

COLONIAL CHUMS!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

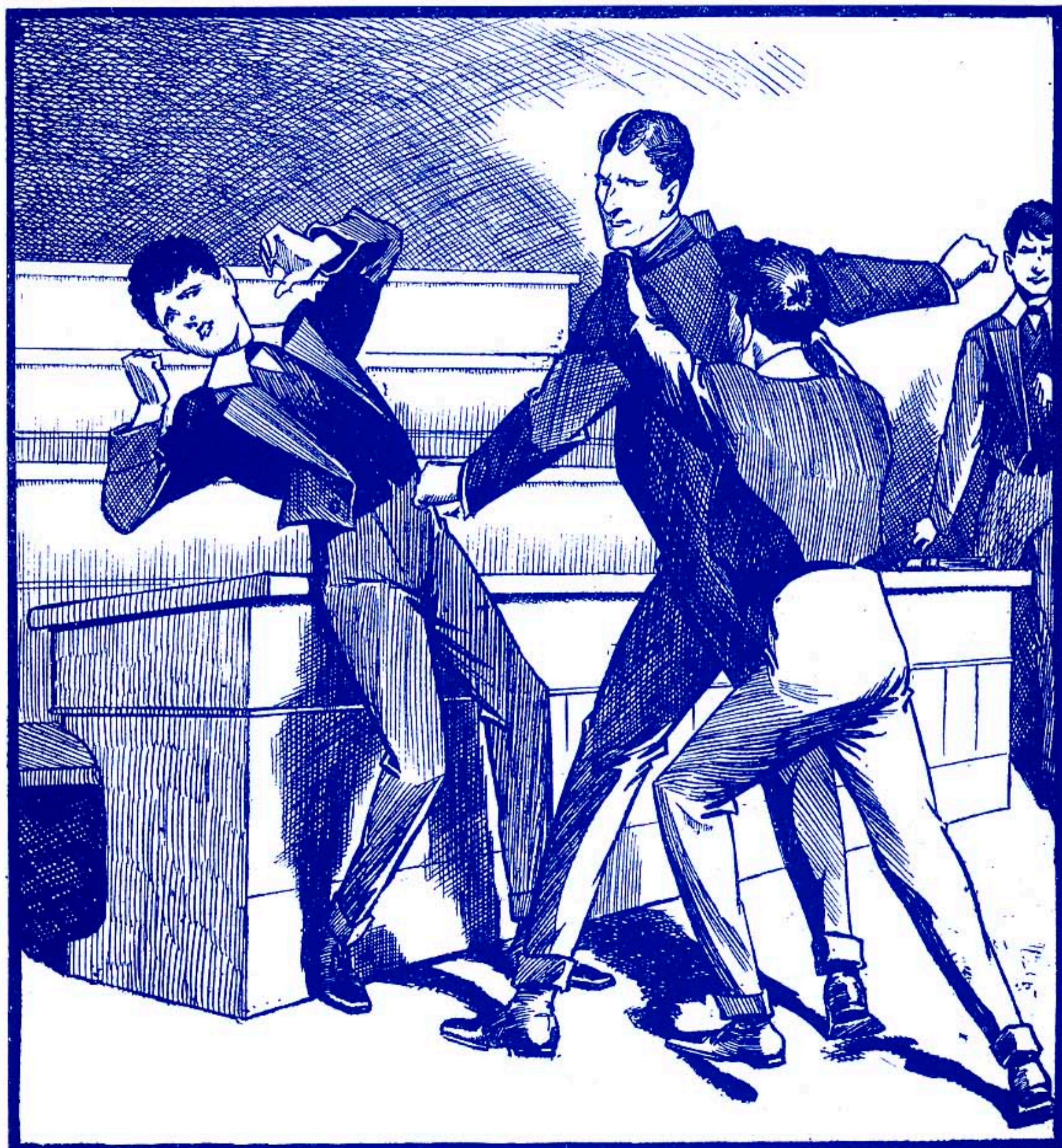


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SQUIFF TO THE RESCUE!

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COLONIAL CHUMS!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of
Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars School.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Old Friends Fall Out!

HERE, clear out of this, Skinner!"

Johnny Bull came into No. 14 Study, on the Remove passage at Greyfriars, which he shared with Squiff—otherwise Sampson Quincy Ifley Field, the junior from New South Wales—and Fisher Tarleton Fish, the Yankee schoolboy, to find Harold Skinner deep in conference with Fishy.

At the best of times, and when in his most amiable mood, Johnny Bull did not like Skinner; and when he did not like anyone, the candid Bull generally let that person understand it.

Just at this moment Johnny's temper was badly ruffled. Things were not going well in the Remove. A dead set was being made against Harry Wharton, the skipper of the Form; and though Harry's friends could not pretend that they held him absolutely blameless, they were sticking to him loyally.

The sight of Skinner was to Johnny Bull as the sight of a red rag is said to be to the animal whose name he bore, for Skinner was one of the plotters against Wharton.

"Why should I clear out?" demanded Skinner. "I suppose I've a right to come in and see Fishy?"

But Fishy gave him no backing. "I calculate I never asked you to butt in, Skinney," he said.

The astute Fish had seen the storm-cloud on Johnny Bull's brow.

"I don't care whether you did or not!" growled Johnny. "I ain't keen on rats in my study!"

From the door Skinner drew a Parthian bow.

"Better get Field to change out, then! He's ratted!"

Squiff came in a few minutes later.

Johnny did not even look up from the book before him.

"I say, Bull——"

"I'm not dead sure that I care about having you say anything to me, Field!" growled Johnny.

Squiff stared. He and Johnny had not been quite on the old friendly terms during the last day or two. But nothing like this had been said by either before, and Squiff at least had no wish to quarrel.

"What's the matter, old son?" he asked.

Johnny merely snorted.

"Aren't you going to answer?"

The snort was repeated. Fish giggled, and Squiff turned upon him a pair of keen eyes that were steel-hard at that moment. The hardness was for Fish, not for Johnny, as Fish very well understood.

If he had been a decent fellow he would have gone out then. Left to themselves, those two, good chums for so long, would have had a far better chance of coming to a friendly understanding. But it never even occurred to Fish to go out.

"I think it's up to you to answer me, Bull," said Squiff.

Johnny looked up.

"A chap who was in here a few minutes ago said you'd ratted," he said. "I

couldn't punch his head, because it was true—as far as I can see."

Squiff did not ask who the fellow was. He saw that it was scarcely that which mattered. What had got Johnny Bull's wool off was the impossibility of denying the accusation.

"Not quite all," said Squiff, keeping his temper wonderfully well in control. "Chaps who have been chummy as long as you and I have don't let another fellow muck up everything by one sneer, I suppose?"

"Depends upon whether it's true!" growled Johnny Bull.

"What you mean is that I'm not as friendly with Wharton just now as I used to be, isn't it?"

"You ain't friendly with him at all. You've gone over to the enemy. Is that the square thing, Squiff?"

"It was a matter of choosing between two friends, and I thought the other chap was in the right!"

"And I don't care a hang whether Wharton was in the right or not!" retorted Johnny stormily. "He's always been my chum, and I'm sticking to him!"

"There isn't a lot more to be said after that, Bull. But don't let us have a row. It's not worth it. In the silly bizney that started it Wharton was absolutely wrong—as far wrong as a fellow who meant well could go!"

"I don't say he wasn't. I told him he was, come to that!"

"Well, then, in the other affair—that cutting out of dorm when Wharton wanted to stop him—Delarey was wrong——"

"And you and Browney and Mauly with him, too!" snapped Johnny.

"We stuck by a chum."

"Well, that's what I'm going to do, so it ain't much good us arguing, is it?"

"You're throwing me over because I don't see eye to eye with you about Wharton—is that it, Bull?"

"I'm sticking by Harry, right or wrong."

"Then you can't blame me if I stick by Piet, right or wrong!"

"Wharton's an older chum of yours than he is."

"I don't see that that matters much," said Squiff.

"You signed that beastly petition thing asking Harry to resign!"

Now the real cause of Johnny Bull's grudge against Squiff was out.

And if Fishy had not been present the two might have settled the dispute on the spot.

For Squiff wasn't exactly proud of having signed that petition, and in Fishy's absence he would have admitted that he had done so in a moment of heat, without thinking enough about it.

But to have said as much before Fish meant having the whole Form told of it, and that meant friction with Delarey and Tom Brown, who would consider Squiff had gone back on them.

Moreover, Squiff did not feel at all sure that it might not be better for the Form if Peter Todd took over the reins of captaincy for a time. Wharton seemed in an unusually nervy and jumpy state—a state in which he was at any moment

more likely to do the wrong thing than the right one.

"Yes, I signed it," said Squiff. "So did several chaps who wish Wharton well."

"My hat! It's a queer way of showing that you wish a fellow well!"

Squiff turned to Fish.

"Clear out!" he said sharply.

"Christopher Columbus! I don't see why I should vamoose the ranch on your say-so!" replied Fish. "You don't want me to go, do you, Bull?"

"I don't care a hang whether you go or stay!" growled Johnny.

"There you are, Field!"

"If you count that a compliment, you're welcome to it, Fish," said Squiff, with rather a wry smile.

His face was serious again when he turned to Johnny. All the sunny good-humour had faded from it; yet it was not angry, either.

"You would rather I cleared out, I suppose, Bull?" he asked slowly.

"It's no odds to me," replied stiff-necked Johnny.

"Then I'll go," said Squiff.

He took up the books he would need for prep, and made his way to No. 12 Study.

Lord Mauleverer, Sir Jimmy Vivian, the schoolboy baronet from the slums, and Piet Delarey, the Afrikaner junior whom the Remove called the Rebel, were just settling down to work. The only one of the three who did not appear rather to resent the idea of doing any work was Delarey. Mauly looked bored at the prospect, and Sir Jimmy none too cheery.

"You chaps mind if I turn in here for a bit?" asked Squiff.

Delarey saw with half a glance that something had gone wrong; but he said nothing except:

"Right-ho, old son, for me!"

"Same 'ere!" said Sir Jimmy. "Squat down, old feller!"

"Oh, begad, Squiff, you know you're always welcome!" said Mauly languidly. "Only don't make a dickens of a row, old fellow; my nerves ain't ironclad, you know!"

"I don't feel like behaving riotously," replied Squiff, with another wry smile.

Then he settled down to work, and for fully an hour no sound was heard in No. 12 but the scratching of pens, the rustling of leaves as books were turned over, the shuffling of Sir Jimmy's feet, and an occasional stifled groan from Mauly.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

No Stopping Him!

PREP over, Sir Jimmy vanished. He liked Mauly and Delarey very much indeed, but he was not quite at his ease in their company yet. Their friendly efforts to improve his manners rather worried him.

Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior, came in. Mauly strolled out.

Squiff, Piet Delarey, and Tom Brown had grown to be great chums of late. It was only natural, for all three were Colonials, and they had a good deal in

common apart from that important fact. Tom Brown and Squiff, it is true, flattered themselves that they were not so mulishly obstinate as their South African chum. But neither was precisely an easy fellow to talk over when once he had made up his mind.

In this matter of the trouble between Delarey and Harry Wharton they had made up their minds very firmly.

They could see where Delarey was wrong; but they were standing by him all the same, for they believed that he was not so far wrong as others might hold.

"Going to argue again, you chaps?" asked Delarey.

"We don't argue. We simply tell you things for your own good," said Squiff.

"Same thing! Don't, old chap! I'm about fed-up!"

"I believe the silly chump means cutting out again to-night, Squiff," said Tom Brown.

"You're right, Browney. The silly chump, if that's me, does!"

"Sec, here, Piet, we aren't going to stand this!"

"You can't come Wharton over me, Squiff."

"Don't be an idiot! We don't want to. We only want to stop you from coming a complete mucker and getting hoofed out."

"It was the narrowest of squeaks last time, you know, old chap," said Tom Brown. "If Wingate had turned up forty seconds sooner we should all have been nabbed."

"You chaps were asses! What on earth did you come for at all? And carting old Mauly along—"

"We couldn't help that, anyhow, for the silly bounder would come!"

"All the more reason why you should have stayed away, Browney! As it was, we nearly got bowled over just because Mauly is so precious slow. It was jolly queer about that bizney, too. What were both Skinner and Wharton doing with Wingate? They weren't on the same lay, I'm sure."

"Not likely! Wharton wouldn't be seen dead with Skinner, and Skinner hates Wharton like fury," said Squiff. "I size it up that the cad was playing one of his rotten sneaking games, and Wharton stopped him at it. If that's so, we've Wharton to thank that we didn't get caught."

"I thought something like that myself," admitted Delarey. "There's no getting away from it—Wharton is jolly decent, every way. You may object to his interfering with your affairs—"

"Thought it was you did that," said Tom Brown.

"That's what I mean, duffer!"

"Don't put it on our backs, then, that's all. Proceed!"

"But if he meddles, he always does the straight thing. If he'd gone to Wingate and reported me, I shouldn't have felt really sore with him. I should have known that he did it because he thought it was his duty."

"Yes, that's Wharton," said Squiff. "But he wouldn't think it his duty to give a chap away. He didn't answer when old Wingate asked him what the row was about."

"Todd's all right, too," said Delarey slowly—"one of the best. But it's rough on Wharton!"

"Then stay at home to-night instead of cutting out," said Tom Brown.

The Afrikaner stared.

"Don't see how that would do Wharton any good," he said.

"It would, though! He's lost face over not being able to stop you—and us, of course. I'm not pretending that we haven't helped to make things hard for him."

"Well?"

"If you cut out again he will either try to stop you, or he won't. If he does try, he can only succeed by bringing a prefect or a master on the scene through the row that follows. That won't do him any good with the fellows."

"I suppose not, Browney."

"Or he won't be able to stop you, and that will let him down."

"Best thing he can do is to take no notice."

"But that lets him down, too. The chaps will say he was afraid."

Delarey looked perplexed.

"Blessed if I can see my way at all!" he said.

"It's easy enough. Don't go."

letting them help you just so far as you would be willing to help them."

"That's all the way," put in Squiff quietly. "What risk is there you wouldn't take for us, Piet, or for Mauly?"

"Not much, I reckon."

"Yet you want to keep us out of this!"

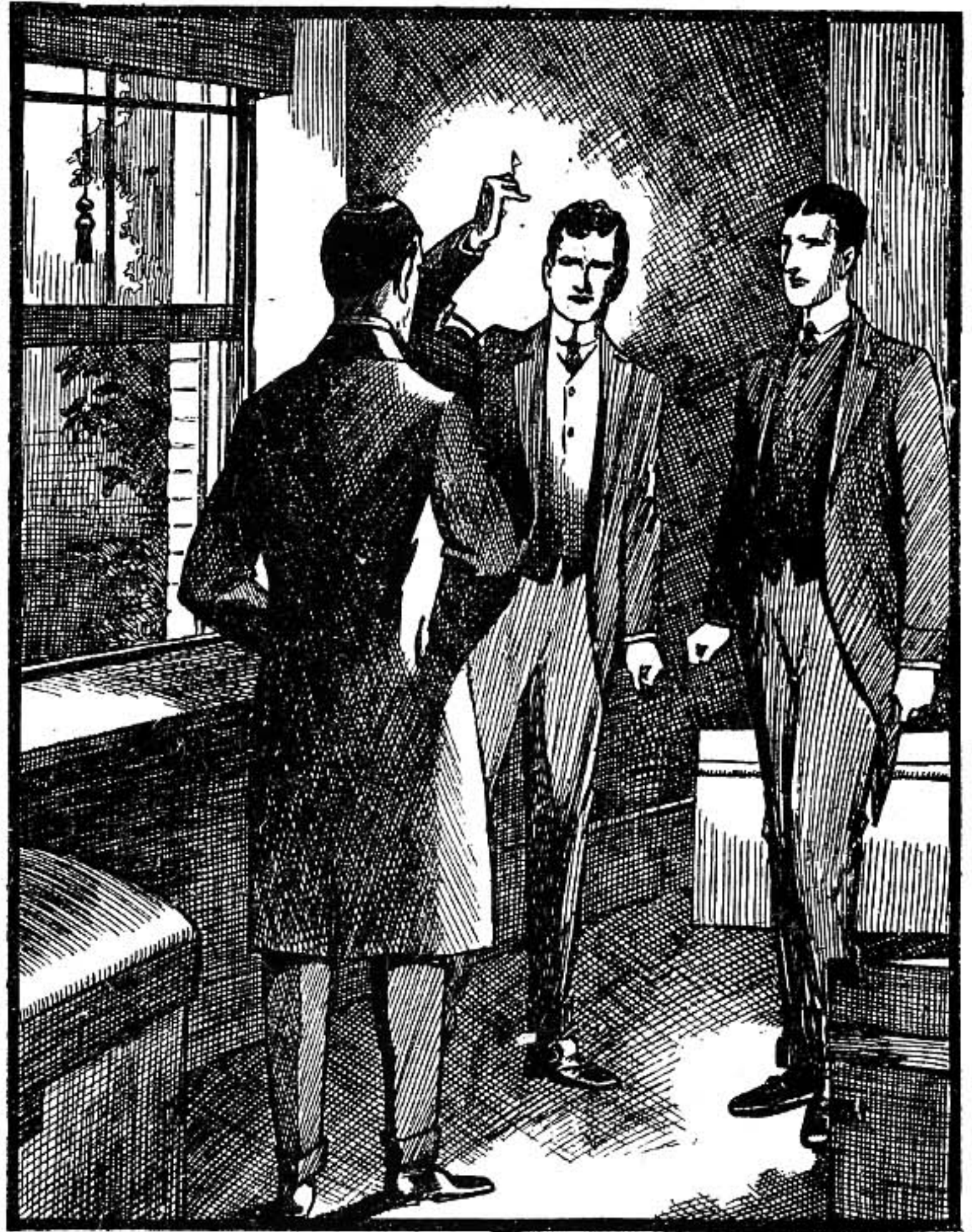
"Because it isn't—"

"It may not be your trouble. It's your risk, all the same."

"That's true, Squiff," said the South African junior very thoughtfully indeed.

"I hadn't looked at it that way before, blessed if I had! And now—"

"Now you see the absolute necessity either of your, not going at all or of our



Catching Loder!
(See Chapter 5.)

"Oh, you are a chuckle-headed idiot, Squiff! Do you suppose that I should go if I wasn't obliged to?"

"Hanged if I can see what forces you to!"

"I don't suppose you can."

"Look here, old chap, make a clean breast of it!" urged Tom Brown. "You can't have got into really black trouble. You're not the sort. And if it was pretty bad—well, hang it all, you can trust us to stand by you, I should think!"

"I'm not in any trouble at all myself," replied Delarey—"at least, not on my own account. There's a secret. It isn't mine. If it were, I should tell you two, and good old ass Mauly as well. I believe in trusting your pals. Yes, and in

coming along to take care of you," said Tom Brown.

"Oh, my hat! You seem to have got me into a giddy corner. But I'm hanged if I believe either of you would agree with what I'm doing if you knew it! And I can't tell you, and it isn't decent that you should run the risk while you're kept in the dark all the time."

"You can't tell us what it is because it's another fellow's secret—I see," said Squiff. "Of course you can't tell us. We don't want you to give away other chaps' secrets. But can't you let us know why you're doing it?"

"Yes, that's the question!" chimed in Tom Brown.

Delarey did not reply in a hurry.

When he did answer his voice was lower than usual, and he spoke very earnestly.

"I'm doing it because I can't go back on an old friend," he said.

"I reckon that's good enough for us, Browney."

"I should say so, Squiff."

"Then we go along with this wild ass to-night, if he goes? He can drop us where he likes, to wait for him. But he doesn't go off the giddy premises without us!"

"That's the game, Squiff!"

"I wish you wouldn't!" said Delarey. "I've got to go. But you can't help. And you're not lessening the risk; you'll only be sharing it."

Perhaps Squiff and Tom Brown had not been without some hope that their decision might keep the Afrikander from going.

But they saw now that their hope was vain. And it can hardly have been strong at best. They knew well how obstinate Delarey could be.

"It's settled, then," said Squiff. "But let's keep old Mauly out of it, if poss. He is so blessed slow, and he's about the last chap in the Form who deserves to be sacked for cutting at night."

"Too jolly fond of his bed to want to do it on his own account," agreed the New Zealander. "But unless he's asleep he'll insist on coming. We shall have to look out that we don't get saddled with that queer specimen of a back-street baronet, too."

"Why on earth should Vivian want to come?" asked Delarey, in surprise.

"Simply because he'd do anything for you, old scout—or for Mauly."

"I hadn't noticed it."

"Dare say not. Vivian couldn't be considered altogether a demonstrative sort. But the other day we caught him with Stott's head in chancery. He really was going it rather hot, wasn't he, Squiff?"

"Some!" said Squiff. "And when we suggested gently that it was poss Stott had had enough to be going on with—"

"He said the beast deserved to be 'anged. He had, it seemed, been guilty of the horrible crime of running you down. I don't think he had said any more than those cads are in the way of saying about anyone they aren't just fond of. But young Vivian said he couldn't stand it. You and Mauly were the best chaps he'd ever come across in all his natural. Mauly's gracious goodness he seemed to discount a trifle as coming from a relative; but yours had got him right where he lived."

"But I've done no more than treat the kid decently," said Delarey. "We like him all serene. He's a bit in the rough, but he's better value than lots of fellows here who have had a heap better chances."

"Just remember, old scout, that in Sir Jimmy Vivian's eyes you are 'It,' and try to live up to it," said Squiff.

"I'll try to see that his feeling isn't wasted, anyway," said Delarey quietly.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Coker—the Foet and the Lover!

THERE was no keeping Mauly back.

He insisted upon going, as they had expected.

Sir Jimmy didn't. Perhaps he would have liked to. Anyway, he didn't.

This time Harry Wharton made no protest. He might have been asleep, for all the four could tell. He did not say a word.

They did not know, of course—he supposed they did not even guess—that he

alone had saved them from being caught out last time.

As Squiff, Tom Brown, and Mauly were all going, Harry felt sure that Delarey's errand was not one that was evil in itself. Indeed, he would not now have been very ready to suspect Delarey had he gone alone. He had been an idiot to believe that the South African had been one of the blades—a bigger idiot to tax him with it in the absence of any real evidence. He saw that now.

It did not matter much. A day or two and his resignation would be handed in. Some other fellow would be chosen to captain the Form—to some other fellow would fall the responsibility of deciding whether to interfere or not when things like this happened.

In his present mood Harry never even thought of the Bounder's plan that he himself should stand again. He did not want re-election. He wanted to be free of this wretched worry.

Bolsover would let half the dormitory be abroad after "lights out" without worrying himself. But Bolsover was not very likely to be elected, Wharton thought.

With Peter Todd it would be quite another matter. Toddy would take his position seriously; would shirk nothing.

"He'll find out it isn't all violets," thought Harry. "Poor old Toddy!"

And he fell asleep with far more friendly feelings to Peter than he had had at any other time during the last few weeks—except when he had thrust forward to guard Toddy's honour against the sneers of Bolsover and the cads who toadied to him.

Meanwhile, the four had gained the road without being spotted by anyone, and were on their way towards Friar-dale.

Not much was said by any of them. There did not seem much to say. One had his own thoughts to occupy him, and the other three were quite in the dark as to what those thoughts were.

"See here, Piet, when you want us to stop and wait for you to toddle back, you've only to say so," said Squiff, after a bit.

"Thanks, old chap! It would be just as well if you pulled up now," replied Delarey.

He was going to meet someone. They had already guessed that. They had gathered, too, that he did not want them to see the person he went to meet. That they did not mind. But they all hoped that to-night would settle up the affair, whatever it might be.

Delarey strode away. They watched him along the road in the bright moonlight.

"Anyone could see him ever so far off, and spot who he is almost as easily as by daylight," said Tom Brown.

"Yaas, begad!" said Mauleverer. "Does it occur to you, Brown, that, on the whole, we are in the same box? Not that I mind—only I should like to sit down, if there's anywhere to sit, begad. Awfully fatiguing this sort of thing, I consider."

"Mauly's right," said Squiff, "though what the old ass came along for at all beats me. Let's get over that gate, Browney. The hedge is pretty high, and we're safe enough behind that."

They made for the hiding-place indicated. And it was not many minutes before they had cause to be glad that they had done so.

Down the road came a figure that had a familiar look.

It was not Delarey's. This figure was taller and burlier.

Tom Brown was the first to identify it.

"Blessed if old Coker hasn't taken to night-prowling!" he said.

"My hat! Who'd have thought it!" returned Squiff. "But it is the great Horace, that's a sure thing."

"Oh, begad, I don't see anything wonderful in it," replied Mauly, yawning. "We're doin' it ourselves, y'know, Squiff."

Coker drew nearer, and something out of the ordinary in his aspect struck all three.

"Anybody might think he was potty!" said Squiff. "Gazing up at the moon and waving his giddy arms about like that, the ass!"

"Horace ain't exactly a hundred miles off being potty at the best of times," replied Tom Brown. "But he certainly does look more Cokerish than ever at this precise minute."

Horace Coker was the great man of the Fifth—so Horace Coker held. And what did the opinions of inferior people matter? If they had no judgment, it was not Coker's fault.

They might think him an ass. They might even call him an ass. It is not to be denied that many people had called him an ass at one time or another—including the Head, every other master with whom he had come in contact, most of the Sixth, and a large majority of the members of his own Form. As for the Remove, they knew him for an ass.

All that sort of thing made no difference to Coker. He knew himself for a very great man indeed, and was convinced that the day would come when these unbelievers would acknowledge the fact.

He strode along now, waving his arms. His voice, which was not of the most melodious, was uplifted in a sort of sing-song chant. Every now and then he broke off in his singing—or what he fondly imagined to be singing—to talk to himself.

Now they could catch his words, aliko in song and in speech.

"Oh, moon, that shinest in the skies—Pretty good, that—eh, what?"

"Rotten bad grammar!" growled Squiff, in the ear of Tom Brown.

"Oh, not for Horace. It's quite up to his mark. Besides, it's supposed to be poetry, and they don't mind much about grammar in that, you know."

"What a silly old ass of a Coker it is, begad!" yawned Mauly.

"Oh, moon that shinest in the skies, With—er—something or other like her eyes—

brilliance, shall I say? No, that ain't quite the word. But I've got the idea, and the word will come sooner or later. This is going to be the finest poem you ever composed, my boy!"

"And it won't have far to go at that, my boy!" said Squiff to Tom Brown.

Coker stopped nearly opposite the three.

They were quite safe. They would have felt so even had Coker been playing the role of detective just then. Coker the poet would hardly have recognised them had they walked past him.

"Oh, my hat! This is a nice sort of thing, I don't think!" said Squiff. "As if we hadn't enough on our minds without having this burbling, potty idiot spouting his awful guff at us! Let's rush the bounder and roll him in the ditch. He'll never know who we are!"

But Tom Brown laid a restraining hand on Squiff's arm. The New Zealander was grinning broadly.

"Don't, Squiff!" he whispered. "This is funny. Pity to spoil the show. Old Coker is in love again, or I'm a Dutchman!"

"He'll get himself the giddy kick-out if he prowls round at night gibbering to the moon," replied the Australian junior.

"Oh, begad, so shall we, Field!"
"We're not gibbering to the moon, idiot!"

"But we're prowlin', begad, an' I rather fancy that's what matters most." Mauly was right. It was much better that they should not disclose themselves, even though Coker was not a person in authority.

"He's off again!"
The afflatus had descended once more upon Coker. He waved his arms, turned up his eyes to the moon, and chanted:

"The fairest of her gender,
With eyes so blue and tender!"

Then he stopped short suddenly.
"I ain't sure they are blue, though," he said, after a moment's pause. "I'm not dead sure they ain't nearer green. Is gender the right word, too? I don't seem to remember it in any other great poet. Never mind! I ain't afraid of being original."

He stopped speaking, dropped his arms to his sides, and stood as if listening.

From behind the hedge had come something which sounded very like a suppressed chuckle.

"I thought it was a donkey starting to bray," said Coker.

"One to your address, Browney!" murmured Squiff.

The three made no further sound that Coker could hear.

His arms began to wave again, and he chanted:

Her lips are like a red, red rose;
Her hair is like—

like—oh, hang it!"

"Carrots!" suggested Tom Brown.
Coker did not hear that. But Coker had seen something. Swinging round as he chanted, he discerned a tall figure approaching him from the Friardale direction.

"Why, it's Loder!" he gasped.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Sixth v. Fifth!

IT would have been quite beneath Horace Coker's dignity to scuttle for shelter. He never even thought of doing that.

And Loder was too near to make evasion easy—unless Loder should prefer not to see.

This was quite possible, for Gerald Loder of the Sixth was not a fellow whose little walks abroad after nightfall would bear the strictest investigation.

In a sense, the same might be said of Coker to-night. But whatever his errand had been, Coker had not been at the same game as the prefect. Horace Coker was many kinds of an ass, but he was no blade, no gay dog, no haunter of shady public-houses. There was not at Greyfriars a straighter fellow than Coker.

Loder could not help seeing. To walk past Coker without speaking seemed to him like admitting too much.

"What are you doing here, Coker?" he snapped, putting on his best high-and-mighty prefectorial air.

"Blessed if that ain't good! What are you doing yourself, Loder?"

"Don't be impudent! I'm a prefect."

"Well, I ain't, though I should make a jolly sight better one than you are!"

"You? Why, you haven't the brains of a dirty-faced fag in the Second!"

"I certainly haven't. I don't need 'em. Got a better quality of brain of my own. But you have, Loder—just about!"

The listeners behind the hedge regarded this as the repartee of Horace Coker's life. But Coker was not great

at repartee—though, of course, he believed himself so.

Coker was pleased with himself. Loder, who was plainly in a bad humour, was not pleased with himself, and was very much displeased with Coker.

"I'll report you!" he snapped.
"Report away! Of course you'll report yourself at the same time?"

Loder had reasons for not explaining anything, or even mentioning the fact that he had been out.

Coker might not care about explaining. But for him it would mean much less than for Loder, as far as possible results were concerned.

There had been a time when Miss Phyllis Howell, of Cliff House, had swayed the heart of Horace Coker.

Phyllis Howell had certainly never encouraged him. On the contrary, she had taken a good deal of trouble to discourage him. But Coker had believed that mere coyness. It was hardly to be credited that she did not in secret admire his manly charms.

But now someone else had replaced the fair Phyllis in the warm heart of Horace Coker.

Someone else was the daughter of a farmer out Courtfield way—a Miss Betty Harris, fresh home from boarding-school.

Coker had only seen her three times. Once, quite by chance, at her home; once at Courtfield; and once in Friardale. He had only spoken to her twice. On both occasions the conversation had been confined to quite ordinary remarks about the weather.

But Coker was fathoms deep in love. Miss Harris had smiled upon him, and the heart of Horace was at her feet. Perhaps she knew it. Perhaps she didn't. The chances were that she did.

Anyway, the great Coker was in no manner of doubt as to his feelings. This was the great passion of his life. It put him off his feed; it made him morose with Potter and Greene, his faithful followers; it sent him out to wander under the moon and spout bad verse when he ought to have been in bed.

"Well?" said Coker. "Going to report me—and yourself?"

"You unlicked cub!" snarled Loder.

This was beyond bearing. The great Horace Coker, the Admirable Crichton of the Fifth, lover and poet and athlete, to be called an unlicked cub by this slacking, pub-haunting prefect!

"Put up your fists, Loder!" he roared.
"I'll teach you to be impertinent to me—me!"

"Do you think I'm going to let myself down by scrapping with you on a public road?" snapped Loder.

"You'd better—unless you'd rather take a hiding without showing fight!"

"Good old Coker!" breathed Squiff.

The Fifth-Former was dancing about in front of Loder like a cat on hot bricks. One of his fists approached within an inch of the prefect's nose.

"Glad we didn't miss this!" said Tom Brown.

"Oh, begad, they're at it!"

Loder did not want to fight; but it was out of the question that he should put up long with Coker's threatening attitude.

He struck the first blow. But it was the second blow that mattered more; and Horace Coker, with just a toss of his head as the prefect's fist took him on the right ear, struck that.

Coker had a four-point-seven punch. Loder went down before that punch.

He got up sullenly and slowly. Coker danced round him again, waving his fists.

"Come on!" yelled Coker. "You don't mean to say you're licked already? Oh, come on!"

Loder was not licked yet. But he had a pretty shrewd suspicion that he was going to be if he went on, and he did not like the idea.

"Stop it, you utter idiot!" he snarled.

"An idiot, am I?" hooted Coker, putting a large fist close to the prefect's nose. "Just you apologise for that, or I shall have to hit you again! And I shall hit you hard this time!"

"If he hits much harder something will go bust," said Tom Brown.

"It's only Loder, so that's no odds!" replied Squiff.

They were at it again. Loder was no hero, but he had some courage, and he could not afford to give in thus tamely.

His left lashed out, and Coker staggered backwards.

But the Fifth-Former did not go down.

It was Loder who did that! Coker recovered himself, and hit with all his force.

The prefect was sent flying—a wild mass of helpless rage.

This time he was in still less of a hurry to get up.

He lay on his back, gasping, till Coker seized him under the armpits and yanked him to his feet, obviously with the kindly notion of knocking him down again at once.

But the pluck of Gerald Loder was not proof against the prospect of a third four-point-seven punch.

"This must stop, Coker!" he snarled.
"A nice sort of thing it would be if we were caught scrapping here like a pair of silly juniors! At this time of night, too!"

"Blessed if I care!" retorted the valiant Coker. There was very little Horace Coker did care about once his blood was up.

"Have a little sense!" said Loder.
"Have another punch on the dial!" replied Coker.

But that was just what Loder did not mean to have if it could be avoided. Had he known there were spectators of the combat, pride might have made him continue. But he did not know, and all he thought about was smoothing Coker down now, and waiting to get back on him in revenge at some later time.

He backed away from Coker's brandished fists.

"There ain't a-goin' to be no more," said Tom Brown sadly.

"Loder's a quitter!" growled Squiff.

"Apologise, and I'll let you off!" roared Coker.

"Oh, don't be absurd! You took offence quite unnecessarily at the notion of my doing what, after all, is only my duty—"

"Do your duty, then, hang you!" hooted Coker, still making warlike demonstrations.

"I did not really mean that I intended to report you. You must admit—"

"I don't admit anything! Don't you say 'must' to me, you overbearing rotter!"

"Oh, begad! Coker ain't a bit overbearing himself, is he, Field?" murmured Mauly.

"Look here, Coker—"

"I am looking, Loder; but you'd better not ask me my opinion of the thing I'm looking at, because—"

"Oh, stop that rot! Anyone might think you were a kid in the Remove!"

"Better to have Coker thought one of us than Loder—eh, Browney?"

"Are you going to apologise, Loder, or am I to hit you again?"

"What do you want me to apologise for?" asked the prefect.

"Great Scott! He's going to do it!"

"What did you expect, Squiff?"

"Lots of things," answered Horace Coker, in his largest manner. "But

there's no need to go into details. A general apology will be accepted."

"I suppose it will be enough if I say that I regret we ran against one another?" said Loder.

"That ain't what I call an apology. But we'll let it go at that."

"Coker the magnanimous!" whispered Tom Brown.

"Loder's a worm!" said Squiff.

The prefect strode away, his shoulders hunched.

Coker watched him go, and snorted thrice. Then he, too, moved off towards the school.

Scarcely had he got out of sight when Piet Delarey appeared.

The three came out of their shelter. It was evident at a glance that Delarey was not in the best of tempers. His chums guessed that he had no luck on this mysterious errand of his. But they did not ask him questions about that.

"Seen Loder?" asked Squiff, after a few minutes of silence.

"Yes."

"Did he see you?"

"No."

"Seen Coker?" Tom inquired, grinning.

"Great Scott, no! Has that ass been wandering around loose?"

"He has. And, what's more, he fairly put it across our dear pal Loder!"

"Sent him flying at the first punch, begad!"

"Oh, good egg! I can't stand that chap at any price! Old Coker's decent in his way, though he is a prize idiot!"

"Where did you see Loder, old chap?" asked Squiff.

"At the Cross Keys, if you must know."

It spoke volumes for the faith of the three in Delarey that even this admission failed to shake it. They were not going to believe that he had gone to the Cross Keys with any such motive as Loder's.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Sir Jimmy Plays His Part!

GREYFRIARS had presented more than one puzzling problem to Sir Jimmy Vivian, who, from the society of the Sparrow and his like, and the life of the slums, had suddenly found himself transported to a place where everybody seemed to look upon things in quite a different way from anything he had been used to.

They were not all decent. Sir Jimmy had learned that. Skinner & Co. were, in some ways, he considered, below the standard of Carker's Rents.

But he had come to understand that they all dreaded a thing that he had not yet learned to dread in the least.

This was expulsion.

Sir Jimmy did not want to leave Greyfriars. On the whole, he was happy enough there, in spite of having to conform to standards of behaviour which seemed to him unnecessarily strict and pedantic, and having to learn things which did not strike him as useful.

But to him expulsion would have meant simply having to go.

He would not have seen it as the black disgrace that these fellows—even such as Skinner & Co.—regarded it as. It would

just have been saying "Good-bye!" to a few fellows he had grown fond of, and missing what he had come by now to look upon as a chance of improvement.

Before long he would come to look upon it in a very different light, even for himself. That was tolerably certain, since already he had arrived at an understanding of what it meant to others.

Sir Jimmy could not sleep that night. He tossed restlessly in bed.

Out there in the moonlight the two fellows for whom he cared most—Delarey and Mauleverer—were running the risk which meant so much. And with them were Tom Brown and Squiff, to whose fate he was by no means indifferent. He had got so used to them from their dropping so often into No. 12. And they were among those who had from the first shown themselves willing to give the slum lad a fair chance.

The heart of Sir Jimmy had been in his mouth when the four so narrowly eluded Wingate. He had guessed at something nearer the true facts of the case than anyone else in the dormitory—had guessed that Skinner, whom he believed mean enough for anything, had tried to betray the adventurers, and that Wharton had saved them.

Now he wondered what Wharton meant to do.

Perhaps he was waiting for Skinner to make a move.

But Sir Jimmy did not fancy Skinner was the real danger to-night.

Perhaps he was fed-up with the whole business, and would not interfere in any case.

But Sir Jimmy was not fed-up with it. It is scarcely to be wondered at that the mind of this boy, so lately a street-arab, did not grasp exactly the functions of a prefect.

Sir Jimmy could only see Wingate as a kind of youthful policeman.

Quite a good-tempered policeman, with no rancour against those he hunted down. But this fitted in with Sir Jimmy's conception of the force. More than once a "copper" had done him and his pals a good turn. But the same copper would have nabbed them without pity if he had caught them out.

And, of course, coppers wanted "cases." Sir Jimmy thought of Wingate as wanting a case; and he felt sure that the skipper of Greyfriars would be on the watch to-night.

Sir Jimmy could stay in bed no longer. He got out and made a hasty toilet.

Bunter snored loudly. The trumpet of Bolsover major was also heard. Regular breathing sounded from other beds. No one spoke.

Sir Jimmy trod softly towards the door.

"Who's that?"

It was Wharton's voice.

Sir Jimmy was not surprised. Somehow he had felt sure Wharton would be awake.

He stole close to Harry's bed.

"It's me—Vivian!"

"What are you after?"

"I dunno—not for sure. On'y I can't lay there an' 'ave them chaps copped without havin' a shot at 'elpin' 'em!"

Harry Wharton was less surprised than some of the Remove might have been. He did not think that a youngster from the slums was sure to be void of all feeling.

"Who says they're going to be caught?" he whispered.

"No one don't. But I kinder feel it in me bones. They'd 'ave got it in the neck before if it 'adn't been for you—I knows all about that! But that bloke Wingate ain't goin' to cop 'em if I can stop it!"

Harry sat up.

He could not persuade himself that there was nothing in Sir Jimmy's fears.

George Wingate was not the fellow to rejoice at the chance of catching out others. But the skipper had a strong sense of duty, and he was very much down on night prowling.

Harry would not have been astonished at his visiting the dormitory to make sure that no one was absent. But it had scarcely occurred to him that Wingate might watch elsewhere.

"How do you think you are going to stop it?" he asked.

"P'raps I can't. You never know your luck. But I can 'ave a good try!"

"I don't see how."

"Ow, you're too slow! No offence, Wharton. I knows as you're the right sort. But—"

"What do you mean to do, Vivian?"

"If 'e's watchin' of the box-room winder, I rather fancy as I can 'it on a trick to get 'im away from it."

"I'm not sure that I ought to let you go, Vivian!"

"An' I'm jolly sure as you can't stop me, cocky!"

He had gone. Harry Wharton lay down again.

If he tried to help Sir Jimmy, he might only hinder him.

Sir James Vivian stole softly along the passages, keeping in the shade wherever possible. A Red Indian on the trail could scarcely have been more noiseless.

He reached the box-room. Inside all was dark. But the sound of voices came to his ears.

"It's a beastly job, old man!" said one. He did not recognise it; all he knew was that it was not Wingate's. In fact, it was Arthur Courtney's.

Wingate's answered.

"I'm not denying that, Arthur. Cut it, if you like. I sha'n't grumble. But I'm determined to put the kybosh on this sort of thing!"

"I shall stay, George. I quite agree with that. How can we hope to keep the juniors within bounds when a chap in our own Form is setting them the rottenest possible example?"

So a member of the Sixth Form was abroad! Sir Jimmy did not care a scrap about that in itself.

What he cared about was the fact that the presence of the two seniors in the box-room meant grave danger to the fellows in whom he was interested.

Greatly daring, he stole inside. Mauleverer's big trunk stood open. The two prefects were by the window, their backs turned to the Remove.

He slipped into the trunk. It was big enough to take him easily.

There he stayed, scarcely daring to breathe. He had no definite plan; he merely waited upon events. If there was one thing he hoped for, it was that the Sixth-Former for whom those two waited might turn up first. Then doubtless the watch would be relaxed, and Sir Jimmy's friends might get in unseen.

Ten minutes passed—passed ever so slowly. To Sir Jimmy the time seemed endless. He felt as if he had been half the night there already.

Then the voice he did not know said:

"Here he comes!"

Sir Jimmy lay still and gloated. "He" could not mean "they." After all, things were turning out all right.

Wingate and Courtney drew back from the window. They let Gerald Loder get inside without speaking to him.

But as his feet touched the floor, and he turned to let down the sash, Wingate spoke.

"What does this mean, Loder?"

The black sheep of the Sixth was badly taken back.

He gasped out something incoherent.

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ANSWERS

If you are not getting your right PENSION

Then, in a flash, he remembered something, and his presence of mind returned.

"I might ask you that, Wingate," he said coolly.

"It would be confounded cheek if you did!" retorted the skipper, by no means coolly.

"I don't see that. I have only been out in pursuance of my duty--after another fellow!"

"What?"

Neither of the two prefects believed that yarn, but Sir Jimmy's heart sank. Whatever game Loder was playing, it meant increased danger for the four Removites.

"It is just as I say," replied Loder, exulting as he thought of how he was getting his own back on Coker.

"Who is the other fellow?" demanded Wingate.

"I decline to say."

"It strikes me as a jolly unlikely yarn," Courtney remarked.

"I do not value your opinion, Courtney! But I'm not talking out of the back of my neck. Stay here, and you'll see the other fellow."

Sir Jimmy could have groaned, but he did not fail to notice that Loder only spoke of one fellow.

"Why didn't you bring him back with you?" Wingate inquired.

"Because he would not come."

"Rather a queer thing you should have come in this way if you were out on duty!" said Courtney sharply.

"I preferred to. I did not care to have anyone see my face."

"What's the matter with your face?" snapped Wingate.

Courtney struck a match. Sir Jimmy gave himself up as lost, but no one looked towards the big trunk.

"Whew! The other chap showed fight, it seems," said the skipper.

"Now perhaps you will believe!" replied Loder, in a tone of injured and dignified innocence.

The match flickered out. Loder moved off, and neither of the two said anything to stop him.

"Going to stay here, old man?" asked Courtney.

"Not likely; but I'm going to fasten up the window."

"Safer to stay. I should like to know who's been playing that tattoo on Loder's classic countenance."

"I have my suspicions," growled Wingate; "but I don't mean to stay up here. I twig what you mean--someone inside may open the window. But not if we screw it up. Wait here, and I'll fetch the tools."

"Oh, I'll come with you!" said Courtney. "We sha'n't be gone long."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Dodge That Failed!

THEY went. Sir Jimmy got out of the trunk.

He was not going to stay there to be caught. The turn affairs had taken pleased him.

Very amateurish policemen, these! That, or something like that, was the thought in Sir Jimmy's mind.

What could be screwed up could be unscrewed, and Sir Jimmy cared little about the risk as far as he personally was concerned.

He had reached the door when a sound at the window attracted his attention.

He turned, to see a burly body silhouetted against the moonlight which flooded the quadrangle.

Sir Jimmy did not hesitate. None of his instincts was on the side of law and order.

Wingate had shot to the catch of the window. Sir Jimmy shot it back.

"Hallo, young shaver! What are you doing here?" demanded the voice of Horace Coker.

"Tain't your bizney! Jest you cut, or you'll get copped! The other chap's blown on you!"

Coker was momentarily staggered. Out of the gloom a voice he did not know was telling him that the other chap--obviously Loder--had blown upon him!

But Coker of the Fifth was too bold to be staggered for long.

"Who are you?" he asked. It was characteristic of Coker that wild horses would not have dragged him from the place till he had learned that.

"Vivian, of the Remove. Cut, I tell you! They'll nab you if you don't do a bunk!"

"But--"

"Oh, you are a ijjit! Bunk, d'ear? They're comin' back!"

Not a moment too soon Coker scuttled out of the box-room. To Sir Jimmy he seemed to make enough noise for ten. The junior, seeing nothing else for it, slipped back into the trunk, and drew the lid down over him. He was not sure whether this big fellow who had just come in had had the sense to pull the window-catch to again, but he hoped for the best.

Coker had done that--done it automatically, not knowing next moment whether he had done it or not.

Now he stood up close to the wall, and Wingate and Courtney passed him, unseeing the gloom.

It irked the proud soul of the great Coker to behave thus, but he saw nothing else for it. He was bound to stay. The fag who had come so opportunely to his aid must not be left to look out for himself.

Coker did not understand that being left to do that was just what Sir Jimmy would have preferred. Sir Jimmy had no very exalted idea of the value of Coker's help.

Wingate had brought a candle.

"Mustn't show a light from the window," said Courtney.

"I'll put it on the floor," answered the skipper. "I shall be able to see well enough."

But the candle on the floor, though it did not throw out a light from the window, yet showed a light within the room. And the four Removites, drawing near, saw that light, and were warned.

They waited until it disappeared. Inside Mauly's big trunk Sir Jimmy waited, silent. Outside in the passage, Horace Coker waited--not so silent. The great Horace was breathing hard, though he did not know it.

And to Arthur Courtney, also waiting while Wingate worked, the sound of Coker's breathing became audible. He laid a hand on Wingate's arm, and the skipper paused in his toil.

"What is it?" he asked.

Coker, by a great effort, managed to breathe without blowing. He had realised suddenly what he was doing.

"Heard a noise like--oh, like young Bunter puffing!" said Courtney.

It was all Coker could do to suppress a snort of indignation at that comparison.

"Imagination," said Wingate, and went on screwing up the window.

The work was done at last, and well done, too.

"Nobody's going to get in now," the skipper said.

"But the fellow who matters most is in already, and if it wasn't for his face I shouldn't begin to believe his yarn," replied Courtney.

"His face doesn't prove it," Wingate said. "Quite likely the rotter got those marks in some low row at one of his beastly haunts. I sha'n't go to the

dormitories. That would be taking his tale too seriously. We know anybody who is out now will be kept out, and we can go into it again with Loder to-morrow."

He blew out the candle, and the two went off.

They passed Coker without seeing him, or even hearing him, though they were not ten yards away before he gave such a sigh of relief that Sir Jimmy, in his trunk, heard quite plainly, and muttered:

"Silly ijjit!"

But, though Sir Jimmy considered the great Coker as "a silly ijjit," he also recognised that Horace was a real white man, and now saw that his help might be useful.

He got out of the trunk, and Coker came back into the box-room.

"You know who I am, I suppose?" said Coker majestically.

"Yuss! Wot's it matter?"

"I'm Coker--Coker of the Fifth!"

"I know--silly ass wot's always bargin' around an' gettin' 'isself disliked. But that don't matter. Trot off an' get a screwdriver, young-feller-my-lad, an' look lively about it!"

Coker gasped. Heard anyone ever the like of this? That he, the mighty Coker, should be coolly ordered about by a mere fag!

"You--you--I say, you can't really understand--"

"All I know about it is you're upsettin' the apple-cart wiv that silly rah of yours! I let you in, an' I ain't sorry; leastways, I shall be if you don't look slippy an' get that screwdriver. But you ain't such a bad sort as you make yourself out to be, or you'd 'ave bunked an' left me to it."

Coker gasped again.

"Are you goin'? The chaps as I want to 'elp are outside still, an' we gotter 'ave that screwdriver!"

Coker went. He hardly realised till he was well on his way that he was obeying the orders of this kid from the slums--he, Horace Coker--Coker of the Fifth!

Sir Jimmy peered out into the moonlit quadrangle. He saw four shapes steal across. The light which had warned those outside of threatening danger had disappeared now; and it seemed to them that their best plan was to make a bolt for safety even at the risk of running into the arms of the enemy.

They were at the window when Coker returned with a screwdriver.

"Gimme it!" hissed Sir Jimmy.

"You're too blessed clumsy!"

The screwdriver was snatched from Coker's hands. He stood, peering at the four, trying to make out who they were, while the junior worked with quick, sure skill in spite of the gloom.

As for the three Colonials and Mauly, they waited, uncertain whether those within were friends or foes, knowing only that if they were foes it was too late to attempt evasion.

"Oh, begad, I shall be glad to be back in bed!" groaned Mauly.

"As! You never ought to ha. come," said Delarey.

Now the sash was raised. Mauly got in first, shivering. Tom Brown followed him. Then came Squiff. Piet Delarey brought up the rear, looking cool and a trifle cynical. He might be--and he was--worried about the danger to his chums. But it was not his way to show it.

Coker struck a match.

"Field! Brown! Mauleverer! Delarey!" he said, in a tone of scathing reproach. "Really, I'm surprised at you!"

"Not half so surprised as we were

when we saw you go for Loder, Coker, old dear!" replied Squiff cheerily.

Coker had had several shocks that night. But this was the biggest of them all.

The air of authority dropped from him. He looked positively sheepish. Perhaps he remembered that if the fellows who had just come in had witnessed Loder's discomfiture they must also have seen him, the great Coker, behaving like—well, behaving a bit queerly. Queerly, that is, to people of intelligence too limited to understand him. Coker knew that a genius like himself took a lot of understanding.

"What's it mean, Jimmy boy?" asked Delarey.

"Don't you stop 'ere yappin'! Clear off, an' get inter bed! They may be back any moment. You better clear off, too, Coker; you can 'ave your screw-driver back in the mornin' if that's what you're waitin' for."

"What's he mean? Who may be back?" asked Tom Brown of Coker.

"Wingate and Courtney. They screwed up the sash, meaning to keep me out; though Loder didn't say it was me. This kid let me in. He's a cheeky little hound, but he's got grit, and you fellows would be in a beastly hole if it hadn't been for him!"

"Oh, stow that bally rot!" said Sir Jimmy crossly. "You did your little bit yourself, Coker, gettin' of the screw-driver, an' you ain't as big a fool as you look—I'll say that for you. But do clear off, all the gang of you!"

"And leave you to it in case anyone comes along, old chap?" asked Delarey.

"Oh, begad, not likely!" said Mauly.

"Rats! I'm all right. Take a pretty smart chap to prove as I been out jist becoss 'e finds me playin' about inside with a screwdriver, I reckon!"

"But what do you want to be left here for?" asked Tom Brown.

"Silly question! To fasten up this winder again, of course!"

"No need for that now we're all inside," said Delarey.

"Oh, ain't there? I want to put a spoke in a certain feller's wheel—that's what I want!"

Coker was not the quickest fellow at Greyfriars in tumbling to things; but Coker tumbled to that, having the clue, while the rest were left wondering. It was plain to Coker that Sir Jimmy had not conceived a devoted affection for Gerald Loder.

But no one would go till Sir Jimmy had finished, and they let him mutter abuse of them without protest. Sir Jimmy had done all five of them a really good turn that night, and none of them was likely to forget it.

Horace Coker was shocked by the fag's cheek, but had already made up his mind that there was good stuff in Sir Jimmy; stuff that might pay for having the master-hand of Coker of the Fifth exercised upon it. He would ask the kid to tea, teach him to speak properly, improve his manners, train him up as a disciple, so to speak. It gave Coker quite a glow at the heart to think of having a disciple of his own. Potter and Greene were followers; disciples they could hardly be called.

Whether Sir Jimmy was at all likely to become a disciple was a question that Coker did not ask himself.

"That done!" said Sir Jimmy. "Bunk, you ijbits!"

But even as they went they heard the sound of footsteps.

And next moment there came another sound—a most unearthly sound—something between a yell and a groan.

They halted. That sound had come from quite close at hand.

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"Oh, come on, do!" urged Sir Jimmy

And, taking him to be ahead, they went on again.

Coker reached the safety of the Fifth Form dormitory, and had time then to shudder. That awful noise had seemed to him supernatural.

Squiff, Tom Brown, Delarey, and Mauly were in their own dormitory before they discovered that Sir Jimmy was not with them.

Then they heard his voice in the passage outside.

"Ow! Wodjer want to go givin' me a fright like that for?" it demanded.

"What are you doing out of your dormitory?" snapped Wingate.

The four slipped into their beds in their clothes. At the worst they could own up; but they all fancied Sir Jimmy would prove equal to the occasion.

And he did.

"I dunno. 'Ow should I? I—I come out; an' then I—I lost meself, an' I let out a 'owl. You'd 'ave 'owled if you'd been me, I reckon!"

The story sounded pretty thin to the two prefects, of course. But what could they do? Nothing seemed much less likely than that Sir Jimmy could be in any way connected with Loder's escapade, and it was that which occupied their minds.

The door of the Remove dormitory opened. Wingate switched on the light.

"Get into bed at once!" he said sternly.

"Wiv all me clobber on?" asked the innocent Sir Jimmy.

"Of course not! Off with your clothes!"

The skipper's keen eyes travelled over the rows of beds. Only one was vacant, and that was Vivian's.

Two minutes later he had gone—to examine the box-room window, no doubt.

"Where's the screwdriver, Jimmy boy?" asked Delarey, with an insuppressible chuckle.

"In bed wiv me. Where do you fink, ijbit?" returned Sir Jimmy.

"I say, Vivian, it was no end decent of you to—"

"Rats, Squiff!" said Sir Jimmy. And he could not be induced to speak another word that night.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Somebody's Notice!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry paused before the notice-board. A fresh notice had been pinned to the green baize since the night before.

It was not the usual kind of notice. The board was meant for what may be termed business announcements. Team-lists were posted up there, announcements of entertainments, and such things. The masters and the prefects used the board quite as much as the juniors, if not more.

But this was not the notice of a master or of a prefect. It was not a Form notice or a team-list. It was the sort of thing for which the board was most certainly not intended—something posted for the wreaking of a grudge.

Thus it read:

TO WHARTON.
WHY DON'T YOU RESINE?
BE A MAN IF YOU KNOW
HOWE!

Bob was down earlier than anyone else in the Form—or so he believed. Wharton, Nugent, Bull, and Inky had all seemed drowsy that morning. Bob, bubbling over with high spirits and ruddy health, left off being drowsy the

moment his eyes opened. He had dressed before the rest, and had come down with the intention of starting his run round the quad, and seeing how many laps he could cover before any of his chums joined him.

He tore the offending notice down, his face flushing angrily.

Wharton meant to resign. Bob knew that. He had tried at first to persuade Harry not to, but he had dropped that now.

But Harry Wharton did not mean to be rushed into a resignation.

What he intended to do he would do in his own time.

Bob hated a policy of pinpricks. Nothing could be more unlike his methods, which were to have it out straight with a fellow.

He felt utter contempt for the sort of fellow who would indulge in taunts of this type.

"Skinner, I suppose!" he said to himself, with curling lip. "I'm not so sure, though. Two words spelt wrong; that ain't like Skinner. More Bunter's style. Hallo, you!"

He broke off his soliloquy to address Sir Jimmy Vivian, who had just appeared. Sir Jimmy had a screwdriver in his hand.

"Hallo yourself!" said Sir James cheerily. Sir Jimmy had a very tolerable opinion of Bob Cherry.

The youthful baronet from the slums had a more than usually cock-sparrow appearance this morning. Bob was by no means a suspicious person, but somehow the thought came into his mind that Sir Jimmy might have put up that notice. He was as likely to be guilty of misspelt words as Bunter, more likely than Skinner. And he was in the same study as Delarey, who was one of Peter Todd's supporters, and not on good terms with Wharton.

Bob had slept through the goings and comings of the night before, and knew nothing of what the new boy had done then.

He was pretty sure that the notice had not been there before bed-time, and, as far as he was aware, he and Vivian were the only Removites yet downstairs.

But he would not have taxed Sir Jimmy with having posted it but for what was said next.

"Took it down, 'ave you?" inquired the schoolboy baronet, grinning.

"You young rip! Did you write it?" roared Bob, suspicion seizing him at once—as was, indeed, not unnatural.

Sir Jimmy should have said "No!" flatly and bluntly. Bob would have believed him. Bob was truthful himself; and it is generally the untruthful person who goes around saying that all men are liars.

"If there's any spellin' mistooks in it, I don't reckon I did!" answered Sir Jimmy.

It was a joke—a bad joke, as things were, for Bob Cherry was in no mood for jokes of any kind just then.

He remembered the two spelling errors. There seemed no doubt that Vivian had at least seen the notice. To Bob there seemed little doubt that he had written it.

It was altogether too cheeky—a new kid like that! Hot wrath flared up in Bob.

He seized Sir Jimmy by the collar. "I'll teach you to—"

"Don't want no teachin'!" howled Sir Jimmy. "I know enough to be up to a thing like that, if I wanted to go for to do it, an' I ain't goin' to stand much of your 'andlin', so I tell you straight! Lemme go, you rotter!"

Sir Jimmy struggled hard; but Bob was too strong for him.

Twice the heavy hand of Bob descended upon the head of Sir Jimmy.

Then the new boy wriggled free.

"You touch me agin, an' you'll get this 'ere thing makin' a blessed puncture in you somewheres!" he yelled.

It is hardly likely that he meant it. The old slum combats he had taken part in were not fought under Queensberry rules, it is true. Boots and finger-nails had come into them. But Sir Jimmy had been quick to pick up the Greyfriars standard of fair play and fair fighting; and, though he might threaten to use the screwdriver, he did so only in his fury, not really meaning it.

And yet he used it, or so it seemed.

Bob went for him again. He dodged, wriggled, slipped down. And somehow, as he slipped, the screwdriver struck Bob close to the corner of his mouth, and made a gash fully four inches long.

"I—I never meant—"

"You threatened me, you young cad! Take that—and that!"

Bob was laying on unmercifully. Sir Jimmy, overweighted, perhaps more than a bit frightened, howled loudly. He did not lack pluck; but he was no match for Bob at the best of times, and Bob, in his anger, seemed to have a man's strength.

"Step that, Cherry!"

It was Piet Delarey who spoke. A hand that seemed to have the strength of steel in it gripped Bob's arm.

But it was not so much the grip as the voice that made Bob stop. The voice brought him to himself. For a moment he was sick with shame, for he realised that he had let his temper get on top.

But next moment a trickle of blood from the wound crimsoned his lips. He could taste it. He could feel the sharp smart of the cut. He turned in wrath upon Delarey.

"Mind your own bizney!" he snapped.

"See what he's done, the young rotter?"

"I—I didn't go for to do it!" faltered Sir Jimmy. "I—oh, you ain't goin' to think as I'd go for to do a thing like that, Delarey, not if 'e does!"

"I'm sure you didn't!" said Delarey soothingly. "All the same, it's a nasty cut. Will you let me see to it for you, Cherry?"

"No, I won't!" roared Bob. "And I won't have any of your interference, either, Delarey! Stand back! I haven't done with that kid yet!"

"He's not up to your weight, Cherry!"

"Are you?" snapped Bob.

"I'm not sure, but I'm quite willing to try!"

There was not the least hint of bluster in the words, and somehow the coolness of them made Bob just a trifle cooler.

"'Ere, none of that!" protested Sir Jimmy. "I 'ain't goin' to 'ave you—"

"Drop it, old chap! Cherry could make mincemeat of you, you know!"

Delarey did not add that the fact made Bob's hot assault the less excusable. But Bob understood it, and he did not like it. For if Sir Jimmy had been Coker of the Fifth Bob would have gone for him just the same, though the result might have been very different.

"I haven't any quarrel with you, Delarey!" said Bob stiffly. "But as you seem to force one on me—"

"Not at all!" said Delarey coolly. "What were you doing with that thing, Vivian? Taking it back to Coker?"

"Yuss. Look 'ere—"

"Ring off! What was all this about?"

"I dunno!" replied Sir Jimmy sulkily.

"Yes, you do!" snapped Bob.

"What about this thing?"

He showed the crumpled notice.

"I never wrote the beastly thing—so now!"

"Why, you practically owned to it!" "Practically your grandmother! I was on'y japin! I seen the thing. I didn't even think as it was over funny—not till I see you got your wool orf about it!"

"As it happens, I have good reason to believe that I know who did write that notice, Cherry! At least, I saw someone, who hasn't any official standing, pinning something up just before bed-time last night!" said Delarey.

"It wasn't yourself, by any chance, I suppose?" said Bob.

Delarey started as if struck. It was not the insult which so moved him, but he had never heard a bitter sneer from Bob Cherry before. It seemed almost impossible to believe that Bob had spoken those words.

And Bob could hardly believe it himself. It was as though something within him, that did not properly belong to his nature, had spoken—something evil—for in his heart he knew, as surely as he knew anything, that the sneer was a wanton one—that Delarey was not the fellow to do such a thing as this.

But he felt, foolishly, that having spoken he could not withdraw. He waited for the Afrikander to answer.

"Do you believe I did?" asked Delarey; and now his tone was no longer cool.

"I don't know!" said Bob deliberately.

But he felt like a liar, for in his heart he did know.

"Very well! I'll meet you in the gym after morning classes—no, that won't do! It must be in the afternoon, I'm afraid! Will that suit you?"

"Yes!" Bob growled.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

At Odds with Mr. Quelch!

"WHAT'S the matter with Cherry's face?" asked Squiff, as the three Colonials came out from breakfast together.

"Ask me another!" replied Tom Brown. "I didn't know but what he had put the sticking-plaster on as an ornament."

The screwdriver had scratched rather than actually wounded. There had been, and still was, considerable smarting; but it was the sort of hurt that would heal in a few days on a healthy face like Bob Cherry's.

And Bob felt rather annoyed with himself that he had made so much fuss about it. He did not believe now that Sir Jimmy had penned that wretched printed scrawl, and most certainly he did not believe that Piet Delarey had.

But he didn't see what there was for it but to fight it out. He could shake hands with Delarey afterwards, of course. He would not grouse if he was licked, and he did not suppose Delarey would.

Bob had not heard even yet of what had happened the night before. He had wondered why Vivian should be taking a screwdriver back to Coker. But even Wharton, who knew part of the story, could not have explained that.

"Do you know, Piet?" asked Squiff.

Delarey was in no sweet temper. He had not settled up the thing that was worrying him, though that was not his fault. He had fallen out with Bob Cherry, whom he liked, and was to fight him, with the prospect of getting a licking, though he had by no means made up his mind to be licked.

"I do!" he growled.

"Don't mean to say you did it?"

"Idiot! How should I do a thing like that? Do you suppose I scratched him?"

"Well, I didn't suppose it was a kiss!" replied Squiff.

Delarey only snorted.

"Who did it, Piet?"

"Young Vivian, if you must know, Browney! But it was an accident!"

"Did you see it?"

"No; but I saw Bob Cherry lamming the kid. And I chipped in. We are to meet in the gym this afternoon!"

"Whew! I say, old scout, this is getting too thick!" said Squiff, with a wry grin. "I ain't dead sure that before the day's out I may not find myself there with Bull up against me!"

"Both of you? Hanged if I ain't ashamed of you!" said Tom Brown.

"How could a fellow help it, Browney? Cherry really was—"

"It wasn't my fault, Browney! Bull went out of his way to be rude. I only went in to fetch some—"

"I'm not going to have Vivian knocked about—"

"Oh, ring off, one of you! I can't hear you both at once! Piet, I reckon you must have seen double if you saw the cheery Bob bullying. But perhaps Bob didn't take to Sir Jimmy's decorative scheme. Squiff, you have a bit more excuse. When Bull's grumpy—well, he grumps some! And you don't seem to have clutched with both hands at the chance of scrapping with him, like Piet here—"

"My hat! If you don't chuck it, Browney, I shall go for you! I'm jelly well fed-up!"

And Delarey strode off, with thunder on his brow.

Johnny Bull passed, and favoured Squiff with a glare that was little, if at all, short of Hunnish. Johnny, also, seemed under the weather this morning.

Possibly his temper may have improved before the bell rang for classes. But Delarey did not look as if his had.

He settled down to work, however, and tried to forget his worries in the study of geography. The subject was one of his strong points, and Mr. Quelch, who had never taken to the Rebel, had been known to give him an approving word in geography class.

But not this morning. Approval was not likely to be won from Mr. Quelch by a statement that one of the chief exports of the Dominion of South Africa was crocodiles, or the equally wrong one that the Yellow River was the Zambesi. Delarey, who had seen the Zambesi, might know whether it was yellow or not; but Mr. Quelch wanted to elicit the reply: "Hoang-ho."

"You know better than that, Delarey, I think," he said sharply.

Then the questioning stopped, and bookwork was resumed.

In less than five minutes the silence of the Form-room was broken by a frenzied howl from Billy Bunter.

"Ow-yow!" he roared.

A long pin had penetrated the tightly-stretched seat of Bunter's check trousers. Which would not have mattered much. Bunter's trousers not being endowed with feeling, but it had gone on penetrating after that.

"What is the meaning of that absurd noise, Bunter?"

"I—I— Oh, really, sir, I couldn't help it! Delarey stabbed me, sir!"

"Stabbed you? Don't talk nonsense to me, Bunter!"

"I mean, stuck a pin into me, sir. But it couldn't have hurt more if it had been a— a stiletto, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The notion of anyone sticking a stiletto into Bunter's trousers struck the Remove generally as distinctly humorous. It did not strike Mr. Quelch at all in that way, however.

"You exaggerate grossly, Bunter! Delarey, stand up!"

The South African junior's obedience was prompt. But if no one else noticed the storm-signal on his face, Squiff and Tom Brown did.

Sticking pins into other fellows was not in Delarey's line. At that particular moment he had felt about as like sticking a pin in Mr. Quelch himself as in Bunter.

Bunter may have believed he had done it. No one ever quite knew what Bunter believed. But Bunter was obtuse, and it would not have occurred to him that the demure expression of perfect innocence on the face of Harold Skinner was suspicious.

Mr. Quelch saw the defiant look on the accused junior's face, and his wrath was hot.

"Why did you do that, Delarey?" he snapped.

"I haven't admitted that I did it!" came the angry answer, and the tone of it was all wrong from boy to master. Delarey knew that himself, but would not have owned it.

"That is not the way to speak to me, Delarey! Do you deny that you were guilty?"

"It doesn't seem much use, sir."

"Boy, are you deliberately accusing me of unfairness?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"I am not accusing you of anything, sir. It is you who accuse me."

The whole Form had stopped work, of course. There was tension in the room. Several fellows tried to signal to Delarey a warning that he was making trouble for himself.

But their warnings went unheeded. Always inclined to be stiff-necked, the Rebel was at his most rebellious just now.

Mr. Quelch turned to the Owl.

"Bunter, are you certain of the correctness of your statement?"

"Oh, really, sir, of course I am! I'm not a chap to make reckless statements, sir. I am always most careful to say nothing unless I am quite sure it is true. I feel that I owe that to my own credit, sir."

"You would certainly improve your reputation if you adopted that course from henceforth, Bunter," said the Form-master drily.

"I hope you know me too well to think that I could possibly be guilty of—of a lie, sir!"

Billy Bunter brought out the word "lie" as if it gave him a positive pain to speak it—which was rather remarkable to anyone who knew, as all there did, that he could reel off untruths by the yard without turning a hair.

"I regret to say, Bunter, that I have no such high opinion of your veracity!" snapped Mr. Quelch.

"My hat, though, tubby's got plenty of that!" whispered Bob Cherry to Frank Nugent.

"Chump! He's the biggest Ananias—"

"Oh, my mistake, Franky! Thought he said voracity; and Bunter's warranted—"

"Cherry! Nugent! Fifty lines each for talking!" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"Hang it!" muttered Bob.

"Now, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter was standing up, his short, fat legs squeezed by the form behind him and the desk in front. Bunter looked almost tearful, as if hurt in his tenderest feelings—as perhaps he was, though not by any words.

"I—I saw him, sir! He—he can't deny it!"

Delarey gave the Owl a look of scorn unutterable.

"He leaned forward, with the pin in his hand, and he stuck it into my—er—my trousers, sir."

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"You must have been neglecting your work, or you would not have seen that, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, sir, no! I wouldn't do such a thing! I never took my eyes off my book for a single second! In fact, I am not sure that I wasn't dozing slightly. I've never felt really well since I had the influenza, sir, and I get horribly sleepy."

"You were dozing, you never took your eyes off your book for a second, and you saw Delarey stick a pin into you? Do I understand you aright, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir. I couldn't have put it more clearly myself. I often tell the fellows what a logical mind you have, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"He, he, he!"

From all sides came laughter in various keys. There was nobody in the Remove—not even Bolsover, who could not be accused of brilliance—who failed to see that out of his own mouth Bunter had convicted himself of flagrant lying.

But Bunter did not see it at all. He blinked around him in surprise.

"Bunter, you are at once absurd and wicked!"

"Me, sir! Oh, really, I can't think what makes you say that, sir!"

"Your story is palpably and obviously concocted."

"Oh, really, sir! There's the pin on the floor to prove it!"

Mr. Quelch did not even glance at the pin; but he looked rather sternly at Harold Skinner, the most likely culprit if Delarey were innocent. But Skinner appeared guileless and unconcerned.

The Form-master did not now believe Delarey guilty; but nevertheless he was thoroughly angry with him—and not without cause.

"Why did you not deny it at once?" he snapped.

His angry eyes were met by eyes fully as angry.

Delarey's temper had reached the point at which something has to go. He felt himself unjustly treated.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Heavy Punishment!

"OH, what's the use?" asked the Afrikander boy recklessly.

"Do you mean that for impertinence, Delarey?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Not particularly," was the cool reply.

A cynical smile played on the Rebel's face as he spoke. He was not in the least afraid, only dogged and stiff-necked and wrathful.

"Your attitude is one of defiance, boy!"

"I don't know about that, sir. I have no wish to run another fellow down, but I shouldn't think myself that Bunter's word was good enough to condemn anyone on."

And because he knew this was true, Mr. Quelch was only the more angered by it.

"Oh, really, Delarey!" protested the Owl. "I'm not going to have my character—"

"Silence, Bunter!"

"But, sir, I must speak! I—"

"Silence, you impertinent, foolish fellow! I am sure that you told me an untruth. But that does not explain the position you have so wilfully taken up, Delarey."

The Rebel did not answer that. It would not bear answering. Both he and the master were partly in the wrong, and the fact made both of them angrier. But Delarey had made up his mind that Mr. Quelch had a down on him, and in that he was wrong. Mr. Quelch did not

like him greatly, but the Remove-master was never knowingly and deliberately unfair to anyone.

Maully sat with a drawn, anxious face. Squiff and Tom Brown were trying to catch the Rebel's eye. Other fellows—some of them among those by no means friendly to Delarey just then—were looking more than a bit worried.

"I expect an apology from you, Delarey."

Silence.

"Failing which, I shall cane you severely."

The answer to that was ready.

"Very well, sir."

"Oh, by gum! The silly ass is fairly asking for it!" whispered Snoop to Stott.

Delarey was, and he knew it. Apologise he would not. He could not so far lower his stiff-necked pride.

To be caned seemed to him a far lighter thing, and he stepped out to face the music without waiting for an order.

There was no tremor on his face. He held his head high. His eyes were still hard and defiant.

Still without an order from Mr. Quelch, he held out his right hand.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

Swish! Swish! Swish! again.

Never had anyone there seen Mr. Quelch strike harder. Tom Brown drew a deep, hissing breath, as if the cuts hurt him. Squiff's bold eyes winked hard. Maully turned his head away.

Sir Jimmy jumped to his feet. He thrust Ogilvy and Russell aside. He pushed out into the space in front of the master's rostrum.

Delarey was just holding out his left hand. He had not even winced.

"Ere, you stop it!" howled Sir Jimmy! "It ain't jannock! It's bloom-in' crool, that's wot it is! 'It somebody else—somebody your own size! 'It me!"

And such was the tension in the Form that Skinner, Snoop, and Stott were the only fellows who sniggered at the queer and humorous double appeal. For most certainly Sir Jimmy was not Mr. Quelch's size.

"Go back to your seat, Vivian!"

There was no thunder in Mr. Quelch's voice now; but it had a hard, steely tone. Yet he was touched—touched more than he cared to show.

"I won't! Sha'n't—that's straight! You gotter stop—"

"You'd better go, Vivian," said Delarey, in a voice so unlike his own that Sir Jimmy felt almost scared.

Before he realised it he was on his way back, casting reckless glances of defiance at the Form generally. But the Form generally rather liked Sir Jimmy for what he had done, though he might be called several kinds of an ass for it.

"Will you apologise now, Delarey?" asked Mr. Quelch, looking at the extended left hand.

"Sorry, sir; but I don't feel that I should!"

But there was less anger in his tone now. Perhaps Piet Delarey was not feeling quite so dead sure he was right. It needed a man of heart and generosity to let Sir Jimmy go untouched after that outbreak. But Mr. Quelch had done it, and, somehow, the Rebel was sure that he would say no more to Vivian.

And then Mr. Quelch surprised everyone.

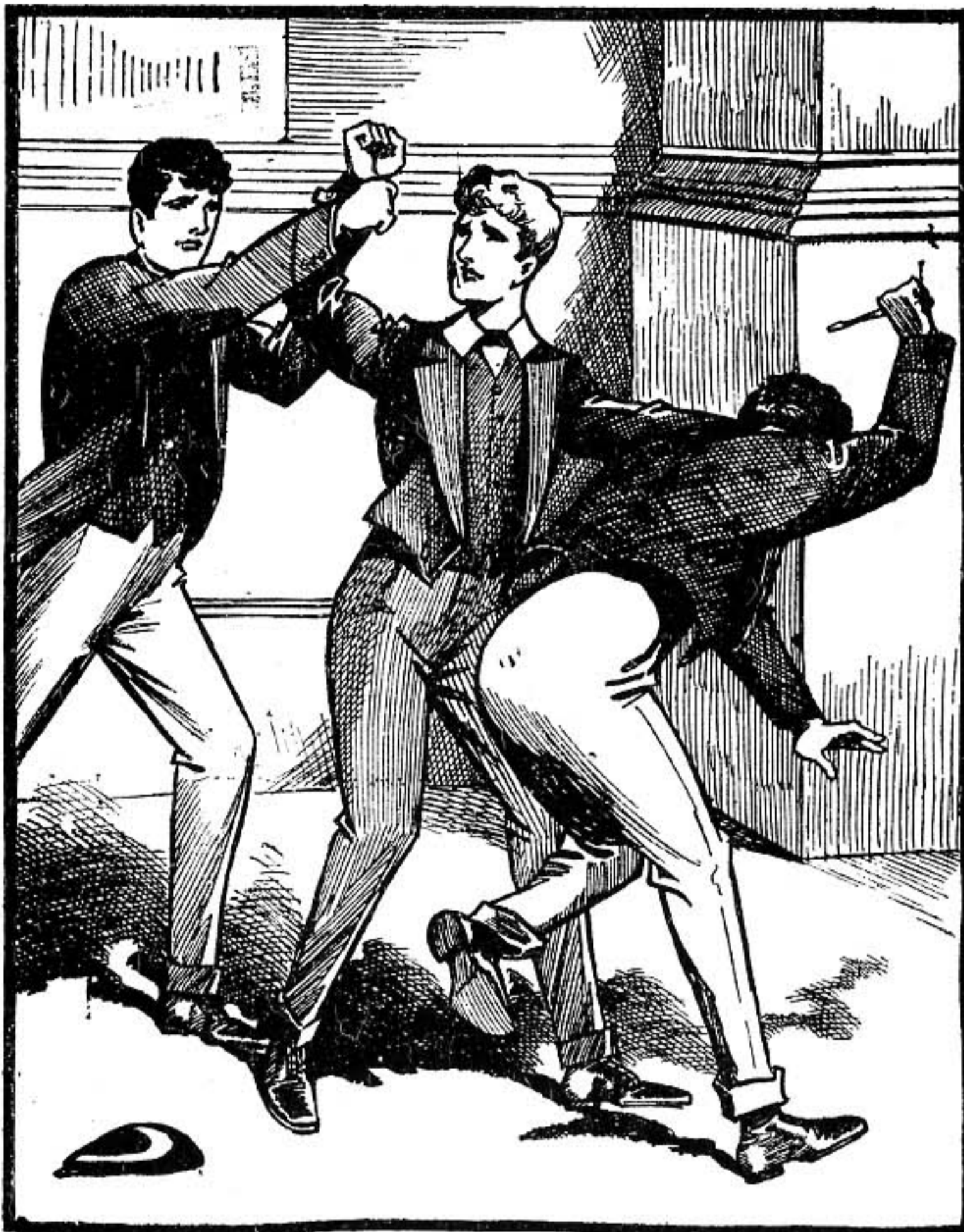
He threw the cane on his desk.

"Go to your seat, Delarey!" he said.

Head up still, Piet Delarey went. There was a faint touch of red in his cheeks that had not been there when he stepped out.

"The Rebel came back with the band playing and the colours flying!" said Squiff afterwards.

It was unlucky that the Afrikander's



"Stop that, Cherry!"
(See Chapter 7.)

seat was next to Skinner's—unlucky for both, as it turned out.

Delarey did not even look at the cad of the Remove as he sat down. He knew that it was Skinner who had used the pin; but it was not for the use of the pin he had been caned.

He despised Skinner too heartily to care about having it out with him. More than once he had shown clearly that he considered Skinner as a foeman unworthy of his steel. And Skinner, quite acute enough to perceive this, hated him for it.

The Form got back to work with a subdued rustle and murmur of excitement.

Skinner waited until Mr. Quelch had taken up a book.

Then he whispered:

"Quelch owes you six on the left, Rebel! What's the odds you don't collect them before twelve?"

Then Delarey spoke, very low, but very distinctly:

"You're a howling, cowardly cad, Skinner!"

"What?"

"Oh, you can hear, you worm! But you're not worth answering!"

"You'd better drop that sort of talk, Delarey! What have I done to you, anyway?"

"You have let me get into a blazing row for a kiddish trick of yours—that's what you have done!"

"Rats! Who says I stuck the pin into Bunter? And you weren't caned for that—"

"Shush!" hissed Bob Cherry.

The two had unconsciously lifted their voices, and nearly all the Form-room had heard Skinner's last words.

Skinner pulled himself up short. But it was too late.

"Delarey—Skinner, you were talking!"

"Yes, sir!" replied Piet Delarey.

"No, sir!" said Harold Skinner.

"Delarey, you will stay in the detention-room until one o'clock. Skinner, come out here!"

"I—I—"

"You lied to me, Skinner!"

"Oh, no, sir!"

Very unwillingly, Skinner went.

No one sympathised with him—not even the fellows he called his chums. There had been plenty of sympathy for Delarey, in the wrong though he was—sympathy even from those who were hostile to him. But there was none for Skinner.

With Delarey's example in mind, Harold Skinner summoned up all his pride and courage.

He was not wholly lacking in either quality. But he had neither in sufficient measure for this ordeal.

One stroke he bore with no more than an involuntary wince; a second with only a stifled cry. But at the third he broke down, and yelled in anguish.

"You can go to your seat, Skinner!"

said Mr. Quelch contemptuously. "You like to inflict pain on others; but you cannot bear it in manly fashion! I know now that you were guilty in the matter of

Bunter's injury. For that, and for not owning to it, you will write me a thousand lines of Virgil!"

It was a stiff dose—even stiffer than anyone had anticipated. But at that moment Skinner preferred it to even one more stroke. One more would have drawn tears—and at least he had stopped short of them!

Back in his place, he put his arms on his desk and buried his face upon them. His shoulders shook; but it was not with crying.

Rancorous hate against the South African boy burned in him. Mr. Quelch did not matter; it was Delarey he blamed for it all. Of course, he never thought of blaming himself.

Then he looked up, and met the Rebel's eyes.

There was no hate in them. The look was not exactly friendly; yet it was not precisely unfriendly, either.

It was rather as though Piet Delarey could not understand Harold Skinner. And perhaps that was it.

Certainly there was no triumph in the look. The cynical smile which the Remove had come to know did not play about Delarey's mouth.

"I hate the beast!" muttered Skinner to himself. "But I cannot make him out, and I don't believe he really hates me a bit! Despises me instead, I suppose, hang him! And yet, I don't know, he's just the sort of chap I could have been chums with if—if things had been different!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Rebel's Secret!

P IET DELAREY had taken quite coolly his sentence to an hour's detention.

But he had not the slightest intention of putting in that hour.

The same reason which had caused him to postpone his meeting with Bob Cherry in the gym until after classes for the day moved him here.

He had an appointment to keep, and he meant to keep it at any risk.

But he had no notion of running unnecessary risks, and certainly none of letting others run risks for him.

He did not stay in the detention-room five minutes. As he happened to be its only occupant, it was easier to cut out.

He ran against no one in the quad, and passed the porter's lodge unseen even by Gosling.

At the moment when Mr. Quelch met Loder in one of the corridors Delarey was well on his road to Friardale.

"Ah, Loder! Do you chance to be particularly busy?" said Mr. Quelch.

"Not at all, sir," replied the tall Sixth-Former, keeping his head down a bit, so that the Remove-master should not see the marks which Coker's fists had left about his chin.

Loder always did all he could to keep on good terms with the masters. It paid.

"Then, would you mind looking in at the detention-room two or three times between now and one o'clock? I have sent a member of my Form there—Delarey—and I have myself pressing work on hand."

"I'll do it with pleasure, sir!" Loder answered.

Mr. Quelch passed on.

"His mouldy old history, of course!" snorted Loder. "I may fag for him while he swots away at that! Never mind, as long as it's one of that crowd I'm to look after! I'll make it hot for him if I catch him trying to kick over the traces!"

Gerald Loder objected to about nine-tenths of the fellows in the Remove, and

lost no opportunity of letting them know it.

Meanwhile, the Rebel, striding along through a driving rain, had almost reached Friardale.

Here he was met by a fellow evidently some years older than himself, but little, if any, taller, and of slight, spare build.

"You've come, then!" said this fellow.

There was something about the square carriage of his shoulders that suggested military training. And it was difficult to see any good reason why he should not have been in the Army, for he looked fit, and he did not look like the Cons. Ob.

But he wore an ill-fitting suit of tweeds, and there was nothing in his attire that announced him a soldier.

"I've come, Jim, of course," said Piet Delarey. "You didn't doubt I should, surely?"

"Thought you might have a difficulty in getting out, that's all."

"Oh, that be hanged! I've got the chink now, Jim, though I had to borrow it, and I don't like that. The remittance I expected hasn't turned up yet. Why didn't you turn up last night, as you promised?"

"It was only half a promise, Piet, anyway. I said I might be fixed so as I couldn't come. An' I was."

"What were you doing?" asked the Removite sharply.

"I was havin' a bit of a flutter with the push at the Cross Keys. An' it wouldn't have done at all to get up an' go—not while I was losin'. They'd have cut up rusty; an' there's no denyin' they can make things nasty for me."

"You haven't told them anything, surely?"

"No, 'ceptin' what may have slipped out when I was a bit bosky-eyed."

"And you lost to them, of course?"

"Yes, I lost. An' I've got to shell-out to-day, or there'll be trouble! Ain't sure that I won't have to clear out, too. That bloke Cobb is gettin' a bit frightened."

"Hang it all, Jim! I came out on purpose to see you, and hang about outside that beastly pub, too; and all the time you were sitting in there gambling! It's too bad!"

"So it is, sonny. I ain't denyin' that."

Why don't you give me the chuck? It's what I deserve!"

"Rats! We're chuns for life, Jim, whatever happens! You saved my life, way back home on the Zambesi, and I sha'n't ever forget that! If you've no other friend in the world, Jim, old man, you've me!"

For a moment the hard, reckless face of the older fellow softened.

"I don't rightly know that I haven't been overpaid already for about the only decent thing I ever did in my life, Piet," he said. "An' the joke of it is, I was in a blue funk all the time. I always was funky of crocs. I'd sooner face a machine-gun. Dunno as I mind that."

"Then, why don't you go to your battalion and give yourself up, as any sensible fellow would do? Before long you'd get the chance you want over there. Rats about funk, Jim! I never saw any of that in you—except about facing things out!"

"If I went back I'd be shot as a deserter. Besides, the C.O. would jaw me something' cruel," said Jim.

Delarey could not help grinning. It was really the jawing Jim Sorrell funkied. He had physical courage enough; but he lacked moral courage.

"Of course, he'd give you the rough side of his tongue. And you'd get a dose of C.B. and stoppage of pay. That's very little odds. There's work to be done in France, and you'd be there soon."

"Not me! Why didn't they send us straight to where the work was, 'stead of bringin' us here an' keepin' us 'ruckin' about at drill for all ever-lastin'? I can't stick playin' at soldiers, Piet. I didn't join up for it. The sergeant's got his knife into me, an' he's down on me like a thousand of bricks if I say 'Bo!' Black marks enough against Jim Sorrell, you bet your sweet life!"

"What do you count on doing?"

"Clear out of this rotten old island, an' get back to a country where there's room to stretch your legs. It will be a good hour for me when we rise the old Lion's Head on the skyline again. No more dear old England for this child, once he's back in S' Africa! Gimme

Jo'burg before bloomin' old London, every time. Give 'em half a chance, they ain't exactly slow about doin' you down in Jo'burg; but London's fuller of sharks than the Zambesi of crocs—and they're all as ugly when you come to know 'em!"

"You haven't told me how it all happened, Jim."

"No. 'Tain't a tale for a lad like you, sonny. I wouldn't tell you about some of the places I was in up there—not for a nugget as big as your fist! I got a bit of cash, and I got a slice of leave, and I was born a fool. You don't want much more than that to guess the rest. When I'd finished—well, there I was, without a ticky left, my khaki duds gone, an' only these reach-me-downs to put on. Somebody's playin' the wounded hero in my uniform now, I reckon, an' here I am playin' the deserter down here, funkied to go back, an' spongin' on a boy like you because I happened to pull you out of a drop of water a year or two ago!"

There was real bitterness in Jim Sorrell's tones. He could see his own faults clearly enough, if he could not amend them.

"You ought to go back, Jim!"

"I ain't goin'—that's flat! I won't go without I'm dragged. Lay information against me if you like, Piet; I promise you I'll never hold it against you!"

It might have been the best thing to do; but Delarey could not bring himself to do it.

"Here's the cash, Jim—five quid."

It had been borrowed from the loyal and patient Mauly, who had asked not a single question, for Mauly had great faith in Piet Delarey.

"Sha'n't have a lot left over when I've settled up with Cobb an' his gang. But that's no odds. I'll clear out of there."

"Where do you mean to go?"

"I dunno. An' it's best every way you shoul'dn't know, sonny."

"That's rot! You've made me an accomplice in a business I hate, Jim. I'm sheltering a deserter, you know; it's a legal offence. But it's done now, and I've simply got to see you through it some way or another."

FREE SEND NO MONEY. WE TRUST YOU.

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Not a word about the trouble at Greyfriars. But Delarey knew that if his absence from the detention-room was noted there would be heavy trouble indeed. He faced that prospect calmly, as he faced most things.

"I'm real sorry, Piet! It's pretty low-down of me, I know."

"Go back, old man, for my sake!"

"I'd do almost anything for you but that, Piet; but I'd do myself in sooner than go back. They'd give me too much funny stuff, and I'd be for killin' some of them."

What could the boy say more? This man had saved his life at the gravest risk to his own. He would not return to his battalion. He did not fear danger; but he feared his colonel's lecturing, his sergeant's abuse, his comrades' chipping.

This was the Rebel's secret; the secret he could not tell to his best chums. Not because he did not trust them, either. But how could he drag Squiff and Tom Brown and Mauly into a thing like this? The very fact that it was against the law tied his tongue.

He and Jim Sorrell parted, not sure whether they would ever meet again, though Delarey told the man to write to him as soon as it was safe, and to count on his friendship through all.

And Sorrell, who would have charged a German trench with the best, slunk back to the Cross Keys, where he was in momentary peril of betrayal; and Piet Delarey, with head down and a great weight at his heart, went moodily back to Greyfriars.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Rebel's Friends!

"THE silly chump!" said Squiff. "He's that, sure enough," answered Tom Brown. "But we've got to stand by the old ass, Squiff."

"Of course! Who's denying that, fat-head? It riles me that he should have got that rotten notion into his head about Quelchy, though."

"It is rotten! Quelchy doesn't love the Rebel; but the man's fair. He's laid into me hard enough before now; but I've never denied that. Let's go along to the detention-room, old scout!"

They went—to be met with a surprise. Delarey was not there!

But the surprise did not last long. "I knew the beggar was up to some other silly-ass move," said Squiff.

"It's all part of his blessed secret!" growled Tom Brown. "Wish he'd tell us. But, of course, he can't, things being as they are. What had we better do, Squiff?"

"One of us must take his place," replied the Australian readily. "The thing's been worked before, and it hasn't always been spotted. If Quelchy looks in, he's man enough not to go right up and nag a chap. Same with a prefect—unless it's Loder."

"It must be me, then," said Tom Brown.

"Rats! You mean me, Browney! It's my dodge."

"But you couldn't pass for Piet in the dark, ass! Your hair would give you away to a blind man."

"You couldn't, either. You're broader across the shoulders than Piet, a goodish bit."

"That won't show at a few yards' distance. And I can hunch myself up so that it don't show at all."

"Look here, Browney, we'll toss for it. That's a fair offer."

"It might be if it was a sausage-roll!" replied the New Zealand junior, with a touch of sarcasm. "But it ain't. As I see it, what we're after is to keep the

silliest chump—and the best chap—at Greyfriars out of a rotten row."

"That's the size of it."

"Well, if I take his place, there's quite a chance. Anyone expecting to see him there might take my napper for his from the other end of the room. They couldn't yours, not from a quarter of a mile away."

It was true, and Squiff knew it. He gave way, though unwillingly.

So Tom Brown went to the far end of the detention-room and sat down. Squiff, looking at him from the door, had to confess that he might be taken for Piet Delarey if one did not look too hard.

A few minutes after the New Zealander had taken his seat someone came in. But it was neither master nor prefect; it was Skinner.

"I say, Delarey, I thought I might as well do my lines here," said Skinner, in a half-friendly, half-awkward tone that puzzled Tom Brown. "You don't mind, I suppose? I'm sorry about this morning."

Tom Brown turned and looked at him. Skinner started violently.

"Why, hang it, you're not—"

"No, I'm not Delarey," said Tom Brown. "But you needn't apologise to me for doing the decent thing for once, Skinner! It's a surprise, but it ain't an unpleasant one."

Skinner snorted, and stood irresolute.

"Sit down, idiot, and get on with the washing! I'll give you a hand if you like. Haven't any of my own to do, you know, being only a deputy, as you might say."

Skinner's astonishment was evident. But he sat down, and he asked no questions about Delarey; which Tom Brown took as some small sign of grace.

They were both hard at work when Loder looked in, having passed Squiff in the corridor.

"You there, Delarey?" asked the prefect.

It seemed rather a needless question. Tom Brown did not answer it, hoping that Loder would go without waiting for a reply.

"Better answer!" whispered Skinner.

"I shall give the show away if I do," said Tom Brown.

"Oh, I'm here, Loder!" said Skinner, with a close mimicry not only of the tones of the Rebel's voice, but also of his manner.

Loder seemed satisfied. He was going out again when a thought seemed to occur to him. There was a good deal of the bully in Loder, and he could not let slip this chance to show his authority.

He came towards them. Skinner went pale, and Tom Brown went red.

"Delarey," snapped Loder, "that's not the tone I choose to be spoken to in!"

Neither Skinner nor Tom Brown answered that.

Loder came nearer.

"Oh, it's you, Brown, is it?" he roared furiously.

"Yes, it's me, Loder—as far as I'm aware. You seem to think you've done a clever thing in identifying me. But the biggest ass in the school could have done that."

"What are you doing here, and where's Delarey?"

"Lines—and I don't know."

Not a word said Skinner. He was rather by way of being a humble hanger-on of the great Loder but at this moment his sympathies were certainly not with the prefect. If he could have helped Tom Brown without risk to himself he would have done it.

But taking risks unnecessarily for another's sake was not in Harold Skinner's line.

"Where's that young sweep Delarey? Do you hear, you cub?"

"Are you talking to me, Loder?" asked Tom Brown.

"Yes, of course I am, confound you!"

"I don't know any sweep named Delarey, and my name isn't Cubb; it's Brown—B-r-o-w-n, without an 'e.' Some people prefer it with, but we've always spelled it the shortest way."

Squiff, whose head was now inside the door, could not resist a chuckle. Tom Brown was always a cool card, and he did not fear Loder in the least—on his own account, that is.

"I'll give you the hiding of your life, Brown!"

"That's better, Loder! You've got my name right now. As for the luxury mentioned—well, it's war-time, and we have to deny ourselves something, so I beg to decline."

"I—oh, confound you, I'll flay you alive, you impudent fag!"

"Not in those trousers, I think!" said Tom Brown.

Then Loder went for the junior.

Now it was well for the New Zealander that Squiff was near at hand. Loder, though many of the Sixth and some of the Fifth could have crashed him, was too big a handful for a junior. And no aid was to be expected from Skinner.

The prefect bore Tom Brown down across the door, punching hard, pressing him backward painfully, till he felt as though his backbone would snap.

Then Squiff came, without a word, but with a reckless rush, and flung strong arms around the neck of Loder, and bore him back, and gave the New Zealander junior a chance to writho free.

Five seconds more and Loder was on his back on the floor, with the two Colonial juniors on top of him.

"See here, Loder, if you don't drop this, we'll call Coker in to you!" said Squiff.

Loder's language was of a kind that it was well for him no one in authority should hear.

"Didn't know you'd been appointed instructor in languages, Loder," said Tom Brown. "And I ain't sure that's the sort we want to learn. Is it Bulgarian?"

"It does sound a bit atrocious," said Squiff, grinning.

"Don't press his chin, Squiff. Old Coker has left his marks there."

"What do you know about Coker, you young cads?" panted Loder.

"Only that he gave you a thundering good hiding last night," said Squiff. "Never enjoyed anything better—did you, Browney? Front seats free, too!"

"You must have been out—"

"Don't say I'm black, Brother Pot!" chuckled Tom Brown.

"And don't wriggle so," said Squiff severely. "It ain't dignified. It ain't useful. And it ain't comfortable for us. We don't mind so much about you."

"Good gracious! What does this mean?" demanded a voice of thunder from the door.

Squiff and Tom Brown were on their feet in an instant. Skinner looked round wildly for a place in which to hide—though there was really no reason why he should hide. He had carefully abstained from taking any part in the proceedings.

Loder got up, very dusty and dishevelled.

For the voice was the voice of Mr. Quelch!

"I am surprised beyond words, Loder, to find you indulging in horse-play of this kind with two juniors—and in the detention-room, too!"

"They attacked me, sir! Without the slightest provocation, they went for me! I suppose they did not want me to find out that Delarey had cut detention."

He was lying flagrantly. But he relied upon Skinner's support. He looked at Skinner. Mr. Quelch also looked at Skinner. Skinner looked at the ground.

"Skinner, you must have seen this!" "I'd rather not say anything about it, sir, if you don't mind," mumbled Skinner. That was better than Squiff and Tom Brown had hoped for. They would not have been astonished had the cad of the Remove backed up the prefect's lie.

"Brown and Field, you will take three hundred lines each!"

"Very well, sir," said the two together.

Skinner had done them no bad turn. If Loder's tale had been backed up they would not have got off with three hundred lines. It was pretty stiff as an input; but, as Tom Brown said afterwards, it was not the market price for an unprovoked attack upon a prefect.

"Where is Delarey?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"Here I am, sir!"

Just then Piet Delarey marched in. Mr. Quelch, with his sternest frown, whipped round.

"Where have you been?" he thundered.

"To Friardale, sir."

"Explain yourself, Delarey! This passes all bounds."

"I'm sorry. I know it looks black. I've no excuse to make; and as for explaining, sir, it's simply impossible."

Squiff and Tom Brown gasped, though the answer was not wholly unexpected by them. Loder and Skinner gazed in wonder. The prefect grinned maliciously. But Skinner did not look at all triumphant.

"This is nothing short of mutiny, Delarey!"

Silence! And really silence was best. What could the Afrikaander say?

"Dr. Locke is away. If that were not the case, I should take you to him at once. In his absence I am in charge; but I do not consider that my authority extends to the expulsion of any boy. You will await his return in the punishment-room. Come with me!"

Delarey followed him without a word. "This means the sack for your Rebel chum, you young rosters!" snarled Loder.

"You're a howling cad!" rapped out Squiff.

"Oh, don't talk to him, Squiff! Give him another taste of teko! It's cheap at three hundred!" said Tom Brown.

Loder beat a hasty retreat.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Sir Jimmy's Dodge!

"LOOK here, Skinner! Will you keep this dark for the present?" asked Tom Brown.

Squiff was surprised. He failed to see the use of asking Skinner to keep dark any story that might tell against a fellow he disliked; and he had a notion that Skinner's feeling for Delarey was stronger than mere dislike.

"Yes, if you want me to," said Skinner. "I've done that chap a bad turn. You fellows may not believe me, but I'm sorry. I don't know exactly why, but I am."

"I believe you," said Tom Brown seriously.

"Hanged if I don't, too, though I'm like you in one thing, Skinner—I don't know why," Squiff said.

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Skinner disregarded that very doubtful compliment.

"He won't fight Cherry now," he said. "What's that?"

"Haven't you heard? I should have thought he would have told you. He's booked to fight Cherry this afternoon in the gym. All the chaps are talking about it. Some of them think he'll take the bounding Bob's number down. I was hoping that myself."

"My hat!" said Squiff. "Piet hasn't half been going it, Browney! But that little engagement is off now."

"Yes—for Piet," said Tom Brown, with a glint in his eyes. "But—I've nothing against Bob Cherry, Squiff, you know that. Still, there it is. Our man Delarey's down on his luck, and can't keep his engagement, so—"

"I'd better keep it for him, of course," put in Squiff.

"Not likely! That's my job, of course."

"Oh, is it? Think you're going to jolly well mop up everything, Browney?"

"Look here, Squiff—"

"Oh, chuck it! You had the last job because of the colour of your hair. That doesn't matter when it comes to fighting."

"Blessed if I can understand you chaps!" said Skinner. "What's the use of squabbling about which of you should offer himself up for a sacrifice? You wouldn't catch me on that hop!"

"It would be an awful shock to us if we did, Skinney," said Tom Brown. "See here, Squiff, we'll toss for it."

"Right-ho, Browney! Heads!"

And heads it was. "I sha'n't go in for hurting old Bob," said Squiff. "I've no feeling against him."

"You'll be feeling him against you, though," said the humorous Skinner.

"What was the bizney all about?" asked Tom Brown. "We couldn't get anything out of Delarey."

"You ought to have gone to young Vivian—he could tell you."

"Can't you?"

"Dare say I can," replied Skinner. "Only you chaps are so jolly suspicious, and if I said that Cherry took down a notice from the board that he reckoned was an insult to his Grace of Wharton, you might get it into your noddles that I put that notice up—"

"And didn't you?" asked Squiff bluntly.

"No. As a matter of fact, Bunter did. That's leaked out since classes. But Cherry fancied it was Vivian, and lammed him. The Rebel chipped in—pistols for two, and coffee for four—or as near that as we can get at Greyfriars. That's all!"

"And enough, too!" growled Squiff.

Skinner did not try to talk Squiff over. Skinner had no rooted objection to seeing Bob Cherry licked by Squiff, or Squiff by Bob Cherry, for that matter. Anyway, they would be sure to hurt one another a bit. And Harold Skinner had not experienced any such change of heart as would lead to his sorrowing over that.

A detected attempt to communicate with anyone in the punishment-room—more especially a fellow under sentence of expulsion, or practically so—meant heavy punishment. But that was not what kept Tom Brown and Squiff away. They would not go near until the affair in the gym had been settled.

"Not that the bouncer is likely to thank me for taking on his job," said Squiff. "He'll only say I deserve all I got if Cherry licks me, and it will be pretty much the same if things are the other way round."

"It will pay best to lie low a bit," replied Tom Brown. "Quelch may relent, and at the worst Piet may not be expelled."

But there was someone in the Remove who was determined to communicate with Delarey without loss of time.

This was Sir Jimmy.

"If it was me," thought Sir Jimmy, "I should give that chap Cherrybob a lickin' first an' do a bunk afterwards. Wot's the good of 'angin' round in a mouldy 'ole like this?"

Not that Sir Jimmy really considered Greyfriars a mouldy hole. But he had always looked upon running away as a possible thing if the place got too hot for him.

He knew what had happened to Delarey. He had been in No. 12 when Squiff came to tell Mauly about it; and after the night before there could be no hesitation about telling Sir Jimmy too.

But Squiff said nothing to either of them about his intention of taking Delarey's place in the gym.

It was quite a surprise to Squiff that Skinner should keep his promise not to let out the story. But he must have done, for when Delarey's place was seen to be vacant in the French class that afternoon there were plenty of inquiries as to what had become of him—plenty of inquiries, but no replies.

Sir Jimmy managed to get next to Skinner. Under the mild rule of M. Charpentier there was far more chance to talk than under the stern discipline of Mr. Quelch.

"You ain't no friend of mine, Skinner," whispered the schoolboy baronet.

"Tell me something I don't know," returned Skinner sardonically.

"But I'm willin' to let 'has-beens' be 'bypasses,' an' I know you're about the cunningest beast in the bloomin' Form!"

"Much obliged, I'm sure, Vivian. Leading up to what, may I ask?"

"Where could a bloke get 'old of the punishment-room key?"

"It would be in Mr. Quelch's study just now, I'm pretty sure," said Skinner at once.

Sir Jimmy looked at him curiously. He knew very well that it was from no good-will to him that that information had been given. He was sure that it would please Skinner if he were caught trying to get hold of that key, for the consequences would be serious.

"Thankee, Skinner!" he said gravely. "Oh, not at all!" said Skinner.

"Wants me to come a mucker," muttered Sir Jimmy to himself as he dodged back to his proper place.

"Hope he'll get it in the neck!" thought Skinner.

Skinner might be feeling more charitably towards Piet Delarey; but he was not overflowing with the milk of human kindness for the Form in general, and Sir Jimmy was one of the fellows to whom he reckoned that he "owed one."

Sir Jimmy developed a headache during French lesson, and Mossos allowed him to go and lie down.

But Sir Jimmy did not go and lie down until he had paid a visit to Mr. Quelch's study.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

In the Gym!

THE Famous Five made their way together to the gym directly classes were over.

"I don't half like this bizney, Rob," confessed Harry Wharton.

"Same here," said Frank Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific, my honoured chums," Inky remarked.

"I ain't stuck on it myself," Bob admitted. "There's one thing I like less

than the idea of licking the Rebel, though."

"What's that?" asked Frank.

"Having the Rebel lick me," answered Bob.

"It's nothing to make a fuss over!" growled Johnny Bull. "I should be jolly well pleased to take on any one of the gang—Delarey, or Squiff, or Toddy, or Brown, or Rake."

"Let 'em all come—eh, Bull?" said the Bouncer, coming up behind them. "I don't know that it's worth while to scrap with them; but, on principle, I regard them all as the enemy just now, I own."

"That's the talk, Smithy!" said Johnny.

The gym was filling fast when they arrived. But among those who had gathered there a story was going about that most seemed to find disappointing.

"A swindle, I call it!" grunted Bolsover major.

"Don't let out the secrets of the family, Bolsy," said Squiff.

"Which of your brother blades has been putting it across you?" asked Tom Brown genially.

"Rats! You chaps think yourselves too jolly clever for anything. But—"

"It will be a rotten shame if he doesn't turn up to be licked!" squeaked Snoop.

"Who—Cherry? Why, I thought I saw him here."

"No; your friend the Rebel!" sneered Snoop.

"You can depend on Delarey to keep an engagement like this," said Peter Todd.

"I'm afraid they can't; or if they do they'll be mistaken," said Squiff calmly. "As it happens, Delarey has a pressing engagement elsewhere, and—"

"What's that?" roared Johnny Bull. "I say, the chap ain't funking it, surely?"

"You are right, Bull. He most certainly is not," said Tom Brown.

A hubbub had arisen. Delarey's absence from class might have prepared the fellows for this, but somehow it had failed to do so.

"Will you hear me?" yelled Squiff.

"Oh, do shut up, and let anyone who knows anything tell it!" cried Harry Wharton to the crowd in general.

Something like silence followed.

"My friend Delarey is unavoidably kept away," said Squiff. "It's no good trying to keep the secret any longer. He's in the punishment-room, in connection with his little difference of opinion with our esteemed Form-master."

Squiff paused. He did not mean to tell them how serious the matter really was. They would know quite soon enough.

"Well, what about it?" growled Bolsover. "That ain't all, I suppose?"

"Not quite all," answered Squiff. "I'm here to take his place."

"You're going to fight Cherry?" snapped Peter Todd. "What on earth for?"

"Certainly; that is, if Cherry does not object!" said Squiff coolly. "I have already explained why."

"But I do object!" howled Bob. "Look here, Squiff, you silly old ass, I haven't any quarrel with you!"

"Nor I with you, Bob, if you apologise to Delarey!"

Bob wavered. Utterly without fear, he yet felt himself in the wrong. He was not keen on fighting the Afrikander—still less keen on fighting his Australian chum.

Johnny Bull pushed forward.

"You'll be an utter idiot if you apologise to please Field, Bob!" he said hotly. "You didn't mean to do it to the other merchant. But there's no need

for you to put on the gloves with this chap. I'll take him on!"

"I think not, Bull," said Squiff. "Go home, and stick your fat head into a pail of cold water! When you and I fight it will be for some better reason than we have yet."

"My hat! I'll soon give you a good enough reason!" roared Johnny, squaring up to Squiff. Nothing in all the campaign against Wharton had hit Johnny quite so hard as the going-over of Squiff to the enemy.

And he really wanted to fight Squiff because he thought so much of him. But Squiff did not quite see it that way.

"Gentlemen," said Peter Todd, "the real trouble appears to be that, having come here to see a fight, you appear to be in danger of going away without having been regaled with that pleasing spectacle. Now, there is really no need for that. Here am I; here is Bolsover. We are under contract to fight. Bolsover has been aching to lick me for days past; but, with a chivalry that I appreciate, has preferred to wait until I felt quite fit again after my bout of the 'flu.' I am quite fit. Bolsover need wait no longer. Let us get on with the washing, gentlemen!"

There could be no mistaking Bolsover's keenness. Already he was taking off his jacket.

"Here's Delarey!" cried Dick Russell. Cool as ever, the Afrikander walked in among them all.

"Sorry I'm late," he said. "I've been locked up, you know. Apologies for keeping you waiting, Cherry! Let's proceed to business at once, for my time may not be long. And it can't be postponed, for to-morrow I may not be here."

Nobody thought of Peter Todd and Bolsover now, or of Squiff and Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry felt none too comfortable. That light apology for keeping him waiting struck him in a queer way. Was he such a churl, then, that he could not apologise, too? And that when he felt himself in the wrong, while Delarey's delay was not his own fault?

Bob was not a churl. He was as kindly and generous a soul as any in all Greyfriars; but to apologise was rather a bitter pill. He was the foremost fighting man of the Form. Everyone expected him to lick Delarey.

But wasn't that all the more reason for apologising?

"What do you mean about not being here to-morrow, Delarey?" asked Peter Todd.

"The sack, that's all!" was the cool reply.

"Oh, I say!"

There was a chorus of surprised exclamations.

"What for?" demanded Bolsover.

"Breaking detention. Serves me right, I suppose. After that affair this morning, I mean. Can't be helped."

Bob came forward.

"I'm not going to fight you, Delarey," he said, in a hush of astonishment.

"Eh?" said Delarey.

"I thought it was the other chap who was funk'd!" sneered Snoop.

"Dry up! Cherry's right!" growled Bolsover.

"I sha'n't fight. I apologise. I know that I was wrong in charging you with posting that notice. I know Bunter did it—the rotter! But I knew at the time you didn't, and I only said it because I was in a beastly rage. And I did lam young Vivian a bit too hard. Is that enough?"

"It's more than enough, Cherry!" said Delarey gravely. "No fellow could have spoken more generously. I'm going back now. There's just a chance my

absence hasn't been twigged, and it's no good making things worse than they are for myself."

He passed out of the gym, down a lane of juniors whose faces showed their sympathy. At the door Sir Jimmy awaited him. Mauly went out with them.

"Cherry, you behaved like a brick!" said Peter Todd.

"Hear, hear!" cried Vernon-Smith. "You were all right, Bob; but I'm hanged if I'm going to shake hands with that bouncer Squiff—not just yet!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Three cheers for Bob Cherry!" shouted Ogilvy.

Everybody but Snoop and Stott cheered—even Harold Skinner.

"Poor old Rebel!" said Bob, heavy-hearted for his opponent that was to have been, as he walked out, with Harry hugging one of his arms and Mark Linley the other. No one had been better pleased with Bob's manly apology than those two.

"He hasn't gone yet, old chap!" said Mark.

No, he had not gone; and there was still hope for him, though the sky was black for the present.

The clouds might roll away. Nearly everyone in the Remove hoped they would.

THE END.

(Don't miss "THE REMOVE ELECTION CAMPAIGN!"—next Monday's grand story of Harry Wharton & Co., by FRANK RICHARDS.)

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CHRIST CHURCH (TURNHAM GREEN) CHOIR BOYS (12).—James Pickett, 78, Upham Park Rd., Chiswick, W.

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ST. STEPHEN (14-15).—R. Sumpter, 47, Whitfield St., Tottenham Court Rd., W.C.

SONRAEP JUNIORS (14-16)—4-mile r.—A. S. Dalglish, 70, Petteril St., Carlisle.

CHURCHWELL CELTIC JUNIORS (13-14)—away matches, 4-mile r.—Albert Mitchell, School St., Churwell, near Leeds.

D. Carter and R. Carsberg want to join footer team (15-17) within 12 miles of the Angel, Islington.—Write, D. Carter, 19, Gibson Square, Islington, N.

CRICKET.

NORTH LONDON UNITED want matches for coming season (17)—20-mile r.; players also wanted.—S. R. Lee, 6, Bathurst Gardens, Kensal Rise, N.W.

BACK NUMBERS, Etc., WANTED.

By William Smith, 42, Tweed Street, Berwick-upon-Tweed—"Boys' Friend 3d. Library," entitled "Conquest of London," "Britain Invaded," "Britain at Bay," "Britain's Revenge," "Flying Armada," "With the Allies' Flag"; also double numbers of "Magnet" and "Gem," from 1909 to 1912 inclusive. Full price offered.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 479.

THE GREYFRIARS GALLERY.

No. 15.—ALONZO TODD.

POOOR ALONZO!

Was ever another fellow made the butt of so many japes as he?

He was a destined victim from the first. Greyfriars would have been very unlike any other school if a fellow whose leg could be pulled so easily did not get his leg pulled hard and often.

It is difficult for Alonzo to believe, even now, that any boy would tell a wanton lie. He has come to understand that the soul of truth is not in Bunter; but no doubt he still entertains hopes that, even for Bunter, there may come a day of repentance and of real reform.

In his simple honesty, his extraordinary gullibility, and his ready obligingness, he gave Skinner, and others more or less of Skinner's type, such a chance to show their humour as they had never had before. It cannot be denied that others besides the cads spoofed Lonzy. But there are different ways of spoofing, and on the whole the amazing Duffer had not much to complain of from the Famous Five and their friends. They were only the Famous Four, by the way, when Alonzo blew in; Johnny Bull came along after him. They ragged him in all good-humour; there was all too often an element of cruelty in the ragging of Skinner and Bulstrode.

Skinner met him at the station; and the result of that meeting was that Alonzo arrived at the school perspiring under the burden of a weird and wonderful brown-paper parcel, which shed articles of attire about the Close. Skinner had, ever so kindly, warned him against the entirely fictitious breach of good form he would be guilty of if he reached Greyfriars with his belongings in a box! There was humour in that, though it was not quite kind; but worse was done when Alonzo was coached up to address to Mr. Quelch, on his first appearance before that stern gentleman, such remarks as these:

"How do you do, cocky?"

"I hope your grandmother is well!"

"Is your father out of prison yet, sir?"

The result was inevitable.

In those days Alonzo was always in a hurry, and as he was also very clumsy his haste often led to unpleasant results—for others and himself. There were so many things he wanted to do for the benefit of that section of the world with which he came into contact. The easiest way of all to spoof him was to appeal to this weakness of his for doing good. Easy—but essentially mean! You lower yourself when you make a fellow appear a fool because his good-nature is in excess of his brains. To show up in the light of a dupe the would-be sharper—such as Fisher T. Fish—that is fair enough! But when Skinner asked Alonzo to wake up all the masters for him at five o'clock, and Alonzo, who no more than anyone else loves getting up with the earliest birds, did it to oblige Skinner—that was not cricket! All too many of the jokes played upon Alonzo were not cricket, yet one cannot choose but laugh at them. He was so very happy when he was doing something for somebody—such things as digging up the Head's carefully-kept lawn, so that vegetables might be sown there—cutting off Wun Lung's pigtail to save him from headache—sweeping Mr. Quelch's chimney—opening a ginger-beer bottle for

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Alonzo Todd

someone who, of course, got the contents in the wrong place after all—putting an immense cold key down the back of Frank Nugent to stop nose-bleeding—minding a horse, which, naturally, ran away—carrying baskets for the Friardale errand-boys—escorting Mr. Walker, the very beery tramp, and finding for him temporary habitation in the box-room—administering his marvellous mixture to anyone who could be induced to take it, knowingly or unknowingly—so very happy, and always actuated with the best possible intentions; and we, who read, knew so well that there was trouble in the offing, and waited for the storm to blow up, and felt half sorry, half amused!

"Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood,"

wrote Lord Tennyson. No one ever had a kinder heart than Alonzo has, and for simple faith the good fellow lacks creation! But he has never got much credit for either. He has been despised by specimens like Skinner, who are not worthy to black his boots—even by fellows far better than Skinner, though in their cases there was liking mixed with the contempt. He is a fool—all's said! That is the worldly verdict. But is all said? Is not the guileless, kindly, straightforward fool, who does to others as he would have others do to him, and goes on doing it, though the others do not reciprocate in the least, the fool who never does a mean thing, though doing many silly ones, is he not in truth of the salt of the earth?

Alonzo bores the other fellows with his talk of Uncle Benjamin. According to him, Uncle Benjy, if at Greyfriars, would be in a continual state of shock and disgust. But Uncle Benjy has visited Greyfriars without any such dire result, and, indeed, enjoyed himself there. Alonzo's Uncle Benjamin is

largely a creation of Alonzo's imagination. His uncle strove to put into him such lessons as are good for any boy—never to sneak, swank, or lie—always to be kind and polite. No doubt but they were good lessons. And no doubt but that Alonzo learned them; but not quite as an ordinary boy would have done. His nature was different.

Lonzy must be quite accustomed to getting what Fish calls "the little end of the horn." It may be said to his credit that he has seldom made much fuss about being victimised—has taken it very much as all in the day's work. He is not without pluck, by any means, though he abhors fighting, and has often given way out of sheer dislike for anything in the nature of a row. But Bunter has found that Lonzy is no mere worm to be trampled upon. And let it not be forgotten that very early in his Greyfriars days Alonzo saved Marjorie from drowning. He can swim, and he is no duffer on the water, though on the playing-fields he is quite hopeless.

At first Alonzo—by the way, how many readers are aware that his full name is Alonzo Theophilus Todd?—shared a study with Skinner and the Bounder, unmeet mates for so gentle a youth. Later he was a member of a strange assortment in a new study, where he had Bunter and Wun Lung for companions. But his best days have been since his cousin Peter came to Greyfriars, to protect him from being overmuch put upon and japed. In No. 7, with "The History of a Potato," or some such congenial volume to study, with Peter, and that good fellow Tom Dutton as company, with his South Sea missionary interests to occupy his mind, Alonzo has been comparatively peaceful and happy. And will anyone grudge him his better times? Would anyone wish for him again a term in which every day was the First of April?

IN A LAND OF PERIL!

By BEVERLEY KENT,

Author of "Officer and Trooper," "Cornstalk Bob," "A Son of the Sea," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Bob Masters arrives in Cape Town to meet his cousin, Jasper Orme. Jasper sends him up country with a scoundrel, named Faik, and it is made apparent that Faik and Jasper are in league to put Bob out of the way. Disgusted with Faik's bad treatment, Bob escapes, in company with Ted O'Brien, an Irish boy, and they take with them the map which shows the spot where a treasure is located, and which it was Faik's aim to seize. The two lads push on into the wilds, and are captured by savages. They are imprisoned in a kraal, and food is brought to them by a slave of their captors. Mendi, the slave, helps Bob and Ted to escape. He tells them of a mysterious ancient city under a lake.

A Hard Trail.

There was a rope made of fibre in the canoe. Mendi paddled to the bank, and used a heavy stone as an anchor. Six hours yet remained before the dawn would break; and there was no prospect of a meal until then, so they decided to sleep.

The black boy closed his eyes, and almost at once fell into a heavy slumber. Ted, before long, was in dreamland, but Bob lay awake. The excitement of the past twenty-four hours had not yet passed off; and he felt a great responsibility, for he realised that the fate of the other two was largely in his keeping.

And as the time passed a feeling of oppression, a foreboding of danger crept over him. Try as he would he could not shake it off. The very silence, broken only by fitful murmurings as the wind rustled the reeds on the river banks, and by the splash of a hippopotamus, brought with it a sense of awe. The mosquitoes plagued him, and once he started as an ominous roar notified the approach of a lion coming down to drink at the riverside. But his companions did not stir.

At last he dropped off into a light, troubled sleep. His senses were still half on the alert. How long he lay thus he never knew afterwards, and it might have been only for a few minutes. He was aroused by a sudden lurch. The canoe seemed to be going down at the bows.

He sat up. Dimly he saw the head and shoulders of a man rising from the water. Something bright flashed in the darkness, and this was followed by a yell of pain. Bob had grasped his rifle, and, swinging the barrel round his head, he brought the butt down on the man's cranium.

Without a moan he sank. Ted was up and awake on the instant, half startled out of his wits. But Mendi did not stir.

"What's happened?" Ted gasped.

"We've been attacked. I hope I've been in time to save Mendi!" Bob cried. "Up with the anchor, and let us clear off! Look! A crowd of them are swimming towards us!"

He grasped the paddle, whilst Ted tugged at the rope. A dozen or more savages were swimming fast towards the canoe. As it got under way, one of them came so close that Bob struck him with the paddle.

"Fire at them!" he cried. "There's nothing else for it."

As Ted's rifle sent the bullets whistling, Bob paddled as fast as he could. In less than five minutes the canoe was speeding down the river, beyond pursuit.

Bob looked over his shoulder.

"That was a tight squeeze! I had a feeling that something was going to happen. Have a look at Mendi; one of the scoundrels stabbed him," he said.

The black boy was lying on his back, his eyes were open, and rolling from side to side. At least he was alive. Ted bent over him.

"Where are you hurt?" he asked.

Mendi pointed to his leg. There was a terrible gash in it, and Ted, tearing strips from his shirt, bound the wound as best he could. But for a long time Mendi could not speak.

"Evil spirits!" he gasped at last. "Let me die, O whiteface, for my hour has come! I am called to the land beyond the great winds and clouds."

"Not likely!" Ted said cheerily. "The evil spirits are your old enemies the Kandalzi. That ruffian Kaasohiki sent them after us, and one of them stuck his knife into you. Buck up, Mendi, old sport! There's many a kick left in you yet!"

The black boy struggled to sit up.

"Then the call to the far land has not come to me!" he exclaimed. "It was but a foeman's blow! Bah! What care I for that? But this is another wound for which the jackals shall pay dearly!"

"Lie where you are for the present," Ted directed. "We can get on all right. And we don't want to have to carry you when the river goes into the earth."

He turned to Bob, who was still paddling.

"This is a nasty knock, and if it hadn't been for you it would have been far worse," he said. "And I was having a serumptious dream, fancying I was making rings round that old ruffian Hoki-poki, with Faik, the colour of green, waiting for his turn. What's going to happen next, I wonder? This is a rotten country, full of surprises, and none of 'em pleasant ones."

"From this on one of us must take it in turn to keep watch at night while we are on this river," Bob replied. "No harm can come to us then. It's awkward about Mendi, but the natives are used to hard knocks, and their wounds heal quickly. We must keep going now till daybreak."

Ted groaned.

"I've made a nasty discovery," he said. "I'm fearfully hungry!"

Bob laughed.

"Pull your belt tighter," he suggested. "And at daybreak you'll have an opportunity to show what you can do with the rifle. That's the only chance we have of grub now."

He paddled along. In an hour or so Ted took his place. Dawn came at last, and they drew the canoe to the bank. Ted went down the river, and they heard a couple of shots. He returned soon carrying a fine swan, at the sight of which Mendi clapped his hands, and under his directions it was cooked.

It proved very good eating, and, much strengthened, they took to the river

again. On the following day Ted shot a bustard, and on the third he brought down an antelope. With this last they had food to suffice for many meals, and so full was the country with game of all sorts that all fear of starvation passed from their minds.

In a fortnight the river had narrowed so much and had become so shallow that they knew they were nearing its source. Mendi's wound had healed well, and he was able to limp about. The two boys decided that the time had come when they should take to the land again.

And now their greatest trials began; but, fortunately, by this time the rough life, hard work, and exposure had hardened them. Because of Mendi they could not travel fast; eight miles a day was as much as he could cover, and even that was hard on his injured leg.

The climate had changed. Whilst the days grew even hotter as they approached nearer to the Equator, the nights became bitterly cold. For they were gradually ascending, and before them in the distance they could see mountains capped with snow.

Sometimes a heavy mist completely enveloped the country; at times rain fell in a deluge for many hours; often they came to vast holes in the ground, evidently extinct volcanoes, and these forced them miles out of their direct course. And, to add to their difficulties, they suffered much from hunger and thirst, for here game was less abundant, and water hard to find.

But they held on with unshaken confidence in Mendi's knowledge of the country, and the homing instinct that would take him to his own people. They reached the top of a mountain, and were forced to stay there for the night. Here they all nearly perished in a snowstorm. Cramped in every limb, they managed yet to crawl down the far side of the mountain next morning.

A few hours of the hot sun revived them somewhat, but the bitter cold of that terrible night had lamed Mendi's wounded leg completely. It was agony for him to stand on it, while to walk was impossible. So they made a rough stretcher after a hard day's work, and next morning they carried him along.

They could only travel a very short distance every day now, and again they found themselves faced by starvation. Their stock of ammunition had run very low, and game had become scarce. They had to stalk their quarry very carefully, for a miss was a serious matter. But, careful as they were, the time came when their ammunition had all but run out.

The mountain was far behind them by this time, and again the country had changed. They had to force their way through vast forests, where roamed herds of elephants. Lions abounded here, too, and they knew not when they might be attacked. The thunder of the beasts' roars at night was terrifying. Sometimes the wayworn travellers climbed into the trees for safety; sometimes they built large bonfires to scare the savage animals away.

At last they came into open country again. Every day Mendi's eyes shone more brightly. Not once had he hesitated as to the direction they should take.

And now he clapped his hands with glee at sight of old scenes he remembered from childhood.

"It is but four days' journey to the lake," he said. "O young white chief, a joyous welcome awaits us!"

His leg had improved, and once again he was able to limp along. So great was his eagerness to see his old home and his people that he almost broke down again in the long marches on which he insisted.

But it was well that he was thus eager, for all the ammunition left now was in the chambers of the two rifles. And anxiety did not tend to good shooting. Both Bob and Ted missed more than once. On the third day after emerging from the forest they were without bullets and without food. All now depended on Mendi's sagacity.

"Mendi, you are certain we are near the lake?" Bob asked.

"This night shall we reach it," the black boy answered.

"And how far is it from the lake to your tribe?"

"Two days' journey."

Bob looked at Ted. They must go foodless for three days.

"We can do it!" he said grimly.

"We must," Ted answered. "We're not going to be beaten at this stage."

All through the day they tramped, drooping in the intense heat, without food, and without seeing the lake. Fears assailed them, but they held on doggedly. The sun began to sink, and yet there was no sign of the lake. But Mendi was smiling more broadly still.

Suddenly the lake came into view as they turned a corner. It stretched out in beauty, wide as a sea, to the horizon. They stood entranced. Then Mendi gave a cry.

Despite his lameness, he ran at full speed, shouting at the top of his voice. And, gazing at him, the two Britishers looked on farther, and impulsively they gripped one another in their amazement.

For a man was sitting by the water's edge. And he was fishing as calmly as if by an English river.

"Barelegs!" Ted gasped. "And, what's more, Bob, he is a Britisher!"

Scotland For Ever!

Mendi had reached the river, and was showing his delight by loud cries of joy. Bob and Ted pressed forward.

As they came near their amazement increased. Never had they expected to meet a white man in this wild locality, hundreds of miles from civilisation. But that was not all.

The stranger had arisen, and he turned to greet them, his fishing-rod in his hand. His wrinkled face told as clearly as words the arduous years he had lived; the marks of hunger, exposure, pain, and tragedy were stamped upon it. He had a long beard, white as snow; great coils of silver hair protruded from beneath his cap; his coat was threadbare, and he was wearing the kilt.

"Eh, mon," he said to Bob, "but this is a rare surprise."

"You're Scotch!" Ted gasped.

"Ay, and you're Irish," the other replied. "Wherever we go we carry the speech of our countries wi' us. That's about all left to me noo. And your friend is an Englishman? Britain's united—eh? 'Tis a queer thing that we three should be standing here."

"Mendi thought you were dead," Bob said.

"There ha' been times when I've been given up for dead, but there's a kick or two left in me yet. I'm Con Macgregor—

old Con to most white men from the Zambesi to Cape Town, and Barelegs to these poor benighted creatures who don't know the kilt. An' who are ye?"

They told him their names.

"And how does it happen, in the name of all that's wonderful, that ye've travelled so far?"

They told him about Faik, and all that had happened since that evening, now so distant in retrospect, when he had tried to thrash Bob. MacGregor listened keenly.

"You're two weel-plucked laddies," he said, and he sighed. "I wish I had dropped across you in these parts some years ago. I was badly in need of friends then, and I lost a fortune for the want of them. Here I was, tied up amongst savages, and here I've had to stay. I'm too old to risk a journey to the coast alone."

"How did you lose a fortune?" Ted asked.

"I was after treasure."

"Treasure?"

"Yes; and I alone knew about it, save for one ither man. I staked all on getting it, and I failed. But that's a long story that will keep. Whaur are your provisions?"

"We haven't any," Bob said.

"Run oot—eh? That was a close shave. Here, Mendi, set to work to light a fire and cook those fish. And you can share my mealies and other grub. I brocht a lot along, meaning to camp out here for a week, for there are times I get restless and like to be alone. Mendi's people are good folk, but I tire of their ways off and on."

Before long the trio were eating ravenously. Yet, though famished with hunger, they could not take their eyes off the old man, who had begun to fish again, and cast his line with the art of an expert. They longed for more talk with him. At last Ted could no longer contain his curiosity.

"Was the treasure you sought far away?" he asked.

MacGregor pointed to the vast lake.

"It's there," he said.

"The doomed city!" Ted almost shouted.

The old man wheeled round.

"You've heard of it?" he exclaimed.

"Faik knew about it," Bob said. "We got his map. Here it is."

MacGregor stared at the map.

"And how did he come to hae that?" he asked.

"I think—indeed, I'm almost sure—that it must have been given to him by my cousin, Jasper Orme," Bob explained.

"Jasper Orme!" old MacGregor repeated. "He was the man I meant. He was the only one besides myself who knew about all this!"

"Then he has been a traitor to you?"

"Ay! A' things are clear now. He thought I must be dead, sac he sent Faik to look for the treasure, and he got you two lads to go with Faik to help him, for he wouldn't trust grown men. It's well ye escaped from Faik, for, your work done, he would hae shown you nae mercy. He and Orme are too greedy to share the profits wi' anyone."

"They've over-reached themselves, and we'll get it. Mr. MacGregor, won't you come and help us to find it?" Ted asked, in great excitement.

The old man began to tremble; a great light sprang into his sad, dimmed eyes, making his face look strangely young. But the light quickly died away.

"I'm too auld," he said. "I wad only be a hindrance."

"No, you wouldn't," Bob urged. "You only feel played out because you've lost all interest in life. Make up your mind to have another try, and you'll feel strong again. And we'll do the hard work, and help you all we can."

He held out his hand, and, after a moment's hesitation, old MacGregor clasped it.

"Ye've gi'en me new life," he said. "I feel the blood rin through my veins as I had never hoped to feel it rin more. Yes, I'll gae. There's my hand on it, lads, and I thank you from the bottom o' my heart!"

"Hurrah!" Ted shouted, flinging up his cap. "And we'll get the treasure, too! Some feeling tells me now that we can't fail. How soon can we start? I'm longing to—"

The old man smiled.

"Haud on!" he said. "Ye've gane through a lot, but a' that may be a trifle to what ye'll hae to face. And as for starting off, there's a lot that has to be made ready first. But I'm done with fishing for a while, anyhow." And he began to reel up his line. "We had better get on the way home."

"To Mendi's tribe?" Bob asked.

MacGregor looked uneasy as the question was asked. He stood a moment, thinking hard.

"Yes," he said at last. "We must go there. We'd never succeed in our quest if we made enemies of them, and Mendi will stand to us ony way. Yes, we'd better start at once."

There was a canoe close at hand. MacGregor had crossed the lake in it, and soon Mendi was paddling them back. On the far bank they resumed the march, and now, well fed, for the stock of provisions was ample, they found the journey more pleasant than otherwise.

In two days they drew near to the native village, and Mendi, all agog with excitement, hurried ahead. As the others approached the kraals they heard drums beating, and the shrill music of reed instruments, and loud chanting. MacGregor stopped and listened.

"It's a' recht," he said. "That means a welcome."

"And why shouldn't they welcome us?" Ted asked. "Mendi told us that—"

The old man eyed Bob.

"They're a strange people," he explained. "And they dinna pull too well together. And the old chief, Kazna, is near to death. There's been prophesying, too. But here they come! They're unco' queer customers, and I dinna like the look of this."

Over the crest of the small hill a procession was advancing. The drums beat louder than ever, and the reed instruments were shrieking. All the tribe seemed to have turned out. They came in hundreds, men, women, and children, walking in procession. In front walked six old men with the skins of beasts over their shoulders, and iron rings on their heads. Behind them marched the warriors of the tribe, holding aloft their axes and spears. To right and left of the procession were the musicians, and behind came the women and the children, carrying garlands.

They stopped when they saw the three Britishers, and shouting came from their ranks. Then they advanced again, and only stopped a second time when some thirty paces away.

The six old men in front chanted solemnly for a while, and then advanced. They prostrated themselves, let their

(Continued on page 20.)

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MAGNET, April 14, 1917.

IN A LAND OF PERIL.

(Continued from page 18.)

heads touch the ground, and then arose.

"O Barelegs, oldest and greatest of warriors, thou hast found him!" one said. "And thus hath the prophecy come true."

"Kampa, speakest thou the truth?" MacGregor asked.

"Yea, all the portents go to prove it," the other replied. "For is not the great chief Kazna nigh to death, and did not you, a whiteface, come first, as was foretold, and was there not the great raid by the Kandalzi, and was it not said that a whiteface would avenge it? And you are old as I am."

"But he is very young. And it was said that a powerful whiteface—"

"He will grow, and we can wait."

"Then he can come again. He goes with me the noo on a journey."

"Nay, Barelegs! 'Tis not thus you should speak to us, your friends. To-day he of the calm brow and the unflinching eye—"

"Great Scott! He's talking about you, Bob!" Ted gasped. "That's what Mendi called you at first sight."

"Rot!" Bob retorted indignantly.

"But, Kampa, have a care!" MacGregor urged. "There be another who hath a claim. What sayeth Mopo?"

"And what care we for Mopo? The prophecy must be fulfilled. Thus do the aged die in honour, and the young sprout into heroes. I have spoken, O friend of the bitter years, and you, have you not brought him to us? Now we pay our allegiance, and escort him, as is his due. Behold, we are all here but those racked with pain. Now let us begin."

He turned and raised his hand.

On the instant the crowd broke up into a rush of people. The three Britishers were surrounded. The braves flung their axes high and caught them; the women danced and clapped their hands; the children strewed the earth with flowers. MacGregor put his hand on Bob's shoulder.

"I've done my best," he said, "But there's no stopping 'em. You've got to stick, it out, O great white chief of the Inrobi!"

"What?" Bob shouted. "Don't let them play the fool like that any more, Mr. MacGregor! Do please stop them! I hate all fuss and rubbish like this. Oh, tell them to dry up!"

"We can't do anything at present," MacGregor whispered. "It would be as much as our lives are worth to oppose them in this excitement."

The whole tribe was working itself into frenzy. The din was awful. By scores the men were prostrating themselves before Bob, calling him their chief, while the women struggled to kiss his hand.

As he shrank back, begging of them to let him go, a yell arose, and it was followed by a cry of fear.

"Mopo! Mopo!" Right into the centre of the smiling circle a powerful young native sprang, his dusky face convulsed with rage.

"Hearken!" he shouted. "The whole prophecy must be fulfilled. For it was foretold that blood must be spilt, and the heir of the great chief Kazna should fight. Is that not so, Kampa?"

"Thou speakest truth," Kampa said. "Then Mopo fights to the death! I, Mopo, can claim my foeman. And thus do I choose."

Swiftly he turned, and struck Bob across the face. A cry of fury broke forth. The lad staggered back, and then, with fists clenched, he sprang forward.

But Ted was quicker. "No, Bob, he sha'n't kill you!" he cried. "Let him have a cut at me!"

And with that he struck the savage such a straight left-hander that Mopo went down like a log at his feet.

(Another splendid instalment next week.)

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Monday :

"THE REMOVE ELECTION CAMPAIGN!"

By Frank Richards.

In the fine story which appears next week we have Fisher T. Fish—on the make of course, for it would hardly be Fisher otherwise—acting as election agent for the burly and bullying Bolsover, and getting very nicely spoofed by supporters of the other candidates. The long-expected fight between Bolsover and Peter Todd is brought off. The matter of Piet Delarey and his deserter friend, Sorrell, is cleared up. Coker figures in a way not particularly gratifying to a fellow with so big a sense of his own dignity as the mighty Horace. Wibley also plays his part, with more satisfaction to himself. The yarn is full of incident, and has also its share of the humorous element, wherefore I feel sure that it will suit most readers.

FROM "SOMEWHERE IN EGYPT."

This is the address given by a soldier reader, who has something to say about a letter from two youngsters, signing themselves H. Fisher and J. Boyd, which appeared in a Chat some little time ago. These young gentlemen sneered at the soldier's and sailor's pretended—so they considered it in the exercise of such judgment as Nature had endowed them with—love for and appreciation of my papers. Their opinion really was of very little consequence indeed; and, seeing that the paper troubles had already begun, though they were less acute then than now, I might have done better not to print it. But it slipped into print as an example of the self-conceit and wrong-headedness of a few of my correspondents, and it has brought me from the trenches on more than one front letters which show plainly how very far wrong Master Fisher and

Master Boyd were. My correspondent with the Egyptian Forces waxes quite hot on the subject.

"I have read both MAGNET and 'Gem,'" he says, "ever since I have been able to read, and this is the first time I have ever written to my Editor. But I only wish I was in England now, and if those two freaks, Fisher and Boyd, belonged anywhere near Lancashire, and came anywhere near the age of eighteen, I'll guarantee they would not want to write any more of their rubbish about the boys who are doing their bit for their at home after I had finished with them! I have some young warlike brothers, too, if eighteen does not suit. Everybody in the Service is not a poor, lonely soldier needing such correspondence as theirs. They ask what we care about the papers, or whether they go West or not. Well, I am not a thought-reader. I don't pretend to know what the other boys think, though I know what some of them say. I will just speak for myself. I should miss the papers terribly. We don't get too many papers out here; but our people send us some, and I always have the MAGNET and 'Gem' from home. You can't imagine how pleased we are to get them. Because we are soldiers does not alter our very real affection for them. I can tell you. I am not going to sing the praises of the MAGNET and 'Gem.' They recommend themselves. But you asked what your Service readers thought of the insult put upon them, and here is one man's answer.

A very good answer, too! I thank T. F. for it. But I don't think Master Fisher and Master Boyd can be accommodated with an opponent at anywhere near the age of eighteen. By the time

they reach eighteen they will have lots more sense, I hope!

ADVICE I CANNOT TAKE.

A short time since I received from a reader a letter full of cocksure advice as to how to run my papers—criticism it could hardly be called—it went far beyond that! I thought, "Well, he is very young, and he means well, no doubt, and is keen: I will answer him civilly, and explain why, on the whole, I have a certain preference for my own views over his."

Which thing I did. But it was wasted labour. By return of post came his reply, and it ran: "I see you have not sense enough to take good advice when you have it under your hand." After that there remained no more to do but to close the correspondence—with a snap. It was funny; but humour of that sort can be overdone—and he didn't mean to be funny—or even courteous. That is the kind of advice I really don't want, you know. The curious thing is that correspondents who write me quite sensible and civil letters of criticism often say: "I hope you won't be annoyed, or think I am a cad." My dear boys, I don't mind your criticism a little bit, when it is of the sort indicated. I welcome it. The critics I object to so strongly are those who start out with the assumption that I am either a knave or a fool or both!

Your Editor

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(Signed)

