Wapford skipper's face. He raised his cap very elegantly to Marjorie, and then addressed the Remove captain.

'Remarkable how that innings has turned out,' he said.

'I don't see anything specially remarkable in it,' he replied.

'We're all down for twenty-three,' said the Wapford captain.

'Is that remarkable?'

'Well, yaas!'

'You didn't expect to get more than twenty?' asked Miss Clara innocently.

Smythe-Poole turned pink; and some of the Greyfriars fellows just managed to turn their chuckles into coughs.

'Ahem!' said Smythe-Poole. 'You misunderstand me. We are accustomed to knocking up a good score. But it's an uncertain game. What I was going to say is, that you mustn't expect to have things too easy, Carton.'

'Wharton, please.'

'Oh, yaas, Wharton. You mustn't expect to have things too easy, as we shall knock you sky-high in the second innings, you know.'

'You mean with your bowling?'

'No; I was alludin' to the Wapford second innings.'

Wharton looked puzzled.

'But there isn't any Wapford second innings,' he said. 'It's a single-innings match.'

Smythe-Poole coughed.

'Some misunderstandin' somewhere,' he said. 'We never play single innings matches.'

Wharton's lip curled involuntarily. He knew perfectly well that Smythe-Poole had known that it was a single innings match, and now wanted to have a second chance. The arrangement had been made quite regularly, and if Smythe-Poole was ignorant of it, he was a remarkably incompetent captain for the team.

'Oh, you want another innings then?' asked Harry.

'Yaas.'

'It was arranged with your secretary, and all was understood. We didn't think there would be time in one afternoon for a full match.'

'Some misunderstandin', I suppose.'

'Well, I don't see where there was any room for misunderstanding, as it was all written in the letters that passed,' said Wharton tartly. 'Under ordinary circumstances, an afternoon wouldn't be much good for two innings a side.'

'Yaas; but we didn't really expect to have to play more'

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than one innings against schoolboys," said Smythe-Poole with calm impertinence. "Naturally expected to beat you by an innings, you know."

'My hat!'

'Of course, a chap couldn't foresee such a remarkable series of flukes.'

'What series of flukes?'

'Why, our wickets goin' down to your bowlin', you know.'

Wharton looked steadily at the Wapford captain. Smythe-Poole's "cheek" was so cool and complete that Wharton hardly knew what to say to him. He had a good many things on his tongue that he would have liked to say; but it would not have been polite to say them to a visitor, so Wharton held them back.

'Don't quite see how the misunderstandin' arose,' said Smythe-Poole; 'but if you say the mistake was with our sec., of course we must stand by it. So if you insist—'

'Oh, we don't insist!' said Harry. 'If you want a second innings, you're welcome. It was arranged as a single-innings match; but we'll let you bat twice with pleasure.'

'Then it's arranged?'

'Yes.'

'Oh, good!'

And Smythe-Poole strolled away to his team. Harry Wharton was looking very grim. Bob Cherry snorted.

'I know the little game,' growled Bob. 'He knows he can't beat us; but he wants to hang the match out till there's no light for play, and make it a draw.'

Harry Wharton nodded.

'I know the game, too,' he said; 'but he won't pull out leg so easily as all that. We'll declare when we've got a good figure, and we sha'n't our bowing to bat a second time—they can't stand against our bowling. The match will be over by six, anyway.'

Bob Cherry chuckled.

In the interval between the innings Skinner was taken to the school tuckshop in the corner of the Close, and regaled by his old friends. Mrs. Mible looked rather curiously at Skinner as he came in with Dulstrode and Stott and Snoop and Hazeldene. The good dame knew all about Skinner having been expelled from Greyfriars, of course, and she was surprised to see him.

'Dear me, Master Skinner!' she exclaimed.

Skinner nodded coolly.

'Yes, I'm coming back, Mrs. Mible,' he said.

'I am glad to hear it, Master Skinner,' said Mrs. Mible politely, though she did not look specially glad. 'You owed me an account of three-and-fourpence when you left. You were going to send it by post, I remember, but I didn't receive it. I suppose you forgot all about it.'

Skinner turned red.

'Ahem! I'll see to it to-day—I mean to-morrow,' he said. 'What a memory you've got for old friends, Mrs. Mible—and old accounts.'

'I say, you fellows,' said Billy Gunter, blinking in at the door of the tuckshop, 'is old Skinner here?'

'Here I am!' said old Skinner.

Bunter came up to him quite affectionately.

'It's jolly good to see you again, Skinny!' he said.

'I hadn't forgotten you—never forget a chap I've been pally with.'

'I don't know that you were particularly pally with me,' said Skinner coolly, with a glance of disfavour at the fat junior.

Bunter coughed.

'Ahem! I—I've come here to tell you how glad I am to see you, Skinner, and—and to stand you a feed, if you'll let me, just to show you that I haven't forgotten old times.'

'Oh, pile in, then!' said Skinner cheerfully. 'I can do with a feed!'

'Good! By the way, it's unfortunate that this special afternoon I happen to be rather short of money,' Bunter explained. 'I'm expecting a postal-order.'

Skinner grinned.

'Is it the same postal-order you were expecting when I left Greyfriars?' he asked.

'Ha, ha, ha!'

'Ahem! No, no—it's another postal-order,' stammered Bunter. 'Blessed if I see anything to cackle at, you fellows! What I was going to say is, that my postal-order will be in before you leave. It's certain to come by the afternoon post. It should really have been here this morning, but there's been some delay.'

'I see. You want to stand me a feed with it when it comes?'

'Ahem! I'd rather stand you one now, Skinner, old fellow. I was going to suggest that you should hand me the ten bob, and I'd give you the postal-order when it comes.'

'Same old Bunter,' said Skinner.

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"Oh, really, Skinner—"

Skinner put his finger and thumb to his eyelids, and opened his right eye very wide.

"Look at that!" he said.

Bunter blinked at it.

"See it?" asked Skinner.

"Yes. What do you mean?"

"Do you see any green there?"

Billy Bunter did not reply to that question. The other fellows chuckled, and Billy Bunter scowled. There was evidently no money to be extracted from Skinner. Skinner turned to the counter where ginger-beer and jam-tarts awaited him. Bunter blinked hungrily at the food.

"Well, I'm sorry that I shan't be able to stand you this afternoon, as my postal-order hasn't come," he said. "But I don't mind joining you—"

"Here, let these tarts alone!" shouted Bulstrode.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode, I'm going to have a snack with Skinner!"

"You're not going to scoff that food?" said Bulstrode, jerking the fat junior away from the counter. "Buzz off!"

"But look here, Skinner wants his old pals round him!"

"I don't want you," said Skinner cheerfully.

"Oh, really—"

"Buzz off!" shouted Bulstrode, as Bunter edged towards the tarts again. "Clear out!"

"Skinner, old man, you'd like to—"

"I'd like you to shut up!" said Skinner.

Bunter growled.

"Well, you—you rotter! I jolly well hope the Head won't let you come back! If he does, I shall write to my father and ask him to complain about it! You oughtn't to be let into any decent school, considering the kind of chap you are! I—Owl! Yah! Leggo!"

Bulstrode spun the fat junior round, and Billy Bunter went whirling into the Close. He blinked into the tuck-shop again a minute later.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I know you were only j-j-joking. I know old Skinner wants me to come in—"

"Oh, clear off!" said Skinner.

"But I say, old fellow—"

"Travel!"

"Look here, you rotter!" roared Bunter.

"Don't we have our ups and downs?" he remarked. "I've been an old pal, and an old fellow, and a rotter, all in three minutes—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you rotter—you rotten outsider!" howled Bunter.

"I jolly well wouldn't feed with you now, if you asked me!"

"I'm not likely to ask you," said Skinner, imperturbably.

"You rank outsider—you've got the cheek to think we'll let you come back. I jolly well won't speak to you, if you do—I'll use my influence with the fellows to send you to Coventry. Yah! Oh!"

Bulstrode had taken up a siphon, and a stream of soda-water caught Billy Bunter under the chin, and interrupted his tirade. The Owl of the Remove spluttered wildly, and staggered out of the tuck-shop, followed by a yell of laughter. And Skinner and his friends finished their food without any further interruption from the Owl of the Remove. Billy Bunter rolled away, and confided to the fellows on the cricket-field that Skinner was a bigger rotter than ever. But he received no sympathy.

"How do you know?" growled Bob Cherry.

"I know he's a big a rotter as he used to be, and worse, and a mean beast!" growled Bunter. "I know—"

"Have you been trying to borrow money of him?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Well, shut up!"

And Billy Bunter, feeling that he was a very misunderstood fellow in a very unsympathetic world, shut up.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Going Ahead!

GREYFRIARS REMOVE opened their innings with Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, two of the best batsmen in the team. Harry Wharton had no objection to turning the match into a double-innings match; but he felt that Smythe-Poole was trying to take advantage of him, and his

back was up. He intended that the Greyfriars side should knock up as big a total of runs in as short a time as possible, so that they could declare, and give Smythe-Poole no chance to hang out the match until light failed for play. After all their swank, the Wapford men wanted to make the match a draw by leaving it unfinished, and the Removites tumbled very easily to the dodge. And they were grimly determined that it should not be a success.

As the Wapford team had turned out to be so weak, Wharton would have sent on his weakest batsman first; to give them a look-in before wiping them out, as he expressed it. He could be good-natured, in dealing with a fair foe. But under the present circumstances, the Remove captain meant to give them the hard hitting they deserved. Two innings, if not three, had to be got through in the remainder of the afternoon, or else the match would end in a draw; and Harry Wharton & Co. did not intend to give that team of incapables a chance of saying that they had drawn with Greyfriars Remove. Wapford were going to be licked; and licked in an unmistakable manner; all the Removites had made up their minds about that.

And Wharton and Bob Cherry started batting, in a way that made the Wapfordians open their eyes. Smythe-Poole himself bowled the first over; Smythe-Poole was persuaded of his powers as a bowler, as he was of his powers as a batsman. But his bowling had no effect on the Greyfriars wickets—only on the Greyfriars bats—which went up in leaps and bounds. Four by Wharton, and then three—and then three again by Bob Cherry—and then another four by Wharton made the Greyfriars fellows chuckle, and the Wapford fieldsmen open their eyes.

Bob Cherry had made twenty-five by himself before he was caught out; and when he was caught out, it was by Skinner. And the Greyfriars crowd gave Skinner a cheer, like true sportsmen. And it dawned upon Skinner that if he wanted to make himself popular with the Greyfriars fellows, it would not be by betraying his side, but by playing up for it as a man.

"Good for you, Skinnery!" said Bob Cherry, as he carried out his bat. "That's a better catch than you ever made when you were here!"

"Glad you like it!" grinned Skinner.

"Well, I don't like being caught out!" said Bob, laughing. "But I'm glad to see you, playing up. You're not such a snit as you were, anyway!"

"Thanks!"

Tom Brown came on in Bob's place. Wharton and the New Zealand junior piled up runs. They knocked the Wapford bowling where they liked, and they ran threes and fours, and could have run fives and sixes, as a matter of fact, only they ran so many threes and fours that they hadn't breath left for fives and sixes. Tom Brown knocked away a couple of boundaries in his first over, and after that the score went up, by three, and four, and two, and three and four again. Wharton and the New Zealander making the running in turn, and both their wickets being quite impregnable to the Wapford bowling.

Smythe-Poole's face was a study when the score turned seventy, for one wicket.

"Doesn't seem to be enjoying it, does he?" grinned Bob Cherry, who was looking on with great interest. And the Greyfriars' batsmen who were waiting their turn—really without much prospect of being wanted—grinned joyously.

"You are not playing a very difficult match this time," said Marjorie. "I understood from Hazel that it would be a very stiff game this afternoon."

"We thought it would," grinned Hazeklene. "But they're not very hot stuff after all. My hat! Look at that—another boundary from old Brown!"

"Hurrah!"

"Well hit, Brown!"

"Bravo, Frozen Mutton!"

Wharton was out at last. In his contempt for the bowling, he gave the field a chance, and a Wapford man took advantage of it and knocked his wicket over while he was taking a fifth run after four. Wharton did not mind in the least; in fact, he wanted to give some of the other bats a turn; as Greyfriars could get as many runs as they wanted, it would have been rather selfish to keep all the batting to himself. Better fieldsmen would not have taken his wicket so easily. He came out smiling, and Bulstrode went on. The score was at ninety.

"Jolly good match, isn't it, Marjorie?" he said, laughing, as he joined the group round the Cliff House girls. "Amusing, at any rate!"

Marjorie laughed. But as Miss Smythe-Poole was there, the Greyfriars fellows did not utter all the comic things they thought about Smythe-Poole's team.

Bulstrode brought the score up well over a hundred before he was bowled by Thompson, the only bowler in the Wapford team who could take a wicket. Thompson, as the Greyfriars:

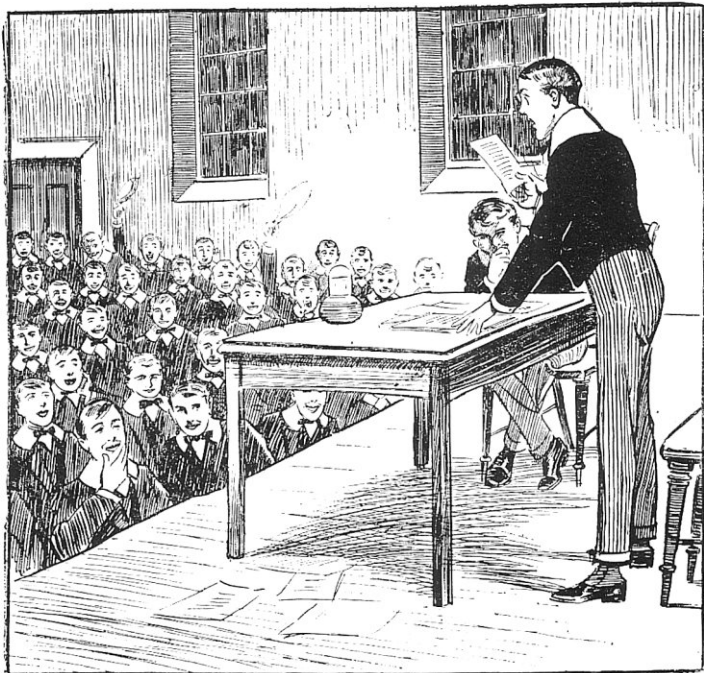
POP LETS See Page 27. POP LETS

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D'Arcy gave a hasty glance at his notes. "Gentlemen, why can't every man have three wives? Bal Jove—that's w'ong! Lowthah, you uttah beast, you've been alterin' these notes!" The Juniors rocked with laughter. "Ha, ha, ha!" (An incident taken from "D'Arcy, The Suffragist!" the grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, by Martin Clifford, contained in this week's issue of "The Gem Library," Out on Wednesday, Price One Penny.)

fellows had observed, was lower by a notch or two in the social scale than the rest of the Wapford team, and was treated with condescension by Smythe-Poole. Smythe-Poole was very unwilling to put him on to bowl at all; it was only after exhausting himself in vain against the Greyfriars wickets that he gave Thompson a chance.

Johnny Bull was next man in, joining Tom Brown. The two brought the score up to a hundred and fifty, and by that time the Wapford men were panting breathlessly. They had seldom had so much leather-hunting in a single afternoon. But their leather-hunting was over now; for Wharton had runs enough to see the match safe, and he did not intend to give the Wapfordians a chance of making it an unfinished game. In spite of the unaccustomed exercise he was undergoing, Smythe-Poole would have been glad for the innings to continue in order to make his own second innings later. He knew that Greyfriars would not have to bat a second time;

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and his only chance of making the match a draw was to hang out the Wapford second innings till the light failed, and stumps had to be drawn. But the Greyfriars' junior skipper was quite up to that little game; and he nipped it in the bud by declaring the innings at an end with a score of one hundred and fifty.

The Remove declaration quite took the wind out of the Wapfordians' sails. The wind had been taken out of the Wapfordians themselves already—by the leather-hunting the batsmen had given them.

It was not yet four o'clock, and the Wapfordians, who had no hope whatever of equalising the Greyfriars score with the total of their two innings, had little hope now of keeping their wickets up till the light failed. They had no chance of making Greyfriars bat again; and they had little chance of hanging out the innings over the time for drawing stumps. But that was their only chance, and they had concentrated on

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that. Tea, provided by the hospitable Greyfriars team, was taken before the Wapford men took their second innings—and Wapford showed no disposition to hurry over tea. Smythe-Poole conversed elegantly with Marjorie and Clara, and dangled over his tea, evidently—to the keen Remove eyes—with the intention of leaving his innings till the latest possible moment. When a more than reasonable time had elapsed, the Greyfriars cricketers began to show signs of impatience—but Smythe-Poole & Co. were impervious to them.

"Time to bat!" said Wharton, bluntly, at last.

"Yas!" said Smythe-Poole. "Yas, that's all right. It won't take us long to knock up a score to beat your little hundred and fifty, you know, and your second innings won't last long. Plenty of time."

The fellow's cool check almost took Wharton's breath away. Knowing Smythe-Poole's real intentions, as he did, it was very difficult to keep polite to the Wapford captain. But he managed it, with a great effort.

"I was just telling you, Miss Hazekende, about our match with Hiechcliffe," went on Smythe-Poole, calmly.

But Marjorie, who read Wharton's face quite easily, was not disposed to be made use of by the astute Smythe-Poole in his design of drawing out the time.

"Yes, I should so like to hear it!" she said. "But we are keeping you from the wickets!"

And Marjorie rose, and walked back to the seat viewing the pitch, with Clara.

"We're waiting for you, Poole," said Bob Cherry.

"And getting tired of waiting, as a matter of fact!" said Johnny Bull; who had a directness of speech that was sometimes appalling.

Smythe-Poole bit his lip.

"Well, we're ready!" he said, reluctantly.

And the Wapford men went on to bat for the second time. But Smythe-Poole had gained, to a certain extent, his object. The sun was sloping down in the west, and there was just an hour left for play, according to the arranged time for stumps to be drawn. And, although Smythe-Poole had a way of regarding arrangements as misunderstandings when it suited him to do so, he was certain to regard the time fixed for drawing stumps as unalterable, as firmly fixed as the solar system or the laws of the Medes and Persians. Greyfriars Remove had just one hour to take the Wapford wickets—but they meant to do it, in spite of all the time-wasting devices of the heroes of Wapford.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Fight Against Time!

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH took the round red ball as Wharton tossed it to him. There was an unusually grim look upon the dusky features of the Nabob of Bhanipur, Hurree Singh knew what was wanted of him, and he meant to perform it.

"Get the rotters out!" was Wharton's concise instruction. "They're going to hang the innings out as long as they can, same as the tea interval. They'll stonewall all the time and take no risks—but they've got to go. Savvy?"

"The savvyfulness is terrific, my esteemed chum."

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh went on to bowl with the air of a fellow who was prepared to do or die.

And the nabob was in great form.

Thompson received his first over—and he was the best man in the Wapford eleven. But at the second ball of the over, Thompson's sticks were flying, and Thompson was out. He went back glumly to the pavilion, and Smythe-Poole met him with a frowning brow.

"Do you call that batting?" he asked, bitterly. "I told you the wickets had got to be kept up. If you'd blocked that ball instead of hitting out at it, you'd have stopped it!"

"I don't think so!" said the batsman. "And I wanted to play the game, you know. Playing against time isn't playing the game; it isn't cricket; it isn't fair, and it's rotten. So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

And Thompson marched away before his angry captain could reply.

Smythe-Poole gritted his teeth. Certainly his tactics did not seem much like playing the game; but he did not like to be told so. A good sportsman would rather take a fair licking than dawdle a game out to make it a draw; though many county players certainly seem to think otherwise—which is, perhaps, one of the reasons for the "rot" in modern county cricket. The dog-in-the-manger policy of refusing to let the other side win though you cannot win yourself is quite out of place in the grand old game. But Smythe-Poole was quite satisfied with himself, and he knew what he meant to do. He stood talking to next man in, and kept him back from the wicket as long as he decently could—or in fact, longer than he decently could. The Greyfriars crowd were shouting to Wapford to wake up, when at last the batsman came in a leisurely way down to the pitch.

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Wharton knitted his brows.

"Get the end out first ball, Inky!" he said.

"The tryfulness will be great, my respectable chum."

The batsman lounged down to the wicket, and took up his position there. Then the Nabob of Bhanipur put all his beef into a lightning ball, which whipped the leg-stump out of the ground before the unfortunate bat knew that it had left the bowler's hand.

"How's that?" yelled Frank Nugent.

"Out!"

"Well bowled, Inky!"

"Bravo, Snowball!"

The nabob grinned. He was on his mettle now, and quite equal to anything that Smythe-Poole could put on the wicket. Smythe-Poole scowled at the outgoing batsman.

"Why didn't you block that ball?" he demanded.

"Because I couldn't see it," growled the batsman. "I was looking for a cricket-ball, and not a streak of greased lightning!"

"That's two wickets down, and only ten minutes gone!" growled Smythe-Poole.

"Well, I couldn't help it. Let me wait stop the ball when you go on!"

"Oh, rot! Next time, take a tumble or something as you go in, Vesey, and I'll block Smythe-Poole to next man."

"The time's got to be running out somehow. It would be too awful to be beaten by a team of junior schoolboys. I never thought the batsman would let 'em, or I'd never have played them. I came over here to give 'em an awful licking for their cheek! All Wapford will cackle at us if we go home licked! Hang it out!"

"Rely on me," said Vesey.

"Why don't you come on?" bawled the Greyfriars crowd.

"Are you going to be all night about it? Why don't you play the game, Wapford?"

"Better get on, or they'll appeal to the umpires!" growled Smythe-Poole.

Vesey sauntered on to the field.

Half-way to the wicket he apparently remembered that he had forgotten his batting-gloves, and came back for them.

Three more minutes had gone when he finally arrived at the wicket. The wicket-keeper, our old friend Johnny Bull, greeted him.

"Have you really got here?" he snorted.

"Yes; here I am," said Vesey.

"You won't be here long, that's one comfort!" growled Bull.

Which proved to be quite correct. For Hurree Ram Singh sent down a slow twister, instead of the lightning ball Vesey was expecting, and Vesey's balls went to the wide.

"Bravo, Inky!"

"The hat trick! Hurrah!"

And Vesey was the third man on the Wapford side who went out for a duck's egg. Smythe-Poole gritted his teeth with rage. If his men had knocked up a few runs, or even stopped the bowling for an over or two, it would have helped him. But at this rate the Wapford wickets would all be down half an hour before the time for drawing stumps.

"Try to block 'em!" growled Smythe-Poole, to the next man in. And next man in promised that he would.

And he did succeed in blocking the ball for the rest of that over. Then the field crossed, and that took time, and Smythe-Poole breathed again. Then Tom Brown put in some bowling.

The Greyfriars juniors cheered Tom Brown merrily. Two wickets fell in the over for a single run, and Wapford were five down for one in the second innings. It did not look as if they would reach a tenth part of the Greyfriars score.

"Five down," said Wharton, looking up at the old clock-tower of Greyfriars. "Five more to fall, and half an hour. I'll speak to Smythe-Poole."

Smythe-Poole was next man in, and Wharton met him as he came down to the wicket buttoning his glove. Smythe-Poole willingly paused to speak. He would have held quite a long conversation with pleasure—anything to fill up the time.

"I suppose, if the light's good enough, you'll be willing to extend the time, if the match isn't finished!" said Wharton.

"Light won't be good enough," said Smythe-Poole.

"But if it is—"

"It won't be."

"It means that you won't agree to extending the time under any circumstances?" asked Wharton sharply.

"An arrangement is an arrangement, you know—yas," said Smythe-Poole.

"Well, I'll be obliged if you'll make your men buck up a little in coming in. We don't want to have the match dawdled out."

"My men will take their time."

"You want to dawdle the match out, and make it a draw?" dashed out Wharton.

"I decline to reply to insinuations of that kind!" said Smythe-Poole, with a great deal of civility.

And he marched on to the wicket, slowly. Mark Linley was bowling, and the Lancashire lad put all he knew into it. Smythe-Poole was very, very careful. Nothing could tempt him to try to score; he was not giving the field any chances, if he knew it. He did not want to take any runs. A few runs more or less could make no difference to the score. He wanted to block the bowling, and hang out the match, and he did it for an over. But the sixth ball of the over sent his bails flying, and when the field crossed over, Smythe-Poole of Wapford was on his way back to the pavilion.

Next man in was so long in appearing that the Greyfriars crowd began to yell again. Politeness to the visitors was lost sight of in their indignation at the evident foul play of the Wapfordians.

"Come on!"

"Why don't you come on?"

"Wake up, Wapford!"

"Don't dawdle it out!"

The Wapford man came in at last. He stayed in for half an over, and then he was clean bowled by Tom Brown. There was no chance of getting the Wapford men out by anything but bowling; they no longer attempted to hit, and they didn't dream of running. But they could not even stop the balls, and another wicket fell, and then another. Harry Wharton's face brightened up as the wickets went down.

"Nine down for one!" he said, with a grin. "Ye gods, what a score! I'd rather be licked than dawdle out a match with a score like that for an innings. Only one more man to come in, and six minutes before Smythe-Poole can claim to have stumps drawn. Who's the last man of the rotters?"

"Skinner!"

"Oh, Skinner!"

Wharton frowned.

Last man in on the Wapford side was the expelled Greyfriars' junior. The crowd of fellows round the ground were calling the last man to come in. Bulstrode shouted at his old friend by name.

"Skinny, old man, come on! Don't let them dawdle it out!"

"Play up, Skinner!"

Smythe-Poole was talking to Skinner, who had his bat in his hands. The Wapford captain was detaining last man in. He had no faith whatever in Skinner's ability to keep his wicket up for six minutes. Had not he, the great Smythe-Poole himself, failed to do so?

"Don't hurry!" he said. "Let 'em yell! No need to go in till the umpire raises an objection!"

But Skinner did not see the matter from quite the same point of view as the Wapford captain. Skinner wanted to make his peace with his old associates, and Skinner, as he heard the Remove yell, realised the best way to do it. And he answered Smythe-Poole in a loud and clear voice that was heard by fifty fellows:

"I'm not going to dawdle the match out, Smythe-Poole! I'm going to play the game!"

And, jerking himself away from the skipper's detaining grasp, Skinner went on. Smythe-Poole gave him a black look.

"You cheeky hound!" he muttered. "You won't play again for Wapford, I can tell you that!"

"Rats! I don't want to! I'd rather play for a team of white mice!" said Skinner.

There was a laugh.

Skinner took up his position at the wicket. Last man had been sent out by the final ball of an over, and the field had crossed over, so it was not Skinner who received the bowling. The Wapford man at the other end tried to stone wall; but he had Tom Brown to deal with, and the New Zealander was as keen as mustard.

Four balls were stopped, and all eyes sought the clock in the tower anxiously. In two minutes more Smythe-Poole could claim to have stumps drawn; and he had not left the home team in the slightest doubt that he would claim his rights.

There would be no time for another over. After this over time would be up before the field could cross. Smythe-Poole's tactics had not yet succeeded; but they had run it very close. All now depended upon Tom Brown, and the last two balls of the over. All eyes were upon the New Zealander junior as he delivered the next ball.

Click!

It was stopped, and fell dead on the pitch.

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There was a deep breath from the crowd.

Tom Brown's face was quite set as he caught the ball when it was returned. If his nerve had been shaken by the crisis the last ball of the over would have been stopped, and Smythe-Poole would have won his low-down game. But the New Zealander's nerve was like iron. He put all he knew into the last ball of the over, and there was a crash of a falling wicket.

Then all the crowd roared.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Hurrah!"

"Well bowled, Brown!"

"Bravo, bravo!"

Harry Wharton slapped the bowler on the back. Bob Cherry slapped him on the back of the head by mistake in his excitement and exuberance, and Tom Brown roared.

"Hurrah!" yelled Johnny Bull. "Bravo! Beaten the rotters! Hurrah!"

Which was not very polite to the Wapfordians; but expressed the feelings of all the other fellows, as well as Johnny Bull.

Wapford were all down for one. The total score for both innings was thus twenty-four, against a hundred and fifty for Greyfriars in their single innings. Wapford had been beaten by an innings and a hundred and twenty-six runs, a victory so sweeping that the Greyfriars fellows grinned over it instead of triumphing.

Smythe-Poole's face was a study.

He went into the pavilion to change without a word. His team had followed him in, with the exception of Skinner. Skinner remained talking to Bulstrode. Several of the Greyfriars fellows slapped Skinner on the back. Wharton had said nothing of Skinner's offer to sell his side, and Wharton, of course, did not find fault with Skinner for having refused to back up his captain in under-hand tactics. Skinner had certainly acted like a sportsman in getting to his wicket in time to allow that last over to be bowled with success, and, if he had not done so, the match would have been a draw. Smythe-Poole was quite aware of that, and he had given Skinner a black scowl as he went into the pavilion.

"Your skipper's got his knife into you now, Skinner," chuckled Bulstrode.

Skinner shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't care! I don't want to play for his rotten team again!"

"Phew! Will they give you the boot over it?"

"Smythe-Poole said so."

"The end!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

Smythe-Poole & Co. came out of the pavilion with their bags. The horses had been put to the brake, and the Wapford men mounted therein. They hardly said a word before they went. Their dignity had been cruelly injured by their defeat, and to their humiliation was added the fact that they had tried to play a low-down game, and had been baffled. They had earned scorn as sportsmen as well as players. They clambered into their brake, and Smythe-Poole studiously avoided shaking hands with Wharton, for which Harry was duly thankful, for he was by no means inclined to shake hands with a fellow like Smythe-Poole.

"Well, good-bye, Skinny, old man!" said Bulstrode.

Skinner smiled.

"I'm not going with that crowd," he said. "No; I'm done with them! I suppose you can invite an old pal to tea in the study, can't you, Bulstrode?"

"What-ho!" said Bulstrode. "But you'll be late back. Wapford is a jolly long way off, you know, and the trains don't go direct there!"

"That's all right. As a matter of fact, if I went home with that crowd, they'd scrag me for not helping them dawdle the match out!" said Skinner.

"My hat!"

The brake rolled out of the gates of Greyfriars, and disappeared—and Smythe-Poole & Co. departed from Greyfriars, without much chance that they would ever return there! But one member of the Wapford team remained behind—and that was Skinner! Skinner had not gone; and Wharton, as he saw the expelled junior still there, wondered what was working in his mind. Skinner had not gone! Did he intend to go?



"PETER TODD'S CHANGE!"

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THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Soft Sawder!

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, met Skinner as he came into the School House after the match. Mr. Quelch had seen the Wapford brake depart, from his study window, and he knew that Skinner had come over as a member of the team. He was surprised to see the boy still at Greyfriars after his companions had gone. Skinner saluted the Remove master with great respect, and the master could not help speaking to him. But his manner was decidedly cold.

"Ah! It is you, Skinner?" he said.
 "Yes, sir," said Skinner, submissively.
 "I understood that you came here as a member of the team who have played the Remove this afternoon?"

"That is so, sir."
 "They have gone home?" said Mr. Quelch.
 "Yes, sir!"
 "Then why have you not gone also?" asked the Remove master, bluntly.
 Skinner coughed.

Mr. Quelch was a severe man, though he had a kind heart; and he was not at all amenable to "soft sawder."
 "I wanted to see the fellows, and the old place, sir," said Skinner, submissively. "I felt it very much, leaving Greyfriars, sir. I hope there is no objection—"

"I cannot say that it is in good taste, Skinner, coming to visit the school, considering that you were expelled."
 "I'm sorry you look at it in that light, sir. I didn't think of it like that. Of course, I'll go away at once if you wish."

"I don't say that, Skinner," said Mr. Quelch, relenting a little.

"Then I may stay and have tea with my old friends, sir?"
 "Certainly, if you like!"

"Thank you, sir. Could you give me a few minutes in your study, sir? I should like to speak to you very much!" said Skinner.

Mr. Quelch paused a moment, and then said abruptly:
 "Very well; step in!"

Skinner followed the Remove master into his study. Skinner's face was all that was contrite and respectful in its expression; but his eyes were watching Mr. Quelch's face like a hawk's.

"Well, Skinner?" said the Form-master.
 "It's some time since I was expelled from Greyfriars, sir. I know I deserved it—"

"There certainly is no doubt upon that point, Skinner!" the Remove master interrupted, drily.

"Quite so, sir. I am quite aware of my fault, and—and I should like to make up for it, if I could, sir. I've repented, sir."

"Indeed? I hope that is true!"

Skinner coughed. Mr. Quelch had a painful directness of speech sometimes; and it was borne more clearly than ever upon Skinner's mind that the "soft sawder" was not of much use in dealing with the Remove master. But Skinner stuck to his guns. Skinner had a great deal to fight for, in getting back to Greyfriars, and he did not mean to surrender while there was a shot in the locker.

"It is quite true, sir. I've had a very bad time. My father was very angry with me for getting expelled. He would not speak to me for several days—"

"I am not surprised at that!"

"And—and now I'm working in my father's office, sir. The work doesn't agree with me—"

"I remember that work never did agree with you, Skinner." Skinner coughed again. He would have been very glad to say some things to Mr. Quelch, with equal directness of speech. But that was not Skinner's game at present. Skinner kept up his role of humility and contriteness with great skill. It was a difficult role to play, while he had an uncomfortable consciousness all the time that Mr. Quelch did not believe in him.

"I—I don't mean that kind of work, sir. I miss the open air and exercise—and the cricket, sir—and all the fellows I knew; and—if you'll allow me to say so, sir—I miss my Form-master, who was one of my best friends if I'd only understood it at the time!"

"You understand it now, Skinner?"

"Yes, sir; I hope so!"

"I trust that you are speaking sincerely."

Skinner bit his lips. He would gladly have bitten Mr. Quelch.

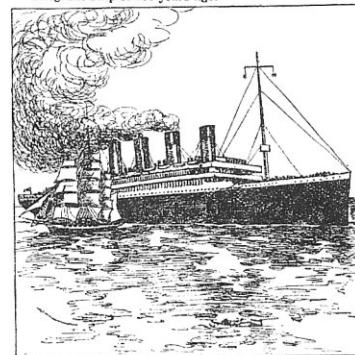
"I hope I am quite sincere, sir."

"I hope you are, Skinner."

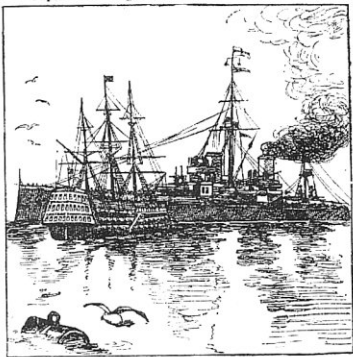
"I miss the old school, sir, and the fellows I knew," said Skinner, mournfully. "I want to come back, sir. But not only because I should be happier here—not only because of that, sir. I want to come back so that I can prove that I have seen my faults, and tried to remedy them, sir; that I have changed, and that I mean to go quite straight in the future. I've had a very severe lesson, sir. I hope you forgive me."

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Bulstrode uttered a sharp exclamation and darted among the rocks. He came back panting, with a cap in his hand. "Skinner's cap!" said Wharton, after a loud pause. (See Chapter 13.)

"Certainly, I forgive you, Skinner, so far as I had anything to forgive."

"And may I hope that you will speak a word for me to the Head, sir?" asked Skinner eagerly. "I am sure that a word from you—"

"You may hope nothing of the kind!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh, sir!"

"I should be sorry to doubt you, if your repentance is sincere," said Mr. Quelch. "But you never had a character for sincerity, Skinner. I applaud your desire to make up for the faults of the past; but Greyfriars is not a suitable place for you to do so. You can do that anywhere. Indeed, if you find office life uncomfortable, you should regard that as a penance for your misdeeds, and make up your mind to do your duties there heartily, and with a strict attention to duty. That is the best way for you to rehabilitate your character. I shall always be very pleased to hear that you are getting on well."

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"Thank you, sir," said Skinner, lowering his eyes so that the Remote-master should not see the rage in them. "You are very kind, sir. But—but if you'd speak a word to the Head for me, sir—"

"I cannot do that, Skinner!"

"You do not wish to give me another chance, sir?"

"I cannot in conscience recommend the Head to take you back, Skinner. I think you would have done better not to come here at all, in the circumstances. You may go!"

"Very well, sir," said Skinner, mournfully. "I had hoped, sir, that I should be able to convince you that I have changed very much—"

"It would require more than words to convince me of that, Skinner!"

"Once at Greyfriars, I should try to convince you by my conduct, sir!"

"I fear that you will not have the opportunity. Good-afternoon, Skinner!"

But a troubled look came over Mr. Quelch's face when the junior was gone. Mr. Quelch was a severe master, and he looked more severe than he was; but he was not really a hard man. He wondered whether there was anything, after all, in Skinner's repentance, or whether it was simply a trick to escape from the unpleasant consequences of bad conduct.

He would not have been in much doubt if he could have seen Skinner at that moment.

The expelled junior had stopped outside the Form-master's study door, and was shaking his fist at the door, his face dark with rage and disappointment.

If Mr. Quelch had opened his door suddenly at that moment, Skinner would have found it difficult to explain.

Fortunately, Mr. Quelch did not open it.

But Frank Nugent came down the passage, and he paused to stare at Skinner as he saw him going through those peculiar antics outside Mr. Quelch's door.

"Great Scott, Skinner!" he exclaimed. "What's the game?"

Skinner jumped.

"Oh!" he stammered. "I—I—"

"Is it a new form of gymnastics?" asked Nugent, with interest.

"Nunno! I—"

"What has the door done, then?"

"Oh, rats!" said Skinner, and he walked away. Frank Nugent grinned. He was not at a loss to guess the cause of Skinner's action; and as he remarked later to Bob Cherry and Wharton, he fancied that Skinner had not got much change out of the Remove-master.

THE TENTH CHAPTER. A Little Celebration.

BULSTRODE met the Famous Five in the Remove passage as they were going to No. 1 Study. After the cricket match, Harry Wharton & Co. intended to stand themselves a high tea, or early supper—it did not matter which it was, as Bob Cherry renuked, so long as there was plenty of it. Bob Cherry and Nugent had parcels under their arms, evidently having been making purchases at the tuck-shop for that high tea or early supper, whichever it was. Bulstrode stopped them.

"I suppose you fellows can do with another tea?" he asked.

"We had cricket tea very early."

"What—ho?" said Bob Cherry.

"We're standing Skinner a little celebration in the Rag!" said Bulstrode. "We'd be glad if you'd come, you fellows. If you've been laying in supplies for tea, you can bring 'em along; the more the merrier."

Harry Wharton knitted his brows. He had told Bulstrode that he would keep an open mind about Skinner, till he saw him with the Wapford fellows; and then he would make up his mind whether he would stand him. The result of his observation of Skinner was that the expelled junior was the same old Skinner. His offer to sell his side had convinced Harry Wharton of that. Wharton wanted to have nothing to do with a fellow who was willing to betray his team in a match.

"Skinner played up all right this afternoon, you know," went on Bulstrode. "If he hadn't bucked up that time about getting to the wicket, those Wapford cads would have hung it out into a draw."

"I know that," said Harry.

"Well, yes, that was playing the game, and a new thing for Skinner," said Nugent.

"I won't come to the celebration, thanks, Bulstrode!" said Wharton.

Bulstrode gave him a grim look.

"I'd like you to come, Wharton."

"I'm sorry; but I can't!"

"Look here, who can't you?" Bulstrode demanded, abruptly. "Nearly all the Removes are coming. In fact, our object is to show all the school that we've got Skinner back. It may have some influence on the Head. You are captain of the team, and your staying away will look pointed. Don't you think so?"

"I'm sorry!"

"But you won't come!" said Bulstrode, angrily.

"I can't! I don't like Skinner, and I think it would be a rotten thing for the Remove if he came back!" said Wharton, bluntly. "I'm not going to pretend I want him, when I don't!"

"It's your old prejudice against him—"

"It's nothing of the kind. I kept an open mind until I saw him!" said Harry.

"What's happened to set you against him?"

Wharton was silent. He did not feel entitled to tell Bulstrode of Skinner's offer of treachery to his side. It was

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not his business to say anything against Skinner, and it would be a good deal like hitting a fellow who was down.

"Something's happened!" demanded Bulstrode.

"Well, yes!"

"And it's set you against Skinner?"

"It's shown me that he hasn't changed in the slightest," said Harry. "And we don't want him in the Remove again—at least, I don't. The other fellows can act as they please; but I'm not standing by Skinner."

"And you aren't say what you've got against him?"

"I don't want to say anything against him. Besides, he would very likely deny it. You know he was never very particular about the truth. I don't want to be dragged into a jaw, with Skinner's word against me; though I don't think the fellows would have to think much about which to believe. But that wouldn't do Skinner any good."

"It wouldn't," said Bulstrode, slowly. "I'm sorry you're up against him again. I'm sticking to him, he's an old pal."

"I don't blame you, Bulstrode—but I'm not in it!"

"What about you other fellows?" said Bulstrode, looking at the Co. "I think you might back me up in standing by Skinner, unless he's got your backs up, too."

The juniors looked doubtfully at Harry Wharton.

"Don't let me keep you," said Harry. "If you feel inclined to stand by Skinner, I wouldn't object of stopping you!"

"I'm not going," said Nugent.

"Why not?" asked Bulstrode.

"Because I've heard from Wharton what he's got against Skinner, and I don't want to have anything to do with him," said Nugent. And he went to No. 1 Study.

Bulstrode bit his lip. Bulstrode was a slow thinker, and he was generally some time in getting to a decision; but when he arrived at one, he generally held to it tenaciously. So it was in this case. He had thought it out, and decided that it was "up" to him to stand by Skinner—at least, if Skinner showed any signs of having improved. And Skinner was showing ample signs of having improved. He had profited by Snoop's tip as to the change in Bulstrode, and he had been pining on the agony, so to speak, for Bulstrode's benefit. So Bulstrode adhered to his resolution. Unless he found Skinner out in some baseness himself, he felt that he was bound to stand by him.

"Well, it would look rather nasty not to go," said Johnny Bull. "I think I'll go, if you don't want me, Harry."

"Go by all means," said Harry. "In fact, I think you fellows might as well go. If it will do Skinner any good he's welcome to it, as far as I'm concerned."

"Right you are!"

Harry Wharton followed Nugent into No. 1 Study.

"Why didn't you tell the fellows about Skinner?" asked Frank.

The Remove captain shook his head.

"I don't want to be hard on him when he's down; but I can't stand him. He offered to sell his own side; and he didn't seem to understand that he was doing anything rotten. I can't stand that kind of chap. Still, I don't want to say anything against him. And I shouldn't make any opposition to his coming back, if he can work it. But I'm jolly well not going to have a hand in bringing him back! That's asking too much."

"I should say so!"

Meanwhile, Johnny Bull and Bob Cherry and Mark Linley and Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh were accompanying Bulstrode to the Rag. Bulstrode & Co. had been making considerable preparations for the feed, which was really on a magnificent scale. All the Removes who cared to come were invited, and, needless to say, pretty nearly the whole Form cared to come. It was understood that all who came to the celebration were backers of Skinner; but that was not a heavy responsibility. Most of the fellows were sorry for Skinner, and if it had rested with them would have had him back. But as they had no influence whatever in the matter, they were quite safe, whatever their opinion of Skinner might be in coming to the feed, and accepting the responsibility of "standing by Skinner."

Bulstrode had made a collection for the feed, getting the biggest contribution from Lord Maulslover, who did not know Skinner, but was always ready to contribute to anything for anybody. Bulstrode himself had come down handsomely, too; but Stott and Snoop had developed a famine in cash for the occasion. But they had assured Bulstrode that they would turn up at the feed without fail—an assurance that Bulstrode received with a snort. He really did not need to be assured on that point.

The Rag was crowded with fellows; and Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth Form had come, as well as the Removes. There was a sprinkling of Shell fellows, too, and Coker & Co. of the Fifth had condescended to put in an appearance. Skinner was the guest of honour; a place that he filled with becoming modesty. To his old confidantes, Stott and Snoop, Skinner was very frank, but to all others—especially Bulstrode

—he was decidedly diplomatic. He had taken up the attitude of the repentant sheep anxious to get back into the fold, and he played the part well.

Still, the keener fellows regarded him with curiosity, and wondered how he meant to turn all this to his profit. The Head was the person required to be influenced. Skinner was undoubtedly getting all the fellows in his favour, so that he would be assured of a friendly reception if he did come back. But how was he to influence the Head? Which was the really important matter? That remained a mystery. But fellows who knew Skinner of old opined that he had some dole in his mind, because he was so very, very deep.

Two tables had been put together in the Rag, and covered with borrowed white-cloths. The tables were covered with eatables and drinkable.—Lord Maulverver's generous contribution had been spent royally. Billy Bunter's face lighted up when he came into the Rag; and a good many other fellows, less greedily than Bunter, brightened at the sight of that really ripping feed.

"Faith, and it's a brash as a brew!" said Micky Desmond enthusiastically. "And sure I wish ye were coming back to Greyfriars iver; day in the term intirely, Skinner darlint."

"I wish the Head could come in, and see us all here," said Bulstrode. "It might alter his mind about taking Skinner back."

"Begad, 'twas!" said Lord Maulverver. "Suppose we send him an invitation?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Head doesn't seem to come by the Rag, fathead!" said Johnny Bull. "If he did, he could hardly be asked to meet a chap he'd be sure to know."

"Begad, that's so, my dear fellow!"

"I'm going to see the Head before I leave," Skinner remarked, with gentle meekness. "I hope to be able to soften his heart."

"You'll have to soften his head before he'll agree to take you back," remarked Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Smithy!" said Bulstrode. "You've been jolly near to being sacked yourself, if you come to that!"

"Awful near it, I guess," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "I guess if the Head can stand Smithy, he can stand Skinner! Yep!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled the Bounder.

"Gentlemen," said Bulstrode, "pile in!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the gentlemen piled in.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Head Says "No!"

WINGATE of the Sixth opened the door of the Rag about an hour later, and looked in grimly. The celebration was going very strong. The feed had been finished; only Bunter still being busy with what was left on the tables. But the merry party had not broken up, and a loud chorus was filling the Rag with harmony when the captain of Greyfriars opened the door. It was also filling the passage with harmony, and echoing to a considerable distance from the precincts of the Rag—hence Wingate's visit.

"He's a jolly good fellow!" roared the Removites, apparently alluding to Skinner. "He's a jolly good—Hallo, Wingate!"

"Hallo!" said Wingate. "Are you trying to bring the roof down?"

"It's a little celebration," Bulstrode explained. "We've licked Wapford this afternoon, you know. Also we've got an old pal come to see us."

"Yes, I've heard all about the old pal," said the Greyfriars captain, "and it's high time the old pal was gone. Have you kids done your preparation?"

"Nunno, not yet."

"Then it's time you did. What train are you going to catch, Skinner?"

"What train?" said Skinner.

"Yes, I suppose you are not going to walk back to Wapford?"

"Oh, no! It's ten miles or more."

"Then you will want a train, I suppose!" said Wingate, looking hard at Skinner. "I suppose your friends haven't asked you to stay the night, by any chance?"

"Would it be allowed?" asked Bulstrode.

"No, it wouldn't!" said Wingate curtly.

"I suppose I'd better be going," said Skinner, with a sigh. "It's hard to tear oneself away, Wingate. It seems like old times to be back here, you know."

"Still, the tearing away process will have to be gone through some time," said the Greyfriars captain unsympathetically. "And the sooner you get about it, the better."

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And Wingate departed. Some of the juniors chuckled; but Bulstrode looked serious. "Sorry, Skinner," he said. "I suppose you must have left."

"I'm going to see the Head first," said Skinner.

"That's right!" said Snoop. "Talk to him like a Dutch uncle! He's softer than old Quelely! And you never know your luck!"

And Skinner made his way to the Head's study, as the party in the Rag broke up.

Dr. Locke called out "Come in!" as there was a tap at his door, and he started a little at the sight of Skinner. He had heard all about the expelled junior being at Greyfriars, and he had not been pleased to hear it. But he had never expected Skinner to have the nerve to come into his presence. He fixed his eyes upon the expelled junior with a glance that was discomfiting.

"Skinner?" he exclaimed.

"May I speak to you, sir?" said Skinner meekly.

"I had rather you did not," said the Head. "You can have nothing to say to me, Skinner. You should not have remained at Greyfriars till this late hour."

"I wanted to see you before I went, sir. I want to make an appeal to you."

Dr. Locke waved his hand.

"It would be useless, Skinner, if you are referring to your coming back to Greyfriars. That is impossible. Bulstrode has already mentioned the matter to me, and I have informed him that the suggestion cannot be entertained for a moment."

"But, sir—"

"You had better go, Skinner."

"Won't you listen to me?" said Skinner pathetically, without making the least movement to go. "I wanted to tell you, sir, that I've been thinking very much over what happened to me here, and—and I've repented, sir."

"I know I fully de-served it, sir, and—and if I'd only known at the time, sir, my headmaster was the best friend I've ever had."

Dr. Locke's face softened considerably. He was, as Snoop had remarked, much softer than Mr. Quelely. Soft savour went further with the kind old doctor than with the Removite-master.

"Indeed, Skinner, I am very glad to hear you say that," he said. "It proves that you are, at least, in a better frame of mind, and able to take juster views."

"I hope so, sir. And I'm awfully sorry for what I did. I know I acted in a very bad way, and I deserved all that I've suffered since."

"I trust that you have not suffered, Skinner," said the Head kindly.

"I have, sir; but I don't complain for myself," said Skinner nobly. "I'm thinking of my father, sir. It was a dreadful shock to him when I was expelled."

"I have no doubt it was, Skinner."

"He still hopes that you may take me back, sir," said Skinner diffidently. "If I could come back, and—and show that I am worthy of your kindness, sir, it would make my father happy, and that is chiefly what I am thinking of."

"That is a very noble and proper sentiment, Skinner."

"You would find that I have changed very much, sir. I'm afraid I was a very bad fellow when I was here; but I've had a hard lesson, sir. It is very painful to me to be back here among the old associations, and—and the friends of early times, sir, and to feel that I must go from the dear old place out into the cold and dark world, sir."

Dr. Locke looked at Skinner rather sharply; and Skinner realised that he was putting it on a little too "thick."

"So I hope you will give me another chance, sir," said Skinner hastily, before the Head could speak.

Dr. Locke shook his head.

"I am sorry, Skinner," he said gently, but firmly.

"Oh, sir, don't send me away—don't—"

"You should not have come here, Skinner. It was very inconsiderate and thoughtless of you to return here at all. Very improper indeed," said the Head. "I am willing to believe that you meant no harm; but you had better go now."

"Oh, sir?"

"I am truly sorry, Skinner, that I cannot take you back! You have gratified me very much by convincing me of your repentance. But I do not think you should return to Greyfriars. Good-night, Skinner!"

Skinner set his teeth hard.

"Good-night, sir!"

"And I am sorry," added the Head kindly.

Skinner rubbed his eyes, and replied only with a short sob. Dr. Locke looked greatly distressed.

"My dear boy, pray do not cry," he said. "You move me very much—you do, indeed. But I cannot take you back into Greyfriars. Pray go now! You distress me very much."

"Ye-es, sir; g-g-good-night!" sobbed Skinner. "I dare say you're quite right, sir; and I d-d-d-deserve all this."

And Skinner left the study.

Outside, all signs of grief vanished from Skinner's face, and the sob changed into a chuckle.

He grinned as he went down the passage; but he ceased to grin, and looked solemnly serious again, as he met Bulstrode at the corner. Bulstrode looked at him rather hard.

"How did it go?" he asked.

"He won't let me come back," said Skinner lugubriously.

"What were you grinning at, then?"

"I wasn't grinning."

"You looked as if you were, then," said Bulstrode suspiciously.

"I don't feel much like grinning," said Skinner pathetically.

"Well, I don't suppose you do," agreed Bulstrode. "But if the Head's refused point blank, I suppose that's the finish, Skinny."

Skinner paused.

"It isn't the finish," he said. "I'm coming back to Greyfriars. I've made up my mind about that."

"Blessed if I see how you're going to work it, then!" said Bulstrode. "We've got round most of the fellows on your side; but Quechly is hard as nails, and the Head says no. How are you going to work it, Skinny?"

"I suppose you're going to stand by me?" asked Skinner.

"I've been standing by you to-day, I think," said Bulstrode warily. "I don't see that I could do more than I've done."

"I know that. But after this? Will you stand by me to work it to get back to Greyfriars?" asked Skinner, watching his old chum's face narrowly.

There was a long pause.

"I will if it's above-board, Skinny," said Bulstrode, at last. "But—but if you've got some of your old dodges in

your mind, you may as well chuck it at once. I'm not going to have a hand in anything rotten. Things aren't just as they used to be; and I draw the line a little tighter than I used, you know."

Skinner's eyes gleamed for a moment, and then he assumed an injured expression.

"I don't think you ought to suspect me of any under-hand dodge, Bulstrode," he said. "I told you I'd turned over a new leaf, same as you have. You believe me, don't you?"

"Ye-es," said Bulstrode dubiously. "But what's the dodge you've got in your mind for getting back into the school? And how can I stand by you any further?"

"Well, I'll let you know some time," said Skinner evasively. "Can't do anything further now, anyway. It's getting near your bed-time, and I shall have to buzz off."

Bulstrode looked puzzled. He could not help suspecting that Skinner had been about to reveal some scheme he had in his mind, and had been prevented from doing so by finding that Bulstrode drew the line tighter than of old, as he said.

Fellows gathered round from all sides to say good-bye to Skinner when he went.

"You've lost the last train," said Watson-Smith, at the door. "Last train for Wapford leaves at Courtfield and Redclyffe—leaves Friardale at nine. You had it a minute to nine now."

"Can't be helped," said Skinner. "I shall have to walk."

"Walk ten miles," swanned Bob Cherry "at this time of night!"

"Well, I've lost the train, so I don't see what else I can do."

"Might pick up some sort of vehicle in Friardale," said Peter Toak. "Somebody might let you a car."

"Wouldn't run to it," said Skinner. "They'd want a quid for driving to Wapford at this time of night. I can walk it."

"It's a jolly lonely road," said Bulstrode uneasily.

"That's all right."

"Hang it all, Skinner, I don't like your going like this!" said Bulstrode. "Suppose something happened to you on the road?"

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"What could happen?" said Johnny Bull.
"Well, Skinner might meet a footpad, or something."
"Must risk it," said Skinner. "Good-bye!"
"Look here, I'll run in and ask Quelch if you can stay all night!" exclaimed Bulstrode. "You can't walk home at this hour—ten miles."

Skinner shook his head.
"I can't stay," he said. "The Head and Quelch don't like my having come here at all. If you tell Quelch I've lost the train he'll think I've done it on purpose, and he'll be ratty about my staying, and show it. I've got a certain amount of pride, though I've been sacked from Greyfriars. I'm not going to stay. Good-bye!"
"We'll come down to the gates," said Stott.
"Thanks!"

A troop of Removites escorted Skinner across the Close. At the gates the expelled junior shook hands all round, and the juniors gave him a cheer. Dr. Locke heard that cheer in his study, and it brought a thoughtful expression to his face. Could the boy be all bad, he wondered, when the Form he had belonged to gave him such a hearty welcome back to the school, and were all willing to receive him back amongst them? Which was exactly the impression the astute Skinner had wished to produce upon the good old doctor's mind. At the school gates Skinner made his farewells, and the juniors watched him disappear down the dark road.

They turned back to the House feeling somewhat saddened. The former Greyfriars boy had come and gone—and he had gone with his hope disappointed. Bulstrode was thinking, too, of the dark and lonely road Skinner had to traverse before he reached his home in Wapford. If anything happened to him on the road?—and it was possible. On the lonely country roads at night footpads were by no means unknown.

Bulstrode was feeling worried about it; but there was evidently nothing to be done. If he had asked Mr. Quelch to let Skinner stay the night, the Remove-master would certainly have believed that Skinner had lost the train on purpose. Indeed, Bulstrode himself had had an idea in his mind that Skinner was trying to lose the train. Now that his old boy had gone he felt that he had been unjust to him. Skinner had refused to stay, so evidently he could not have been trying to do so.

Mr. Quelch met the Removites as they went up to the dormitory that evening, and stopped Bulstrode with a question:

"I hope Skinner caught his train, Bulstrode?"
"No, sir," said Bulstrode.
Mr. Quelch frowned darkly.
"Do you mean to say that he has not gone, Bulstrode?"
"Yes, sir; he's gone," said Bulstrode, feeling very glad indeed that Skinner had, in fact, gone, as he caught the expression upon Mr. Quelch's face.

"It was foolish to lose the train," said Mr. Quelch, his brow clearing. "It would have been impossible for him to stay here, of course. It will be a great expense to him to hire a vehicle to take him to Wapford so late at night; but he has only himself to thank."

And Mr. Quelch walked away without waiting for Bulstrode to reply. What he would have said if he had known that Skinner was to walk home, Bulstrode could not guess. In the Remove dormitory, Bulstrode was very thoughtful and uneasy. Harry Wharton was thinking, too. Skinner had gone! It appeared that he had not, after all, had a "dodge" for stopping at Greyfriars—or what did it mean? Harry Wharton could not understand it. And he was still thinking the problem over when he fell asleep.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Missing!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were in the Close after lessons on the following morning when the telegraph-boy from Friarald came in, and crossed over to the House. The chums of the Remove bore down upon him at once. Johnny Bull was expecting a remittance from his favourite aunt, and, as he had expressly informed her that he was in a hurry for it, it was quite possible that the good old lady had telegraphed it. And the Famous Five surrounded the surprised telegraph-boy at once, on the chance.

"Is it for me?" asked Johnny Bull.
"Are you Master Skinner?"
Johnny Bull snorted.
"No, I'm not."
"This is for Master Skinner."
"There isn't any Skinner here," said Harry Wharton. "There was a chap of that name paying a visit here yesterday, but he went last night."
"It's addressed Master Skinner, Greyfriars School," said the telegraph-boy.

Wharton glanced at the envelope. It was certainly so addressed.

"Better take it in," he said; and the telegraph-boy went into the House. The chums of the Remove whistled.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 274.
A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled:

"PETER TODD'S CHANCE!"

The "Magnet" LIBRARY. ONE PENNY.

"Looks as if Skinner expected to stay all night, as he's given this address for telegrams," said Johnny Bull, with a grunt.

"It does look like it."
"The lookfulness is terrific, my worthy chums!"
"—I suppose it can't mean that he's not got home safely?" said Wharton slowly.

"Phew! I didn't think of that! But if he hadn't got home, they'd wire to the Head, not to him."

"More likely wire to him to come," said Wharton thoughtfully. "If he didn't turn up, his people would assume that he was staying here, as it's his old school. And there was no reason why he couldn't go back with the other cricketers. Most likely that wire's because he hasn't turned up at the office. If he didn't get back—"

"But he must have," said Nugent uneasily. "What could possibly have happened to keep him from getting home?"

"I wonder!"
Bulstrode came out of the School House with an astonished face.

"Do you chaps know that a telegram has just come for Skinner?" he said. "The boy's just taken it to the Head."

"Yes; we've seen it."
"He must have got home last night," said Bulstrode.

"I suppose so."
"Then it's jolly queer."

Trotter, the house page, came out, looking round him, and hurried towards Bulstrode.

"Dr. Locke wants you in his study, Master Bulstrode," he said.

"What's the matter, Trotter?"
"Dunno, Master Bulstrode. Only the 'Ead's just had a telegram," said Trotter, "and the boy's still waitin'."

Bulstrode hurried to the Head's study. He had felt uneasy when Skinner left the previous night, alone, at such a late hour; but with the morning light he had reasoned that Skinner would be all right. This telegram did not look as if it was all right with him, however. Bulstrode was very anxious as he entered the Head's study. Dr. Locke was looking disturbed.

"Do you know anything about this, Bulstrode?" he asked.

"A telegram has arrived here for Skinner. I understand that Skinner left here last evening?"

"Yes, sir."
"It is strange that a telegram should be sent to him here, then."

"I suppose it is, sir," said Bulstrode; "but he left right enough, sir."

"Then the telegram has been sent by mistake," said the Head. "It had better be returned to the sender, as Skinner is not here. You have no reason to suppose that Skinner did not return to his home, I presume?"

Bulstrode hesitated.

"The fact is, sir, he lost the train," he said. "He had to walk home, and it's a jolly long way to Wapford! He might have put up somewhere for the night."

"Dear me, how very foolish of him!" said the Head.

"How very reckless to start walking home such a distance, at such an hour of the night! I should certainly not have allowed it if I had known. I cannot open this telegram, as it is addressed to Skinner; but under the circumstances I had better send a wire to his father, asking if he has arrived home safely."

Dr. Locke wrote out a telegram, and handed it to the boy from the post-office. Bulstrode left the study feeling puzzled and uneasy. Had Skinner not arrived home? Bulstrode remembered what Skinner had said of "bolting," if he were not allowed to return to Greyfriars. Had he carried out that intention? Bulstrode had not paid much heed to it at the time; but now— The Removite waited eagerly and anxiously for news.

It was an hour later that there arrived a telegram for the Head. Dr. Locke opened it quickly, and turned quite pale as he read it:

"Dr. Locke, Greyfriars," the telegram ran. "My son not returned. Concluded staying night Greyfriars—hence wire. Reply if anything known.—JOSEPH SKINNER."

"Dear me!" said the Head. "Bless my soul! Skinner has not arrived home! He has met with some accident on the road! Bless my soul! And—and I refused the request he made! And—and now he may be lying injured! Bless my soul!"

It was a very distressing thought to the doctor. The road to Wapford was lonely enough, and in one place it followed the sea-coast past the village of Pegg, and at night it would have been quite easy for a pedestrian who did not know the way to wander into the cliffs, and meet with an accident.

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The Head thought of the junior, perhaps, lying at the foot of a cliff with a shattered limb, and shuddered.

He wired back immediately to Mr. Skinner that nothing was known of the boy at Greyfriars since he had left the previous evening. To which came another telegram in reply, informing the Head that Mr. Skinner was coming down to Greyfriars by the first available train.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. The Searchers!

THE Greyfriars fellows were in the Form-rooms for afternoon lessons when Mr. Skinner arrived.

But the whole school knew of the purport of the telegrams that had come and gone; and Greyfriars was in a buzz on the subject.

Skinner had started to walk home at a late hour of the night, and had not arrived home.

Nothing had been heard of him since he left the gates of Greyfriars.

What had happened to him? Only an accident of some kind, of course, could have kept him from getting home. If he had put up for the night at some wayside inn, he would have returned home on the following morning. It was now late in the afternoon, and there was no news of him.

It was only too clear that something had happened.

But what? The fellows who knew the Wapford road were anxious. The road ran along the coast for two miles before it turned inland. And in that part of the coast were high chalk cliffs. True, it was a high-road, well-defined and easy to follow. There was no reason why anyone but a blind man should wander from it. Still, if Skinner had left the road, he might easily have taken a tumble among the cliffs. He might have taken a short cut, too—and the short cuts in that locality were very perilous after dark. The possibility that Harold Skinner might be lying mangled at the foot of some cliff naturally had a disturbing effect upon the fellows. Even those who had not liked him had seen nothing to complain of in him the day he had spent at Greyfriars, and had felt sorry he had to go. And now—the thought that he had met with an accident, perhaps a fatal one, softened all hearts. The Remove fellows watched Mr. Quelch curiously in the Form-room. They wondered whether the Form-master was experiencing the pangs of remorse for having refused Skinner's last request—perhaps the last request he was ever to make in his life! But the Remove master had a perfectly normal look, and did not seem to be suffering from remorse. Perhaps he did not yet think there had been a serious accident; or perhaps he felt that he was called upon at all times to do what he conceived to be his duty; even if unexpectedly painful results might follow by chance. If Skinner had met with an accident through losing his train, the fault lay with Skinner himself.

But the boys did not reason it out like that. Youth feels rather than reasons. The Remove fellows felt that poor old Skinner had wanted to come back to his old school, and had been refused, and had gone out into the night to his death, as it might be!

Every fellow who had joined Bulstrode in standing by Skinner was glad now that he had done so. If he had met with an accident, it was a comfort to think that they had treated him well when they had the chance.

Even Wharton felt that he might have been a little kinder. Skinner's offer of playing the traitor to his side had made him very angry—not only the offer, but the insult implied, in Skinner's supposing that he would accept such a service. But after all, the poor wretch had only been trying to make friends to help him get back to Greyfriars; perhaps he wasn't such an awful rotter after all. Those reflections came into Harry's mind as he thought of the possibility of a fatal accident; and would probably have left his mind at once if he had heard that Skinner was safe and sound.

There was an involuntary buzz in the Remove Form-room at the sound of wheels on the drive outside. The juniors guessed that Mr. Skinner had arrived!

They were all curious to see Skinner's pater; but Mr. Quelch continued the lesson as though nothing unusual was happening. But the Removites did not pay their accustomed attention to it.

Trotter showed Mr. Skinner into the Head's study. Dr. Locke, who was taking the Sixth Form in Greek, came to his study at once when the arrival of Mr. Skinner was announced to him. Mr. Skinner, a tall, thin gentleman, who looked taller and thinner than ever in a tightly-buttoned black frock-coat, had a peculiar expression upon his face, between anger and distress. He did not look like a soft-hearted man; but he was undoubtedly disturbed by the possibility of a serious accident to his son; and quite as much

disturbed by being taken away from business on a busy day to attend to the untoward affair.

"This is most unfortunate," said Mr. Skinner, as he shook hands with the Head. "I suppose you have no news?"

"None!" said the Head. "I have telephoned to the local police to make inquiries, but nothing has been communicated yet."

"I suppose it is certain that my son has left Greyfriars?"

"I should imagine so!" said the Head, in surprise.

"He was very desirous of returning here, and he believed that his friends here would be able to help him do so," Mr. Skinner explained. "When he did not return, I concluded that he had stayed the night."

"It is quite certain that he left. A large number of the boys saw him off at the gates. Owing to the fact that he had lost the train, he started to walk—a very foolish proceeding at such an hour. I, of course, was not aware that he was doing so, or I certainly should not have permitted anything of the sort."

"It is very disturbing," said Mr. Skinner, gnawing his under-lip. "Harold is really not the kind of boy to take risks and meet with accidents. It has occurred to me that he may be absenting himself intentionally. He dislikes office life; and he has often asked me to send him to another school. I have always refused. He had his chance here and he lost it. You explained to me your reasons for expelling him, and I was satisfied of their justice. I do not think we have anything to reproach ourselves with. At the same time, it will be very distressing if an accident has happened to Harold."

"Very distressing indeed!" murmured the Head.

"It happens that I am especially busy to-day, too!" said Mr. Skinner. "I am a very busy man, and this is a busy day at my office. It was very inconvenient for me to leave, but I felt that I could do no less."

"Quite so!"

"I was hoping that you might have received news of Harold by this time," said Mr. Skinner.

"None; I am sorry to say. If you would care to telephone to the police-station, my telephone is at your service."

"Thanks. I will avail myself of it."

The Head waited patiently and politely while Mr. Skinner telephoned. There was no news of the missing junior.

Mr. Skinner put down the receiver with a moody brow.

"I fear I can do nothing here," he said. "The search is in the hands of the police; they are the proper persons to undertake it. I shall call at the police-station on my way to the railway-station, and authorise them to offer a reward in my name if no discovery is made to-day! That is all I can do."

"That is all, I am afraid," said the Head.

And Mr. Skinner took his leave.

Skinner's pater was gone by the time the Remove fellows came out of their Form-room, and they did not see him.

There was no news of Skinner; and the fellows gathered in groups in the passages and in the Close, discussing the matter.

A couple of days ago, Skinner's name was hardly known at Greyfriars—only a few fellows ever thought about the junior who had been expelled. All that was changed now. Just now nothing else was talked of; even in the Sixth the talk ran on Skinner, and surmises whether he had met with an accident or not.

And the Greyfriars fellows generally considered that the Head and Mr. Quelch might have been a little easier with the poor chap.

The Head was beginning to think so himself. At the thought that Skinner might have met his death on the cliffs, Dr. Locke wished most deeply that he had allowed the expelled junior to remain at Greyfriars.

Bulstrode came up to Harry Wharton & Co. as they discussed the matter in the Close. Bulstrode was looking very pale and out of sorts.

"You fellows going down to the cricket?" he asked.

Wharton shook his head.

"Don't feel like cricket now," he said. "We were wondering what's become of Skinner!"

"The wonderfulness is terrific!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The sorrowfulness will be great if the esteemed Skinner is damaged."

"If you're not doing cricket, you might come with me," said Bulstrode. "I'm going out to look for Skinner. It would take the local police weeks to search over the cliffs, and then they'd never look in the right place."

"Not a bad idea," said Harry. "I'll come with pleasure!"

"Same here!" said Nugent.

"The shamefulness is terrific!"

And the Removites walked out of gates together. They were likely to be out after locking up, but they did not ask for passes. Permission would probably have been refused them to make the search, for there was a distinct element

of danger in it, if it led them among the rough and wild cliffs to the south of Pegg Bay.

"We can risk a few lines for poor old Skinner!" said Bulstrode. "You think he's had an accident?" asked Wharton, abruptly.

"I can't think anything else!"

"You told us he said something about bolting if he couldn't get into Greyfriars again! If he was going to bolt, he might have done it last night."

Bulstrode replied with a shake of the head.

"He hadn't given up hope of getting back. Only just before he left he told me he was determined to get back, and I thought he had some dodge, though he didn't tell me what it was. He hasn't bolted!"

The juniors tramped on in silence. The Famous Five had very mingled feelings. If Skinner was hurt, they were sympathetic; if he was safe and sound, and merely staying away on his own account, they had no sympathy to waste on him. And as they did not know which was the case, it was rather difficult to know what to feel.

Outside the village of Pegg, the road looped inland to avoid several steep acclivities. A short cut lay across the high ground, rejoicing the main road further on. In the daytime, most pedestrians who knew the way used the short cut, when it was safe enough. But at night it was by no means safe. The footpath ran within three feet of the edge of a high cliff in one place, and a fall from the dark night meant death on the rocks below.

Bulstrode halted at the point where the short cut left the road.

"You don't think he would have been as enough to take the cliff path at that time of night, Bulstrode?" Harry Wharton exclaimed.

"That's the only way to account for an accident," said Bulstrode.

"Well, it was a frightfully reckless thing to do, if he did it!"

"If he didn't, why hasn't he arrived home?"

"Well, let's look!"

The juniors left the road, and proceeded along the rough and steep path. The path was lonely enough, used by few people. The Greyfriars juniors, who had had training as Boy Scouts, searched for tracks; but the rocky ground was too hard to retain them. But suddenly Bulstrode uttered a sharp exclamation, and darted among the rocks. He came back panting, with a cap in his hand.

The juniors looked at it. It was a cricket cap, of the kind that Skinner had been wearing when he left Greyfriars the previous night. Its clean condition showed that it had not been in the open air a great length of time.

"Skinner's cap!" said Wharton, after a long pause.

"Must be!" said Nugent.

There was no doubt about it. No other fellow was likely to have dropped a cricket cap of the same kind there, among the rocks, on the previous day.

"It might have blown off," said Wharton, slowly. "There's always a good wind on these cliffs. Skinner might have left the path to look for it, and—" He paused.

"Good heavens!" muttered Bob Cherry, turning quite pale.

It was the most dangerous point in the path. Close at hand was the bluff edge of the cliff, with grass growing in

the clefts of the chalk. If Skinner had fallen over that edge in the darkness of the night—

Bulstrode did not speak. He dropped on his hands and knees, and crawled to the edge of the cliff. The other fellows followed him.

They gazed below.

Below was a wide expanse of rough and rocky shore, with the blue waves curling with frothy edges over the outlying boulders. The tide was out now. The juniors scanned rock and beach below. They were in fear of seeing a still, shattered form lying among the rocks. But they saw nothing. Nothing but rocks and sands and sea, and the fishermen's boats out on the blue waters.

"He didn't go over the cliff," said Johnny Bull, at last.

Bulstrode drew a deep breath.

"Not here," he said. "If he had fallen here, we should see the body. But he must have fallen somewhere. We know he came by this path, from his cap. And he never got home. Come on!"

The juniors crawled back from the cliff-edge, and went slowly along the path, looking out for traces of Skinner. A short distance further on the cliff fell away in a great rocky gap, with a steep slope of broken boulders down to the beach. And in quite a prominent position on the rocky slope something gleamed silvery in the sun. Bulstrode scrambled down and picked it up. It was a penknife, and the initials "H. S." were cut on the metal.

"Harold Skinner," said Nugent, in a low voice.

Bulstrode's face was white.

"That's where he went down," he said huskily.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER. The Finding of Skinner.

There was a long silence. The juniors gazed down the steep slope of rocks, broken into gaps and crevices and caves in which a hundred bodies might have rolled and become hidden from sight.

Had Skinner fallen there?

If he had blundered upon the slope in the dark, and lost his footing there, he might have rolled down the slope, and his roll would soon become a fall. He might have rolled into one of the deep cavities, and disappeared for ever from the light of day.

"Poor old Skinner!" muttered Bulstrode.

"There's a chance yet," said Harry Wharton. "He mayn't be down there. But are you fellows game to look?"

"I am," said Bulstrode quietly.

The juniors looked at the rocky slope. They had plenty of pluck. But any fellow who ventured to climb down those rocks would take his life in his hand.

"We'll do it," said Nugent.

"One of us will be enough," said Bulstrode. "Skinner was my pal, and I'm going to look for him. You fellows stay here."

"Rats!" said Harry Wharton promptly. "We can do it all right; it only wants care. And there's more ground to be covered than you can cover, Bulstrode. Skinner might have fallen into any of those gaps."

"Well, come if you like."

Bulstrode clambered down the rocks without another word. His face was set and pale.

From the cliff top the slope looked like a broken declivity to the sea. But once upon it the rocks loomed up larger, and, as Bulstrode clambered up, he was lost to sight among the great masses.

"Careful, old fellow!" called out Wharton, who was picking his way slowly down.

"Right-ho!" came back Bulstrode's voice.

"Call out if you see him!"

"Right!"

Bulstrode appeared in sight again, crawling carefully over a huge boulder. Then he vanished again on the other side of it.

Then there was a shout.

"Skinner!"

"Have you found him?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Yes."

"Alive?"

"I think so!"

The juniors scrambled quickly round, and over the big boulder. They joined Bulstrode. Bulstrode was kneeling beside a still form on the rocks.

It was Skinner!

The missing junior lay on the rocks in a deep hollow of the cliff. Close by him there was a deep cave in the rock. How Skinner had got there was a mystery, unless he had stumbled over the cliff and rolled down, and reached that hollow in trying to crawl back to the cliff-top. He showed no signs of injury as he lay; but his clothes were torn and muddy.



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"Skinney, old man!" whispered Bulstrode. Skinner's eyes were closed. They opened now, and fixed themselves upon Bulstrode with a wild gaze.

"He's alive!"

"Must have fainted," said Johnny Bull. "He doesn't seem to be hurt. Can he have been lying here all day in that state?"

"By Jove, he must have had a rotten time!" said Nugent.

"The rottenfulness must have been terrific!"

"Skinner, old man," said Bulstrode, "can you get up?"

Skinner groaned.

"Are you hurt, old man?"

"I—I can't move!" moaned Skinner. "Oh, it has been awful! All night in this place! Oh, the long, long hours!"

He groaned again.

"Poor old chap!"

"How did you get here?" asked Nugent.

"I took the short cut!" groaned Skinner. "I was afraid my people would be gone to bed before I got in, and then the pater would have jawed me for not coming back with the team. And I missed the path, and—and I fell, and I crawled about till I couldn't crawl any longer; but it was too dark to see, and my legs hurt. Then I suppose I fainted. I've been lying here all day, unable to move. I've shouted a lot of times, in case anybody should pass over the cliff, but nobody's heard me."

"Jolly rough, old chap!"

"He will have to be carried to Greyfriars," said Bulstrode.

"We shall have to get a stretcher of some sort, and carry him as far as the road, and then get a trap to take him to the school."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, there's the trap!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

The trap from Pegg, with Nugent in it, was seen in the distance. Wharton and Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and the Nabob picked Skinner up, and bore him away down the rough path towards the road. Skinner closed his eyes and winced and groaned every few minutes as they carried him on to where the trap had drawn up to wait for them.

Bulstrode did not immediately follow. He clambered down the cliff to the deep hollow where Skinner had been found, to see if anything belonging to the injured junior had been left behind. Skinner had lost his cap and penknife, and he might easily have dropped other things in crawling over the boulders. Bulstrode looked round the deep hollow, and glanced into the cave under the boulder.

Then a strange expression came over his face. He paused for some moments, and then bent his head and entered the cave. It was not more than five feet back into the cliff. The interior was dark and shadowy, and had not Bulstrode specially looked in he would have noticed nothing out of the common. But he had seen it, and he had seen what he was very far from expecting to see.

In a corner of the cave was a black railway rug, a heavy greatcoat, and a bag. Bulstrode opened the bag, and found inside it a quantity of sandwiches, a portion of a cold chicken, half a loaf, and several other eatables. Some of the provisions had evidently been consumed, but there was a good deal left. Bulstrode stared at the things, the cloud growing darker and darker upon his brow. He was beginning to understand. The cap, the penknife—two plain and prominent clues on the way. The rug and coat and provisions in the cave

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"To the school?" said Wharton doubtfully.

Bulstrode's eyes flashed.

"I suppose the Head won't refuse to take him in when he's injured? And there's nowhere else to take him. The hospital at Courtfield is too far. And Skinner's not going to be shovelled into a rotten hospital, either! He's going to be where he's got friends to look after him!"

"Well, I suppose that's all right."

"One of you buzz to Pegg, and get the trap from the Anchor!" said Bulstrode. "Get it to the road at the end of the short cut, ready, and we'll get Skinner there."

"Right-ho! I'll go!" said Nugent.

And Nugent clambered up the cliff, and started for Pegg. Harry Wharton & Co. gathered round Skinner, and lifted him in their arms. Skinner seemed to be unable even to crawl. It was not an easy business to get him up the steep cliff; but the juniors contrived it among them, and Skinner was safely landed on the path at last.

He groaned as he was set down, and the juniors rested after their efforts.

Harry Wharton made an examination of the injured leg to see whether he could do anything for it, and failed to find any outward sign of injury. But Skinner winced horribly when he touched it, and Wharton concluded that there was some inward sprain or twist.

"We found your cap and penknife, Skinner," said Bulstrode. "I'll go down there again and see if you've lost anything else."

"No, don't," said Skinner. "I haven't lost anything, and it isn't worth the risk. Get me away from here as quick as you can!"

"We've got to wait for the trap from Pegg," Bulstrode explained.

"Don't go down the cliff again; it's not worth the risk."

"I'm hurt as well, Skinner, to see if—"

"Don't, I tell you!" exclaimed Skinner irritably. "I don't want you to run the risk!"

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under the boulder; the absence of any outward sign of injury upon Skinner. All that pieced itself together in Bulstrode's mind.

It was some minutes before Bulstrode clambered up the cliff again. He looked towards the road. The juniors had not waited for him. It was necessary to get Skinner to where a doctor could see him as soon as possible. Wharton and Johnny Bull had driven off with Skinner in the trap to Greyfriars. Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had gone through Pegg to get to Friardale, to get Dr. Short to the school to see Skinner as quickly as possible. Only Bob Cherry was waiting in the road for Bulstrode, to walk back to Greyfriars with him.

Bob looked curiously at Bulstrode as the burly Removite joined him. He could not fail to notice the black cloud that had gathered upon Bulstrode's brow.

"Found anything?" he asked.

"Let's get back," said Bulstrode, without answering the question. And Bulstrode did not speak a word again on the way back to Greyfriars.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. Skinner Wins!

"SKINNER!"

"They've got him!"

"Wharton's found him!"

"Bravo!"

Quite a crowd gathered round the trap as it stopped before the School House. Wharton and Johnny Bull descended, and lifted Skinner out. Skinner groaned deeply.

"It's Skinner!"

"Poor old Skinner!"

"Is he hurt?"

"Where did you find him?"

Mr. Quelch hurried out of the House. He turned an

anxious glance upon Skinner as the two juniors brought him up the steps.

"You have found him, then? Very, very good!"

"Yes, sir. He tumbled over the cliff last night," said Harry Wharton.

Skinner groaned.

"He must be put into bed, and a doctor summoned at once!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Nugent's gone for the doctor now, sir."

"Very good! You are very thoughtful!"

Skinner was taken up into the Remove dormitory, and placed in bed. It was his old bed, now belonging to Banthorpe, who had come since Skinner left. Skinner allowed himself to be undressed, winching painfully all the time, and cut into bed. Then he closed his eyes, and appeared to relapse into unconsciousness.

Dr. Short was not long in arriving.

The Head of Greyfriars came up to the dormitory with him. Dr. Locke was looking very distressed. He was glad that Skinner had been discovered alive; but he was very anxious about his state. It was a serious thing to fall over a cliff, and lie exposed for a night and the greater part of a day.

"Skinner, my dear lad," said the Head, "can you speak?"

"Is that Dr. Locke?" asked Skinner, in a faint voice.

"Yes, my boy."

"I'm sorry to be putting you to such trouble, sir. But there was nowhere else where I could find you."

"Please don't speak like that, sir. You surely know that you are very welcome here. I care most sincerely that your injury is not serious."

Skinner groaned.

"We shall soon see about that!" said Dr. Short.

The Head sat down while the doctor made his examination. Dr. Short was looking a little perplexed when he drew the Head towards the window after he had finished with Skinner.

"Is it serious?" asked the Head.

"Not at all!"

Dr. Locke drew a deep breath of relief.

"I am glad of that. You have taken a great weight off my mind."

"As a matter of fact, the boy appears to have been more frightened than hurt," said the medical man. "There is not even a bruise upon his leg, but as he complains of not having been able to move it, I suppose he has twisted the muscles in some way. Judging from his appearance, I should not suppose that he had lain exposed, without food or shelter, for a whole night and day; but—"

"There is no doubt about that," said the Head. "The boys are here who found him."

Dr. Short nodded.

"Well, well, he has stood it very well indeed!" he said. "I should attribute his collapse more to fright than to injury—doubtless lying on the cliff, fearing he might fall over into some chasm every minute, must have had a bad effect on his nerves, and accounts for his being prostrated. But there is no other reason for it, and he will not require anything beyond rest."

"That is a great relief to me!"

The medical man took his leave.

Dr. Locke approached the bedside.

"I am glad to say that Dr. Short has made a most favourable report of you, Skinner," he said.

Skinner groaned.

"I don't think Dr. Short quite understands how I feel, sir," he said, faintly. "I feel as if I've got some internal injury."

"Dear me! I hope not, Skinner! You can certainly rely upon Dr. Short. He is a very experienced practitioner."

Skinner only replied with another faint groan.

Dr. Locke left the dormitory, with a very uneasy feeling in his breast.

After all, medical men were often mistaken, and internal injuries might exist without any outward symptom. The good old Doctor was very much perturbed. He had already wired to Mr. Skinner that his son was found, and Mr. Skinner had replied that he was coming down by the next train.

Greyfriars was in a buzz when Bulstrode and Bob Cherry came in. Bulstrode was looking very black, as he had looked all the way home.

"Skinner here?" he asked, as he met Harry Wharton.

"Yes; he's put to bed in the Remove dorm." said Harry. Bulstrode groaned.

"Good; I'm going up to see him!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Harry, catching Bulstrode's arm, as he started for the stairs. "Nobody's allowed in there now. Mrs. Kebble is in charge of him, and she doesn't allow anybody in. He's got to have quiet!"

"I'll give him quiet!" growled Bulstrode.

Wharton stared at him in astonishment.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "You were more keen about Skinner than anybody else. What has happened now?"

Bulstrode hesitated.

He wanted to have it out with Skinner, but he did not

want to give the schemer away to the whole school. After all, Skinner had been his pal; and the time was not so very far behind when Bulstrode would have helped him in the trick he had played. Bulstrode had changed, and Skinner was the same old Skinner—that was all the difference. Bulstrode was furious; but he did not want to show Skinner up. Wharton read his doubt and hesitation in his crimsoning face, and was more and more astonished.

"What on earth's the matter with you, Bulstrode?" he asked, almost sharply. "Everybody feels sorry for old Skinner now. I do, and I've got no cause to like him. You seem to be turning against him just when you ought to be kindst!"

"Oh, rot!"

"Well, you can't go into the dorm.!" said Wharton. "Mrs. Kebble won't let you!"

"I'll see him later, then!" grunted Bulstrode, and he thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and strode away, leaving the captain of the Remove in a state of the greatest astonishment.

Mr. Skinner arrived early in the evening, and spoke to his son in the dormitory. His hard face wore a troubled look when he came down and saw the Head in his study.

"My son seems to be feverish," he said. "I suppose you have every reliance upon your medical man?"

"Certainly!" said Dr. Locke.

"Harold is making himself worse by worrying, I suppose," said Mr. Skinner. "It is all very unfortunate."

"Worrying?" repeated the Head.

"Yes. He seems to have fixed his hopes upon returning to this school, and the disappointment is weighing upon his mind. I suppose nothing can be done?"

There was a long, long pause.

"I will consult with Mr. Quelch, his former Form-master," said the Head, at last.

And when Mr. Skinner had gone, the Head consulted with the Remove-master. And the result of that consultation was that Dr. Locke paid a visit to the Remove dormitory, and saw Skinner, and informed him quietly that he had decided to give him a second chance, and that when he was well enough he should take his former place in the Greyfriars Remove.

Skinner thanked the Head in low and broken tones; but when the Head was gone, Skinner winked one eye at the ceiling, and then winked the other.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER. The Quality of Mercy!

"BULSTRODE, old man! It's good of you to come and see me!" said Skinner, faintly.

Bulstrode halted by the bedside, and fixed a grim look upon his former chum. Skinner read war in his glance, and he was wary at once.

"You mayn't think it's so good when I've finished!" said Bulstrode. "I hear they're arranging to move you into the school sanatorium for the night?"

"Yes."

"And the Head's going to let you stop at Greyfriars, because the trouble's preying on your mind, and making you worse?"

"Something like that!" admitted Skinner.

"Well, you're going to chuck it!"

"What?"

"Don't you understand plain English, or are you getting deaf?" asked Bulstrode. "I say you're going to chuck it!"

"Chuck what?"

"Malingering?"

"Who's malingering?" demanded Skinner.

"You are, you cad!"

"Look here, Bulstrode, if you've come here to quarrel with a fellow who's lying in bed—"

"Rats!"

"A fellow who's lying in bed ill," said Skinner, pathetically. Bulstrode snorted.

"Lying in bed?" he agreed. "Lying like a rotten liar, as he is—but not ill. I tell you I know you're spoofing!"

"I—I'm ill—"

"Through falling over the cliff, and lying exposed all night?" demanded Bulstrode.

"Yes."

"How was it that when you fell over the cliff, a railway-rug and a coat and a bag of grub fell with you, and got into that cave?" asked Bulstrode.

Skinner changed colour.

"You've seen them?" he gasped.

"Yes!" said Bulstrode, glowering at him. "I've seen

(Concluded on page 111, of cover.)

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THE STORY OF THE
GREAT MAN-HUNT
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Ferrers Lord, millionaire, and owner of the Lord of the Deep.



Prince Ching-Lung, adventurer, conjurer, and ventriloquist.



Nathan Gore, jewel collector, and multi-millionaire, Ferrers Lord's terrible rival.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

"BY FOUL MEANS OR FAIR, I'LL WIN!"

While crossing the Atlantic on his way to England—where the costly diamond, "The World's Wonder," is to be put up for auction—Nathan Gore, the American millionaire and jewel-collector, receives a message from his agent in London to say that the diamond has been bought by his hated rival, Ferrers Lord, who is the owner and inventor of the wonderful submarines, the Lord of the Deep.

Nathan Gore swears he will obtain possession of the diamond, and on the night of his arrival in London he goes to his rival's house, and, taking the stone, leaves in its place the message: "To Ferrers Lord,—Knowing that you would not sell 'The World's Wonder,' I have taken it. Do your worst! I defy you! The stone is mine!"—Nathan Gore." The millionaire accepts the challenge, and a few hours after the robbery the chase is started. For five months, accompanied by his two friends, Ching-Lung, a Chinese prince, and Rupert Thurston, he pursues Nathan Gore, travelling twice round the world, but never being able to overtake him. At last Ferrers Lord, on board the Lord of the Deep, returns to Lonsdale, an island belonging to Nathan Gore. A man named Hackerden, who has been in Gore's employ, but who is now a free man, pays Ferrers Lord a visit, and leaves his fifteen-year-old nephew on board the submarine. He then returns in a motor-boat to help Nathan Gore, who has become demoralized. On his way Hackerden hears shots being fired, and sees the glare of a fire.

"E'gosh, they're firing the saloon," he murmurs, as a crackling sound reaches his ears.

(Now go on with the story.)

Stirring Scenes.

Hackerden felt that he had never travelled so slowly. The lights of the forts were suddenly extinguished. He could smell smoke.

"The skunks!" he hissed. "The soldiers have joined 'em!"

The glare grew brighter, and the yells louder. The waves reflected the crimson glare, and shouldered past the bows of the little vessel like waves of fire.

The launch shot in between the forts, just in time, by wonderful seamanship. Hackerden avoided a drifting lighter, just grazing its bows. The sky was ablaze, and it was almost as bright as day. The wooden buildings burned like tinder.

"Tst, tst, tst! Bang, bang, bang!"

Three bullets whistled past him, and three reports rang loud. Hackerden ducked his head and dragged out his revolver. He had just skimmed past one of Gore's cruisers. Clear and distinct in the glare he saw a human figure. There was a blaze, a report, and a wild laugh.

Hackerden dropped, and the bullet struck the side of the launch. Then he fired. The figure toppled forward, and a plunge followed.

Then came a crash, as the launch struck the quay, and Hackerden was swimming for his life in the turmoil caused by the sinking craft.

Goretown, the mushroom city, had gone mad—as mad as the man whose fierce hate and terror had caused it to rise on that lone Pacific isle, as if at the touch of a magic wand—the magic wand of wealth. Money had planned it, money had built it, money had peopled it, and sustained it. Gold was its foundation, but the golden foundation had crumbled away, its citizens were clamouring for their pay, for food,

and, most of all, for strong drink. Almost up to the last, Nathan Gore had managed to find supplies for the four hundred scoundrels he called his military police.

But the fountain of his wealth had run dry. The end had come.

The old man paced the verandah of his house, and gazed down at the city. A murmuring, terrible murmur, like the sound that comes from a nest of angry serpents.

Nathan Gore was alone. His servants, taking all the valuables they could lay hands on, had abandoned him. Gore's eyes gleamed wildly as they tried to pierce the gloom. The gate was wide open. He turned swiftly, and snatched up a saw. Very soon one of the carved oak rails of the verandah fell with a clank on the gravel below. A second followed. Then, with an insane chuckle, the old man dragged a Maxim gun forward until its muzzle pointed through the gap straight at the gate.

He lashed the wheels fast, and made sure that the deadly ribbon of the cartridges would run freely through the breach. Wiping the perspiration from his ashen face, he leaned forward to watch and wait.

The murmur had become a roar, and the sky was flushed with crimson. A jet of flame shot up.

"The dogs are burning the gaming-house," muttered the old man. "Let them burn and destroy. All the better. They are robbing him, not me. Curse him! Burn, ye accursed villains! Murder each other, ye drunken dogs! Goretown ablaze will make a gallant sight. Burn, burn, burn! Ye've drink enough still, so drink, drink!"

As the glare grew brighter, and the greedy flames licked higher, he danced and screamed with delicious joy, and snapped his bony fingers. He could hear the sound of firing. All the spirits had not been exhausted. There were hundreds

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of cases of whisky and brandy in the rock cellars of the largest saloon. Would they find it, or had they found it?

"Come, dogs, come!" he screamed. "You say I cannot find you. Come and see. I'll feed you with lead!"

He sprang back into the house. Clucking and mouthing, he opened a locked drawer. A long-barrelled, gold-chased cavalry pistol lay there beside the case which held the great diamond. The old-fashioned pistol was a splendid weapon, and legend said that it had belonged to dashing Prince Rupert. The Damascus barrel, quite two feet long, was as bright and glistening as on the day when it had left the shop of Simon Drebrough. "Armourer to Ye Kinne's Most Gracious Majesty, at Ye Signe of Ye Spurres and Broad Swords, in Ye Chepe, London." The old man loaded it with a powder, primed the pan, and cocked the flint. He had no bullets, so he picked up a gold fountain-pen and pushed it into the barrel.

Bang! The pen crashed through the mirror, and flakes of the shattered glass clattered down on the marble hearth. Again Nathan Gore rannned a charge of powder home. There was a look of diabolical glee on his wrinkled face as he pounded in a wad of paper, and hammered it tight until the gun-powder shone black on the touch-hole.

Like a ball of treacle from the priceless diamond lay in his palm. He kissed it again and again. Then, with a sigh, he let it fall into the pistol-barrel, and drew it home savagely. His hands were shaking now—shaking so much that he could hardly prime the lock.

"He said he would hunt me down," he thought, "and I'll be glad for this diamond, I have lived for it, and I'll die for it. Did ever man dream of such a bullet? Did ever mortal man dream of such a hiding place for a gem as his own brain? Ha, ha, ha! There are no post-mortems or inquests on Lomeland. I shall sleep quiet with my darling for ever. Beaten—beaten! I have beaten him! I shall sleep for ever with my jewel. For ever and ever! It is mine, mine, mine!"

He filled a champagne glass with brandy, and gulped the spirit down. He knew that sooner or later the rioters would come to loot the house. Leaving the pistol on the table, he went out. The sky was blood-red, and the dusty road looked like a winding stream of blood.

"Come, ye dogs, come!" he shrieked, shaking his clenched fists. "I'll give some of you such a meal that you'll never ask for need of another. Come, I say!"

Captain Hackerden rose under the shadow of the stone quay, and drew a few deep breaths. He was a powerful swimmer. As he had already been in a mere feebler. He took his bearings, and swam for the steps. "Waal!" he thought, as he stood shaking himself. "I reckon if there's a double-jointed ass cowering about the face of this earth, it's the same as me. To be potted at and floundered about all honey. I can't leave the old man, that's flat. I was born for bad luck, and I always find it."

The captain smiled, however, when he remembered that his money was safe with Ching-Lung, and that, whatever came, it would be safely handed to his wife. Then he looked at his revolver, which was quite as serviceable after its witting as it had been before.

Hackerden walked quickly along the quay. He was something of a favourite with his own men, but they were a mere handful. One glance up the main street told him that he could do nothing. Several buildings were ablaze, and the drunken, yelling rioters were firing their revolvers at the windows. It was a terrible scene!

As he stood there, three shrieking figures appeared on the roof of the burning saloon. He could see them waving their arms. Their piteous cries and gestures were unheeded. Shouts of laughter rang high above the roar and crackle of the flames. Then a hundred revolvers belched out flame and bullets, and the figures reeled and fell into the raging furnace.

"B'gosh!" said Hackerden hoarsely. "I'm mighty glad I didn't bring those dollars along."

The Yankee had iron nerves, but this ghastly deed shook him. Pinks of laughter rang in his ears, the rioters surged and swayed and writhed together like a pack of fiends. Cases of spirits were passed through the flames from hand to hand.

"No," said Hackerden, "I guess I'll quit. It ain't healthy. Oh, thanks!"

A revolver bullet, fired at random, skimmed over his head. With his hands in his wet pockets, the Yankee coolly watched the scene. The crowd surged back and the roof of the building fell with a thunderous crash. Then it surged forward again as the sparks ceased to fall. Blazing pieces of

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wood were torn out of the scorching ruins, barrels of petroleum and tar were whirled up the street by eager hands, and in a few minutes the electric light station was burning. Then the words passed from lip to lip:

"The bungalow! The bungalow!"

"Both the rebels!" said the Yankee. "I'd better be morning."

"Forty or fifty of the rioters detached themselves, and began to march up the hill. Half of them were Indian coolies, and a little drink had turned them into maniacs. Hackerden pushed his way forward. Some of the rioters recognised him and cheered him. Dozens of bottle of brandy were extended, and he was invited to drink. Hackerden pretended to do so, but not a drop passed his lips.

Once clear of the town, he darted off the road, and ran. Suddenly a great flash of light gushed into the sky. Hackerden looked back. A pillar of fire seemed to lick the very clouds. It was almost as bright as noon.

"That's the petroleum store," he thought, "and there's half a million gallons in those tanks. At fourteen cents a gallon that's money, b'gosh! Go on, you wretches! Burn the whole— Curse! I'm shot!"

Hackerden reeled. A red-hot knif seemed to have been plunged into his shoulder. He swayed to and fro, clutching and tearing at his shirt. Then he dropped on his knees and laughed.

"Both me!" he gasped. "I'm—I'm glad I left them—them dollars! Good-bye, little woman! I guess they've put my light out! Funny thing! Wal, I'm—"

He fell back, and lay with the weird glare flickering on his face. Running figures streamed along the blood-red road and passed him. Hackerden's blue eyes stared upwards at the wan and colourless stars.

"Funny thing," he muttered jerkily. "I don't feel no trouble about dyin'. Glad I left them dollars for the old gal. By gosh, don't it smart! Ain't the sky dark, too! Ain't it—"

He tried to move—to try to sit up. Then the darkness shut down on his brave eyes, and he stirred no more.

The Mad Millionaire at Bay.

Nathan Gore sought more courage in the brandy decanter. He refilled and emptied the champagne glass for the third time. Perhaps it was not courage that he tried to find, but something to enable him to withstand the wearing strain of waiting. The old man was brave enough, and he had made up his mind. He could look death fairly and squarely in the face without flinching. He was quite ready to face the silent unknown, but he could not go into the darkness unaccompanied. He patted the Maxim and danced. He sang snatches of song in a wild, cracked voice. Nine Lee-Mefford rifles, all fully charged, waited in readiness against the verandah. He had lighted a lamp, for the electric light had failed. Then he sat down to write. His nerves were perfectly steady, and the handwriting was firm. He wrote:

"To Ferrers Lord,—I know that all is over. In a fashion, you are the victor, and it has been a gallant fight. Some victories are almost more bitter than defeat. So yours will be. In a real victory the victor should gain some great and lasting advantage. You will gain nothing, except the wreck of my fortune. To many this would be enough; but to you, money is nothing. What good are a few hundred thousand pounds to a man of your vast wealth?"

"All you want is the diamond, and to crush me. You have crushed me, but you shall never obtain the diamond. It has been a glorious conflict. Though I stand here ruined, I swear that you are not the winner. You have beaten me in the skirmishes, but I shall be the conqueror in the last decisive battle. The jewel is lost for ever. It is mine.

"I stand now on the brink of the great unknown. I am about to plunge into the everlasting night. My hate for you, strangely enough, does not dominate me thoroughly at this moment. What has come to me I cannot tell. Instead of loathing and reviling you, I prefer to think of you in my last hours as a gallant foe. Mind you, I have no intention of hoisting the white flag. I must fight you to the very last and beat you. I am mad, and I know it. You are too strong for me, Ferrers Lord, and I admit it.

"But I shall never surrender, be sure of that. Between us there can be no peace with honour. I shall fight you to the end. When a battle is won, it is won, even though the



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victorious general is slain. Morally, I shall be the victor. And now—strangest of all—I ask you, my foe, in the hour of a bitter contest, to do one great kindness.

"Though I hate you, I respect you as a man of honour, and a true-hearted British gentleman. I have a niece, my only relation, a mere child of fourteen years old. I ask you to become her guardian, and to keep my story from her. She is in the convent of Our Lady of the Veil, Los Angeles. It seems madness, does it not? I ask you, further, to settle upon her, out of the wreck of my fortune, a sum of fifteen hundred pounds a year. It is a mere nothing to you. Can you understand? It seems strange and impossible, for were you here before me I would shoot you down like a dog! And yet I ask you this, and feel assured and confident that you will not fail me. And I have won the game!"

He threw down the pen. A hoarse, wolfish yell rang through the flower-scented air. The old man rubbed his lean hands together and chuckled. To him the sound was music.

Nathan Gore folded the letter and addressed it to Ferrers Lord. Then, standing on a chair, he pressed his hand against a portion of the picture moulding, and pulled it downwards. A cavity appeared in the wall, and showed a heavy fireproof safe. The old man opened the safe and placed the letter inside. That Ferrers Lord would come was as sure as the sunrise. Like the safe, the wall was fireproof and remarkably strong. Even if the rioters burned the house, the wall would stand. In searching the ruins for the diamond, Ferrers Lord would sift every handful of ashes, and probe every crack and cranny. He would find the safe, and in it the message from the dead.

But he would never find the jewel—never! The old man grinned with glee at the thought. His ghastly hiding-place—his own mad brain—would never be exposed.

He took more comfort. The flames, tossing against the sky, filled him with delicious joy. The scolding shouts of the drunken mob, revelling in the wanton destruction they were causing, intoxicated him. Nathan Gore expected little mercy—at least, from the black coolies and yellow men. He had used the lash too much, and the laws he had made were harsh and cruel. He knew that he was hated, that his slaves had burst their bonds.

They were coming! He listened for a moment, and then tossed back his white hair. There was a black patch on the blood-red road. It moved swiftly, sometimes widening, sometimes narrowing. Gore took up a rifle, and steadied it on the rail. The weapon cracked. He laughed as he heard a chorus of screams, and saw the patch split apart and vanish. The rioters had left the road—all but one.

Then came a volley, and bullets hissed overhead and splattered the wall of the garden. But Gore was safe so long as he kept clear of the one open space, the gate. He ran into the house, and flew upstairs. From a little window he emptied the magazine of his rifle and sprang away.

Three or four feet-footed men went down the road at full speed to carry the news that the house was garrisoned. Gore was chuckling and tittering, when suddenly there was a terrific crash close to one of the sentry-boxes.

He clenched his hands and cursed. It was a shell from a four-pounder.

The smoke from the burning petroleum tanks beat down into a dense black cloud that almost choked him. He kept on firing at random until the greasy, stifling smoke lifted, and the glare shone down again on road and garden. His teeth came together, and his eyes blazed with murderous joy as a bugle rang out its shrill note. At last it was the signal to charge. Like fiends the rioters, who had crept up close, leapt from the bushes and ferns and heather. Firing and yelling, they rushed for the gate. Nathan Gore uttered a terrible, exultant cry. The windows behind him were shattered by a hail of bullets. The old man stood untouched and defiant, waving his gaunt arms. The ghoulished, drunken brutes pressed on.

Then the Maxim uttered its deafening rattle, and a blue flame whirled and flickered at its muzzle, but not for long. It spluttered irregularly and jammed. The rioters reeled back in terror, and then came on more madly. A second bugle altered its note, clear and silvery. Then came a ringing, lusty British cheer, and British bayonets flashed like gold under the blazing sky as eighty brawny bluejackets swung down the road.

(This story will be concluded in next Wednesday's MAGNET LIBRARY, which will also contain the opening chapters of our grand new Ferrers Lord serial, entitled "Mystic," by famous Science Dece. This magnificent story is packed with thrilling incidents from first to last, and every MAGNET reader will follow the great adventures of the popular characters with breathless interest. Don't forget to order next Monday's MAGNET LIBRARY in advance; there will be a great rush on it. Price, one penny, as usual.)

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A WORD TO MY OVER-SEAS READERS & TO INTENDING EMIGRANTS!

I was reading the other day that a large number of people left the British Isles in January last for the Colonies, and I wondered how many of them were my readers, and as I understand that the shipping companies are busy booking berths and passages, I should like to point out to any of my readers who are thinking of leaving England that they can obtain "The Magnet," "The Gem," and "The Penny Popular" in any of our Colonies—Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa. In fact, I can proudly say that there is not a country where the Englishman is where the Invincible Trio cannot be obtained. Of course, if you go right up country in Canada or Australia, you may not be able to get your three favourite papers, simply because there is no one there to sell them; but you can get them from the nearest township, no matter how small. I give below a list of towns, and the addresses of newsgagents who sell "The Magnet," "The Gem," and "The Penny Popular," and if there is any one of these who is thinking of going to any of our Colonies, please drop me a postcard, and I will send you the address of the nearest newsgagent.

Emigrants will not find it easy to get their papers and books in the Colonies as they are not in the British Isles, as the newsgagents only order from London what is ordered of them; because, you see, they have to pay the postage or carriage on everything they order from London, and so cannot afford to buy papers unless they are certain of selling them. If my emigrant readers will take my advice, they will arrange with a newsgagent to supply them directly they settle down in their new home, and then they can still have their three favourite papers the same as they do now.

Don't forget to send me a postcard, and I will tell you where you can obtain "The Magnet," "The Gem," and "The Penny Popular" in any part of our Colonies, and if when you arrive you would like to have some copies to give away, let me know, and I will send you some free, and carriage paid, which you can give to the new friends you are certain to make in a new country.

CANADA.

Montreal.—Montreal News Co., 356, St. James Street; Mr. Ashford, 340, Dorchester Street; Mr. Chapman, St. Catherine Street.

Quebec.—Mr. J. Walsh, publisher. Toronto.—Imperial News Co., 91, Church Street; Mr. E. Woodward, 143, Queen Street W.

Vancouver.—Mrs. L. Galloway, 442, Westminster Avenue; Vancouver News Company; British Columbia Book Co., Ltd., 350, Granville Street.

Winnipeg.—Winnipeg News Co., 56, Albert Street; The Mayboro Newsagency, King Edward P.O.; O. K. Press, 344, William Avenue; J. A. Hart, Main Street.

Calgary, Alta.—Mr. L. C. Wilson, 8th Avenue. Saskatoon, Sask.—Saskatoon Newsagency, 310, First Avenue.

Moose Jaw, Sask.—Nixon, Ltd., Booksellers, Main Street.

Hamilton, Ont.—Mr. Hughes, 675, Barton Street E.; Mr. Hamilton, James Street N.; Mr. Willis, 197, King Street E.

Edmonton, Alta.—Mr. J. A. McNeill, 245, Jasper Avenue; Mr. A. Smith, 744, First Street.

AUSTRALIA.

Adelaide.—Atkinson & Co., Gresham Street. Brisbane.—Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Queen Street. Melbourne.—Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., 124, Queen Street. Perth.—Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., William Street. Sydney.—Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Pitt Street.

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Auckland.—Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Custom Street. Christchurch.—Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Gloster Street. Dunedin.—Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Princes Street. Launceston.—Gordon & Gotch, Ltd., Camilleri Street.

SOUTH AFRICA.

Cape Town.—The Central Newsagency, P.O. Box 9, 125, Long Street. Johannesburg.—The Central Newsagency, P.O. Box, 1033.

THE EDITOR.

"THE MAGNET LIBRARY."

The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street.

London, England



My Readers' Page

WHOM TO WRITE TO:
**EDITOR,
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.**

OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS
**"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
EVERY WEDNESDAY
"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
EVERY FRIDAY.**

The Editor
is always
pleased to
hear from
his Chums,
at home or
abroad.

FOR NEXT MONDAY,

"PETER TODD'S CHANCE." By Frank Richards.

This splendid tale, a masterpiece of the chums of Greyfriars deals with the latest study that has sprung up among the juniors of the Remond School, viz., that between Peter Todd & Co.—The Imposing Four—and Harry Wharton & Co., for the proud position of being "top study" in the Form. The resourceful Peter gets a chance of proving his metal, and takes on a very difficult task—none other than that of making Loder, the prefect, pay for the damage that Todd has done to his Loder's study. How Peter succeeds in accomplishing this apparently impossible task is told in Frank Richards' own wonderful way in

"PETER TODD'S CHANCE."

THIS WEEK'S "GEM" LIBRARY.

This week's issue of our grand companion paper "The Gem" Library is, I think, the most interesting number of the famous little story-paper that has ever appeared. In addition to the list of contents which have made it famous—the grand complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., by Martin Clifford, Warren Bell's great new public school serial, the Chat page, the Free Correspondence Exchange, Storiette Competition page, etc.—it contains

TWO ABSOLUTELY NEW FEATURES.

The first of these is one which thousands of "Magnetics" have been urgently asking for, viz., a

"GEM" PORTRAIT GALLERY,

containing specially-drawn pictures of all the principal characters in Martin Clifford's famous St. Jim's stories. The second grand new feature is also a pictorial one, entitled:

"FAMOUS FIGHTS FOR THE FLAG,"

and is represented in this week's issue of the "Gem" Library by a thrilling full-page picture—the first of a series—illustrating a stirring incident which occurred on the outbreak of the Great Indian Mutiny. With these two splendid new pictorial features this week's "Gem" Library will represent absolutely the best value for one penny it is possible to obtain.

COLONIAL COMPETITION RESULT.

The special competition for my Colonial readers which was announced in "Magnet" Library No. 256 is now closed, after having been kept open long enough to enable my most far-distant Colonial "cousin" to send me his attempt. From the large number of very excellent "postcard opinions"—concerning, of course, "The Penny Popular"—which have been sent in from almost every nook and corner of our vast colonies, I have at length selected four as being, in my opinion, the pick of the bunch, and to the senders of these, the four cash prizes have been accordingly despatched.

The lucky winners are:

Leslie H. Christie, 563, University Street, Montreal, Canada; Benny Rudolph, 70, Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, South Africa; George Pryce, Havelock Street, Narrogin, Western Australia; John R. Leitch, Churchill Street, Maryborough, Queensland, Australia. The first-named two readers will receive the sum of 10s. each, while 5s. each will fall to the lot of the latter two.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 274.

A Grand, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled:

"PETER TODD'S CHANGE!" Please order your copy of "THE MAGNET" Library in advance.

"POPLETS."

The Latest New Competition.

This week's issue of our second companion paper—"The Penny Popular"—is also a bumper number, by reason of the fact that it contains, in addition to the manifold attractions in the way of really splendid complete stories which are always to be found in it,

A WONDERFUL NEW COMPETITION, which is simply bound to become all the rage.

"POPLETS"

is the name of this great new competition, for which many big

CASH PRIZES

are offered every week. All particulars will be found in this Friday's issue of "The Penny Popular." There is going to be a great boom in

"POPLETS."

You don't know how fascinating, as well as remunerative, a competition can be till you have tried the new

"POPLETS" COMPETITION

in this week's "Penny Popular."

NOTE.

If G. T. Howell will send me his address, which he omitted from his letter, I will do my best to obtain for him the numbers he asks for.

COLONIAL READERS, PLEASE NOTE.

I should like to draw the special attention of my Colonial readers, and those of my readers who contemplate emigrating to any of our colonies, to the information contained in Column 2 on the opposite page, which I have compiled specially for their benefit. From this they will see that I have taken great pains to make it as easy as possible for them to get their favourite papers wherever they are in the world, and I feel sure that an ever-increasing number of my overseas friends will show their appreciation by making a point of ordering the three famous companion papers every week from one of the newsagents whose names I have given on the opposite page.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

R. Stead.—I am sorry I am unable to supply you with the books, which are now out of print.

B. C. L.—There are many schools like Greyfriars in England.

M. Madden (Scotland).—I am afraid your father will have to wait until the advertisement appears again, unless he can get into communication with the publishers, either in England or America; or perhaps a good method would be for him to advertise.

S. J. B. (Leyburne).—If your friend wishes to cure himself of the habit of biting his nails, he should put bitter aloes on them.

N. Jervis (Salop).—To obtain particulars of the N.W. Mounted Police, apply to the Emigrants' Information Office, at 31, The Broadway, Westminster, London, S.W.

J. H. Johnstone (Birmingham).—You can buy a cheap stamp-album from Messrs. Stanley Gibbons, of the Strand, London.

H. S. Michael (Australia).—I am afraid your speed is still too slow on the typewriter; you will ultimately be able to type three times as fast as you do now.

(Owing to the great pressure on our space this week, the second article on "How to Keep Fit," has been crowded out, but will appear in next Monday's Chat Page.)

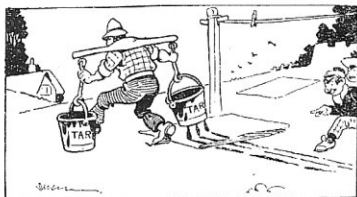
THE EDITOR.

THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY SPECIAL COMIC SUPPLEMENT.

"TAR!" SAID THE WICKET BOYS.



1. "What's the game!" piped the budding county cricketers. "What's the game! It's no good punching those holes in the old chap's bucket just because we've turned up without wickets to play cricket." But the inventive lad went hammering away while the tarring gentleman's back was turned.



2. In two two's the I. L. (inventive lad) had taken matters in. For he had seen that the workman would have to pass the clothes-line to get to the road. Then commenced the great cross-country run. Do you spot that leaking bucket?

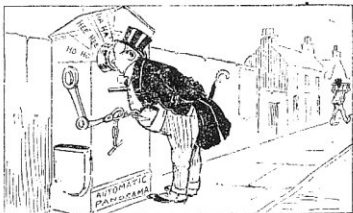


3. Well, the old chap did exactly what was required, leaving three splendid black streaks across the folded sheet. Then the wicked boys hung it on the line and played cricket after all. Ah, but wait until Mrs. Wo-her, the tub-and-soap lady, turns up!

A MECHANICAL NICK OF TIME.



1. "I must have a pennyworth," said old Juggins as he patronised the automatic-machine.



2. And then that automatic-machine stretched out a claw, and gently but firmly removed Juggins's gold watch.



3. And wasn't the old chap surprised when he found that his ticker had disappeared. He fairly hornpiped with vexatiousness.

STANDING BY SKINNER.

(Continued from page 23.)

them, and I know the whole game now. You never intended to leave when you came here with the Warford cricketers on Wednesday. You lost the train on purpose, and had those in the cave ready, to lie low there and pretend you'd fallen over the cliff. You left your cap and penknife so that a search-party couldn't possibly miss you. You intended to be brought back ill to Greyfriars, and to play that wheeze on the Head. You're no more ill than I am! You're malingering, like a rotten lying cad!"

Bulstrode paused for want of breath. Skinner had had time to recover his coolness. When he spoke, it was not in the faint and expiring voice of an invalid now.

"You seem to have nosed it off out pretty well," he said. "What have you got to say about it?"

"Say about it? roused Bulstrode. "I'll jolly well say—"
 "Don't shout. It was a jolly good game, I told you I was coming back to Greyfriars by five or five o'clock," said Skinner. "When I was here before, you weren't so jolly particular, Bulstrode. I don't see what you've got to complain of. I've spoiled the Head into taking me back. That's all!"

"That's all, is it?" said Bulstrode, savagely. "And do you think I'm going to remain quietly by and let you do it?"

"Yes, rather. You can't give me away?"

Bulstrode grinned his teeth.
 "I was willing to stand by you, as an old pal, though things have changed in a lot of ways," he said. "I've stood by you—I've tried to get the fellows on your side, and to get the Head to take you back. But I told you, Skinner, that I wouldn't have a hand in any rotten underhand bizney—and I won't!"

"I don't ask you to have a hand in it!" said Skinner, sullenly. "I never asked you to come and look for me, did I? Just mind your own business, and let me alone!"
 "I'm not going to let you work off this swindle on the Head!"

"What do you mean to do?" asked Skinner, in a frightened tone. "I could see that Bulstrode was in earnest now.
 "You've got to confess to the Head that you've taken him in!"

"Confess!" repeated Skinner. "Are you mad?"
 "If you don't—"
 "Well?"

"I shall do so, then," said Bulstrode.

"You—you sneak!" hissed Skinner.

"You're not going to make me a party to a rotten piece of lying and deceit like this!" said Bulstrode. "You ought to be ashamed of playing such a rotten trick. You made us all anxious about you. The Head was looking quite woe-begone all day. And your father, too. I wonder you had the nerve to do it. You're a rotten cad, Skinner, and you haven't changed an atom since you were kicked out of Greyfriars for being such a worm. But I'm not going to have a deception of this kind put on me. You'll have to own up!"

"Don't be a fool. I can't!"

"You must!"

"Bulstrode, old man!" Skinner almost shrieked as Bulstrode turned towards the door. "I—I say, don't be hard on me! I can't own up now. Think what I should get from my father, if he found it out—and the Head would tell him!"

"You should have thought of that before."

"And—and it would be all up with me for getting back to Greyfriars, then. I should never have a chance again!"

"All the better for Greyfriars!"

"Bulstrode! You used to be my pal—"

"I'll jolly well never be your pal again, after this!" said Bulstrode.

"Well, let it go at that," said Skinner. "You said you'd stand by me, but I won't hold you to your word. Let it go at that! Hold your tongue about what I've done, and I won't ask any further favours of you."

Bulstrode clenched his hands.

"I can't!" he said. "It's a rotten lie and deception. You can't expect a decent chap to stand by you in that!"

"It was my last chance!" groaned Skinner. "You don't know what my life has been like in the office; grind all day long, and my pater reminding me every other day that I might have been still at school if I'd had sense enough. I simply had to cut it. I can't run away to sea—that's not

in my line. Bulstrode, I mean honest. If I get a chance here again, I'll go straight as a die—honour bright I will! This is the last trick I'll ever play. After this everything shall be fair and square! The Head sha'n't have any reason to be sorry that he let me come back!"

Bulstrode hesitated.

Could he believe him?

Skinner was in deadly earnest now, in his terror of discovery, of punishment, of being sent away from Greyfriars, and being received with scorn, and perhaps severe punishment, by his father.

But how long would his earnestness last? As long as his danger, probably—but no longer. And yet—there was a chance. Bulstrode knew what uphill work it was to leave bad ways behind—he had his own experience as a lesson there. He was far from spotless himself. There had been a time when he would have joined in this scheme without a thought—and if he had come to see things in a better light, might not Harold Skinner?

Skinner caught the hesitation in his look, and hope flashed into his face again.

"Bulstrode! Don't be hard on me!"

The door opened, and Harry Wharton came in.

The captain of the Remove started; he had heard Skinner's words. He closed the door and came to the bedside.

"I got permission to come and see you, Skinner," he said. "I wanted to tell you that I've heard you're coming back into the Remove; and you won't find me up against you, for one, so long as you choose to keep on good terms with me. But is anything the matter here—surely you're not quarrelling with Skinner, Bulstrode, now he's ill?"

Bulstrode grunted scornfully.

"By George!" he exclaimed, suddenly. "Well let Wharton decide. He's captain of the Form, and he can think it out. Are you willing that I tell Wharton, Skinner?"

"No!" almost screamed Skinner.

"Either Wharton or the Head; take your choice!"

"Bulstrode—"

"Take your choice, I'm going—"

"Wharton, then?" panted Skinner.

"Very well!" Bulstrode turned back.

Harry Wharton gazed from one to the other in amazement.

"What does all this mean?" he exclaimed.

"It means," answered Bulstrode, quietly, "that Skinner's not ill—that he's only spoofing; to work up sympathy so that the Head would let him stay."

"Great Scott!"

"I found it out by accident," said Bulstrode. "And I've told Skinner I won't have anything to do with it. He's got to own up to the Head, or I'll tell Dr. Locke myself!"

"It—it isn't quite so bad as Bulstrode makes out!" groaned Skinner. "I'm simply bound to get back to school. I only want a chance—and they wouldn't give me one. You can't sneak about me to the Head—you know you can't!"

"I'm willing to leave it to Wharton to decide," said Bulstrode. "I'll abide by what he says!"

Wharton bit his lip.

"Skinner's acted like a miserable cad!" he said. "But—"

"I'm going straight in future!" said Skinner. "I swear I mean it—honour bright! Just give me this chance, and you'll see that I shall always play the game!"

"I hope you mean that!" said Wharton, dubiously.

"I do. Honour bright!"

Bulstrode snorted.

"Well, what do you say, Wharton?" he asked, turning his back on Skinner.

Harry Wharton looked perplexed.

"I don't see how you can sneak!" he said. "The Head ought to know—I know that. But I don't see how you can tell him! Skinner has acted like a rotten cad—but it's not your business to denounce him; and the fellows would call it sneaking! Let Skinner settle it with his own conscience!"

Bulstrode looked thoughtful.

"You really think that?" he asked.

"Yes. I don't see how you can tell the Head!"

"Very well; let it go at that. Bulstrode turned to Skinner again. "But take care, Skinner—after this! You've said you're going straight—and you've got to go!"

"I mean it!" said Skinner, panting with relief. "You fellows sha'n't be sorry that you gave me a chance."

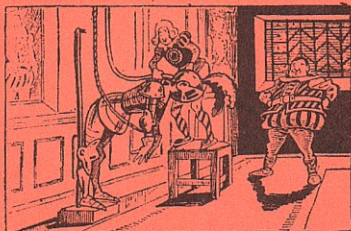
"I hope not!" said Wharton; but he spoke very doubtfully.

Skinner was in earnest then; but how long would it last? Yet it was always possible that experience had taught him a lesson; and if he kept his word, and kept to the straight path, then neither of the juniors would ever have cause to regret "Standing by Skinner!"

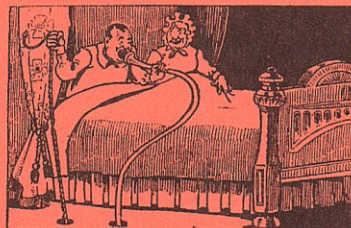
THE END.

(Next Monday, "PETER TODD'S CHANCE," by Frank Richards. Order your copy of "The Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

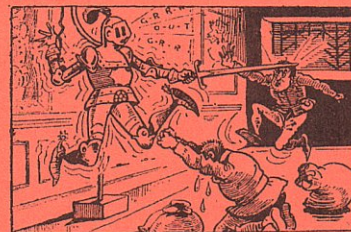
"FORSOOTH!" CRIED THE ROBBERS.



1. Oh yes, they had their burglar alarms in the middle ages. Here we perceive the brainy Baron de Beef Kazz having one fixed up. How did it work —



2. Why, that tin snit in the hall was connected with the baron's bed-chamber by means of a speaking-tube and a rope —



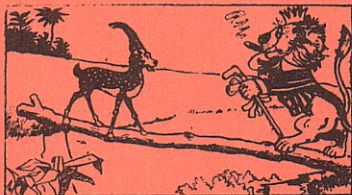
3. And when the nervous old noble heard the burglars about, he just pulled the string and made the figure work — all it caused it to have a word to say for itself. And those thieving knives were alarmed largely — yea verily, forsooth!



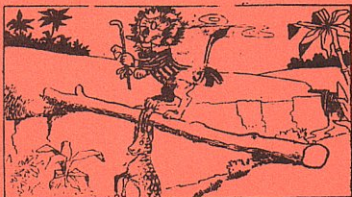
TWO OF THE K-NUTS.

"Really, my dear fellow, I thought you understood the party was informal; just a free-and-easy affair. Why the dress suit?"

VERY CUTE!



1. "Oh, crikey! here's King Leo, and I can't go back," groaned the Antelope. "What on earth shall I do?"



2. But the Antelope had a good set of brains, so he let himself down and hung on the bridge by his horns, and King Leo passed on his way.

JUST HARK AT HIM!



"Hallo, old man! You're looking very glum."

"Yes. This morning during my walk I came to a ferry, and the ferryman made me cross!"

A DRY RETORT.

Hardup: "I presume that you will allow me to take my belongings away with me?"

Landlady: "I am very sorry, Mr. Hardup, but your other sock is not quite dry yet."

