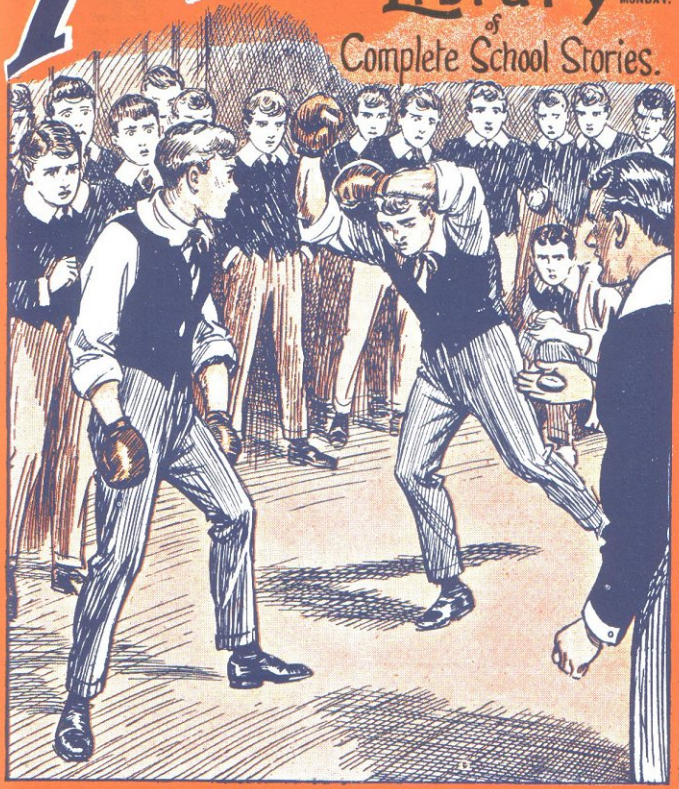
No. 885. Vol. XXVII. Week Ending January 24th, 1925.

# The Magnet 2d Library

EVERY MONDAY.

of Complete School Stories.



HARRY WHARTON TASTES THE BITTERNESS OF DEFEAT!

(A dramatic incident from the long complete story of Greyfriars, contained in this issue.)


THIS is a competition in which every one of you can join. You are all familiar with the Cross Words that fly between schoolboys, and you are all familiar with the time-honoured Limerick.

For the benefit of those unacquainted with completing an unfinished Limerick I will give a few hints that may be found helpful. Now, suppose you were required to complete the following verse:

Said Brown to Bully Silvaster
In tones that courted disaster:
"Yah, go and eat coke,
Hit some other bloke,"

You must make your last line scan with the first two. That's the most important thing to remember in completing a Limerick.

For instance, such a line as:

"Then Brown ran—but Silvaster was the faster"

is obviously far too long. A more suitable last line would be:

"Now Brown's requiring some plaster."

I don't say that this is a clever line, but it fulfils the requirements of a Limerick and scans correctly with the first two lines.

Another point is, don't try to be too clever. A simple but forceful line is what is wanted—a line that rhymes and scans with the first two. You will get a better idea still by reading carefully the two other examples and the finishing lines. These verses, of course, form no part of the competition—they are published merely for your guidance.

In a moment of wrath Bunter said:
"A brute and a beast is the Head!"
Then the swish of a gown
Made him nearly fall down—
(Example) And he murmured "sweet nothings" instead!

When Coker played footer one day,
His skipper remarked, "You're a jay!
Your notions of sport
Fairly make a chap snort—
(Example) You scored—but you kicked the wrong way!"

Now that you have got the hang of the thing fill in the coupon below.

***To the sender of the "last line," which in the Editor's opinion is the best, will be awarded the handsome money prize of FIVE POUNDS. To the 12 next best, Consolation Prizes of SPLENDID POCKET-KNIVES will be awarded.***

## DIRECTIONS.

When you have thought out a really good last line fill in the coupon below, taking care to write your name and address clearly, and IN INK, and post it to:—

"Cross Words" Limerick Competition, No. 1,
c/o "Magnet," Gough House,
Gough Square, London, E.C. 4,

so as to reach that address not later than January 27th, 1925.

You may send in as many attempts as you like, but all efforts must be written on the proper Entrance Form.

It is a distinct condition of entry that the Editor's decision must be regarded as final.

**"CROSS WORDS"** **No. 1.**
**LIMERICK COMPETITION.**

When Loder sat down on a tack,
At Cherry he frowned and looked black.
"You villain!" he roared,
"This sha'n't be ignored—

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Last Line..... Closing date, January 27th.

***THE LAST STRAW!*** *When Bob Cherry steps into the captaincy of the Remove, Wharton—the ex-captain—feels it is time to kick. At every conceivable turn he flouts this new authority with the intention of dragging big, honest Bob into a brawl. He gets his desire in the end, for they fight, but whether Wharton gains anything from it remains to be seen.*

# Harry Wharton's Downfall!

A Magnificent, New, Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

By

**FRANK RICHARDS.**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Wharton Is Wanted!

BILLY BUNTER put a fat, grinning face into Study No. 12 in the Remove.

"Wharton here?" he asked.

It was Lord Mauleverer's study; and his lordship—the new captain of the Greyfriars Remove—had finished prep, and was taking his ease upon the sofa. After exerting himself at prep, Mauly felt that he was entitled to a rest. His more energetic relative and study-mate, Sir Jimmy Vivian, was roasting chestnuts at the study fire.

Harry Wharton, late captain of the Form, was sitting in the armchair, conning over a list of names written on a sheet of impot paper. He glanced up as the Owl of the Remove blinked in.

"I'm here," he said.

Bunter's big spectacles turned on Wharton.

"You seem to be always here now, Wharton," he said.

"That needn't worry you, Bunter."

Bunter sniffed.

It need not have worried him. But it did. Without Wharton in Study No. 1, there was not likely to be any supper in that celebrated apartment, which Bunter shared in these days. Billy Bunter did not, perhaps, miss Wharton—but undoubtedly he missed the supper. As for standing supper himself that was out of the question, owing to the non-arrival of a long-expected postal-order.

"What's that paper you've got in your hand?" asked Bunter. "I jolly well know what it is."

"The list for the Rookwood match to-morrow."

"I jolly well knew it was!"

"Then you need not have asked."

"Like your cheek, I think, Wharton. What the thump has the football list got to do with you? You're not captain of the Remove now."

"Is that what you came here to say?"

"No, it isn't!" snapped Bunter. "Still, I think it's a cheek! I hear that you've turned all your old pals out of the eleven."

"Shut the door after you."

"Not that I mind," said Bunter. "I think it's time there was a change. I don't think much of Bob Cherry at half——"

"Fathead!"

"Johnny Bull's really no good at back——"

"Ass!"



"Inky isn't much use in the front line——"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"And Nugent's no good anywhere. Still, I think it's a cheek!" said Bunter. "Mauly's captain of the Remove, ain't you, Mauly?"

Lord Mauleverer had both hands behind his lazy head, as he reposed on the study sofa. He made an effort and detached one of them, and waved Bunter away.

"Go away, old bean!" he said.

"Look here, Mauly——"

"Be a good chap, Bunter! You know what a bore you are," said his lordship. "You can't fail to know really, because I've told you lots of times. Blow away!"

Instead of blowing away, William George Bunter blinked indignantly at his lazy lordship.

"Call yourself a Form captain!" he snapped.

"Yaas."

"Pretty sort of an ass to captain the eleven to-morrow, ain't you, Mauly?"

"Yaas."

"You're letting Wharton run the whole show."

"Yaas."

"Do you think that's what the Remove elected you captain for?"

"Yaas."

"You silly chump!" roared Bunter. "Can't you say anything but 'Yaas, yaas' like a silly parrot?"

"Yaas."

"I think you jolly well ought to run the show yourself, Mauly, if you're captain of the Remove. So do a lot of the fellows."

"Yaas."

"You ought to be going over that football list, not Wharton."

"Yaas."

"You burbling chump!"

"Yaas."

"You—you—you blithering jabberwock!"

"Yaas."

"Look here, Mauly——"

"Vivian, dear boy, would you mind kickin' Bunter into the passage?" asked Lord Mauleverer. "I'll do as much for you some time when I'm not so jolly tired."

"Certainly!" grinned Sir Jimmy Vivian. And he jumped up from the fire.

"Hold on, you dummy!" howled Bunter. "I came here with a message for Wharton."

"Cough it up, then, quick!" said Vivian.

"Yah! Wharton, Wingate wants you in his study," said Bunter. "He told me to come and tell you."

"Very well," said Harry.

"I say, he was looking a bit waxy," grinned Bunter. "Looks to me as if it's a licking!"

Wharton made no reply to that. He put the football list into his pocket and rose from the armchair.

"I fancy you're booked," said Bunter, with a fat chuckle. The idea of the late captain of the Remove being "booked" seemed to entertain the fat junior. "Bend over for six, you know—he, he, he! I shouldn't wonder if Mr. Quelch has spoken to Wingate about you. Quelchy turned you out of the captaincy, and he jolly well didn't know that you were going to wangle Mauly into the place, and captain the Form in Mauly's name. That's what you're jolly well doing."

"I asked you to kick Bunter out, Vivian, old man," said Lord Mauleverer plaintively.

"Here goes!" said Sir Jimmy.

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter dodged out of the study just in time to escape a lunging boot. Lord Mauleverer sat up on the sofa, and regarded Harry Wharton with a rather anxious expression.

"Hold on a minute, Wharton," he said. "Think there's really any trouble with Wingate of the Sixth?"

Wharton shook his head.

"I don't see why there should be," he answered. "Anyhow, it's all right. I'm getting rather used to trouble this term."

"Of course, you know I'm not takin' any notice of Bunter's piffle," said Mauleverer. "I've had plenty of it from the other asses, too. I think it's jolly decent of you to stand by me, and help me carry on now I'm captain of the Form. I'd have chucked the job before this if you hadn't backed me up like a real good chap."

Wharton made no answer to that, but there was a curious expression on his face as his glance dwelt on Lord Mauleverer.

"The fellows elected me, of course," went on Mauly. "But I should never have got in without your support. And I couldn't have carried on without your backin'. I should have had to resign really. It's jolly good of you, Wharton—takin' all the trouble on your shoulders. But——"

"But?" said Harry.

Lord Mauleverer rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"I wonder whether Mr. Quelch has noticed anythin'," he said. "Of course, it's all silly piffle what Bunter was sayin'—and what the other fellows have been sayin'. But if our giddy old Form master got the idea into his head that you are really keepin' on as captain of the Form, it might mean trouble."

"Let it!" said Harry.

"All serene, old man—I can stand it, if you can," said Lord Mauleverer. "Quelchy's awf'ly down on you these days. Some of the fellows think he's only waitin' his chance to jump, like a giddy old tiger, you know."

"Very likely," said Harry Wharton with a curl of the lip.

"And now Wingate's sent for you—the jolly old head prefect," said Lord Mauleverer. "I'll come with you, if you like, and we'll face him in his lair shoulder to shoulder, what?"

Wharton smiled.

"It's all right, Mauly, leave it to me. Stick to your sofa, old chap."

"Just as you think best," said Lord Mauleverer with a nod. "But mind, I'm backin' you up as Captain of the Remove, and I'm prepared to tell Wingate so, and Mr. Quelch too."

Wharton nodded and left the study.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### The High Hand!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH, the Bounder of Greyfriars, was lounging in the doorway of No. 4 as Wharton came along the Remove passage. He was talking to some fellows in his study, and Wharton, without glancing in, was aware that his former friends were there—Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. The Bounder beckoned to him to stop as he came along.

"Hold on a tick, Wharton, if you're not in a hurry!"

"Wingate's sent for me," said Harry, stopping. "What is it, Smithy?"

"About the Rookwood match to-morrow."

"Yes; you're playing."

"Thanks," said Vernon-Smith, with a slightly ironical smile. "It seems that our new and respected captain has left the matter in your hands."

"Not exactly that," said Harry. "Mauly's new to the job, and it's natural that he should take advice from a fellow who was captain of the form before him, and who happens to be his friend. I don't see anything for the fellows to grouse about in that."

"I'm not grousin'," said the Bounder. "So long as the advice you give Mauly is good, all's well. But you seem to have advised him to make some rather extensive changes in the team."

"Yes, we agree that new blood is wanted," said Wharton calmly.

"That may do for Mauly," said the Bounder. "It won't wash in this study, Wharton. I've got nothin' to do with your family quarrels, of course. I know you're at loggerheads with the fellows you used to pal with, and it's no bizney of mine. But football's football. You've dropped Cherry, and Bull, and Inky——"

"Mauly's dropped them."

"As Skinner was sayin', the hand is the hand of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob," said the Bounder with a laugh. "You've dropped them, speaking with Mauly's voice for the occasion. Now, seriously, Wharton, we want a good team in the field to meet Rookwood, and we can't spare three of the best men in the Remove."

"Better speak to Mauleverer about that. He's captain, you know," said Wharton unmoved.

The Bounder looked impatient.

"You're captain to all intents and purposes," he said. "Look here, Wharton, it won't do. We want to beat Rookwood, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes."

"That comes first, not second to your quarrels with other fellows in the Remove."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I want to see Bob Cherry's name in the list, and Johnny Bull's, too," said the Bounder, "and Inky's."

"I've told you to speak to our captain if you've got any advice to offer," said Wharton calmly.

"That means that you mean to go on your own way, whether we get a thumping licking from Rookwood or not," exclaimed the Bounder angrily.

"Certainly I'm not likely to go any other fellow's way. But I hope we shall beat Rookwood to-morrow. There's plenty of talent in the Remove, and you're one of the fellows, Smithy, who used to say that the football was too much in the hands of the old gang."

The Bounder coloured uncomfortably.

"Well, perhaps I did," he said. "But there's a limit. Another point is, I happen to be vice-captain."

"Nobody disputes that, that I know of."

"Mauly's not a bad man at footer, if he chooses to buck up. But he's no shakes as captain in the football field."

"The Remove elected him," said Harry. "They knew what he was like, I suppose."

"It was chiefly your doing," snapped the Bounder.

"I helped, certainly," assented Wharton. "But if the Remove are not satisfied with their choice it's their own look out. Form captain is always football captain in the Remove, and every fellow knew it. But Mauleverer isn't going to make a hash of things; no need to be alarmed. He's asked me to captain the side to-morrow against Rookwood."

"Oh!" ejaculated the Bounder.

There was a muttered exclamation inside the study. But Bob Cherry & Co. did not join in the talk. Wharton was utterly indifferent to their presence: from his looks it might have been supposed that he did not know that they were there.

"I quite understand the game, Wharton," said the Bounder, after a pause. "Mr. Quelch turned you out of the captaincy of the Form, and you're defyin' him by keepin' it on with Mauly as a screen. I don't say I blame you. In fact, it's a game I might have played myself in your place."

Wharton winced a little.

Right or wrong, he was resolved to go upon the way he had marked out for himself. But possibly it came as a little shock to him to hear that he was playing a game that the Bounder of Greyfriars might have played in his place. There had been a time, not so long ago, when Wharton's ways and the Bounder's ways had been as far as the poles asunder. In a flash, for that moment, Harry Wharton realised how far he had fallen since he had set up his own arrogant pride to be his guide and master. But it was only for a passing moment.

"Well, if you don't blame me, well and good," he said quietly. "Is there anything else, Smithy?"

"Yes; if Mauly doesn't think of captainin' the side himself—and he's sensible there—he ought to have asked the vice-captain."

"There's something in that, Smithy."

"A lot in it, I think," snapped Vernon-Smith.

Wharton nodded.

"I don't want you to have a grievance, Smithy. Captain the side to-morrow; I'll square it with Mauleverer."

"Oh!" said the Bounder, quite taken aback.

"I'll see that your name goes down as captain if you make the claim," said Wharton. "Is there any more?"

Vernon-Smith burst into a laugh.

"You take the wind out of a fellow's sails," he said. "I was feelin' rather sore, and I admit it. But I'm not wedgin' in like that. If you offer me the captaincy I sha'n't take it."

Wharton laughed, too.

"But I want to see you play our best men against Rookwood," said the Bounder seriously. "Personal feelin's don't count in football, as I've often heard you say yourself. Put the best men in. Seriously, you know jolly well that Cherry and Bull, at least, ought to be playin'."

No answer.

"If we're beaten to-morrow, Wharton, it will mean trouble," said the Bounder.

"We've been beaten before; we can't always win matches."

"You know what I mean—if we're beaten through good men bein' left out because you've rowed with them, and influenced Mauleverer——"

"Wingate's waiting for me," said Harry Wharton. "Can't very well keep the captain of the school waiting, Smithy."

And Harry Wharton went along the Remove passage, leaving the Bounder looking very disturbed.

Mark Linley was coming up the stairs as Wharton reached them. There was a thoughtful and troubled expression on Mark's face.

"Oh, here you are, Wharton!" he exclaimed. "I want to speak to you."

"Go ahead!"

"Am I down for to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"What about Bob?"

"If you mean Cherry, he's out of it. Lord Mauleverer is skipper, you know, and he thinks it's time there was new blood in the team," said the late captain of the Remove gravely.

Mark Linley looked at him very quietly. Quiet as his glance was, there was something in it that drew a flush to Wharton's cheeks.

"Is it true that you're leaving out Cherry, Bull, Hurree Singh, and Nugent?" he asked.

"Mauleverer's leaving them out."

"I think it comes to the same thing," said Mark quietly. "This isn't treating Mauleverer well, Wharton."

"How do you make that out?"

"He trusts you," said Mark.

"Well?"

"We've been friends," said Mark. "I still feel friendly, whatever you may feel like, Wharton. There's no telling. You seem so changed this term. I'm sorry to see you acting like this. It's not worthy of you, and I wish you'd listen to a friend's advice."

"I'm not asking advice of anyone at present, thanks."

Mark Linley coloured.

"Very well. Then I won't offer any. But it's rather rotten to make use of Mauleverer in this way, to wreak your private grudges. For that's what it comes to, and you know it. The team is practically being mucked up, and Mauly will have to answer for it if we're beaten as a result."

"Oh, we're going to win!"

"We're not going to win," said Mark steadily. "We're going to be licked to-morrow, at this rate. You've given Bull's place to Stott, a smoky slacker. You're playing Bolsover major, too, a man you'd never have played in a big fixture when you were captain. Goodness knows how you'll fill the other places! There's a lot of feeling about your leaving out good men you've rowed with, and there may be some resignations."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"I can fill the places—I mean, Mauleverer can fill them," he said. "Anyhow, the fellows you've named are left out."

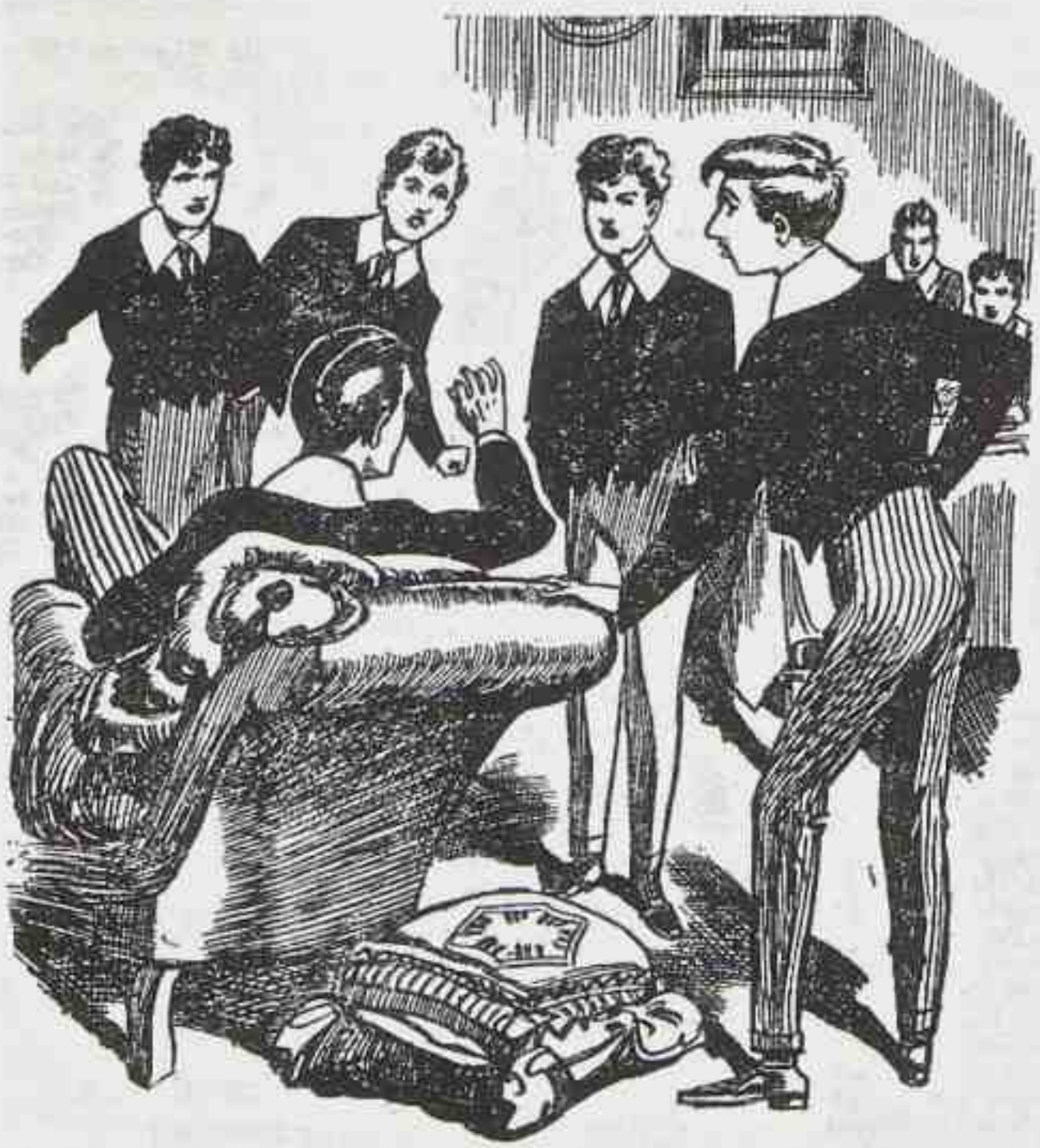
"You mean that?"

"I generally mean what I say."

"Then you can leave me out, too," said Mark Linley. "If Bob Cherry's dropped from the team for no reason, except that you've chosen to make an enemy of him instead of a friend, you can drop me also. I will play if he does, otherwise not."

"Done!" said Harry.

With that he passed on down the stairs, leaving Mark to go on his way more troubled and thoughtful than before. Apparently quite unconcerned, Harry Wharton walked along to the Sixth Form passage and tapped at Wingate's door.



**Lord Mauleverer blinked at the dissatisfied four and then blinked at Wharton, who was sitting at the table. "You mean you'll resign from the footer team?" he asked, addressing Peter Todd & Co. "Yes!" snapped Peter. "I suppose we can fill the places, Wharton?" said his lordship languidly. "Certainly!" "All serene, then," said Mauly lazily. "Your resignations are accepted, you fellows!"** *(See Chapter 4.)*

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Wingate's Warning!

GEORGE WINGATE of the Sixth Form, captain of Greyfriars School, was waiting in his study for Harry Wharton. The head prefect of Greyfriars did not like being kept waiting by a Lower Fourth boy, and his brow was rather grim by the time Wharton tapped at the door, and his voice was short and sharp as he rapped out "Come in!"

Harry Wharton entered the study quietly. It could not be said that there was anything offensive or disrespectful in his manner or in his look, and yet Wingate's eyes glinted for a moment. Indefinably, he had an impression of cool, obstinate defiance on the part of the junior. That was an impression Wharton had frequently made of late upon both masters and prefects, yet with nothing definite enough to be particularised as an offence.

"You sent for me, Wingate," said the Removite.

"I sent for you a quarter of an hour ago."

"Did you?"

"I did," said Wingate gruffly. "And if you think you can keep the captain of the school waiting for a fag, Wharton, you don't understand your place as a Lower boy."

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Wingate," said Wharton, quite civilly, yet undoubtedly conveying the intimation that he was not really sorry in the very least.

"If Bunter gave you my message at once——"

"Bunter is rather long-winded, you know," said Harry.

"Well, I know that," said the Sixth-Former. "Never mind, then, if you came as soon as he told you."

Wharton made no rejoinder to that. He was quite prepared to tell the prefect that he had stopped to chat to Remove fellows by the way if Wingate had asked him. Fortunately, the prefect did not ask.

"Now, I've got something to say to you, Wharton," said the senior, fixing his eyes upon Harry steadily. "Probably you haven't noticed that I've been keeping an eye on you lately. Well, I have."

"Thank you!"

Wingate's eyes glinted again.

"I don't want any cheek, Wharton."

"Is it cheeky to thank you for taking such an interest in me?" asked Wharton.

"That will do! Just listen to me," said Wingate gruffly. "Not long ago your Form master, Mr. Quelch, turned you out of the captaincy of the Form. He had good reasons for doing that. You may not be aware that he consulted me on the matter, as captain of the school. I fully agreed with him. You have been rebellious, obstinate, cheeky, disrespectful——" Wingate paused.

"Anything more?"

"You've quarrelled with your best friends, and seem to have set out to make yourself a general trouble in your Form and the school. You've become a bad influence in the Lower Fourth."

"Oh!"

"So I quite agreed with Mr. Quelch that you were not fitted to hold the captaincy of the Form. I hoped that Cherry would be elected in your place. The best man for the job, as you have turned out so badly. Cherry, it seems, would have been elected by the Remove but for Mauleverer butting in—with your support."

"Is that so?"

"He was next on the list in the voting, Vernon-Smith and Todd came a bad third and Fourth. Now, nobody has anything to say against a good-hearted lad like Mauleverer, excepting that he's too unsuspicious and trustful, and likely to be taken in too easily by any unscrupulous person."

Wharton flushed crimson.

"Am I unscrupulous, then?" he asked.

"It looks like it now."

"Would it be cheeky to thank you for your good opinion, Wingate?" asked the late captain of the Remove.

Wingate's glance strayed to his ashplant. It lay ready on the study table, as if the prefect had foreseen that it might be required during this interview.

But he did not touch it. Wharton could see that the captain of Greyfriars was trying hard to be patient with him.

"I've kept an eye on you, as I said," resumed Wingate. "It's fairly clear that you are pulling Mauleverer's leg, and using him. Under cover of Mauleverer, whom you shoved into the place, you are keeping on the captaincy as before."

"Do you think so?"

"Do you deny it?" snapped Wingate.

No reply.

"Well, so long as no harm is done, well and good," went on the Sixth-Former. "Mauleverer isn't much use at games, and if you played straight you could help him through many difficulties. But if your object is to defy your Form master, by ignoring his decision regarding you, Wharton, you've got to stop."

"Yes."

"If you only want to make yourself useful to a new captain who is not equal to the job, of course, that's all right."

"Good!"

"But it doesn't look like it," added Wingate. "You seem to have taken the next Remove football fixture into your own hands, as if you were still captain. From what I hear, you are letting personal likes and dislikes enter into the matter. Mauleverer seems quite under your thumb, in point of fact. You're using him for your own ends—a fellow who trusts you."

Wharton winced.

"Mind, I'm not interfering—so far. I'm only warning you. Mauleverer was elected Form captain, and he has a right to a chance to make good, and to get what assistance he can from the former captain. But it's common talk in the Remove that you are still practically captain, and that is a defiance of your Form master's authority. This won't do."

"No," said Harry.

"I warn you to be more careful. Mr. Quelch is not a man to be played with, as you ought to know. It is in his power to cancel Mauleverer's captaincy as he cancelled yours. If that should be done there will not be a new election to give you a chance of playing such a game over again. The captaincy will be handed to the next man on the list of voting."

"Bob Cherry!" said Wharton, with a glitter in his eyes.

"Exactly."

Wharton stood silent while the captain of Greyfriars scrutinised his face.

"Carry on this game too far, and it simply means that your friend Mauleverer will be chucked out," said Wingate. "I've given him a hint to that effect. Now I'm giving you one. See?"

"I see. I feel flattered."

"Flattered?" repeated Wingate.

"Very. Isn't it rather unusual for a Form master and a head prefect to take so much trouble over a mere junior—a commonplace Lower boy?"

"It's very unusual for a Lower boy to give so much trouble to a Form master and a head prefect," said Wingate grimly, "and it's a kind of thing that will not be allowed to go on. The way you're going, Wharton, you're heading for a flogging, and perhaps the sack from the school."

"Indeed!"

"If you're too cheeky and reckless to consider yourself, you might at least think of your people," said the captain of Greyfriars. "If it comes to the long jump it will be a serious matter. That's all. I've warned you. You can go."

"Thank you!"

Wharton left the study.

There was a sarcastic smile on his face as he walked down the Sixth Form passage. Wingate had given his warning, but the warning had fallen upon deaf ears.

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## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### No Surrender!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"The list's up!"

"Oh!"

"It's up in the Rag!" grinned Billy Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you're left out. He, he, he!"

Bob Cherry & Co. made no rejoinder to that. The four of them walked away quickly to the Rag.

It was Saturday after dinner. After morning classes there had been a rush to the Rag to see whether the football list was up. But it was not there then. Lord Mauleverer, or, rather, Harry Wharton, was keeping it back till almost the last moment. Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood were expected over at Greyfriars early in the afternoon.

A crowd of Remove fellows had already gathered in the Rag to read over the long-expected list when Bob Cherry and his friends arrived there. Loud were the comments upon it, and extremely unfavourable.

"It's in Wharton's fist!" grinned Skinner. "Mauly hasn't even taken the trouble to write it out. Who's the captain of this giddy form?"

"Wharton, first and last," said Snoop.

"What a list!" said Bob, as he ran his eyes down it. "That lot will never beat Rookwood."

"No fear."

"The no-fearfulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Rotten!" said Johnny Bull.

"Rotten; that's the word!" agreed Frank Nugent. "And Wharton must jolly well know that it's rotten."

"Of course he does!" growled Johnny.

"That's your opinion," sneered Bolsover major. "Well, my opinion is that he's done a jolly sensible thing to try some new blood. There was too much of the old gang in Remove football, much too much."

"My esteemed fatheaded Bolsover——"

"It won't do!" said Squiff, with a shake of the head. Sampson Quincy Iffley Field was looking very serious.

"You're in it!" snapped Bolsover major.

"Yes; but you're in it, too, old man."

"You cheeky ass——"

"It won't do!" said the Bounder.

"I say, you fellows, he's left me out, after all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a dud team," said Johnny Bull. "A few good men and a lot of rotters. A walk-over for Rookwood."

"And I voted for that ass Mauleverer at the election!" murmured Squiff.

"What a list!"

"What a crew!"

Undoubtedly, Lord Mauleverer's first essay at picking out a football eleven for the Remove did not give much satisfaction. It was such a team as the Remove might have played in a match with the Third or the Fourth. Nothing like the team that was needed for a big fixture. It ran:

Field; Bolsover, Stott; Todd, Brown, Vivian; Penfold, Vernon-Smith, Wharton, Mauleverer, Hazeldene.

"There's some jolly good men there," remarked Peter Todd. "Two of the halves are all right, but what good is Vivian?"

"He's Mauly's relation," grinned Skinner.

"Of course, Mauly doesn't know what he's about. But Wharton does."

"The hand of Esau, but the voice of Jacob!" chuckled Skinner.

"And the backs!" groaned Johnny Bull. "Fancy Bolsover and Stott trying to stop a Rookwood rush! My hat!"

"Do you think you're the only men at Greyfriars that can play back, Johnny Bull?" roared Bolsover major.

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Squiff. "We're not playing the Third. In a real game we want Bull and Mark Linley back."

"Linley resigned from the team," said Stott sulkily. "I know Wharton was going to play him, but he said he wouldn't play if Cherry was left out."

"Cherry oughtn't to be left out," said Peter Todd. "Bob's wanted at half, and Wharton knows jolly well."

"So that young ass Vivian has got my place!" said Bob Cherry ruefully. "I wouldn't mind if he could do it. But he can't. He's a keen little beggar, and I like him, but he's no good against Rookwood."

"No good at all," said Skinner. "I dare say Wharton's out to lose the match, just to show us what it's like without his Magnificence in supreme command."

"Oh, rot!"

"Well, I'm dashed if it doesn't look like it!" said Hazeldene.

"You mean, because he's put you in?" asked Stott.

"No, I don't!" hooted Hazel.

"There's got to be some changes," said Frank Nugent.

"You wouldn't butt in, anyhow," sneered Stott. "Wharton wouldn't have played you against Rookwood, even when you were friends."

"I don't mean that——"

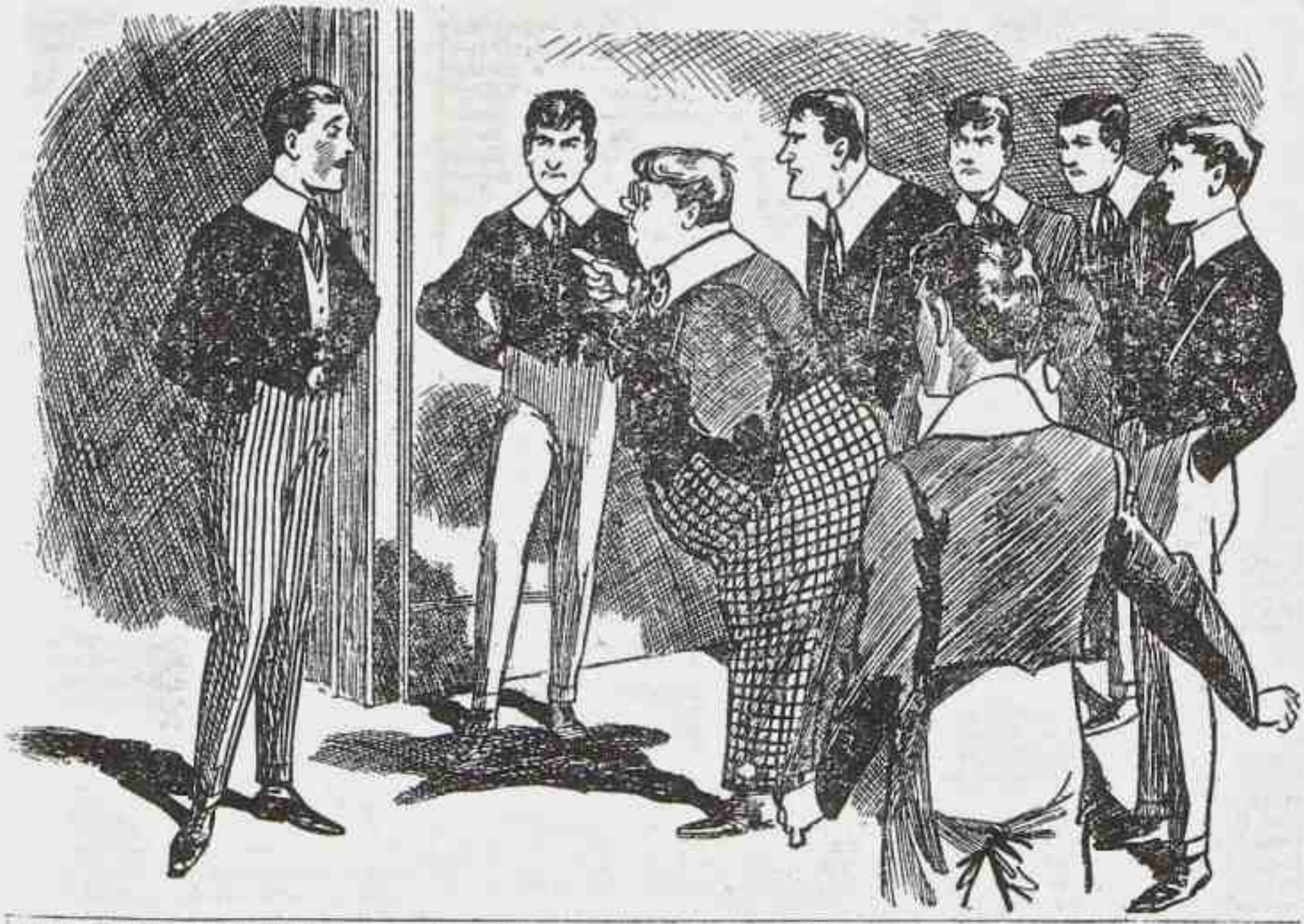
"Mauly's got to make some changes in this crowd," said Peter Todd decidedly. "We'll put it to him. It's rather a pity that he's playing himself. But I suppose he must as he's captain."

"He's not captain," grinned Skinner. "He's asked Wharton to skipper the team. I had that last night."

"Oh, rot!"

"It's so," said the Bounder. "Wharton told me that."

"I suppose we've got to recognise the fact that Wharton is still captain of the Remove, in spite of Quelchy," said Peter



**"Rag him!" shouted Skinner, as Lord Mauleverer came into the Rag. "Shut up, Skinner," grunted Johnny Bull. It was evident that his lordship had something to say. He cleared his throat. "I'm sorry, you chaps," began Mauly. "You elected me as captain an' I've made an awful hash of it. I'm sorry! I resign!"** *(See Chapter 7.)*

rubbing his nose thoughtfully. "Anyhow, that back line won't do, and Vivian won't do at half. And Inky ought to have the place that's given to Hazel."

"Oh, ought he!" snapped Hazel.

"You know he ought."

"I don't know anything of the kind. Come to think of it, I think that's a pretty good list, anyhow," said Hazeldene, a sudden change of opinion that made some of the Removites chuckle.

"We'd better see Mauleverer about it," said Peter Todd. "There must be three changes at the very least, or the game is a goner! We don't want Rookwood to come over here and cackle at us. If we can't beat them we want to give them a tussle, and that team couldn't do it."

"No fear."

"You can't dictate to Mauleverer!" growled Bolsover major. "I'm backing up Mauleverer through thick and thin, and Wharton, too. I think it's jolly decent of Wharton to help a new man along like this."

But Bolsover major was not heeded. Squiff and Peter Todd, Penfold and Tom Brown, drew together to discuss the matter. They were all in the team, so their collective opinion ought to carry weight with their captain. No doubt it would have carried weight with Mauleverer himself. With Harry Wharton the matter was more doubtful.

"Better go and see the ass at once!" said Peter. "Anybody know where the chump is?"

"Most likely on his sofa," said Skinner, and there was a laugh.

"Come on!" said Squiff.

The four juniors proceeded to the Remove passage and looked into No. 12. They found Lord Mauleverer there, and Skinner had been correct, his lordship was on his sofa. No doubt he was taking a well-earned rest after the exertion of eating his dinner.

Harry Wharton was in the study, too. Possibly he anticipated objections to the football list, and considered it judicious to keep Lord Mauleverer under his eye.

Peter and his companions entered, and bestowed their attention on his lordship, taking no heed of Wharton. Officially, at least, he was no longer captain of the Remove.

"Look here, Mauly, this won't do," said Peter.

"What won't do, old bean?"

"That crowd for the match this afternoon?"

"Oh, gad! Ain't you satisfied?"

"No."

"What a life!" sighed Lord Mauleverer. "Toddy, old man, I've had no end of bother with fellows wantin' to butt into the eleven. Don't you come along buttin', there's a good chap!"

Peter Todd stared, as well he might.

"You silly owl! I'm in the eleven!" he roared.

"Oh, gad! Are you?"

"Don't you know who's in your own team?" roared Squiff.

"Yaas. I mean no. Ask Wharton."

"You silly chump!" hooted Tom Brown.

"Oh, gad! Are you buttin' in too, Browney, or do you happen to be in the team already?"

"Oh, my hat! I'm in it."

"Then what are you grousin' about?" asked his lordship plaintively. "By gad, it's a worrying life. Fellows I leave out come here and slang me, and fellows I put in come here and slang me. What's a fellow to do?"

"I'll tell you," said Peter Todd. "If we're to have a chance against Rookwood to-day you've got to make some changes. At least four of your men will have to be dropped."

"Your four?" asked his lordship innocently.

"No!" yelled the four in angry chorus.

"Who are the happy victims, then?"

"Bolsover, Stott, Vivian, and Hazeldene. Perhaps you might keep Hazel, he's a good man at times. But three will have to go!"

"You think so?"

"Yes, ass!"

"What do you think, Wharton?"

Wharton smiled.

"It's for you to say, Mauly. Personally, I'm quite satisfied with the team as it stands."

"You see, you chaps!" said Lord Mauleverer. "Wharton is satisfied."

"Wharton's got nothing to do with it."

"Lots, old man. He's taken no end of trouble advisin' me, an' helpin' me through—taken all the trouble on his shoulders, like a really good chap. I dare say he'll give you a hearin' if you talk to him."

"It's not much good talking to Wharton," said Peter Todd, "and I'm dealing with the captain of the Form. You've got us four down to play with your duds, and to bag a licking from Rookwood, and we're not taking any. We're not going to help in bagging a silly beating and getting laughed at. If you play Stott, Bolsover, and Vivian you don't play us."

"Cheek!" said Sir Jimmy Vivian from

the corner of the study. But no one heeded Sir Jimmy.

Lord Mauleverer blinked at the dissatisfied four, and then blinked at Wharton. Then he blinked again at Peter & Co.

"You mean you'll resign?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I suppose we can fill the places, Wharton?"

"Certainly!"

"All serene, then," said his lordship lazily. "Your resignations are accepted, you fellows. Anythin' else?"

There was nothing else. The four objectors were, indeed, too dumbfounded to think of anything else. They left the study with feelings too deep for words.

* * * * * *

Ten minutes later the list stuck on the door of the Rag was amended. Four names had been crossed out, four new names had been written over them. The malcontents had been taken at their word, without a syllable of expostulation, without a hint of compromise or concession. The new list read:

Hazeldene; Bolsover, Stott; Russell, Dutton, Vivian; Ogilvy, Vernon-Smith, Wharton, Mauleverer, Redwing.

The Remove fellows read that list down with deep feelings. Wharton had done the best he could, shifting Hazel into goal, where he had often done well, and putting in Russell, Dutton, Ogilvy, and Redwing—all good men and true, though not in the first line of Remove football talent. The team was a good enough one for a Form match, but no footballing fellow believed it would hold its own against Rookwood. Peter Todd tapped the Bounder on the arm as Smithy read down the list, and shrugged his shoulders over it.

"Smithy, you're not playing with that crowd?" urged Peter.

"Looks like it."

"You're the only first-class man left in it, besides Wharton himself. If you stand out, even he will have to think a bit. He couldn't have the neck to lead a wholly dud team against Rookwood. Smithy, old man, you ought to help now."

The Bounder looked at him and smiled.

"My dear man, do you think that Wharton would surrender an inch if I threatened resignation, as you fellows did?"

"He would have to," growled Peter.

"Well, he wouldn't; he would take me at my word, as he took you."

"Who the thump could he play in your place?"

"Any old thing—Bunter, rather than give way an inch," said the Bounder laughing. "I think I know him a bit better than you do, Toddy. He's got his back up, and he means business—cold business—from the word go, as Fishy puts it. It looks like a licking for us, but I'm going all out to keep down the margin, see?"

"You really think——"

"I know!" said the Bounder tersely.

And the Bounder's name remained in the list.

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## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### The Rookwood Match!

JIMMY SILVER & CO., of Rookwood School, arrived at Greyfriars in cheery spirits, and in blissful ignorance of the exciting events that had been transpiring there. Jimmy Silver came over expecting a hard match, with victory on the knees of the gods, so to speak, little dreaming of the revolution that had taken place in the Remove. The Rookwooders had their first hint that matters were not as usual when they arrived at the gates in their brake from Courtfield Junction. Four juniors were just cycling off in a party—Bob Cherry, Hurree Singh, Johnny Bull and Frank Nugent. They waved their hands cordially at the Rookwood brake as they went, but did not stop. And Jimmy Silver, who knew the Greyfriars fellows well, was rather surprised to see them starting on a cycling spin just then; he would have expected to see at least Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull in the home team.

Harry Wharton met the Rookwooders with a cheery smile and cheery handshakes, and Lord Mauleverer, having made the necessary effort to detach himself from his study sofa, was with him, urbane and courteous as always. On Little Side, Jimmy Silver ran his eye over the Remove footballers, and was a little perplexed. It was obvious that drastic changes had been made in the eleven since the last match, and Jimmy, who had a keen eye for a fellow's form, did not think that the changes had been for the better, on appearances. However, that was no business of his, and he did not give the matter much thought then.

Most of the Remove fellows came down to Little Side to see the game—to see the defeat, rather, as Squiff remarked. Nobody outside the eleven expected to see the Remove win; it was doubtful whether many inside the eleven expected it.

What Wharton thought of his team's prospects certainly could not be read in his face. He looked cheery and cool, just as if he had been backed up by the best team that the Remove could have turned out. And his look did a good deal towards inspiring his men with confidence.

They needed a little inspiration of some kind. They were all keen to play. Even Stott was keen, and indeed had, in his keenness, quarrelled with his old comrades, Skinner and Snoop. But keenness, though a very good thing in football, as in other matters, was not quite enough to win matches. Hazel would not have admitted it for worlds, but he was well aware that he was nothing like Squiff's form between the sticks, and Russell did not pretend to be anything like Todd's, or even Tom Brown's form in the half-way line. Other members had lingering doubts, though they were willing to rely upon the judgment of the skipper who had picked them out to play. Wharton had a manner of cheery confidence as he chatted with his men before the kick-off, which went a long way towards giving them confidence in themselves.

Lord Mauleverer was not troubled with any doubts.

His reliance upon Wharton's judgment was absolute; and in that, Mauly was right. His reliance upon Wharton to give him a fair deal was equally unshaken and unshakable, and in that it was unfortunate that Mauleverer was a little too unsuspicious. That Wharton would leave out men who were wanted, and put in others not their equal in form, at the risk of capturing a defeat, never occurred to Mauleverer's mind. Fellows had told him so, but the suggestion had passed over Mauly's loyal mind like water over a duck's back. He simply could not think anything of the kind concerning a fellow who was his friend, and whom he trusted.

Indeed, no one could have thought anything of the kind of Harry Wharton a few short weeks before.

What Wharton himself thought of his own line of action nobody could guess. But it is fairly certain that he did not realise how his conduct looked in other eyes.

He was going to win the match—Mauleverer's first fixture, as captain of the Remove, was to be a victory. That determination remained fixed in Wharton's mind, even while he was making change after change in the team, rendering victory a more and more remote possibility.

It was almost as if he deemed that, by sheer force of will he could carry matters as he desired, with all the chances against him; and perhaps he avoided considering whither his line of action was leading him. He seemed no longer the Harry Wharton his friends had once known; yet assuredly he would have shrunk from the bare thought of betraying a friend's trust in him. Yet that, in the opinion of many Remove fellows, was precisely what he was doing.

Potter of the Fifth was referee in the match, and Potter, when he came on the ground, glanced over Wharton's men with a curious expression on his face. In the Fifth they had heard something of the troubles in the Remove; though the Fifth, as a senior Form, were too lofty to take much heed of what passed in the Lower Fourth.

"You seem to have left out your friends this time, Wharton," the Fifth-Former remarked to Harry.

"No; they're mostly here, I think," said Harry.

"I mean Cherry—and Bull—and——"

"They're not friends of mine."

"Oh!" said Potter. He stared at Wharton. "I believe I've heard somethin' about a row—not that it matters much what goes on among the fags. But I hope you haven't weakened your team because of rowing with the other kids, Wharton. Fag matches mayn't matter much; but Greyfriars oughtn't to go askin' for a licking."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"It's awfully good of you to ref for us, Potter," he said.

"Eh? Yes! I wasn't speaking about that."

"I was!" said Harry.

Potter stared at him again, and realised that he was snubbed. He coloured a little and turned away—feeling disposed to throw up his refereeship on the spot. Fortunately, he refrained from that. It was time for kick-off now, and the visitors were ready.

The Remove won the toss, and Rookwood were given the wind to kick off against. There was a keen wind, and as Russell remarked to his chum Ogilvy, every little helps. The sides lined up, and round the field, Removites gathered to watch. Peter Todd was there, looking very glum; Tom Brown and Squiff and Penfold stood together, not cheery. Perhaps they rather regretted the method they had adopted to secure changes in the team—it had secured changes that were likely to be disastrous.

For the sake of the school they wanted to see Harry Wharton win; but personally, it is probable that they would not have been sorry to see him overwhelmed by Rookwood.

The home team started well, however. With the wind behind them they came up the field in good style, and there was a tussle before the visitors' goal. Lord Mauleverer, rather to the surprise of the onlookers, played a good game, and

looked like anything but a slacker. His lordship could, if he chose, exert himself; and he knew what was due to the Remove, and he had heroically thrown aside his laziness, and was going "all out." And, further, to the surprise of the Remove fellows, he showed that he knew the game well, and was a useful forward.

Wharton and Vernon-Smith were in great form, and Redwing was steady and reliable. Ogilvy, the new winger, was playing up his very best, and he showed good quality. So far as the front line went, Greyfriars seemed able to hold their own, at least, against the visitors.

But the attack did not materialise; and when the Rookwooders attacked in their turn, it was seen at once that the home defence was weak. Russell, Dutton, and Vivian, the half-backs, simply could not hold the Rookwooders. Russell and Dutton were useful players—and Sir Jimmy Vivian had shown promise—but they were nowhere near the form required. And behind them, Bolsover major and Stott seemed nowhere.

They were both triers—Bolsover major was full of zest, desirous to show that he could play up for school as well as Johnny Bull or Mark Linley; Stott seemed to have dropped all his slacking ways, under Wharton's influence; conscious, too, that the sneering looks of Skinner and Snoop were upon him from behind the goal. They did their best—but the Rookwooders handled them with ease.

Jimmy Silver & Co. came through the defence almost like a knife through cheese, and Hazel, in goal, was given some hard work. Fortunately, he was in good form, and he saved and saved again, and a lucky fluke enabled Bolsover major to clear to mid-field, and the assault petered out.

"Holdin' them, what?" Lord Mauleverer grinned to Wharton, as they went after the ball again.

"Yes, rather!" answered Harry.

But his heart was not in that answer. It was borne in upon his mind that he had taken too many risks with the eleven, and that success in that match was a possibility so remote that it might as well be counted out.

He set his teeth at the thought.

A win meant that he could carry on—nothing succeeds like success. A win by the new eleven—and many of the Remove would agree that it had been, after all, high time for new blood in the team—high time that the "old gang" were forced to let go their grip on the games. But a defeat—especially such a crushing defeat as seemed likely—— As nothing succeeds like success, so nothing fails like failure. A defeat meant that the whole Remove would attribute the failure to Wharton's drastic changes in the team—and Mauleverer's subservience to the late captain.

Harry Wharton had, in fact, staked all on success—failure meant the breaking-up of his whole plan of campaign. And with success so important to him he had allowed his arrogant pride to eliminate nearly all the factors of success. He realised it now—rather too late for the realisation to be of much service to him.

His teeth set hard.

He would win that match—he must win it; somehow, anyhow, he would snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

And the onlookers could not help remarking to one another that Harry Wharton was playing the game of his life; and that he had never shown himself so excellent a leader. By sheer force of his personality he seemed to be pulling together his patchy team, and most of them played up in a way that surprised themselves.

It was close on half-time when Mornington, of Rookwood, put the ball into the home goal; the only score before the whistle went. Rookwood were one up; and Wharton's efforts, at least, had kept the margin down. For on their form Jimmy Silver & Co. should really have been three or four goals to the good by that time.

Still, the fact remained that they were one up; and the change of ends would give them the wind behind them. And Wharton's hopes of a win, faint enough already, were reduced almost to zero.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Licked to the Wide!

HERBERT VERNON-SMITH sucked a lemon, and smiled at Harry Wharton in a rather cynical way. It had been a gruelling half, but Wharton looked fresh enough—the Bounder almost as fresh. It was not so with the rest of the team. Stott had bellows to mend, Lord Mauleverer was obviously fatigued, and other fellows showed only too plainly the strain of the hard fight. Wharton, however, still wore a cheery expression, and his look was confident—he was not the captain to discourage his men in the middle of the fray.

"You've overdone it a bit, old bean," the Bounder remarked.

"Overdone it?" repeated Wharton.

"A couple more good men might have pulled us through," said Smithy. "I'd give a good deal for Bob Cherry at half, and Johnny Bull in the back row—what?"

"I don't agree."

The Bounder laughed lightly.

"You mean, you won't agree," he said.

"Just as you choose."

"Oh, I don't mind," yawned the Bounder. "You've landed us with a beating, and if you're satisfied——"

"Don't let the fellows hear you croaking, Smithy."

"They can't hear me, and it wouldn't make much difference. Don't tell me that you're expectin' to beat Rookwood."

"I know they're one up. We beat St. Jim's once when they were three up in the first half."

"Not in these trousers!" grinned the Bounder. "Not with the collection you've got on the field at present!"

"Oh, rot!"

"Rot, is it?" said Vernon-Smith sharply. "I'm half-sorry that I didn't take Toddy's advice, and back out of this crew of foozlers."

"Back out now, if you like," said Wharton contemptuously. "I'm not asking you to keep on."

"By gad! I've a jolly good mind——" said the Bounder, with a deep breath.

"Please yourself!"

"You're a hard man to deal with, Wharton! It might pay you to remember that pride goes before a fall!"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"Well, I'm not backin' out!" said the Bounder. "Not quite my style to desert my side in the middle of a game. I'm goin' all out to keep the margin down; but you won't see me in your team

"I'm not captain of the Remove now," said Mauly. Wharton started. "What? You haven't resigned?" "Yaas!" "You fool!" exclaimed Wharton. "That's the right name for me," replied Mauly, with a touch of bitterness. "You can't call me a bigger fool than I call myself. I've let you use me to pay off old scores against your old friends!" (See Chapter 8.)

again Wharton, till you make up your mind to play the game."

And with that, Smithy turned his back.

Pheep!

The whistle went, and the sides lined up again.

The attack came from Rookwood, and the home defence was sorely tried at once. Wharton seemed here, there, and everywhere. Skinner remarked to Snoop that he was doing most of the work for the halves, and some for the backs, and wondered whether he would soon be dropping into goal to give Hazel a leg-up, at which Sidney James Snoop sniggered.

Greyfriars held the enemy, and a chance came to the forwards at last. And it had a success that the onlookers were far from expecting. The ball went into the visitors' goal from the foot of Herbert Vernon-Smith—bang into the net, and there was a roar from the Greyfriars crowd.

"Goal!"

"Good old Smithy!"

"Goal! Goal!"

Harry Wharton gave the Bounder a bright look as they walked back to the centre of the field.

"Good man, Smithy!" he said.

The Bounder laughed.

"A flash in the pan," he said. "They won't let us do that again!"

And Wharton felt that Smithy's words were true. That goal had been too lucky for a repetition of it to be hoped for.

But the score was equal now, with twenty minutes to go. A draw was the next best thing to a victory; and if the home team could draw with Rookwood, at all events it could not be said in the Remove that Wharton had knowingly taken a losing side into the field.

From that moment Wharton was fighting hard for a draw. He had abandoned the faint hope of victory.

But with twenty minutes ahead of them, the Rookwooders were not likely to be bottled up by a team little more than half their strength, in spite of the superhuman exertions of that team's captain.

The next goal came swiftly, and it came to Erroll of Rookwood.

"Two up!" said Squiff to Tom Brown. "We sha'n't equalise again, Browney!"

And the New Zealand junior shook his head.

Again the Rookwood forwards came tearing through. By this time, Stott was a helpless bundle of gasping futility; and Bolsover major, though still good enough in the wind, was in an almost dizzy state, not in the least knowing how to handle lightning play like that of the Rookwooders. Squiff, in goal, would have saved the shot that beat Hazel to the wide, but it was Hazel who was there, and the leather went in.

"Three for Rookwood!" grinned Skinner. "How's that for high, Snoopey?"

"All over bar yelling!" said Snoop.

"There they go again!"

Rookwood had tasted blood now, so to speak. They came on again in great style, and Wharton's herculean efforts, backed up manfully by the Bounder, did not suffice to stem the tide. Almost desperately Wharton played up, and never had he been better—seldom so good—but Soccer was not a one-man game. Rookwood came through again, the halves were powerless, and the backs simply nowhere, and the ball went in for a fourth goal. Five minutes later it was in again.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Peter Todd. "Oh my Aunt Matilda! What sort of a walloping is this going to be?"

"A giddy record!" said Squiff.

"Something for the Rookwood chaps to write home about!" said Tom Brown. "There'll be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth over this here, though."

"It's all Wharton's work!" said Squiff fiercely. "Can't he quarrel with his old pals without mucking up the football?"

"Apparently not!" said Peter Todd, shrugging his shoulders.

"And that fool, Mauly——"

"That utter ass, Mauly——"

"Even Mauly will see, I suppose, that Wharton has been making a fool of him, after this," said Penfold.

"Yes, rather!"

"Oh scissors! There they go again!"

Mornington of Rookwood had put the leather in once more. The Rookwood score was six to one, with minutes still to go. The game had, in fact, resolved itself into a walk-over for the visitors; the home team knew that they could not touch them, and that knowledge helped to demoralise the hapless defenders.

The match was now as Skinner put it, a Rookwood procession. Only the final whistle could stop the piling up of goals, and only the fact that the finish was so near, could save the Remove from such a defeat as would make them the laughing-stock of the school.

Almost on time the ball was in again, and Potter of the Fifth grinned sardonically as he blew the whistle. Seven goals to one was a score seldom achieved on a Greyfriars ground.

"Well," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell of Rookwood, to his chum, Jimmy Silver. "Well, this was some game, old man! Blessed if I can believe the fellows will swallow it when we tell them."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Greyfriars aren't what they were," he remarked. "Wharton himself seems better than ever; but what could he do with that team? They ought to keep to Form matches if they can't put a stronger team than that in the field to meet a school side."

"Some of 'em seem to be dying," said Lovell. "Look at that chap hanging on to a goal-post!"

"That chap" was Stott, winded to the wide, and too far gone to care a rap what anyone thought of his exhibition.

The Rookwood fellows were smiling a good deal as they came off. But among the Removites, looks were black and growing blacker. Lord Mauleverer had a very sombre expression on his usually cheery face. Wharton made a movement towards him as the footballers came off. His lordship did not seem to see it, and he turned away.

Wharton stopped, and a flush came into his cheeks. He did not need telling that Mauleverer's eyes had been opened by the outcome of that match, and that he stood no longer where he had stood, in the esteem of the captain of the Remove.

It gave him a pang. Mauleverer had trusted him—had staked all on his trust in him; and this was how the trust had been requited. For the moment, as Mauly avoided him, it came like a blinding flash of revelation to Wharton what he had done, and how it looked in all eyes not blinded by arrogance and wilful pride—all eyes but his own.

But it was only for a moment. His face hardened again into indifference; like Pharaoh of old, he hardened his heart.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Wrathy!

"SEVEN to one!"

"Seven! My hat!"

"What a score! What a game!"

"Seven!"

"Shame!"

There was excitement in the Rag after the Rookwood men had departed from Greyfriars. There was excitement and there was wrath, and there was deep resentment. Such a defeat was unknown in the records of the Remove football club. Indeed, Temple & Co. of the Fourth, whom the Removites professed to regard as fumblers at football, had never been beaten seven to one. Even in Second and Third Form matches, where the footer was often wild and woolly, a score of seven was uncommon at least.

So the Remove fellows raged.

They prided themselves on being a footballing Form. They prided themselves on playing better matches than Temple's crowd, who claimed to be the genuine junior eleven of Greyfriars. They were sportsmen who could take a beating cheerfully. But not such a beating as this. When a team was beaten by a margin of this extent there was something wrong that had to be set right. And there was cause to rage.

A win would have justified Wharton, or at least enabled him to carry on. A defeat was fairly sure to let him down. A crushing, overwhelming defeat like this was absolute ruin to all his plans. There was hardly a fellow in the Remove who did not say, or, rather, shout, that it was all Wharton's fault, that he had asked for it, that he had wanted it, that he didn't care whether the Remove were defeated or not, so-long as he could have his own arrogant way. And the vials of wrath were poured also upon Lord Mauleverer's inoffensive head. What sort of a captain was he who allowed himself to be run by a fellow who openly made a fool of him, and landed him in this?

In the Rag the Removites met and compared notes and opinions, and encouraged one another in wrath.

Temple, Dabney, & Co. of the Fourth Form strolled in to join in the discussion. It was no affair of theirs, certainly; but they were so pleased that they couldn't help butting in. This, according to Cecil Reginald Temple, was the end of Remove cheek and impudence. They thought they could fix up outside matches just as if they were a school team, and not merely a Form team; and this was how it turned out—seven goals to one!

The Remove were in no mood for badinage from Temple & Co. Cecil Reginald and his friends had, in fact, understudied the fools who rush in where angels fear to tread.

Badinage soon became hot argument, and hot argument developed into a scuffle, and a scuffle into a regular Form fight. Temple, Dabney, & Co. were driven ignominiously out of the Rag, and chased along the passage, and would have been chased home to their studies in the Fourth, but for the intervention of Sixth Form prefects with whacking ashplants, who put a very speedy end to the conflict.

Then the Remove fellows forgathered in the Rag again, and the angry discussion of the match went on. Harry Wharton was not there. Lord Mauleverer was not there. But nearly every other fellow in the Remove was there—all angry and indignant. Even fellows well known to care nothing for games

shared, or affected to share, in the general feeling. Billy Bunter was loud and emphatic; Skinner and Snoop made their voices heard. It was, indeed, sheer pleasure to Skinner, who saw that "his Magnificence," as he called Wharton, was down at last—with a fall from which he was not likely to recover.

Even members of the losing team seemed as angry as the other fellows. Stott was almost at his last gasp from exhaustion after the match. He was jeered at and sneered at by his pals, Skinner and Snoop. He was an object of derision to all the Form. His defence took the form of heaping the blame on Wharton.

"What did he play me for, then?" demanded Stott. "When a fellow's picked out to play he plays, I suppose. Is he supposed to consider first whether his captain knows what he's about?"

"Something in that," agreed Bob Cherry. Bob Cherry & Co. had returned from their spin just after the Rookwooders left, and learned the disastrous result of the match with deep feelings.

"I should jolly well think so," said Stott. "I never butted into the team like Bolsover. I was asked to play."

"That ass Bolsover——" growled Johnny Bull.

Bolsover major had little to say for himself. With all his high opinion of himself as a footballer, he could not think that he had stood up well to the Rookwooders. The game had been miles above his form, and he knew it.

"Well, Mauly put me in, and Wharton confirmed it," he said sheepishly. "I did my best. Anyhow, somebody had to play, I suppose, and the backs had been dropped."

"That's so."

"That's how I feel about it," said Russell. "I've never claimed to be Browney's form at half. But a man was wanted when Brown stood out."

"Same here," said Ogilvy. "I'd have given my place up to Inky willingly enough. But Inky was out."

"That ass Mauly——"

"'Tain't any good blaming Mauly," said Sir Jimmy Vivian loyally. "He relied on Wharton, and you all know it."

"And Wharton let him down!" roared Bolsover major. "You fellows know I should have done better with Johnny Bull or Linley next to me instead of that foozling ass Stott."

"I jolly well know now that I oughtn't to have been in the team," added Sir Jimmy Vivian. "Wharton ought never to have put me in. It was making a fool of a chap."

"Making fools of all of us!" growled Hazeldene. "You fellows keep on telling me that Squiff ought to have been in goal. Well, I never turned him out, did I? He was out, and I suppose the goal wasn't to be left empty!"

Indeed, it was clear that members of the overwhelmed eleven felt more sore about it than fellows who had been excluded. They felt that they had been placed in a false position, given a task beyond their powers by a captain who should have known better, who, indeed, did know better, who had placed his own arrogant pride before all other considerations, and let them down in consequence.

"There's one thing jolly certain!" said Johnny Bull. "Mauly's going to be chucked out of the captaincy."

"Hear, hear!"

"We've had enough of Mauly as skipper, with Wharton pulling the strings behind the scenes."

"Yes, rather."

"Now you're coming to business," said Peter Todd. "Mauly will have to go. He's a good chap, and can't help being an ass; but he's got to go. There will have to be a new election."

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows, if you'd voted for me——"

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"We'd better see Mauly about it," said Peter. "If he chooses to resign that's the best way."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he comes!"

Lord Mauleverer entered the Rag.

All eyes were turned upon him at once.

His lordship was looking concerned and troubled. No doubt he had been thinking a good deal since that unhappy match with Rookwood. There were hisses and "boos" from some of the fellows as he came in, and Mauleverer flushed.

"Well, what have you got to say for yourself?" boomed Bolsover major.

"Rag him!" shouted Skinner.

"Shut up, Skinner!"

It was evident that his lordship had something to say, and had come to the Rag to say it. Peter Todd called for silence.

"Go it, Mauly!" said Frank Nugent encouragingly.

Mauleverer cleared his throat.

"You chaps, I'm sorry," he said. "You elected me captain, and I've made an awful hash of it. I'm sorry. There's only one thing left for me to do—resign. That's what I'm doin'."

"Resignation accepted, nem con," grinned Skinner.

"Shut up, Skinner, you cad!"



"It's not your fault, Mauly, old man," said Bob Cherry.

"We all knew that," said Squiff. "You're rather an ass, Mauly, but you were let down by a fellow you trusted, and we all know it."

Mauleverer winced.

"I'm not sayin' anythin' of the kind," he answered. "The responsibility is mine, and I can only say I'm sorry I've made such a hash of things. I resign the captaincy. I had a talk with Wingate the other day. He gave me a hint to resign, and I didn't take any notice. He told me that if I went there wouldn't be a new election. The captaincy would go to the next on the voting list at the last election. That's Cherry. I wish now that Cherry had got in last time. Anyhow, I resign, and he steps into my shoes. I'm goin' to Mr. Quelch now to tell him I've chucked it, and I expect he'll put a paper on the board. That's all."

With that Lord Mauleverer walked out of the Rag.

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## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Down and Out!

HARRY WHARTON was in his study, No. 1 in the Remove.

With his hands in his pockets, and a deep line in his brow, he was pacing up and down the study.

His strenuous exertions in the Rookwood match had tired him, but he did not seem conscious of fatigue.

His mood was gloomy enough.

His plans had fallen in ruins about him—and conscience, which would not be quite silenced, told him that it was no more than he had deserved.

In that gloomy hour there was regret in his heart—perhaps repentance. Possibly, if his old friends had come to him then they would have found him in a chastened and softened mood, prepared to admit his fault and to do his best to atone for it. But his old friends did not come—they did not think of coming. Wharton had made it only too clear that he was done with them, and they had taken him at his word. And in their present anger and resentment they were not likely to make overtures of reconciliation, if he had been willing to accept them.

He was alone in his study—and he was left severely alone.

He knew that the Remove were holding an excited meeting in the Rag, he knew that the storm had burst. He would not have been surprised at a hostile demonstration in the Remove passage. But no one came.

Many thoughts passed through his troubled mind as he paced his study. He was down—down and out! His power in the Form was a thing of the past. He realised that only too clearly. Once or twice he glanced towards the door, when there was a footstep outside, with a curious expression on his face. If Bob Cherry's cheery visage had looked in then, with its old friendly expression——

But no one came.

The softened mood passed. After all, perhaps everything was not lost; it was still possible, at least, to put up a fight. At least he would never admit defeat while a chance remained. His face hardened, and the stubborn pride which had been his undoing awoke again. His thoughts took a more bitter turn.

He left the study at last, and went along the Remove passage to Study No. 12. In that study he had been, of late, more at home than in his own; he wondered whether that was over

now. Anyhow, he had to see Mauleverer and ascertain how matters stood.

Lord Mauleverer and Sir Jimmy Vivian were in the study. Both of them looked at Wharton as he stood in the doorway, without speaking. Vivian flushed a little, but Mauleverer's face was cold and calm.

"Well?" said Harry.

"Do you want anything?" asked Mauleverer.

"Only a few words."

"Come in, then."

Wharton came in.

It was not like Harry Wharton to avoid a fellow's glance. But somehow he did not like meeting Mauleverer's clear, steady eyes just then. He sat on the edge of the study table with an air of carelessness.

"We came rather a mucker to-day," he said.

"Yaas."

"One swallow doesn't make a summer, though."

"No."

"Oh, cut it out!" broke out Sir Jimmy Vivian sharply.

Wharton glanced at him.

"What does that mean, Vivian?" he asked.

"You've treated Mauly rottenly, you've treated me rottenly, and all the Remove, too," said Vivian. "You needn't give me any of your black looks—they don't scare me, I can tell you! You put me in the eleven and made a fool of me!"

"Oh!" said Harry.

"You led Mauly by the nose——"

"Chuck it, Jimmy!" said Lord Mauleverer.

"Well, you know he did—and he knows it!" said Sir Jimmy sulkily. "It was a rotten game all along. Now I suppose he's come here to give you soft sawder. Well, it's no good to me!"

"I don't think I should waste any on you, Vivian," said Wharton scornfully. "You don't count."

He turned to Lord Mauleverer again.

"If you've got anything to complain of, Mauly——"

"Nothin'."

"You don't seem so pleased to see me as usual," said Harry sarcastically.

"I'm not."

"Well, that's candid, anyhow."

"What's the good of talkin', Wharton?" said Lord Mauleverer quietly. "I'm not complainin', and I'm not goin' to reproach you. I suppose you knew what you were doin', and had your reasons, and so on. I wouldn't like to judge any chap harshly—but you might have gone a bit easier with a fellow who trusted you."

Wharton winced.

"Do you mean that I've let you down?"

"What else do you call it?" said Mauleverer. "I trusted you. I thought you were helpin' me to make a success of my job—a job I ought never to have taken on, only—as all the fellows say—I'm rather an ass, I suppose. I meant well, anyhow, and I thought I'd make good, with you backin' me up. I'm not keen on football, and I dare say I should have forgotten there was a Rookwood match at all—on my own account. But all the fellows are keen about it. They think it's a big thing. I've let them down—and I never meant to. But you must have known that the team we put into the field was no good against Rookwood."

"I thought we might pull it off."

"I dare say you hoped so. Put it plain. Would you have played that team last term when you were captain?"

Wharton did not answer.

"I was relyin' on your judgment. I wouldn't listen to a word when the fellows told me you were usin' me to pay off old grudges. But it's pretty clear now. Mind, I'm not complainin'. I know very well that I ought to have played the game off my own bat, or not played it at all. It's my own fault, I know that. But—you were dealin' with a fellow who trusted you, and you might have let him off a bit easier."

Wharton drew a sharp breath.

"That's how you look at it?"

"Yaas."

"One swallow doesn't make a summer. You're captain of the Remove—even if the fellows are growling and grousing now. We've lost matches before without all this fuss."

"Not in the same way. And I'm not captain of the Remove now."

Wharton started.

"What! What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. Did you think the fellows would let me keep the job after what's happened, or that I'd want to keep it?"

"You haven't resigned?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yaas."

"You—you fool!"

Lord Mauleverer's lip curled.

"That's the right name for me," he said, with a touch of bitterness. "You can't call me a bigger fool than I call myself! But not for resignin'! That was all that was left."

"You could have made a fight for it, at least."

"Made a fight—to keep a job I'm not fit for? To keep on bein' used to pay off your old scores against your old friends, and to put you in a position to defy Quelchy? I may be a fool, as you say—but not quite such a dashed fool as that!"

It was evident that the scales had fallen from Lord Mauleverer's eyes. He had been slow to see—but now that he saw, he saw very clearly indeed. Wharton bit his lip hard.

"You've actually resigned, then?" he asked.

"Yaas."

"Then there'll be a new election."

Lord Mauleverer smiled grimly.

"There won't! The captain of the school thinks there's been enough of your wire-pullin' in the Remove. The captaincy goes to the next on the list of the votin'. That's Bob Cherry."

Wharton remembered Wingate's words the previous evening. He had no doubt that Mauleverer's statement was correct.

"Not that an election would make much difference, I think," added Lord Mauleverer. "There were four candidates last time—and Toddy and Smithy were next to nowhere. Bob Cherry ran me rather close, and if there was a new election, with the same lot standin', it's pretty certain that he would pull it off. You wouldn't be able to run a dud candidate, the same as you did before. I'm the only fellow in the Remove who's ass enough to be used like that, and you can't use me twice!"

Wharton's eyes glinted.

This was very new language from Lord Mauleverer.

"Anyhow, there won't be an election," said Mauleverer. "I've handed in my resignation, and Mr. Quelch will put a notice on the board this evenin'; I dare say it's there already if you want to see it. And now, if you've got nothin' more to say, Wharton——" Mauleverer paused.

Harry Wharton slid off the table and walked out of Mauleverer's study without another word.

He went downstairs and stopped at the notice-board.

There was already a paper there in Mr. Quelch's handwriting, and a number of fellows were reading it. Some of them gave Wharton dark looks as he came up, but he did not heed them. He glanced at the paper. It was brief, but to the point. It announced that Lord Mauleverer had resigned the captaincy of the Form, which, therefore, passed to the candidate next on the list of voting at the late election—Robert Cherry.

Wharton walked away with a set face.

Bob Cherry was captain of the Remove—that matter was definitely settled. Harry Wharton no longer counted; if any distinction remained to him, it was that of being the most unpopular fellow in the Form.

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## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### The Downward Path!

"WHAT next?" asked Skinner.

A good many fellows in the Remove, as well as Harold Skinner, were asking that question.

Others fellows thought, or hoped at least, that the trouble was over; that the term which had begun so stormily for the Greyfriars Remove would run on peacefully now. Wharton, the stormy-petrel of the Form, was down and out; there was nothing left for him but submission to the inevitable. Bob Cherry was captain of the Remove; and he was not a captain to be fooled or trifled with.

But Skinner, at least, did not believe that the trouble was over. Perhaps, in his case, the wish was father to the thought. Skinner had one of those natures which seem to thrive in troubled times.

"His Highness isn't taking all this lying down, you know," Skinner remarked sapiently in Study No. 11. "Not his style. Something's bound to happen."

"I don't see what he can do," observed Snoop. "He's down and out, so far as I can see. He hasn't a friend left in the Form. Even Mauleverer has turned him down."

"He hasn't a kick left in him," said Stott.

Skinner shook his head.

"He will kick—hard!" he answered. "Of course, Cherry is a very different kind of skipper from Mauly; he won't stand any humbug. But he won't have a peaceful time, I fancy. There's talk of leaving Wharton out of the footer; the fellows can't get over that Rookwood bizney. Some of them have been talking of sending him to Coventry. Mauleverer never speaks to him now. Like jolly old Lucifer, you know, he's fallen from his giddy high estate, and great was the fall thereof. I'm jolly glad, of course; I never could stand the chap. But the thing isn't over; and what I want to know is, what next?"

Skinner was quite curious upon that point. But if Harry Wharton had any intention of keeping up the struggle he seemed to give no sign of it.

Bob Cherry had stepped into his place as captain of the Form, without a dissentient voice. Everybody was glad to see him there; even Peter Todd and the Bounder, who had contested the late

election. That Bob was rather too easy-going for the position was possible; but certainly there was no such weakness in his case as in Mauleverer's.

Lord Mauleverer had stepped down thankfully enough—glad to be done with captaining the Remove. He was of too forgiving a nature to nourish a grudge against anyone, and after a few days he had forgiven, and probably forgotten, Wharton's conduct; but the friendship that had grown up between the two was over. Mauleverer dropped back at once into his usual slack and lazy ways; and Harry Wharton no longer came along the Remove passage to Study No. 12. He was not, indeed, "persona grata" in any Remove study; the Rookwood affair had turned all the Form against him.

The verdict upon him was that he had not "played the game," and that was enough for the Remove.

It was a hard verdict, for certainly it had never been clear to Wharton's mind that he had failed to play the game. But if it was not clear, it was because pride and obstinacy had blinded him.

Most of the fellows were civil enough to him; a suggestion of sending him to Coventry had been stamped out at once by Bob Cherry and his friends. But there was little cordiality. If any fellow was still friendly it was Vernon-Smith. There was something that appealed to the Bounder's peculiar nature in a fellow following his own wilful way, doggedly obstinate and unbending, regardless of consequences.

Wharton was often seen with the Bounder in these days—the only fellow in the Remove with whom he was on anything like friendly terms. Frank Nugent sometimes noticed them together with a clouded brow. Wharton was his oldest and best chum at Greyfriars, but Nugent had many wrongs to remember—the friendship was over. Still, he felt a pang sometimes at seeing his former friend on the downward path. And chumming with the Bounder marked a definite stage on the way down.

And Skinner & Co.—rather to their own surprise—began to find that they had something in common with the fellow they had always disliked and derided. That alone might have proved to Wharton that he was on the wrong path had he chosen to take heed of warnings.

In the Form-room he was on the worst of terms with Mr. Quelch.

The Remove master was not a man to be trifled with; and open rebellion was not practicable. But from Wharton he had to expect exactly as much opposition as could possibly be offered, and precisely as much "cheek" as circumstances allowed. Skinner, and other malcontents in the Form were only too glad to see somebody "standing up to Quelchy," as they described it, and they began to look on the fallen captain of the Remove as one of their own sort—one of the right sort, as Sidney James Snoop put it.

So Skinner—while still wondering "What next?"—began to be quite friendly, and Snoop and Stott followed his example; and Wharton, on his side, did not rebuff them. It was something to have a little of his old influence, if only over the slackers and black sheep of the Form.

It was said of old that one cannot touch pitch without being defiled. Wharton's present company was the worst he could possibly have had, in his resentful and reckless humour. His new associations could not fail to have some effect upon him, and the effect was wholly bad.

With all his faults he had never been called a slacker; but he was dropping into slack ways, in the style of Skinner & Co. His "prep" was always carelessly done—if it was sufficient to enable him to scrape through in the Form-room, he seemed satisfied; and when it did not enable him to scrape through, he took his punishment with cool stoicism.

The fellow who had seldom, or never, been known to miss a games practice, now began to miss them regularly. Whether it was slacking, or a desire to disregard the new captain of the Form, Wharton kept clear of the junior ground, and had never touched a football since the Rookwood match.

Bob Cherry was not a brilliant captain, but he was a dutiful one. On compulsory days he had to see that the Remove fellows turned up for games practice. A certain amount of latitude was allowed; and Bob undoubtedly was very easy with Bunter and other shirkers. Wharton he had never expected to be a shirker; and he could not help suspecting that his former friend was "out" for trouble. For which reason, and perhaps others, the new captain of the Remove turned a blind eye to him; and if Bob alone had been concerned in the matter, Wharton might have steered clear of games practice till the end of the term. But Wingate of the Sixth had to be reckoned with. And one Wednesday Bob Cherry received a summons into the study of the captain of the school.

Bob marched in cheerily; but he found Wingate looking rather grim. Wingate, as Head of the Games, had to keep a supervising eye on all the Form captains; and in his opinion he had had quite enough trouble with the Remove—a rather unimportant Form in the eyes of the captain of the school.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here I am, Wingate!" announced Bob cheerily, as he tramped into the Greyfriars captain's study.

"Games practice for the Remove this afternoon," said Wingate. "I shall give you a look-in for half an hour—three to three-thirty."

"Good!"

"You'll see that your men are all there, Cherry."

"Right-ho!"

"I've noticed that Wharton has cut games for the last week or two."

"Oh! You've noticed that?" stammered Bob.

"Yes. What's the matter with him?"

"Nothing that I know of."

"Well, then, why haven't you put a stop to it?"

Bob coloured uncomfortably.

"You—you see, Wingate——"

"I think I see," said the captain of Greyfriars. "You feel diffident about using your authority over the fellow who was captain of your Form a few weeks ago. You're afraid of being misunderstood, and suspected of swank, and so on. Is that it?"

(*Continued on page* 16.)

**There was a roar as Bunter shot on to the study carpet. "Yaroooooh!" "Now, if you want kicking, Bunter," said Bob Cherry grimly, "say the word. Otherwise get off and change quick." "Beast!" Bob Cherry bestowed a gentle kick on the sprawling Owl, and there was another roar.** (*See Chapter* 11.)

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# HOW TO HUNT!

**Suggestions from the pen of Robert Cherry.**

I MUST admit that I don't know a lot about hunting, and when Wharton asked me to write an article about 'How To Hunt,' I made it my business to pick up a few tips. Some of them were useful, some humorous, and some frankly ridiculous.

Bunter insists that if you let your horse trot up to an obstacle, have a look at it, and he shows you that he doesn't like it, the thing to do is to find an obstacle that appeals better to the horse's fancy. It's ridiculous, for where on earth would the rest of the field be by the time you'd done that?

Tom Brown, who happens to be something of a hunter, told me that the best way to catch a mouse is to tie up a cat by the mouse hole, and starve the beggar out—the mouse not the cat! He may be right, but what about cruelty to animals? I strongly suspect Tom Brown was pulling my leg.

Fisher T. Fish was voluble on the question. He started off by talking of corners, and bears and bulls, and it was some time before I realised he was referring to the hunting of dollars. Fisby never thinks of anything but dollars, it seems.

Wun Lung has hundreds of ways of trapping. He's as cunning as a fox, and as wily as a possum. I could fill a book with an account of his methods if he would only sit down beside me and talk decent English! He told me that the best way to hunt rats was to put three saucers on the ground, at intervals of three feet. One of the saucers should contain tea, another milk, and the third melted sugar. All you have to do is wait until Master Rat wants a drink of tea, watch him go the saucer of tea, and swot him with a stick when he moves between the saucers for milk or sugar! He looked so innocent when telling me that I really don't know if it really is a good way of catching the beastly things.

Hunting rabbits appears to be a pretty good sport. You wait until the evening, when Brer Rabbit comes out for his evening stroll. You then block up his front door, fill in the back door, and wait until he comes home. I didn't find out what you have to do if Brer Rabbit is making a night out of it somewhere or other!

Personally, I think I shall go in for hunting lions. I do know how to do that. You simply have to bait the ground with a goat or a sheep, and when Leo pops up, you pull the trigger of your gun. That's easy, and doesn't require much exertion. Of course, if the lion happens to sniff you before he does the bait, things might get exciting!

Trapping bears in pits is another simple way of hunting. But blessed if I can see much sport in that. Fancy calling digging a huge hole, in ground sometimes as hard as rock, sport! That's all it amounts to, for when the hole is dug there is nothing to do but cover the mouth of the hole with sticks and foliage.

No—I shall stick to lions, hoping that lions won't stick to me!

* * * * *

Skinner's pretty good at hunting, only he doesn't realise it. He had the temerity the other day to put treacle in Quelchy's best Sunday topper. You should have seen Quelchy's face when he jammed the topper on his learned head just before chapel parade. Yes, and you should have seen Skinner's face when Quelchy taxed him with it on Monday. The Remove japer had all Sunday to think about the lamming that was coming his way, for Form masters are forbidden to cane recalcitrant juniors on the Sabbath. Good word that!

Skinner was hunting for a hiding, and he got it.

Bunter is very keen on hunting, too. I caught him an hour ago, nosing into my study cupboard. He was hunting for a snack, and he got a whack instead—in fact, he got several!

# EDITORIAL!

**By Harry Wharton.**

HUNTING is always fascinating, and methinks my hundreds of readers will appreciate a special number dealing with this subject. Hunting foxes is, of course, the best of all hunting, but there are many other things for which one can hunt and find plenty of fun and sport.

There are hunts which are not popular—Loder, hunting for a fag, for instance. Skinner, hunting for a fag of the other variety, provides another example. The Head, hunting for an excuse to give the school a day's holiday, though, is always wished the best of luck by all and sundry!

Dicky Nugent was to have written us a story, but he tells me that he hunted two days for an idea and didn't trap one, so he's boiled something or other down and called it an article. Dick Penfold would have been a great asset, and I expected a ballad from him, but I did not like to ask him to spend his time in writing this week, because he's had a lot of work to do for his father.

However, taking everything into consideration, I am extremely pleased with my staff, contributors, and myself. I only hope you will be as pleased.

I think I ought to add a word of caution. Some of my contributors have told amazing stories of how to hunt. I shouldn't advise my readers to take them too seriously, or trouble may visit the happy family. Billy Bunter's article, for instance, is meant to be serious, but I cannot imagine anybody but W. G. B. looking at it in anything but a humorous spirit.

Cheerio, and long may you hunt!

HARRY WHARTON.

## STOP PRESS!

Wingate of the Sixth is hunting for the japer who boned his birthday cake.

* * *

Quelchy is hunting up facts for his "History of Greyfriars." Would-be interrupters take note!

* * *

Skinner of the Remove is hunting for a fag, of the cigarette variety. Loder of the Sixth is hunting for a fag to run down to the village tobacconist's. Two of a kind!

* * *

Coker is hunting for a thick ear. I believe someone has punctured both tyres of his stink-bike, and he's accused Potter of the dirty deed. If he goes on chinwagging much longer he'll be knocked as flat as his rotten tyres.

# In at the Death!

A true story of the Hunting Field!

By William George Bunter M.H.

MANY reeders will wonder what "M.H.," which I am entitled to place at the end of my name, means. These too letters stand for "Masterly Hunter," and to have the write to put them after my name I had propperly to go through the mill.

Ignorant people will tell you that M.H. stands for Master of the Hownds. Don't take any notiss of them—they're the sort of people who will tell you that M.C. after an officer's name stands for Military Cross, when everybody knows that M.C. stands for Master of Cerrymoanies. Pure ignorance, of course.

How did I earn my M.H.?

It is tolled, reeders, in a few words. But words—oh, useless words! How can they deskribe to you what I had to pass through, what mortal injuries I had to suffer, what mental angwish I eggsperienced before I won through to the herroick end? There are no words, but I am going to tell you.

It was at Bunter Court, and the frost had gone at the first approach of the son. It was an ideel mourning, being black as pitch when the hownds were brought from the drawring-room. (We never kept dumb animals outer-doors.) My father was clad, like myself, in a sumptuous red jacket, with trowsers to match in white.

We had dissolved overnight to start the Hunt at a Coppiss called William's Coppiss, being named after myself, and there we started. The field was led off at a merry tune by a nimble horses and the agile hownds, and it was not long before we struck a scent. It was so clear a scent that everybody spotted it when I pointed it out to them, and with a wild "Hurrah!" we set off at a gallop.

Now, there is a write way and rong way to take a fence. Some people gallop straight up to the fence, and let there horse take them over. That's rong—most emfatically rong. The proper way is to take your horse up to the fence, or hurdle, or wall, or hedge, or ditch, or obstacle, and let him have a look at it. If he doesn't like it, take him to another. Follow this advice, and you'll never be throan.

I did that, with the result that I was one of the four hunters left when the first obstacle was left behind. The remaining members were kissing the ditch.

I looked at the other three. My father, of course, was one of them. The others were Colonel Hopnotch and Baron de Comeitt, too very personal frends of ours.

Then—ah!—even as I looked, reeders, a rabbit jumped up and bit my horse on the nous. Yes, on the noes, which tells you how a rabbit can jump, though he mightn't look as if he can.

Down went my horse, down went myself. It was a dramatick moment.

"Billy!" came in a stentoryan roar from my father. "Come and help us run down this focks, for the love of mike!"

I looked rownd. The only animal in sight, beside my horse, was a donkey belonging to Mrs. Pepmint. I caught it quickly, jumped on its back, and sat down to ride like a jockey.

The wind whistled through my hatless hair. The wind brort tears to my eyes. Jack Frost nipped my ears. I was having a bitter time, though I felt ale and hearty.

The feeld came back to me—like the wind, they disappeared in my wake. They encouridged me with wild crys of delight, and I and my noble steed dashed on, on, on, arfter the hownds.

Four times I was throan. Four times I caught the donkey and dashed on.

Six of the hownds were exhausted and had to give up. My own mount seemed inclined to stop, and I thought deeply—why? Hunger! That could be the only reeson.

But where was I to get a noes-bag from? If I turned I might loose the focks upon which my father had set his hart.

Fortunately, we passed through a feeld, and in the feeld I found suffishent carrots to satisfy the crayvings of my mount.

"You'll have to buck up," I sed, in tones of great sternness. "We're going to have that focks!"

The donkey looked at me as much as to say: "We'll do it, Billy, old fellow!" and as he munched the last carrot I jumped on his back and rode on like the aforementioned jockey.

By this time the hownds had drawn away, farther than ever I had drorn away from my feeld. But I kept on—riding, riding, riding, with hand and knee and no whip, which latter I don't believe in.

We came to a brook. My mount didn't like it. Perhaps he couldn't swim. I looked round again. Luckily, there was a fallen tree handy, and I dragged this along and set it over the stream, which was rushing like a torrent. Acrost this my mount dashed, and I had to run to catch up with, and mount, him.

Once again we were orf. I meen I was on the donkey's back, but orf. The teers were blinding me now, and my ears had ceased to be part of me. But I kept on—I had to have that focks!

So we went on, deer reeders, me bruised and sore, my mount panting for gasps of breth.

The hownds kept looking round to see if we were following, and finding we were close behind, they rooted out Master Focks, and cornered him. The rest was soon over. I had Master Focks, and secured the brush, which many frends at Greyfriars have seen and admired.

That's how I gained my M.H., for everybody agreed that none but a Masterly Hunter could have kept up with the hownds, with only a donkey for a mount.

Of course, we had a record celybration when we got back. We had bacon and sosses—— (This is a hunting number, Billy, not a menu!—Ed.)

# HOW TO HUNT AND WHY!

By DICKY NUGENT.

I COULDN'T think of a story for this number, so I have contributed an artickle, which I am sure you won't like so much as my stories, cos there isn't so much of them—I mean, it.

The grate burning question of the day in the hunting world is what to hunt and why it should be hunted. Here's what and why, duly tabyoulated in proper order.

Mice. These are vermin, and shood be hunted day and night, especially in January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December, which are the only months mice come out from their nests, and can be cort. Mice eat cakes in study cubberds, and shood be shoan no mersy. White mice shoodn't be hunted except when they're lost, and then only to be brort back again.

Flies. This is more vermin. They are always about when the wether is hot, and should be swotted with a newspaper or somebody else's impot. Flies can be found where there is food and lots of places where there isn't food.

Fish. Fish can only be hunted with bate and not traps. Fish can be hunted in water, especially lakes and ponds, rivers, streams, and the sea. If you haven't got a hook bent pins will do, and you only have to bate the hook and throw it into the water and the fish come to it and are cort.

Moths. These are also vermin. They eat your clothes if you don't look out, and they want swotting like flies.

Beetles. More vermin, worse than moths. These are hunted under the floors and in cracks and crevisses and holes, and all you want is an old boot and strong arm. You have to be quick with beetles or they get back into their dug-outs, which is slang for holes. Time—early morn.

Rats. Vermin, worse than any of the others. You hunt them in sheds and barns or where there is refuse. You want a stick, a dog, a ferritt, a lamp, and a quick eye. Hunt them at nights when you can spare the time, and that shood be often, because rats spread death and decease, not to mention illnesses. They come off ships from forin lands and places abroad.

Birds. Hunting birds is crool and isn't allowed in decent places. Of corse shootin part ridges and feasants isn't crool, because they are delishus when cooked and served up with veggytables.

Animals. Few animals except fockses, badgers, and otters are hunted in England. Fockses sneak chickens and ducks and make drakes of farm yards, and are hunted in cold weather so as not to make the horses too hot and the hunters too thirsty.

Motor-cars. Only policemen hunt motor-cars, and that's because they are stolen or strayed, but there's no sport in that. It goes on all the year round, because they never find them—but they live in hopes.

Fags. Hunting fags is a prefects' privyledge and not a sport, but you wouldn't think that when Loder's tracking down a fag. It ought to be barred by Act of Parlourment.

# NO MORE HUNTING!

Copy of a letter from Alonzo Todd, Remove Form, Greyfriars, to his Uncle Benjamin.

My dear Uncle Benjamin,—Harry Wharton and his friends are going to produce a Hunting Number of the Greyfriars Herald, and I think this is the opportunity to place before its millions of readers the real truth about hunting. I am, therefore, requesting you to send me, for publication, your views upon this mighty question.

Your communication can only lead to one thing—the abolition of hunting. I feel sure of that. Publication of a letter, above your name, is bound to attract attention, and I am certain your following will be so great that it will overwhelm the dissentients.

Believe me, dear Uncle Benjamin,

Your affectionate nephew,

ALONZO TODD.

(The letter "above" Uncle Benjamin's name takes the form of a serial story, being no less than fifty thousand words in length. Much as we respect Uncle Benjamin's views, it is impossible for us to publish them. To do so we should require a dozen supplements at one sitting as it were.—ED.)


(*Continued from page* 13.)

"Well, something like that, perhaps," admitted Bob.

"It won't do! If Wharton is sulking over being turned out of the captaincy, it's time he got over it, see?"

"I—I don't know that he's sulking."

"Well, whatever it is, he can't be allowed to break school rules, and hang about slacking, any more than any other junior. See that he's on the ground this afternoon!"

"Yes, Wingate," said Bob.

It was all he could say.

But he was feeling great discomfort as he left the Greyfriars captain's study. He had hoped fervently to keep clear of Wharton—that no new contest need be entered into. But that wish, evidently, was not to be gratified. And it came into Bob's mind, too, that if the late captain of the Remove was looking for trouble, he would not fail to find it—if not on one ground, then on another. That was the view taken by his chums when he consulted them, rather anxiously, in Study No. 13.

"Wharton isn't really a slacker," said Johnny Bull. "He never was that, whatever he was. And he's keen on football. He's looking for trouble. He knows you will have to round him up sooner or later if he keeps on shirking games—and that's what he wants."

"Looks like it," said Bob ruefully.

"I'm afraid that's how the matter stands," said Frank Nugent. "It's rotten; but I suppose there's going to be trouble."

"The esteemed and ridiculous Wharton is bound to give way," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I'll drop him a hint in a friendly way—as friendly as possible," said Bob. "I hope he'll see that it won't do. Anyhow, I'm jolly well not going to be drawn into a row. I'll take jolly good care of that."

And Bob Cherry went—in rather a rueful mood—to look for Wharton. From Billy Bunter—general purveyor of news and information in the Remove—he learned that Wharton was in Skinner's study. So to Study No. 11 Bob Cherry proceeded, with a troubled countenance.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### Bob Cherry Puts His Foot Down!

FOUR fellows were gathered in Skinner's study in the Remove passage, taking their ease. Skinner, Snoop, and Stott were smoking cigarettes, a little custom of Skinner & Co. Harry Wharton was in the armchair, stretched lazily, his hands in his pockets, an unlighted cigarette between his teeth.

Probably he had accepted it from Skinner as an act of civility. He could not frequent Skinner's study and keep up his old attitude towards Skinner's manners and customs. Bob's startled glance fell upon it; and Wharton, as he caught that glance, deliberately reached for a matchbox and lighted the cigarette. Skinner & Co. exchanged grinning glances. The one-time "model youth" of the Remove was coming out with a vengeance.

Bob Cherry flushed, quite realising the defiance of himself and his opinion in Wharton's action. But he told himself that he had not come there to quarrel, and he affected to notice nothing.

"Just looked in to speak to you fellows," said Bob, addressing the whole study in general, and nobody in particular.

"So good of you!" yawned Skinner. "Are you picking me out for the St. Jim's match when it comes off?"

Bob laughed.

"Not likely, Skinner. I want just to remind you that it's games practice this afternoon, and you'll be expected on Little Side."

"Blessed are those who don't expect," said Skinner cheerily. "I'm going to be rather busy this afternoon, Cherry."

"You are—at football!" said Bob, his blue eyes glinting a little. "Don't play the goat, Skinner!"

"Of course, I'm jolly keen, as you know," said Skinner, while Snoop and Stott chuckled. "But I really shall be busy, and I can't oblige you this afternoon, old scout. Let me off, like a good chap."

"Can't be done!"

"Well, expect me if you see me," said Skinner.

"If I don't see you, Skinner, I shall come and look for you," said Bob Cherry quietly, "and if I come and look for you, you'll be rather sorry you didn't turn up!"

"Dear me!" said Skinner.

"The fact is, Wingate's been speaking to me," said Bob. "I've been jawed for going too easy with the slackers, and it's got to stop, see?"

"I see!" assented Skinner. "It isn't just swank because Quelchy has pushed you in as captain of the Form?"

"No!" roared Bob.

"Not a case of a fellow dressed in a little brief authority, and settin' to work to make the angels weep?" asked Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Snoop and Stott.

"You can think what you like about that Skinner," said Bob. "But you'll turn up on the Remove ground, or else you'll be dealt with."

"Boiling in oil, or somethin' like that?" inquired Skinner.

"No; a jolly good licking!" exclaimed Bob angrily.

"My hat! Are you merely captain of the Remove, or have they made you Tsar or Kaiser?" asked Skinner.

Bob did not heed him further. Wharton, blowing smoke from his cigarette, had said nothing; but there was a mocking smile on his face.

"You'll turn up, Wharton?" said Bob, addressing the late captain of the Remove directly at last.

"No!"

Bob drew a deep breath. He was determined not to lose his temper, or to be drawn into a quarrel. But he began to wonder how he was to avoid it. If it is true that it takes two to make a quarrel, it is true, also, that it takes two to keep the peace.

"Why not, Wharton?" he asked quietly.

"I'm chucking footer for the term."

"Dash it all, Wharton, you don't want to chuck footer!" said Bob earnestly. "That's not good enough for you. You know you'll be wanted in the St. Jim's match, too."

Wharton's lip curled.

"Are you going to ask me to captain the side, as Mauleverer did when he was skipper?" he asked.

"Of course not. That can't be done, and you know it."

"Then you can count me out!"

"Do you mean to say that you won't play for the school unless you can play as captain?" demanded Bob.

"Exactly!"

"That's sheer swank!"

"Much obliged for your opinion."

"Well, if you want to stand out of matches you can please yourself," said Bob, after a pause. "There's plenty of men in the Remove to fill your place. I shall be sorry to lose you; but we can beat St. Jim's without you. But you can't stand out of games practice, and you know it."

"No?" said Harry.

"No!" said Bob sharply. "I shall expect to see you on Little Side not later than three."

"You can expect."

"Does that mean that you will not be there?"

"It means just that."

"I suppose you know you'll get a perfect's beating if I have to report you to the head of the games for slacking and dodging practice?" exclaimed Bob, flushing with anger.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I won't take you at your word," said Bob Cherry, calming himself. "I shall expect to see you on Little Side, Wharton, and I hope you'll think better of it. Wingate's told me specially to round you up, so I can't let you off."

"I'm not asking to be let off. I don't recognise you as captain of the Remove," answered Wharton coolly. "I'm asking you nothing. I'm simply telling you my intentions, as you seemed to want to know."

Skinner & Co. grinned cheerily. Skinner's old question "what next?" was answered now. Wharton had made his move, and was evidently booked for a contest with the new captain of the Form.

"Jolly good!" said Skinner. "All piffle this games practice, in my opinion. Why should a fellow slog at games if he doesn't want to?"

"Echo answers why!" grinned Snoop. "You're jolly well not going to bully us into slaving at footer, Bob Cherry, now you've butted into the captaincy. Take that as a tip!"

"Yes, rather!" said Stott.

Bob eyed the three slackers.

"What do you think you come to Greyfriars for?" he asked. "Haven't you come here to train body as well as mind? Quelchy's told you so often enough."

"Don't give us Quelchy's gas at second-hand, old scout."

"Do you think you're here to slack in class and frowst in the studies out of class?" said Bob scornfully. "What sort of dingy loafers do you expect to turn out, at that rate?"

"Go it!" sighed Skinner. "It's your lower jaw that moves, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Snoop and Stott.

Bob did not lose his temper, however. Skinner & Co. were scarcely worth losing one's temper over.

"I can see how it stands," said Bob quietly. "You never dared get your ears up like this when Wharton was captain of the Form. He wouldn't have stood it, and you know it. Now he seems to have joined you in slacking, and you think I'm easier to deal with—what? Well, I hope I'm an easy-going fellow; but if you don't turn up at games practice this afternoon, you three, you'll find me a hard nut to crack. That's all. As for you, Wharton, I leave it to your common-sense whether you'll get yourself known as a slacker and a frowster and a loafer like these weedy wasters."

With that Bob Cherry tramped out of the study, and his heavy tread rang along the Remove passage.

Wharton was left with crimson in his cheeks. Bob's words had gone home. He looked at his companions—the idle, weedy, pasty Skinner, the still more weedy and pasty Snoop, and Stott, burly enough, but slack and lazy and slouching. These were his companions now. For these he had turned his back on his old friends. A feeling of loathing came over him, a pang of shame, loathing for his company, shame for himself. He threw the half-smoked cigarette into the fire with a gesture of disgust. What was he doing here, playing the petty blackguard among these petty blackguards?

And yet——

He was ordered to turn up on the practice-ground. He was under the orders of Bob Cherry, the new captain of the Form. Orders from the captain of the school, even from his Form master, were irksome enough to his stubborn nature. Orders from the fellow who had replaced him in the captaincy of the Remove—— Never—never! He set his lips hard and his eyes glinted.

"You standin' out, Wharton?" asked Skinner, eyeing him curiously, puzzled by the changes of expression in his face. "Do you mean it, or was it only gas to chivvy that duffer? Have you got the nerve?"

Wharton laughed contemptuously.

"I'm standing out!" he answered.

"It means trouble."

"Let it."

"We'll back you up, then," said Skinner. "After all, Bob Cherry is no great shakes of a captain. My opinion is that he's not up to the job. If we get the best of him this time, we can stick out for our rights all through the term. He doesn't want trouble."

"There's Wingate," said Snoop doubtfully. "Wingate's taking the practice this afternoon, you know."

"Cherry can put him off if he chooses. He's only got to say that he's let us off games practice. Wingate never butts into a Form captain's business if he can help it. He'd have plenty on his hands if he did." Skinner smiled cheerily. "Like as not Cherry will back down. Pretend to forget about us, and give Wingate some excuse if he asks. And if he does—well, we shall know how to handle him then."

Harry Wharton strolled out of the study. Skinner & Co. were his supporters now, but he did not want any more of their company.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Rounding Up the Slackers!

BOB CHERRY had a rather thoughtful expression on his rugged face as he came down to the Remove practice-ground that afternoon before three. It was a fine, clear, frosty afternoon, and nothing but detention would have kept Bob himself indoors. Most of the fellows agreed with him, but there were incorrigible slackers who preferred "frowsting" over the study fire or loafing about the passages with their hands in their pockets. So far the new captain of the Remove had taken little note of them. He had a natural disinclination to forcing his new authority upon anyone, and a dislike of interfering with anybody. He had erred, in fact, on the side of good-natured tolerance. But now that the captain of the school had called him to order, the captain of the Remove had no personal choice left in the matter. He had his duty to do.

He was still hopeful of avoiding trouble. He wished fervently that the shirkers, warned specially to turn up that afternoon, would leave their shirking for a more favourable occasion. Bob wanted to let them alone if he could. On the present occasion he couldn't.

But the accession of Harry Wharton, the former captain of the Form, to their dingy ranks, had bucked up the slacking brigade very considerably. It was known to all that Wharton had declared his intention of cutting games practice, in spite of Form captain and Greyfriars captain; and many fellows considered that Bob Cherry was very likely to stretch his tolerance a little further to avoid trouble.

So every slacker in the Form had ranged himself behind Wharton, with one exception. Lord Mauleverer had turned up. In every way Mauly had shown a desire to back up the new captain, even to the length of exerting his noble self. And Mauly, lazy as he was, was a very different kind of slacker from Skinner and his friends, and had a very strong repugnance to being associated with Skinner & Co. in anything. So Mauly was there, yawning in shirt and shorts.

Bob looked over the Remove crowd, and at once missed Wharton, Skinner, Snoop, and Stott. Billy Bunter also was absent, and Fisher T. Fish and Micky Desmond and Hazeldene.

"Nine fellows," said Johnny Bull. "You'll have to do something, Bob. Wingate's bound to notice it."

Bob rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"One or two might pass, but not a mob of them," said Frank Nugent, shaking his head.

"The roundupfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed Bob," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Wingate is coming down at three, and you will be called over the esteemed and ridiculous coals."

Bob grinned.

"I'll talk to them," he said. "I hope there won't be a row."

Bob Cherry walked back to the House.

His friends were left in rather a doubtful mood. They had backed up Bob for the captaincy, but they were not at all sure whether he had firmness enough for his duty.

Bob proceeded along the Remove passage, and looked in at Study No. 1, where he found Billy Bunter frowsting over a blazing fire. The Owl of the Remove blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"Out you go!" said Bob.

"I say, old chap, it's cold," said Bunter.

"You'll get warm enough at practice."

"I prefer a fire, old chap," said the fat junior. "The fact is, I don't feel very well this afternoon, and as Wharton's standing out I don't see why I shouldn't—see?"

"Get a move on!"

Bunter glowered at him.

"Look here, you beast, we're jolly well going to have fair play!" he exclaimed indignantly. "You've no right to let Wharton off just because he used to be your pal, and jump on me like this!"

"Wharton's not let off," said Bob gruffly. "And I don't want any chin-music. Get going!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

Bob Cherry grasped the back of the armchair in which the Owl of the Remove was sprawling, and tilted it up. There was a roar as William George Bunter was strewn on the study carpet.

"Yaroooh! Ooooh!"

"Now, if you want kicking, Bunter, say the word. Otherwise, get off and change quick!"

"Beast!"

Bob Cherry bestowed a gentle kick on the sprawling Owl, and there was another roar.

"Ow! Stoppit! I'm going, ain't I?" howled Bunter.

"Back up, then!"

And Bunter dolorously bucked up. Bob Cherry went along to Study No. 6, and found Micky Desmond there, busy making toffee. Micky gave him a rather doubtful grin as he looked in.

"It's all right, Cherry——"

"Is it?" grunted Bob.

"Wharton's standing out, and if one fellow can stand out another can. Besides, I'm making this toffee."

"Out you go!"

"Look here, Cherry——"

Bob Cherry cheerfully grasped him by the collar, and with a swing of his powerful arm landed Micky in the passage.

"Sharp, now!"

"I say, that toffee will burn—"

"You should have thought of that before. Get going!"

Micky Desmond eyed him for a moment, evidently meditating resistance. But he thought better of it, and went down to the changing-room. Bob Cherry proceeded to No. 14, where Fisher T. Fish was discovered, pencil in hand, leaning over a sheet of impot paper covered with figures, deep in some of his abtruse calculations. He waved a bony, impatient hand at Bob.

"Don't butt in."

"What?"

"I guess I'm busy some," said Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I'm on my accounts, and there's ten cents I can't get after. I couldn't have lent it to any galoot, and I guess I can't have lost it——"

"Football practice!" said Bob.

"Oh, don't be a funny jay," urged Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I'm after that ten cents. Vamoose the ranch, do!"

Fisher T. Fish, however, did not continue his quest of the elusive ten cents. Suddenly he found himself alighting in the Remove passage with a bump, hardly knowing how he got there. He sprawled and roared.

"Now then, sharp!" said Bob.

"I guess I'll wallop you," roared Fisher T. Fish, sitting up and spluttering with wrath. "I guess I'll make potato scrapings of you, you mugwump."

"Go ahead!" said Bob, laughing.

But Fisher T. Fish decided, on second thoughts—proverbially the best—not to make potato-scrapings of Bob Cherry just then. Instead of that, he limped away to change, murmuring deadly threats of what he would do next time. Bob Cherry cheerfully followed him along the passage as far as No. 11, the door of which study he hurled open. Skinner, and Snoop, and Stott were there, uneasy, but defiant.

"Get a move on, you chaps!"

"Wharton——"

"Never mind Wharton. You fellows clear!"

"Sha'n't!" said Skinner, between his teeth.

"You know you'll be reported for a prefect's beating if I leave you here."

"Mind your own business."

Bob regarded them thoughtfully.

"I won't trouble Wingate with you," he said. "I think I can handle you myself. Now then, are you going?"

"Are you going to make us if we don't?" sneered Snoop.

"Yes."

"Rats!" said Stott.

"You're not going?" asked Bob.

"No!" snarled Skinner desperately.

"Here goes, then!"

"Oh, my hat! Oh!"

Bob Cherry wasted no more time in words. He came at Skinner & Co. with his hands up, his blue eyes glinting over them. There were three of the slackers, and they stood together. But the three did not seem of much use against Bob's hefty attack. Skinner staggered under his right, and Stott sprawled under his left, and Snoop, not meeting the attack at all, dodged round the study table.

There was weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in No. 11 Study. Skinner & Co. had made the discomforting discovery that the new captain of the Remove, though certainly desirous of avoiding trouble, was not to be fooled with.

"Going now?" asked Bob equably.

"Ow!" groaned Skinner. "Keep off, you rotter."

"I—I—I'm going!" gasped Snoop.

"Back up, you chaps," and we'll chuck him out!" shouted Stott.

But there was no backing-up in Skinner and Snoop. They were prepared to defy a feeble and irresolute Form-captain, but certainly not prepared to deal with Bob Cherry in his present mood. They limped out of the study, and Stott, after an angry glare at Bob, decided to follow them. There was quite a gathering of slackers in the changing-room, hurriedly changing for football practice. With angry and sullen faces they trooped dismally down to the practice ground.

One offender remained to be dealt with. Bob had learned that Hazeldene had gone out of gates; but Harry Wharton remained, the most difficult proposition of all. Wharton was not a fellow to be dealt with like Skinner & Co., that was quite clear; and how he was to be dealt with was a dismal problem to the captain of the Remove. Bob found himself hoping that he had gone out of gates with Hazel, but that hope was soon knocked on the head by the sight of Harry Wharton himself coming up the Remove staircase.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here you are then!" exclaimed Bob.

"Here I am, if I'm wanted."

"It's close on three."

"Is it?"

"I've been rounding up the slackers," said Bob.

Wharton smiled contemptuously.

"I've seen them. You seem to have been punching them."

"Well, it was that or a prefect's beating, and it saved time. I remember you handled Skinner's crowd once when you were captain."

Wharton was passing on without replying when Bob laid a detaining hand on his arm. Wharton shook it off.

"You've got to come, Wharton," said Bob appealingly. "Don't force me to report you to Wingate."

"Why report me?" said Wharton mockingly. "You didn't trouble to report Skinner and the rest. Shouldn't there be one weight and one measure?"

Bob breathed hard.

"You're asking me to handle you?" he said.

"I'm ready."

"Well, you won't have your wish," said Bob slowly. "I won't deal with you myself."

Wharton laughed sarcastically.

"Why not? You've dealt with Skinner yourself, and Fishy, and Snoop, and the rest. Are you funking?"

Bob Cherry set his lips.

"You know I'm not funking, Wharton."

"I know it looks like it," said the former captain of the Remove coolly. "You've given me an order. I'm taking no notice of it. You call yourself captain of the Remove—and I don't admit you're captain, and I don't care a snap of the fingers for you or your orders. Is that plain enough?"

"Quite!" Bob Cherry clenched his hands. "Will you go down to the practice ground?"

"No."

"Then I'll jolly well make you."

And the next moment they were fighting.

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## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Foes!

GEORGE WINGATE, of the Sixth, arrived on the Remove ground and glanced over the juniors there.

"Where's Cherry?" he asked. "Why the thump isn't Cherry here?"

"He's gone back to the House," said Nugent.

"Rounding up the giddy slackers," said Peter Todd with a grin. "Most of them have turned up."

"He should have been here at three—he knows I'm here," growled Wingate. "I shall see to this."

And the Greyfriars captain, with a grim brow, started for the House in a wrathful mood. He had observed that Wharton was not present, and he could guess what was delaying Bob Cherry.

"Stop that!" roared Wingate, glaring at the combatants. But Cherry and Wharton paid no heed. Wingate grasped them in his powerful hands, and wrenched them apart. (*See Chapter 12.*)

He strode into the House and ascended the stairs to the Remove passage. A sound of trampling, panting, and scuffling of feet greeted him.

"Stop that!" roared Wingate.

He glared at the combatants.

But they did not stop, and the Captain of Greyfriars strode at them, grasped them in his powerful hands, and fairly wrenched them apart.

They separated then, panting.

"Now, what does this mean?" demanded Wingate savagely.

Bob Cherry dabbed his nose, but did not reply. Wharton stood breathing hard and deep. As a matter of fact, Wingate's question did not require an answer.

"Why are you not on the practice ground, Wharton?"

"I've chucked footer."

"Have you?" said Wingate grimly. "I fancy I shall have something to say about that. You refused to go when Cherry told you?"

"Yes."

"You'll take five hundred lines."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"And you'll go straight down to the ground," said Wingate. "That or a prefect's beating in my study. Take your choice."

Wharton hesitated.

"And after the beating you'll still go," said the captain of Greyfriars. "It's time you learned, Wharton, that you've got to obey orders, like any other Lower boy at Greyfriars. Now, are you going?"

The big Sixth-Former towered over the junior, his face dark and angry. Wingate was a good-tempered fellow, as a rule; but he had plenty of duties on his hands, and he had no time to waste on a rebellious junior of the Lower Fourth. He had noted Wharton's progress since the beginning of the term, with a grim eye of disapproval, and he was fed-up now.

"Very well," said Wharton, after that moment's hesitation; "I suppose I'm bound to obey the captain of the school."

"You're bound to obey your Form captain when he gives you orders within the rules."

"I am captain of the Remove," said Wharton coolly. "I don't recognise any other captain, or Mr. Quelch's authority to appoint one."

Wingate stared.

"By gad! Don't you? I warn you, Wharton, that you're heading for serious trouble if you take this line. Now, enough said—get going."

"Very well!"

Harry Wharton went down to change. In his stubborn mood he was disposed to defy even the captain of the school; but a remnant of prudence restrained him from that rash step. It was useless, and absurd, also, to set himself up against an irresistible force—to take a prefect's beating in Wingate's study, and then to be marched down to the Remove ground with a grasp on his collar, the grasp of a fellow too hefty for him to resist. He changed for football and went down to the ground, and arrived there at the same time as Wingate and Bob Cherry.

Skinner & Co. grinned at him sourly.

"So that's the finish, is it?" sneered Skinner.

Wharton flushed, but did not answer. Certainly his resistance had come to a rather ignominious end. But it was not quite so ignominious as arriving on the ground with a hand on his collar. And the matter was not ended yet.

Wharton set an example of slacking in the practice, but, fortunately, did not go far enough to draw Wingate's special attention upon him. Bob Cherry took no notice of him at all. Bob's nose was red and swollen; the fight in the Remove passage, brief as it had been, had been fierce, and both the juniors bore signs of it.

After the practice, when the Removites began to clear off, Harry Wharton walked across to Bob, who was with the Co.

Some of the fellows gathered round at once, in anticipation of trouble. Skinner's hopes revived once more.

"Cherry!" rapped out Wharton.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"We were interrupted by that fool Wingate——"

"Better let him hear you call him a fool!" growled Johnny Bull.

Wharton paid no heed.

"When are we going to finish?" he asked.

"I don't want it to go any further," said Bob.

"Probably not. But I suppose a punch or two would help you to make up your mind? Is that what you want?"

Bob crimsoned.

"That's enough! If you're bent on scrapping, you sha'n't be disappointed. I've tried to keep clear of trouble with you. I can't forget that we used to be friends, if you can. When and where you like."

"In the Rag, then, after prep."

"Done!"

Harry Wharton walked away, and Skinner & Co. joined him as he went. Bob Cherry and his friends moved off more slowly. Bob's rugged face was dark and gloomy.

"It was bound to come, old chap," said Johnny Bull.

"The boundfulness was terrific."

Bob Cherry nodded.

"It's rotten," said Nugent. "I can't understand Wharton this term—he seems to have gone all to the bad. But

you can't help it, Bob. It's his last chance of downing you as captain of the Form. That's what he wants, of course."

"I know," said Bob gloomily. "If he licks me it will give him some sort of a footing. I suppose it was bound to come."

"You'll lick him," said Johnny Bull.

"I'll try!" said Bob.

But Bob's face remained gloomy. Win or lose, the fight was repugnant to him; there was little he would not have given to avoid it. But it was not to be avoided. The news spread like wildfire through the Remove that there was to be a fight in the Rag after prep between the rivals of the Remove—once the firmest of friends. And every fellow in the Form made up his mind to be present, as well as a good many fellows of other Forms.

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## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### The Finish!

THE Rag swarmed.

Prep was over. A good many fellows, indeed, had "scamped" prep at a great rate, in order to be early.

The Remove turned up almost to a man. Temple, Dabney, & Co. of the Fourth came in. Tubb of the Third brought a contingent of fags, and Nugent minor and a swarm of the Second were to be seen. Hobson of the Shell turned up with a dozen Shell fellows, and even some of the Fifth were seen to lounge into the Rag, an unaccustomed quarter for seniors.

Evidently the coming fight was a matter of keen interest.

In the Remove it could not fail to be so, both the champions occupying prominent places in the Form. And as a fight, it was certain to be worth watching, for Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry were both fighting-men of renown in the Lower School. Bob had been known to give a good account of himself in troubles with the Fifth Form, and Wharton was a splendid boxer; both were well-known to have unlimited pluck. It was likely to be a fight of unusual keenness—a battle of the giants, in fact. And the fact that the two fellows had once—and not so long ago—been chums, added to the general interest in the fight.

Bob Cherry was the first of the two to arrive in the Rag. He came in with his friends—Nugent, Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, and Mark Linley. A large group of Remove fellows gathered round them. It was easy to see that Bob was the popular champion. Almost all the Remove were backing up their new captain with sympathy and good wishes.

Harry Wharton entered about ten minutes later, and he came in alone. But Vernon-Smith joined him at once.

"Bagged a second?" asked Smithy.

Wharton shook his head.

"Like me to see you through?"

"Thanks, old man!"

None of Wharton's old friends had offered. Squiff, Tom Brown, Peter Todd, Russell, Ogilvy, Mauleverer, and other fellows with whom he had once been on the most cordial terms were in the group round the new captain of the Remove, and they did not approach Wharton. But for the Bounder's offer, Wharton would have been reduced to taking on Skinner or Snoop, which would have been unpleasant enough, in the sight of a swarming crowd of fellows of all junior Forms.

It would have shown only too clearly of how little account he now was in his Form. But the Bounder, though a fellow with what Skinner called a "juicy" reputation, was a prominent fellow in the Form, and his offer saved the fallen captain of the Remove from that last humiliation.

Smithy consulted for a few minutes with Johnny Bull, who was acting as a second for Bob. The preliminaries were soon arranged, and the ring formed, and Bolsover major thoughtfully locked the door. A good deal of noise was not uncommon in the Rag, and prefects were wont to turn a deaf ear in that direction, unless the din became too pronounced; but, in any case, prefects or masters were not wanted in the Rag just then. An interruption of such an historic "scrap" would have been too bad, from the point of view of the swarming spectators.

So the door was locked. The big table had been pulled aside, to give plenty of room. Lord Mauleverer was appointed timekeeper, and all was ready. Mauleverer stood, watch in hand; round the ring swarmed the juniors, with eager faces. There was no hint of a handshake before the fight began—the two juniors, with the gloves on and their jackets off, faced one another grimly, and at the call of time the fight began.

Bob Cherry was grim and quiet, his feelings a strange mixture of reluctance and resolution. In the handsome face before him—set and hostile as that face was—Bob could not help seeing the face of his old friend—bitterly estranged now, he hardly knew how. A few short weeks ago it would have seemed impossible to Bob that he should ever have stood foot to foot, face to face, with Harry Wharton in fierce combat. Yet it had come to pass—not by his will.

He could not afford to lose that fight, and he knew it. A captain of the Form who had been knocked out by a rebel in the Form was likely to find his leadership very much shaken. It was, indeed, for that reason, as he guessed, that Wharton had forced this on. Reluctant as Bob was, he was determined to win, if he could; and as the fight proceeded he forgot his reluctance, and warmed to it.

Wharton was cool, calm, self-possessed. He did not seem to share the mingled feelings of his opponent—he seemed to have forgotten that the honest, rugged face before him was the face of one who had ever been a friend. If remorse had touched him he had hardened his heart against it.

The fight was hard from the start. It was, as Fisher T. Fish remarked to Skinner, "Business from the word 'Go!'"

Bob Cherry had rather the worst of the first round. In the second he had distinctly the worst. Wharton had never seemed so good a boxer—never so determined to put in all he knew. And Bob had had no chance, so far, of using his superior weight and strength.

But in the third round Bob came home with a right-hander that had all his weight behind it, and Harry Wharton went backwards, with a crash, to the floor.

"Man down!" grinned Bolsover major.

But the late captain of the Remove was hardly down before he was up again, with elastic activity, and fighting hard.

"Time!"

Vernon-Smith sat his principle down on a chair in the corner, and ran a sponge over his heated face.

"Mustn't let that happen again, old man," he murmured. "Stall him off—that's your game. He's heavy for you."

Wharton nodded.

"Time!" came from Lord Mauleverer.

Both the juniors came promptly up to time. The fourth round was hard and fast, with plenty of punishment on both sides. Fifth and sixth rounds followed it, hard and fast, with both the combatants showing signs of damage now.

"Time!"

The seventh round began, and interest in the onlooking crowd was at fever-heat now. Victory was still on the knees of the gods; but one thing was certain—it was a first-class fight and it was still a long way from the finish.

Crash!

It was Bob Cherry who was down now; and Lord Mauleverer began to count, amid breathless silence.

"One, two, three, four, five——"

Bob was up again and coming on. His nose streamed red, his left eye was closed. But his face was set now with grim and dogged determination; he did not seem to feel that he was hurt, as he fought on fiercely.

"Game birds, both!" remarked Hazeldene to Squiff. "Looks to me as if Wharton will pull it off, though."

Squiff shook his head.

"Time!"

The eighth round was chiefly sparring; both the combatants were feeling the strain now. In the ninth they came to hard fighting once more, and the juniors looked on at an exhibition of slogging seldom seen in the Remove. But at the end of the round it was still "anybody's game," as some of the juniors remarked.

"Tenth round!" said Johnny Bull, in a low voice, as Lord Mauleverer called time again. "Some fight, anyhow!"

"Terrific!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Frank Nugent looked on in silence, with a clouded face. He recalled that day in the vacation, when he had stood up to his former friend, and had been hopelessly outclassed and beaten. Wharton was standing up to a more formidable antagonist now. But Frank recalled it without rancour. His heart was heavy as he watched this desperate struggle between two fellows who had been friends—who might have been friends still.

He felt a pang as a heavy blow landed fairly in Harry Wharton's face, and the former captain of the Remove went down again heavily. He hoped for Bob's victory; Bob's cause was just, and Bob was his chum. Yet, as Wharton went crashing down under that heavy drive, Frank realised that dogged and obstinate and arrogant as his old friend was, evil as he now seemed to be, the old friendship was not quite dead—his heart ached for the fellow he had always liked and respected until of late.

"One—two—three—four—five," Lord Mauleverer was counting steadily, distinctly—"six—seven—eight—nine——"

There was a gasp in the crowd looking on.

Harry Wharton struggled to his feet. Barely in time to escape being counted out, he was up again and fighting.

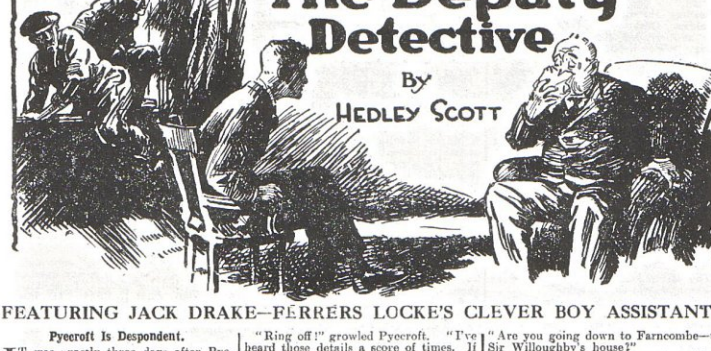
"Good man!" gasped Skinner.

"Bravo!"

Wharton showed only too clearly the effects of that knock-down blow; he was almost reeling, and only an iron determination kept him on his feet and facing his enemy. The call of time came to

(Continued on page 27.)

*YOUTH WINS! While the official police are following a false trail in their endeavour to fix the theft of a valuable State document on the right party, young Jack Drake gets quietly to work and scores where they fail. Read how he does it!*




## FEATURING JACK DRAKE—FERRERS LOCKE'S CLEVER BOY ASSISTANT!

### Pyecroft Is Despondent.

IT was exactly three days after Pyecroft's unfortunate experience in the old Tudor mansion, at Hambledon, that he rushed from Norwood Station to his flat, a distance of two hundred yards up hill. His heavy features were red with rage and indignation, his energetic stride bespoke volumes for the wrath that consumed him, each stride being a savage outlet for his feelings.

Pyecroft undoubtedly was in a tantrum—positively tartaric.

A newsboy, cheeky of countenance, who endeavoured to foist upon him a copy of the morning newspaper, received a black look for his trouble and a string of hot abuse. Pyecroft impolitely informed him that he wished all newspapers and those connected with them at the bottom of the sea.

Having thus delivered himself and appeased his desire to "slang" somebody, Inspector Pyecroft blew out his cheeks, snorted, and strode on.

He burst into the sitting-room of his flat like a cyclone, causing the single occupant of the apartment to look up from his paper in some surprise.

"Hallo, old bean!" grinned Drake pleasantly, for he it was seated in the armchair. "Expect you're ready for breakfast. I've had mine. Bacon and some——"

"Confound breakfast!" roared the C.I.D. man savagely. "Confound bacon——"

"And confound the motor bandits!" finished Drake. "They've been at it again."

"Don't I know it!" growled Pyecroft, sinking wearily into a chair. "The chief up at the Yard seems to think that it's entirely my fault that they plunder every one who lives in a house."

Drake could scarce forbear a smile at this statement. He covered it, however, by lifting the newspaper and reading extracts from it.

"House of Sir Willoughby Fortescue, Foreign Secretary, broken into. Ten thousand pounds' worth of jewellery gone. No alarm. No clues. And it all happened while the family was at dinner."

"Ring off!" growled Pyecroft. "I've heard those details a score of times. If it were only an ordinary case of robbery I shouldn't be half so worried."

"What do you mean, Pyecroft?"

"Why, Sir Willoughby is tearing his hair at the loss of a highly important Government document; and if this document finds its way into certain hands abroad it is ten chances to one that this country will be plunged into another war."

"Good heavens!" gasped Drake. "And is it believed that the motor bandits have stolen this document—intentionally, I mean?"

"That we cannot say," said the C.I.D. man wearily. "We're hoping that the document came to be 'lifted' with the rest of the papers in the safe without the plunderers knowing what it was. In any case, it would be in code."

"And what are your instructions for the day?" was Drake's next question.

**CHARACTERS YOU WILL MEET.**

JACK DRAKE, a boy of fifteen with a gift for detective work, the assistant of Ferrers Locke, the world-famous scientific investigator.

INSPECTOR PYECROFT, of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard, a friend of Locke and Drake's.

THE CHIEF, a mysterious person who directs the coups of the notorious motor bandits, and of whose identity nothing is known to the police.

THOMAS and WILSON, two typical members of the gang.

While Locke is away on the Continent Drake is given the opportunity of handling his first case, his instructions being to lay the rascally motor bandits by the heels.

He tracks the gang to their headquarters in Hambledon, arriving just in time to save Pyecroft, who had fallen into their hands, from a terrible fate.

The gang make good their escape. A clue is left behind, however, in the form of a sheet of paper covered in a distinctly boyish handwriting. On it, repeated from the top of the page to the bottom, appears a Latin phrase that reminds Drake of his "impot" days at Greyfriars.

The more the boy sleuth gazes at that sheet of paper the more convinced he is that one member of the gang at least must be connected in some way with a school. Pocketing the paper, Drake decides to keep this clue to himself.

*(Now read on.)*

"Are you going down to Farncombe—to Sir Willoughby's house?"

"I'm not!" grunted Pyecroft. "I'm detailed to keep a watch on a certain Egyptian political agent, to whom it is thought the stolen paper might be delivered—that is, of course, assuming that it was stolen at his behest."

"Then I'd better do something, too," said Drake. "I've been idling these last three days, and accepting your hospitality, Pyecroft."

"Well, you couldn't stay in the empty rooms at Baker Street!" growled Pyecroft. "I'm jolly pleased to have you here, for that matter. And, in any case, you haven't been idling. You've discovered the warehouse in Wapping where Locke's furniture was taken."

"And discovered through the agent who had the letting of the property that he had no idea it had been borrowed by the bandits. No clues picked up, old man."

"Well, you'll get the furniture back. The trouble is, the bandits' agents have given the chief of the gang the tip, you can bet your sweet life," said Pyecroft dismally. "No good keeping a watch on the warehouse. They'll not come back to dispose of the furniture now."

"And to my mind it's an unnecessary precaution to keep a watch on the Haven in Hambledon," said Drake thoughtfully. "The gang'll never go there again, now that they know you escaped the fate they had prepared for you."

"Quite so," agreed Pyecroft. "I've already withdrawn my men from that place."

"Look here, Pyecroft!" exclaimed Drake suddenly. "I want to go down to Farncombe and have a look round. Will you write me out an official pass?"

"By all means," replied the C.I.D. man. "But I don't expect you'll find anything worth following at the Firs. The local police and a Scotland Yard man have discovered nothing yet, at all events."

"Well, I rather fancy my chances," grinned Drake cheekily. "Be a sport and give me that pass."

Good-humouredly Pyecroft wrote out the necessary pass, giving Drake full

authority to view the scene of the robbery.

"And I'll bet you a dinner, Pycroft," Drake remarked as he folded the paper, "that I bring you news of the stolen document before nightfall."

"Hum!" Pycroft seemed to have his doubts about that. "I wish you luck, my lad."

Leaving the inspector to tackle his breakfast, Drake donned his coat and hat, and strolled round to the local garage, where he had stored his motor-bike. Inside five minutes the lad was speeding along the Portsmouth road, a feeling of excitement running through his veins, his hopes of success high.

He completed the journey to Farncombe, a tiny village just outside Godalming, under two hours, and was soon inquiring the way to the Firs. Another short run brought him to a stately-looking house standing in its own grounds—the Firs. There were signs of great activity about the place as Drake neared it. Three local constables were parading up and down, scared faces of servants showed at frequent intervals, and the local inspector was deep in conversation with a Scotland Yard man, whom Drake recognised as Detective-Inspector Morrison.

The latter looked up in surprise as Drake appeared on the scene.

"Well, I'm blest! Young Drake. How are you, my lad?"

Locke's assistant winced a trifle at the man's obvious air of patronage, but he smiled.

"In a much happier and more optimistic frame of mind than you are, Morrison," he replied.

"Indeed!" was the somewhat cold reply. "And what prompts the statement?"

"Your face, old man. You look positively worried. Haven't you discovered anything yet?"

"That's my business, my lad!" growled Morrison, and the local inspector, deeming it an opportune moment to show Drake what an important person he was, cleared his throat.

"Clear off, young man!" he said loftily. "We've no time for schoolboys in a job like this."

"Indeed!" said Drake imperturbably. "I want to have a look round. Here's my pass!"

To the dismay of the two inspectors, he flourished Pycroft's official permit in their faces.

"Must be off his head to give you a permit!" grunted Morrison; but he was careful not to add to the remark. Pycroft was his superior.

"Pshaw!" the local inspector was positively disdainful. "What the thunder do you think you'll do here, my lad?"

"Better able to talk about that in a few hours' time," replied Drake. And to the two official detectives' further discomfiture, he walked off to the house, meeting on the way Sir Willoughby Fortescue himself.

## The Victim!

THE Foreign Secretary looked worried and depressed. His features were haggard, his eyes told the want of sleep, his hair appeared more grey than ever. For one moment his worried expression gave place to that of surprise and pleasure as he spotted the youthful figure bearing down upon him. But the change was only momentary. He extended a friendly hand, however, as Drake halted before him.

"Mr. Locke's assistant!" he exclaimed. "Jack—Jack——"



"Drake, sir," prompted the lad, with a smile. "How do you do, sir?"

"Of course," said the baronet. "I remember you now. I made your acquaintance when Ferrers Locke was engaged by the Home Secretary to recover the secret of the purple sandals. Bless me, I'd almost forgotten you!"

The case to which the Foreign Secretary referred was one in which Jack Drake had figured very prominently, a case Ferrers Locke had brought to a successful conclusion. And, as was natural in the circumstances, Drake had shared the honours that attended it.

"And what are you doing down here, my lad?" asked Sir Willoughby. "Surely you're not interested in this bandit affair?"

"I am, sir," replied Drake. "And I would be awfully obliged if you would acquaint me with the details of the case. I'm afraid it's asking too much of the official police for the necessary information. Professional jealousy, you know, sir."

The Foreign Secretary laughed—the first time for twenty-four hours—and it restored his habitual good humour.

"Come into the study, my lad," he invited. "And I will do my utmost to satisfy your curiosity. I see you have an official pass," he added. "Well, well, there's no harm in my telling you, I feel sure. If I remember rightly you were entrusted with a secret that only half a dozen men in the kingdom knew of when Ferrers Locke started the case of the purple sandals. And you proved yourself worthy of the trust."

While he was speaking, the baronet was walking towards the house. He led the way into a well-appointed room and motioned Drake to a chair. Then he seated himself.

"As you have already seen from the newspapers, Drake," he began, "the robbery took place between half-past seven and eight o'clock last night. We were at dinner then. The first inkling we had of the affair was when my butler burst into the room with the startling news that the place had been broken into——"

"At what time was that, sir?"

"Five minutes past eight, to be exact," replied Sir Willoughby. "Jenkins—that's my butler—was informed of the French windows being open in the reception-room by Eccleston——"

Drake's eyes elevated in polite inquiry.

"My secretary," said Sir Willoughby. "A very capable and——"

"Where was Mr. Eccleston at the time of the robbery?" put in Drake.

"In his study, writing letters for me," said the baronet.

"And where were the other members of the household, sir?"

The baronet was thoughtful for a moment.

"The maids, with one exception, were in the domestic quarters having their dinner," he said at length. "The butler, naturally, was attending to us at table."

"But the one exception—where was she?"

"Confined to bed with a bad chill," answered Sir Willoughby.

"Thank you, sir. May I ask if it is customary for Mr. Eccleston to join the family at table?"

"It is. As a matter of fact, last night was the first occasion that Eccleston hasn't had dinner with us since he came into my employ. But I knew he had a heap of letters to attend to, and I excused him. Dinner, I believe, was sent up to him in the study."

"What did you do, sir, when Jenkins brought you news of the robbery?"

"Why, my lad, I at once rushed to the safe in the library," replied Sir Willoughby, with a dismal shake of his head. "In that safe, two hours earlier, I had placed the draft of a State note with the Egyptian Government—a very important document, my boy."

"And it had gone?"

"It had. The safe door was open, several papers had been tossed aside, but the document had gone.

"Without plunging into unnecessary details, my lad," continued Sir Willoughby earnestly, "that document might easily bring war on this country if it falls into certain foreign officials' hands. It was a rough draft I had brought home with me to check and revise yesterday evening. This morning something that has happened in foreign government circles obviates the need for such a drastic Note. Should it leak out, however, what our intentions were if the stage hadn't been reached it would mean war. The seriousness of this theft cannot be understood too fully."

"I agree with you, sir," said Drake. "And it is thought that the thieves who made off with ten thousand pounds' worth of jewellery have taken this document as well?"

"So the police declare," returned Sir Willoughby, passing a weary hand over his wrinkled forehead. "Personally, I don't know what to think. The loss of the jewellery is nothing compared with the document."

"Is it in code?"

"It is, my lad. But there are hundreds of agents clever enough to decipher it," said the baronet wearily.

"Then, with your permission, sir," said Drake briskly, rising to his feet, "I will go over the grounds and the library itself."

"How a woman could enter my window and open the safe——" began Sir Willoughby, with a shake of his head.

"A woman?" gasped Drake. "But the newspapers gave no account of a woman being concerned in this robbery."

"They were asked to suppress the intelligence by the police," replied the baronet. "Whether Scotland Yard is on a clue I do not know. But the fact remains that amongst the footprints in and around the house appear those of a woman's shoes!"

"Well, I'm blessed!" exclaimed Drake. "But there isn't a woman in the motor-bandit gang—leastways," he added hastily, "there wasn't three days ago."

Thereupon he gave Sir Willoughby an account of his adventure in Hambledon.

"And so you tracked the scoundrels by their lair singlehanded," remarked the baronet admiringly. "Drake, my lad, I'm beginning to think that I could do a deal worse than giving you my confidence in this affair."

The lad glowed with pride.

"That's awfully kind of you, sir," he replied modestly. "And now"—briskly—"I would like to view the grounds."

Together they walked out of the house, the baronet relapsing into silence. Drake looked about him with interest. His keen eyes soon saw the spot where the incriminating footprints had been discovered, for the surrounding ground had been staked out and roped up by the police.

Before the large French windows of the reception-room ran a narrow strip of cultivated soil, composed chiefly of a fine reddy-brown mould that at once attracted Drake's attention. Leading up to the French window was a winding path of crazy paving. But the paving showed him nothing. It was the garden bed that interested him.

**"Morrison looked so confoundedly clever that I could have kicked him," said Sir Willoughby to Jack Drake. "Sir Willoughby!" Into the room strode Inspector Morrison, behind him, with his hand upon the shoulder of a terrified housemaid, came the local constable. "We have caught the thief!" "What?" thundered the baronet, with an expressive glance at Jack Drake.** (*See this page.*)

"Here we are," said Sir Willoughby, coming to a halt, before the French windows of the reception-room. "This is where the thieves entered. See, the footprints are clear and distinct—that's due to the rain we had at seven o'clock last night."

Drake scarcely heard him; he was studying the trampled ground intently. The woman's footprints he paid especial care, scanning them for over five minutes or so. When he finally rose to an upright position there was no mistaking the gleam in his eye. Drake had spotted a clue!

"There are certainly six distinct and separate imprints of men's shoes," he said, with a disarming smile—"six, without taking into account those of the woman's shoes——"

"And all six of them entered the house and rifled it," volunteered the baronet. "At least, the police declare it so."

"These footprints just outside the enclosed radius are those of your servants, I take it," said Drake, indicating a number of well-defined imprints in the loose mould.

"They are," was the reply. "Each of them has been identified. The large footprints are those of my butler, those next to them are my own. The pair of footprints that show a decided dip at the toes belong to my secretary. You see, my lad, I was careful to instruct Jenkins not to obliterate the footprints of the thieves. The butler is apt to get excited——"

"And the secretary, sir, I take it, was thoughtful enough to stand where he was without any such caution?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, it was the secretary who discovered the footprints first. Jenkins and I came rushing out of the house in answer to a shout from him. Eccleston is a pretty cute fellow—you must ask him for an account of the affair yourself, Drake. You'll find him quite a decent sort."

"I should like to meet him very much," smiled Drake. "Those imprints show him to be a hefty fellow, six foot, and weighing about twelve stone, eh?"

"On the contrary," replied Sir Willoughby, "Eccleston is a dapper little fellow, about five feet five in height, and his weight——"

"Indeed?" Drake's exclamation expressed great surprise.

He stood directly behind the secretary's footprints and gazed over the trampled red mould until his eyes rested on the imprints of the woman's shoes. For quite ten minutes he remained thus. Then with a muttered word of apology to Sir Willoughby, Drake announced that he would like to view the rooms that had been ransacked by the thieves.

"Very well, my lad," replied Sir Willoughby. "We will follow the route taken by the bandits. By exercising a little care we can avoid obliterating the trail they left behind them. You can see how they effected an entrance," he added, as Drake followed him through the french windows into the reception-room.

"Forced the hasp of the window," grunted Drake, paying but scant heed to the window, however. "Funny," he remarked a moment later, "that the woman's footprints do not show on this polished floor whilst the rest of the gang's do!"

"Yes; that gave the police a moment or two's consideration," smiled Sir Willoughby. "But, rest assured, Drake, we'll pick up the trail in the library again in a moment or two."

"I take it that in the other plundered rooms no sign is to be seen of the woman's footprint?" was Drake's next query.

"You are quite right. Apparently the woman made straight for the safe in the library whilst the remainder of the gang searched the rooms upstairs."

"That's very strange. It would look as if she knew what the safe contained, would it not, Sir Willoughby? And, in any case, why should she make straight for the library——"

"Police seem to think that one of my maids might have been in league with the motor-bandits, but I scorn the suggestion, Drake. They are all as honest as the day—been with me for years."

"I take it no one has been allowed to leave the house since the robbery occurred, sir?"

"No, my lad!"

"And how long has your secretary been with you, Sir Willoughby?"

"Well, as a matter of face, he joined me only a month ago. Came from the Treasury in Whitehall."

"And does he know the combination of your safe?"

Sir Willoughby looked hard at his questioner.

"I don't know what you're driving at, my lad," he remarked a little coldly, "but Eccleston most emphatically does not know the combination of the safe. If you are casting——"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Drake gravely. "Perhaps I shouldn't have asked the question."

The baronet, somewhat mollified, conducted the boy detective over the plundered rooms upstairs, and then on to the library. The safe door was open as it had been found by Sir Willoughby himself. On the polished floor just in front of it stood out the marks of two muddy footprints, undoubtedly made by a woman's shoes.

"And these two imprints are the only ones to be found denoting that a woman entered this room and forced the safe?" said Drake, peering at the footprints through his pocket lens, a gleam of excitement in his blue eyes.

"They are. What puzzles me is the fact that no footprints have yet been discovered that point to the woman having left the house. They are all incoming footprints, as it were," said Sir Willoughby. "I pointed that singular fact out to Inspector Morrison, and he only laughed. The fellow looked so confoundedly clever that I could have kicked him——"

"Sir Willoughby!"

Into the room strode Inspector Morrison, his heavy features alight with

triumph. Behind him came a local constable, his hand upon the shoulder of a terrified housemaid. And at the constable's heels, looking highly important, came the local inspector.

"What does this mean?" demanded Sir Willoughby, in amazement. "I beg of you, constable, to release that girl!"

The constable looked to Inspector Morrison for orders, and received a covert wink.

"Don't let her go," said Morrison. "Sir Willoughby, we have caught the woman who broke open the safe."

## Jack Drake's Triumph!

"WHA-A-T?"

"Isabel Maynard, your house-parlourmaid, is the woman who stole the document," said Morrison, with a note of triumph in his voice.

"Nonsense!" Sir Willoughby's exclamation was expressive of his disdain. "She's as honest as the day!"

The terrified housemaid burst into a torrent of incoherent speech in an endeavour to proclaim her innocence. From words, she sought refuge in tears, and from tears to deep sobs.

Morrison, however, remained unmoved.

"We're used to this play-acting, Sir Willoughby," he said. "If you remember, we took the size of the imprint, and it fits exactly with the size shoes this woman wears—"

"But, good lord!" exclaimed Sir Willoughby. "That is not sufficient evidence to justify her arrest—"

"One moment, sir," broke in Morrison officiously. "We have also discovered the shoes this woman wore last night—in short, sir, the shoes responsible for those incriminating footprints in front of the safe and outside the french windows."

"But this maid was confined to her bed yesterday!" stormed the baronet. "She remained in her room all the evening—"

"Part of the piece," grinned Morrison. "I'm innocent!" cried the maid, with a supplicating gesture to her master. "The shoes they are fastening on me as evidence of my guilt are shoes that had been in the box-room for nearly a month. They are old ones, past repair. Why, the sole of one of them had worn right through—"

Drake pricked up his ears. The case to him was beginning to straighten out.

"Don't be misled because the culprit is a woman," said Morrison. "She's a bad lot right enough. Now you can see, sir, why it is the footprints only enter the house—"

"I'm afraid I don't!" was the baronet's reply.

"It's quite simple, sir," returned Morrison. "It is evident now that this woman was in league with the thieves. She unfastened the french window to admit her rascally colleagues, walked down the narrow strip of gravel path, joined the thieves, and re-entered the reception-room in their company. But where they walked on the bare flooring, she, naturally—to avoid being traced—took off her shoes—"

"All very well!" put in Drake. "I congratulate you on your theory, Morrison, but why does the hasp of the french window have to be broken if the thieves were admitted in the fashion you describe?"

"A little bluff, that's all," said Morrison, a trifle curtly. He disliked answering questions from this cheeky-faced youth.

"And, still in her stockinged feet this



—this unhappy maid broke open the safe, I presume?"

"You've got it, my lad!" grunted Morrison. "She was careless enough to put the shoes down on the polished flooring just in front of the safe the while she stood on the edge of the carpet."

"Hmm!" Sir Willoughby looked at his tear-stricken maid, tried to think the matter out reasonably, and failed hopelessly.

It was Drake who broke an awkward, oppressive silence.

"Have you a photograph of the imprints, Morrison?" he asked.

"I have," was the reply.

"I wish you would let me glance at them," said Drake.

Smothering his annoyance, Morrison complied.

Walking over to the window, Drake looked at the photographs intently. Next he brought a powerful pocket lens into play. Regardless of the sneering glances of the official police, the lad studied the photographs for five minutes or more. Then, with a shrug of the shoulders, he handed them back to Morrison.

"And have you the shoes, Morrison?" he asked.

The shoes were handed him by the surly C.I.D. man. Drake examined the right shoe, noticed ample traces of red mould on the sole, and seemed satisfied as he handed it back to Morrison.

"And where do you think the stolen papers are now, Morrison?" he asked, a slight smile playing about the corners of his mouth.

"Why, up in London by now!" was the reply. "Being handed to the merchant Inspector Pyecroft is shadowing."

"I'll wager you a dinner, Morrison, that the papers have not left this house!"

Drake's statement came like a bombshell. The police, the maid, and Sir Willoughby himself turned to Drake, astonishment, incredulity, contempt written in their changing expressions.

The boy detective stemmed the tide of remarks that began to flow from four people at once with a commanding gesture.

He turned to the maid.

"Tell me," he said, with a reassuring smile, "are you on bad terms with anyone in this house—anyone in the employ of Sir Willoughby?"

The maid coloured slightly, licked her dry lips, looked from one to the other of that grim-faced assembly, and then—

"Yes—"

"And his name is——" questioned Drake.

"You're pretty certain that it's a he!" exclaimed Morrison, with a sneer.

"I'm prepared to wager another dinner that it is a he," replied Drake cheerfully.

"Wh-a-at!"

"And his name is——" repeated the youth.

"Sir Willoughby's secretary—Mr. Eccleston," faltered the maid.

The baronet gave her a hard glance.

"Indeed. I had no knowledge——" he began, when Drake continued his cross-examination.

"You were, I believe, in bed at the time of the robbery, miss?"

"Yes, sir. I had a bad cold, and at the time of the robbery I must have been asleep. I purposely asked the cook not to send me any dinner upstairs as I wasn't feeling in need of food."

"Ah!"

"You see," broke in Morrison. "At the time the food would have been sent up this little bag of mischief was reckoning to be well employed below."

"A good theory," said Drake. "And one that deserves a better fate."

"You impertinent jackanapes——"

"Sir Willoughby," continued Drake, unheeding Morrison's outburst, "I declare this young woman to be as innocent of the crime as you are yourself."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" The maid's gratitude and relief were painfully obvious. "I am innocent, sir, I swear it——"

"The person who stole the document," went on Drake, "endeavoured to cover up his tracks by fastening the guilt on this young woman. The attempt was very cleverly performed, as you will admit when I have outlined my theory."

"Explain!" grunted Morrison coldly.

"Very well," said Drake. "We will start at the beginning of the crime. We have learned from Sir Willoughby that his family were, at the time of the robbery, seated at dinner, and that the maids, with one exception—Miss Maynard—were below stairs, also having dinner—"

"Well?"

"The butler, Jenkins, was in and out of the dining-room attending to the family," continued Drake. "There remained but one person whose movements we are not too certain of."

"Drake!" exclaimed Sir Willoughby coldly. "Explain yourself. Mr. Eccleston was busy in the study typing letters for me during dinner. And remember this," he added, with a touch of hauteur in his manner as above suspicion."

"Very good, sir," said Drake easily. "Now then, the evidence is conclusive that Miss Maynard's shoes tally with the footprints found outside the french window and here again before the safe. Those shoes, we are told, were in the box-room."

"That's only Miss Maynard's story," grunted Morrison.

"I'll prove her story to be true," answered Drake, rather sharply. "There's one important piece of evidence that you have overlooked, Morrison. The imprint of the shoes outside the french windows of the reception-room distinctly show that the shoes were worn on the wrong feet—if they were worn on feet at all!"

"What!" exclaimed Morrison, dragging the photographs of the footprints into view.

"Look closely at the right shoe before you examine the photograph," cautioned Drake. "You will observe that the sole in one place has worn right through. The right shoe, mark you."

"Well, what of it?" grunted Morrison.

"Now look at the photograph," said Drake. "The outline in that red mould is none too well defined. It would be difficult to say whether it represented the right shoe or the left. But now look closely at the left imprint in the picture and look for the hole in the sole."

"Jove!" exclaimed Morrison. "This is an important point. I can see now the deep indentation that corresponds with the hole in the sole of the right shoe."

"And now bear this well in mind, Morrison," said Drake—"the photograph points to the fact that the right shoe was worn on the left foot. Surely that is a strange circumstance? And if this were so, how can we account for that deep indentation that occurs directly beneath the hole in the shoe?"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Morrison excitedly. "You've got it, my lad! No toe could make an indentation like that. The toes would be much higher up in the shoe. The hole in the sole occurs where the ball of the foot would be."

"Good!" said Drake. "That's point number one. Now we will examine the prints of those same shoes in front of the safe. What do you see, Morrison?"

**The bandit's head was just disappearing from view when the door burst open and Morrison & Co. appeared on the threshold. "After him!" yelled the inspector, rushing forward. But his eagerness nearly proved his undoing, for a revolver bullet whistled past his head, missing him by the fraction of an inch.** (*See page 26.*)

The C.I.D. man crossed the room and gazed at the footprints under a powerful lens. Then he turned to the company.

"They seem to have been planted down in their natural order," he grunted. "Left shoe where the left foot would be, and——"

"And the footprint is exceptionally well defined, is it not?"

"Very well defined," replied Morrison. "We've got to thank the rain for that. The soil was sticky."

"But your theory, my dear fellow, was that the maid simply placed the shoes there while she, in her stockinged feet, opened the safe. If that is the case, how do you account for those footprints being so well defined?"

"I got you!" broke in Sir Willoughby excitedly. "If the shoes were simply placed there not much of a footprint would be left on that polished floor, certainly not so clear and distinct as these undoubtedly are. And if the thief wore the shoes there would be more than two footprints."

"Quite right, Sir Willoughby," smiled Drake. "A thief couldn't open that safe without moving his feet, not if we take into account the position of the footprints as they appear now. And again, if the shoes had been worn in the room the major portion of the mud collected on the soles from the garden-bed would have transferred itself to the carpet. And an examination of the carpet reveals no particle of red soil at all."

"But——" began Morrison.

"These footprints," continued Drake, "undoubtedly, were left deliberately clear and distinct to serve a purpose. Look again, Morrison, at the photographs of the prints in front of the safe. Look very closely at the right shoe with your pocket lens."

Morrison did as he was bid. A second or so later a whoop of excitement left his lips.

"There's a finger-print showing through the hole in the sole of the right shoe!" he exclaimed.

"Exactly—a finger-print!" said Drake. "And the red mould collected from the garden-bed outside shows that finger-print more distinct than it would have appeared in normal circumstances."

"Then the shoes were placed on someone's hands!" ejaculated Sir Willoughby. "That accounts for the fact that the left shoe was worn on what we thought to be a right foot. The person responsible made a mistake in putting them on the wrong hands."

"Exactly!" said Drake. "And that would account for the misleading outline left in the soil. You try putting your left hand into this right shoe," he added, "and see how it distorts the shape of the shoe."

"Jove, you're right!" exclaimed the baronet, trying the experiment. "It does distort the outline."

"And what would be the motive for all this?" asked Drake.

"To lay the blame on someone else, my lad."

"Right! And this person, as we will call the thief, knew where to find a pair of shoes to serve his purpose," said Drake. "But why should he go to the box-room? Shoes are usually found in bed-rooms. Why the box-room?"

"That is indeed a poser!" grunted Morrison.

"Not a bit of it," laughed Drake. "You have heard the maid say that she was on bad terms with Eccleston. Again, the maid was confined to her bed at the time all this was going on. Eccleston doubtless knew, too, that she had given instructions to the cook not to send her up any dinner. Everything fitted into the rascal's scheme——"

"He did not know!" broke in the maid.

"But if the scoundrel wished to lay the blame at someone else's door," exclaimed Morrison excitedly, "why did he go to all this trouble? There was plenty of evidence already in hand to cast the blame at the motor bandits, who hooked the jewellery. All he needed to do in that case would be to steal the document and leave things entirely alone. It would be supposed—rightly, too, I'm thinking—that the bandits took the document as well as the jewellery."

"Quite right!" grinned Drake. "But it's obvious when you've made up your mind to account for the woman's footprints—and they must be accounted for—to see that the document was stolen before the thieves broke into the house, and that it is merely a coincidence that those selfsame footprints mark the spot where the motor-bandits chose to break into the place."

"Gee!" ejaculated Morrison. "You're right, my lad! You've right! Those footprints must be accounted for. You've hit it right enough! The document was stolen by someone with a good knowledge of the routine of the house, someone who knew that Miss Maynard was confined to her bed, someone who knew that he would find a pair of old shoes belonging to Miss Maynard in the box-room."

"And someone who left a fingerprint behind him on this polished floor," grinned Drake. "A fingerprint showing a small scar of some sort on the tip of the fellow's second finger. It must be the second finger," he added, putting his own hand into the right shoe belonging to the maid, "for that is where the hole in the sole occurs—that is where the criminal left his trade mark."

"You're right!" repeated Morrison, peering at the photograph. "That's a scar right enough!"

"Scar on the tip of his second finger—right hand," muttered Sir Willoughby with a start. "The knave! The scoundrel!"

"You know such a person, Sir Willoughby?"

"Eccleston, by thunder!" roared the baronet. "Of course. Possibly the scoundrel has been looking over my shoulder, taking a note of the combination of the safe this last week. How else could he know the combination? Besides, he knew that I intended bringing home the confounded document—it was his suggestion!"

"Now we can account for those deep indentations in the footprints where Eccleston stood," said Drake. "I'll wager they were made when he laid the snare of the woman's shoes. The weight of his body was bearing forward as he reached out to place the shoes in the softer soil. I expect, if the truth's known, when he signalled you and the butler, Sir Willoughby, he was standing on the flagstones."

"Why do you say that?" asked the C.I.D. man.

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"Because the deep indentations in the red mould show that the man wore goloshes—note the horizontal tread across the sole," answered Drake. "Did he wear goloshes when he summoned you to look at the footprints, Sir Willoughby?"

"He did not!" replied the baronet emphatically.

"You will admit then, Morrison," continued Drake, turning to the C.I.D. man, "that the evidence points to Eccleston. Another point," he added. "Why should he be wearing goloshes when he was supposed to be writing letters in the study?"

"Ah!" grunted the baronet. "He'll have a deuce of a job to explain that! It's obvious now that the girl here is innocent."

"I apologise!" exclaimed Morrison, very much embarrassed. "I beg your pardon, Miss Maynard."

"Come!" rapped Sir Willoughby, his kindly features assuming an angry and bitter expression. "This scoundrel Eccleston must be apprehended before he can part with the document!"

And leaving the maid laughing and crying hysterically at her good fortune in being proved innocent, the party dashed from the room.

## Eccleston Pays the Penalty!

MONTAGUE ECCLESTON surveyed his sharp features in the mirror that hung above the mantelpiece of his room, seeing in the reflection a countenance slightly flushed with excitement and an occasional flicker of fear.

He tugged a trifle nervously at his tie and then seated himself in an armchair. Below stairs, as he knew, the police were endeavouring to fix the guilt of the person who had stolen Sir Willoughby's papers. That was a pleasant reflection. Eccleston, with a comforting grin, hoped that they would be successful.

So engrossed was he in his own thoughts that he failed to note the tremble of the long curtains hanging in front of the window. The first inkling of something unusual he discovered when, looking up, he beheld a tall figure clad in a cloak whose features were practically obscured by a black mask.

"Good lord!" ejaculated the secretary, rising to his feet. "Who the dickens are you?"

His courage began to wilt as he found himself looking into the barrel of an ugly-looking automatic.

"What—what—"

Eccleston's tongue refused him service. Like a mesmerised being he watched his visitor walk across to the door, turn the key of the lock, and pocket the key. Then, seating himself in a chair opposite the terrified secretary, the masked figure broke into speech.

"I come for the Government document, Montague Eccleston——"

A guilty flush overspread the secretary's features.

"I come for the document," the man was speaking again. "And I'm not prepared to dilly-dally here for your benefit. Very cleverly you stole the document, Eccleston, although you assured Salmonstein, the moneylender, at the last moment that you wouldn't——"

"What do you know of Salmonstein?" gasped Eccleston.

"I know that you borrowed two thousand pounds from him," replied his masked visitor scornfully. "I know, too, that you would be expelled from the Civil Service if those in authority knew of the transaction. Wait!" he added, as the secretary was about to speak. "I know, too, that you promised to deliver an important document into Salmonstein's hands in return for the incriminating paper you signed when you took out the loan——"

"You know all that," said Eccleston hoarsely. "I am betrayed!"

"Not yet," was the reply. "At the last moment you informed Salmonstein that you wouldn't steal that document for all the signed papers in the kingdom —you talked about your patriotism, your honour." The masked man sneered. "Fool that you are!" he continued. "You brought me down here last night on a fool's errand——"

"Then you were one of the motor-bandits?"

"I am their chief!" came the boastful reply. "I came not for a paltry ten thousand pounds of jewellery. I came for that document. But I knew you had forestalled me when I saw the open safe, although you had sworn to Salmonstein that you wouldn't touch it even if he offered you——"

"I was afraid," said Eccleston. "I knew Salmonstein would carry out his word. Ruin stared me in the face. A Civil servant, as you know, is not supposed to have any truck with money-lenders."

"So you took the document, after all," sneered the masked man. "And the blame of it all lies at the door of the motor-bandits. Very well," he added, "we will take the results of the robbery, but we want the papers as well. That's what I am here for. Those papers are worth a hundred thousand pounds to me."

"But you'll never get them!" Eccleston hissed the words defiantly. "If they're worth that amount to you they're worth a similar amount to me!"

"That document is worth exactly your life!" hissed the masked man, toying significantly with the revolver. "Hand it over!"

"I refuse!"

"Very well." The visitor's voice was coldly calculating and cruel. He brought his revolver arm in a line with Eccleston's head. "I'll give you three seconds to decide!"

In that period of grace between this world and eternity the secretary's past life came before his mental vision in a flash. Only one deed wrought far out-weighed the good—he refused that with a peculiar gulping sensation in his throat. But there was a chance to redeem something of his shady past if he could succeed in baffling this cool individual with the revolver. The document was not yet in his hands.

Another look at the glinting weapon sapped half Eccleston's good intentions, and then, with the characteristic impulsiveness of the weak man, he sprang at the masked invader.

There was a blinding flash of light and a muffled report as the revolver spat fire. But the bullet missed the secretary by a hair's-breadth. Next minute he was struggling with the masked man with all the ferocity of a tiger.

"You villain!" he hissed. "You—— Help! Help!"

With a superhuman effort the secretary tore the weapon from his assailant's hand, only to succeed in reclaim it the revolver was kicked aside.

Montague Eccleston was thoroughly roused now. He knew he was fighting for his life. Desperately he freed himself of the grip on his throat, savagely he tore at the mask covering his assailant's features.

It came away in the struggle, and a cry of amazement escaped Eccleston's lips as his wildly staring eyes fastened themselves on the face of the chief of the motor bandits.

"You!" he exclaimed hoarsely, falling back a pace. "I know you!"

Crack!

The revolver was snatched from the floor, a muffled report rang out, and when the smoke cleared Montague Eccleston lay still upon the floor. For one moment his assailant stood hesitating. Then, refastening the mask over his features, he made as if to search the bureau.

Before he could commence his search, however, the sound of footsteps sounded in the corridor without. A moment later came a knock at the door.

"Open this door!"

The masked man stood undecided, looking about him furtively. Then, as the locked door resounded to heavy blows, he slipped his leg over the window-sill, and with amazing agility for a man of his bulk began to clamber down the ivy.

His head was just disappearing from view when the door burst in. On the threshold stood Jack Drake, Inspector Morrison, and Sir Willoughby Forteseue. They stood petrified at the scene before them.

"After him!"

It was Morrison who collected his scattered wits first. With a whoop of triumph he jumped the intervening space between the door and the window and grabbed at the figure descending the ivy. But he was a fraction of a second too late.

His eagerness nearly proved his undoing, for the masked man disengaged one hand from the ivy roots and fired a shot at the C.I.D. man. Morrison ducked instinctively, and heard the bullet whistle past his ear.

He cursed himself for having left his own revolver downstairs.

"After him!" he roared savagely as he dashed from the room. "Follow me!"

The policeman raced at his heels, the while Drake bent over the prostrate figure on the floor. With a shake of the head the lad signalled to the horrified Sir Willoughby that the secretary was almost beyond any assistance. Next moment he was forcing the contents of his brandy flask through the fellow's lips.

The secretary's eyes opened for a moment or two, his lips parted.

"The—document!" he muttered faintly. "Secret—drawer—bureau!"

He fell back into Drake's arms. The lad's flask came into play again. A measure of raw spirit was forced down Eccleston's throat. The baronet thinking more of his precious document than the life of his treacherous secretary, raced across to the bureau and began a frantic search.

Once more the secretary's eyes opened, his head began to tremble. He tried to speak. The end was near now, and Drake bent lower, the better to catch the stricken man's last words.

"I'm a gonner! Miss—is innocent! Forgive me—bandit—chief—is——"

His words trailed off unintelligibly.

***(Will Eccleston live long enough to divulge the name of the bandit chief? Make sure you read next week's powerful instalment. It's full of surprises, chums!)***

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## HARRY WHARTON'S DOWNFALL!

(*Continued from page* 20.)

He fell rather than sat in his chair in the corner. The Bounder sponged his face dubiously.

"Going on?" he whispered.

Wharton gave him a fierce look.

"What do you mean? Of course I'm going on."

"If you'll take my tip——"

"Cheese it!"

Wharton came up at the call of time for the eleventh round. Skinner was in full sympathy with his struggle against the captain of the Form—as he would have been in sympathy with any outbreak against law and order and the fitness of things. But Skinner privately offered two to one in half-crowns on Bob Cherry now. Stott and Snoop shook their heads—there were no takers. It was only too clear now how the fight was going.

Wharton was on the defensive all through that round, and his defence was weakening. Had Bob pressed him hard he could scarcely have stood up to the call of time. But Bob was not pressing him hard—the pale, set face, sadly marked now, but blazing with desperate determination, touched him strangely. He knew that he was the winner—that Wharton was already defeated and should have stopped, and it was not in his heart to hammer a failing adversary.

"Time!"

"Look here, old man," whispered the Bounder as he fanned Wharton's face in his corner. "Chuck it! I'm bound to advise you to chuck it. Try again another time, if you like, but chuck it now!"

Wharton did not answer in words. He had no breath to waste. But he gave the Bounder a look of savage animosity.

Smithy said no more; with that passionate, desperate determination it was useless to reason.

"Time!"

Wharton forced himself to toe the line. His brain was dizzy, his sight uncertain now; but his determination was unshaken. So long as he could stand he would fight.

Fortune, ever fickle, seemed to gleam upon him again in the twelfth round. If Bob was sparing his opponent he had cause to repent it. Wharton came at him savagely, and his attack got home, and Bob was driven round the ring under a rain of blows he could not guard, and finished by crashing down dazed and dizzy.

Wharton stood unsteadily while Lord Mauleverer counted. Mauleverer had reached eight when Bob Cherry dragged himself up.

His friends breathed with relief. It had been a near thing—very near—but a miss was as good as a mile. Bob was fighting again, and Wharton had spent his force. That last desperate effort had exhausted him. He was tottering when Lord Mauleverer called time, and he groped blindly for his corner—the Bounder's helping hand guided him there.

Wharton sat, breathing in painful gasps, the sea of faces swimming round him. The Bounder said no word—it was useless to speak. Lord Mauleverer looked at his watch and glanced anxiously across at Wharton.

"Time!"

Wharton rose to his feet, forcing his fatigued and aching limbs to action. He was not beaten—he would not be beaten—somehow, anyhow, he would yet snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. But the lights were floating about his dizzy eyes—he saw the crowd of breathless faces as in a glass darkly. He staggered into the ring.

Bob Cherry loomed up before him like a figure in a mist.

"You can't go on!"

"Mind your own business!" Wharton muttered the words huskily. "I'm ready, hang you! Come on!"

Bob kept his hands down.

"Wharton, old man—Harry, call it a draw! I'm willing to call it a draw, if you are, and——"

"You rotter! Come on!"

Wharton lurched forward, hitting out. Bob Cherry stepped back, and Harry Wharton, swaying blindly, fell.

There was a buzz in the crowd.

Twice Wharton essayed to rise, and twice he sank back, helpless. He was done, defeated, but he would not acknowledge the self-evident fact. Like a voice from afar, through a mist, he heard Lord Mauleverer counting him out.

Then the Bounder's hand grasped him and drew him to his feet.

"Come away, old chap!" whispered Smithy.

"I'm not finished! I——" panted Wharton hoarsely.

"You're counted out, old man! Dash it all, Wharton, you can't even stand! Have a little sense!"

Harry Wharton strove to pull himself together. He stared round him dazedly. Bob Cherry, almost at the end of his tether, was standing with his friends, victor in that desperate fight—and the fight was over! It was the last, the final crushing defeat. Harry Wharton had made his last throw of the dice, and the cast had gone against him.

He was defeated—he was down and out. Most of the faces round him were grave, some curious, a few mocking. Wharton did not heed them. He turned towards the door, and Bolsover major unlocked it. The Bounder's friendly arm helped him as he went.

But before he reached the door Wharton pushed aside that helping arm. With a last desperate summoning of his pride, he walked out of the Rag, unaided, his head erect.

It was ten minutes later that Bob Cherry's rugged, kind face looked in at Study No. 1 in the Remove. Harry Wharton was there—seated at the table, his aching head resting on his outstretched arms. Bob's face twitched as he looked at him. Wharton raised his head; his eyes burned at the captain of the Remove. Bob made a step forward.

"Wharton, old man, I'm sorry! What did you do it for? Harry—Harry, old chap, can't we forget all this—and be friends, like we used?"

There was no answer, only that steady, burning gaze of animosity. Bob Cherry waited a moment or two, and then, with a clouded face, he turned and left the study.

THE END.

(*What will be Harry Wharton's next move? Will he make it up with his old friends, or will he persist in following the downward path? Next Monday's grand story "Down And Out" will tell you. Don't miss it!*)

## Next Monday's Programme!

### OUR SIMPLE COMPETITION!

THIS week sets our Grand "Cross Words" Limerick Competition a-rolling. On page 2 will be found full particulars of this fascinating contest, together with many helpful suggestions for rounding off unfinished Limericks. I want all my chums to try their skill with No. 1. If you do not bag a prize the first week, you can try again next week—that is the joy of it! Bear well in mind that I am offering £5 and 12 Consolation Prizes of Splendid Pocket-Knives EVERY WEEK. Now turn to page 2, and get busy with coupon No. 1. Somebody has got to win that

**FIVE-POUND NOTE!**

—and it might be you. You may send in as many attempts as you like, but every effort must be accompanied by the proper coupon. Go in and win, chums!

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### "DOWN AND OUT!"
**By Frank Richards.**

That is the title of next Monday's grand, extra-long complete story of Greyfriars. Wharton, the one-time skipper of the Remove, is nearing the end of his tether. His arrogant spirit can rebel against authority, but authority—in the shape of prefects and masters—always comes out best in the long-run. Lines, lickings, gatings—that's Wharton's daily programme now. He takes them all stolidly, without a murmur, but his heart is heavy. I feel sure you will find a certain amount of sympathy, not unmixed with admiration, for the Remove fellow who is

**"DOWN AND OUT!"**

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There is, of course, another powerful instalment of our grand new detective serial next week, in which young Jack Drake takes it into his head to return to school. His object is not to swot Latin, maths, etc.—far from it! The boy sleuth is out to lay the chief of the motor bandits by the heels, and at a certain school in Surrey he hopes to accomplish his purpose. What awaits him? Don't miss next week's instalment, boys, of

**"THE DEPUTY DETECTIVE!"**

or you will be missing something extra good.

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### "LEAVING SCHOOL!"

With the advent of 1925 many of my loyal chums are leaving school to take their place in the business world. Their hopes of success, as is perfectly natural, run high. Fortunes are to be made, positions are waiting to be filled, and every man jack of you reckons to cover himself with glory. A splendid spirit, that, and one that rides you over obstacles that dismay the weak-minded and the unambitious.

Now, the best news your Editor could receive during this coming year would be that every single one of his loyal chums had made a mark for himself, had made "good." And this is where a few tips from your old friend, of whom in the past you have sought advice on subjects ranging from the keeping of white mice to engineering, etc., will serve you well.

The bright, intelligent lad of to-day is the successful business man of to-morrow, the boy with a thorough knowledge of his trade, no matter what branch of commerce it may be, is bound to get on, is bound to be recognised by his employer. And the bright, intelligent lad of to-day can make absolutely certain of success by devoting a few hours of his leisure time to study. Here, again, the firm responsible for the publishing of the "Magnet," which has provided you with so many enjoyable hours of fiction, now helps you in the sterner walks of life. At a ridiculously low cost, a complete Encyclopedia of Commerce that embraces every known trade is placed at your disposal. In it such wonder-men as Lord Birkenhead, the Rt. Hon. Neville Chamberlain, Cabinet Ministers, Bank Directors, Professors of Universities, Shipping Magnates, etc., give first-hand information on every business under the sun. And, unlike many other Encyclopedias,

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is understandable and practical to every boy or girl with ordinary intelligence. Although an authoritative work it is not dull, it is not abstrusely technical.

With such valuable knowledge at your elbow, chums, success is as near a certainty as anything in this world can be. You've taken my advice in the past, and, I believe, have found it helpful. Take it once again. Make up your minds to score your mark in this great world of business that you are just entering, make up your minds to get the best information obtainable that will help you along in your new job, make up your minds to get every fortnight

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the complete guide to Commercial knowledge. Ask your newsagent to show you a copy.