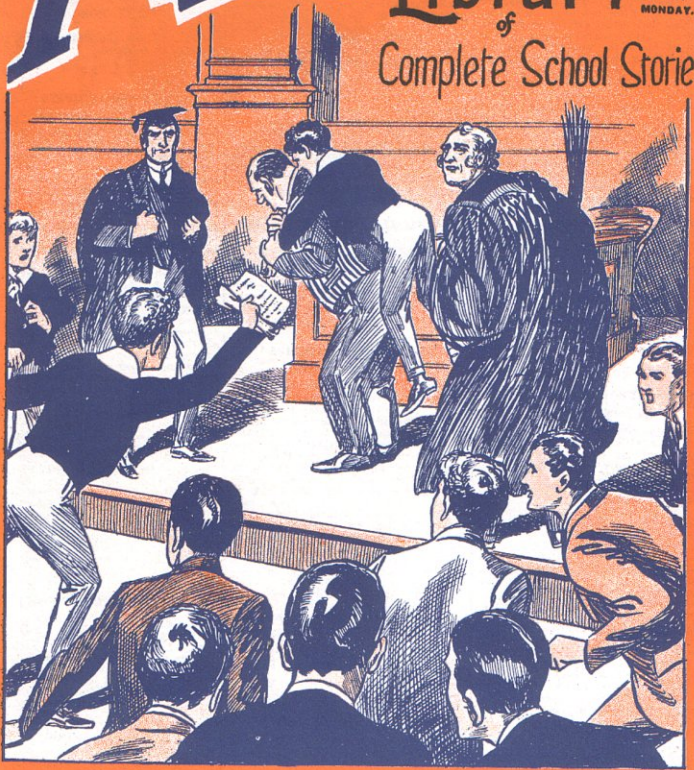
No. 886. Vol. XXVII. Week Ending January 31st, 1925.

The Magnet 2d Library

EVERY MONDAY.

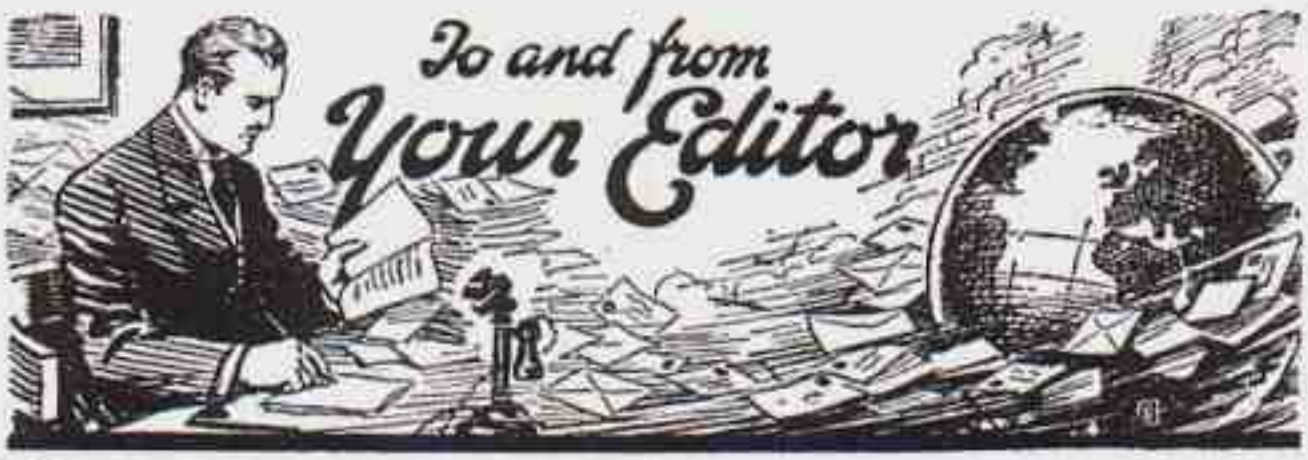
of Complete School Stories



"STOP!"

JUST IN TIME TO SAVE WHARTON FROM A FLOGGING!

(A sensational incident from the magnificent long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, within.)



WHO WANTS A FIVE-POUND NOTE?

THERE'S no catch attached to this headline. A Five-Pound Note is really offered every week to Magnetites interested in Limericks. Five minutes' work and, mayhap, that useful sum of money will be yours. Apart from the prize, there is a lot of fun to be extracted from our simple "Cross Words" Limerick Competition, and I want every single one of you to fill in the coupon. I am also awarding twelve consolation prizes of splendid pocket-knives to those readers whose efforts show merit. The beauty about this contest lies in the fact that you can enter a fresh effort every week. No coupons to collect together for a number of weeks, simply a few minutes' work and your part of the competition is finished. When the result sheet appears you will know at once how you have fared, and if your effort has failed to catch the judge's eye there is still time to have another shot. Five minutes—that's all the time you'll want to find a last line for this week's unfinished Limerick, a congenial task that will earn for somebody the enormous "wage" of

A POUND A MINUTE!

Worth while trying your skill, isn't it, chums? What-ho! Right, then, get busy on that coupon now!

"THE WORST BOY AT GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards.

That's the title of the next long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., and, as can be guessed, the one-time captain of the Remove fills the leading role. A few weeks back none would have dreamed that Wharton could have fallen so low; none would have imagined that one of Mr. Quelch's most promising pupils could have defied authority in so flagrant a fashion. And all this, mark you, started from a misunderstanding, was sped along its evil course by a broken friendship, was continued with such unreasonable bitterness through the promptings of an arrogant and overbearing pride. The break must come. Sooner or later the hardiest spirit snaps under a merciless authority that can wield the rod of iron, and yet, strangely enough, wield it justly. There's the rub. Wharton knows in his heart of hearts that he deserves everything he gets, and yet that unreasonable, twisted outlook on life tells him that he must follow the thorny path he has set himself.

THE CROSS KEYS!

This disreputable establishment has figured often enough in Greyfriars history. It has achieved an unenviable distinction as the place where reckless, shady schoolboys have repaired in order to "play the man." Don't run away with a wrong impression. Skinner & Co.'s idea of "playing the man" is entirely different from the sporting code of the healthy-minded boy. It's more like "playing the goat." There's nothing praiseworthy in smoking cigarettes in a smelly bar parlour, nothing creditable in gambling with derelict specimens of humanity, who can find in plucking silly, foolish schoolboys the only means to hand of continuing an unworthy existence. And yet such rotters as Loder, Skinner, & Co. think they are "living the life" in the company of such miserable rogues. You can, therefore, appreciate the shock Frank Nugent & Co. experience when they learn that their one-time chum has taken to visiting this common public-house. And what a shock a certain Form master receives when he sees Wharton leaving the place. How this tangle becomes unravelled you will discover for yourselves upon reading

"THE WORST BOY AT GREYFRIARS!"

And I'll wager you a bag of doughnuts that you'll devour every word of it. Keen you will be to reach the end of the story—we are built like that—and how sorry you'll be when you have finished it. Don't miss this yarn on any account, chums!

"THE DEPUTY DETECTIVE!"

By Hedley Scott.

There is, of course, another magnificent instalment of this popular detective serial. In it we see young Jack Drake do what we all do in the course of our lives—make mistakes. Wonderful that—eh? It's a new departure for the hero of a story to do silly things. Heroes are usually superior persons who can do no wrong. Now, that's just where Hedley Scott gets down to the natural side of things. His hero is human; he can live outside the pages of fiction. No doubt you will be sorry to read of Drake's bad blunder, but he retrieves his reputation before you come to that irritating phrase, "To be continued." Mind you read this coming instalment, my chums; it's top-hole.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT!

Magnetites can look forward to another sparkling supplement next Monday. "The Ballot at St. Sam's," one of the features, shows Dicky Nugent to be at his best, while George Wingate discourses upon "Dining-Hall Disasters," with a light, interesting touch that holds your attention from the first word. Don't forget to read next week's supplement. Remember the "Herald" motto: "Laugh and grow fat." You can't go far wrong, then, boys.

"CROSS WORD" PUZZLES.

Several readers have urged me to publish as an additional feature in the MAGNET a weekly "Cross Word" puzzle. These readers will have their wish gratified next Monday. I feel sure that the majority of you will find these puzzles highly entertaining and amusing. They are helpful, too, in that they strengthen one's vocabulary and general knowledge. These puzzles, which will be published every week, are

SIMPLY FOR YOUR AMUSEMENT

There is no competition attached to the scheme, so I will take this opportunity of asking my readers to refrain from sending in their solutions. The true solution to each puzzle will be published the week after the original puzzle appears. Look out, then, chums, for "Cross Word" puzzle No. 1

NEXT MONDAY,

and take the precaution of ordering your MAGNET in advance.

THE GREAT QUEST!

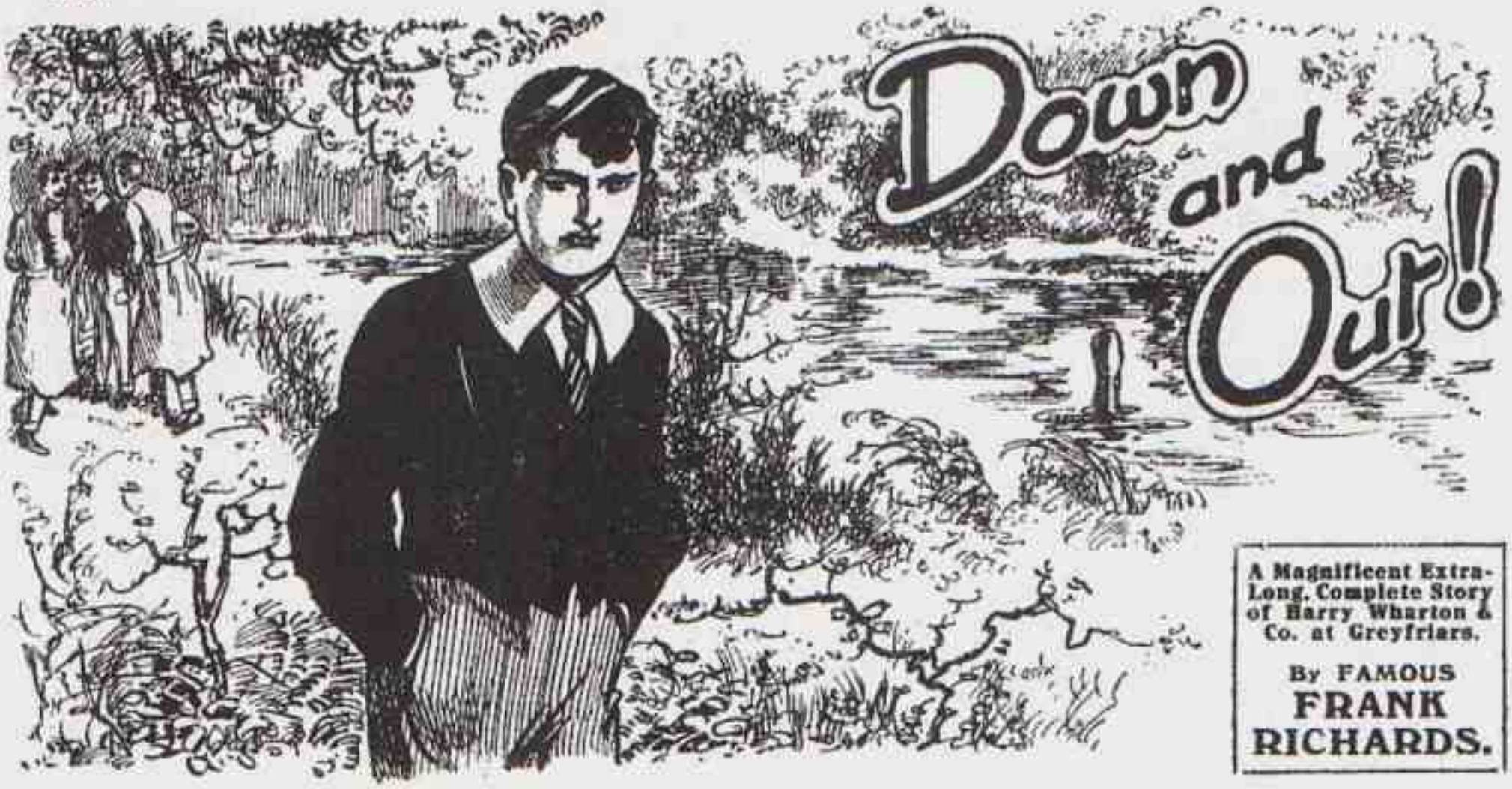
This is a true tale. It deals with a fellow who started life right early. But something within told him that he had not found the secret of success. He consulted many books in his search for that secret. It was all N.G. He realised he was simply marking time, instead of striding onwards with the quick march of progress. He knew this was so as he through the toiling first year of his working life. Other fellows who were round used to laugh at him. At last he could stand it no longer. What was this thing he wanted and had not got? He could not give it a name, but he was grimly determined to find it by some means or another. So he shouldered his pack and walked out of his native town, passed through the wide world. He looked in all the holes and corners; he travelled overseas. Nothing doing. At long last he turned round and started for home. "Perhaps it is something wrong with me," he said to himself. He was not right out there. There was nothing wrong with him at all. He had grit and pluck and industry. So he reached the town where he lived, and chanced to pass in front of a bookshop. In the window he saw a book called "Harmsworth's Business Encyclopedia." He dashed into the shop. "That's the book for me!" he cried delightedly. "It is the key to success. Just what I have been looking for until this minute, all in vain." And subsequent events will prove that he was correct, for assuredly he will rise to the top of the tree.

THAT KETTLE OF FISH!

As might have been expected, the return of Wharton have excited much attention. I am not one bit surprised. Letters pour in on me expressing the wish that the captain of the Remove will get back to his old job. There is fierce wrath in many quarters. "Put him back in the captaincy at once!" runs the note. Heaps of trusty true-blue Magnetites have got out their fountain-pens and set down what they think. Some of their remarks are worthy of red ink. But it is no manner of good getting riled because things happen you don't like! They will happen.

Your Editor.

THE REBEL! Harry Wharton can kick against authority and stand the consequences longer than most juniors in the Greyfriars Remove. But the end is the same in the long run—authority holds all the trump cards. There's the rub!



A Magnificent Extra-Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars.

By FAMOUS FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Appeal to the Head!

"MIND your eye!" murmured Smithy of the Remove.

But the Remove fellows did not need the warning.

As soon as Mr. Quelch, their Form master, entered the Form-room all the Remove could see that there was thunder in the air; and all of them became immediately very circumspect.

Billy Bunter hastily thrust his stick of toffee out of sight under his desk. Skinner dropped the ink-ball he had intended to project at Lord Mauleverer. Snoop ceased whispering to Stott; Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull stopped a discussion of the St. Jim's match, which was to take place that afternoon.

Mr. Quelch's brow was grim and frowning.

When the Remove master frowned it was time for the Remove to sit up and take notice, as it were. And they did.

In fact, only one fellow in the Form failed to be impressed. That was Harry Wharton, late captain of the Remove. Wharton was fitting a new nib in his pen; and he continued his task sedulously, as if quite indifferent whether his Form master frowned or smiled.

Mr. Quelch stopped by his desk, and looked at the Form.

The Removites wondered what was coming.

They noticed that his glance rested upon Harry Wharton, though Wharton seemed carelessly oblivious of it.

And the general impression in the Remove was that Wharton was "for it" again.

Since the new term had started there had been a great deal of trouble between Wharton and his Form master, and it had reached a climax when Mr. Quelch had turned him out of the captaincy of the Form. Since then it was understood in the Remove that Wharton was "up against" the Form master; and certainly he succeeded in giving Mr. Quelch plenty of trouble, with the result that he captured a record number of punishments.

The time when Skinner & Co. had sneered at Harry Wharton as a "model" youth and a "shining example" was past. Wharton was anything but a model youth now, and, so far as his former friends could see, he was going from bad to worse.

"Wharton!"

Mr. Quelch rapped out the name like a bullet.

Wharton glanced at him, raising his eyebrows slightly.

"Yes, sir."

A junior could not very well be caned for raising his eyebrows. But never had Mr. Quelch felt so disposed to cane a member of his Form.

"Stand out before the class, Wharton!"

"Oh, certainly!"

Wharton lounged out before the Remove.

All eyes were fixed on him.

Bob Cherry looked a little worried. Frank Nugent very serious. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had a troubled look on his dusky face, and Johnny Bull frowned.

The split in the Famous Five was wider than ever since Bob Cherry had become captain of the Form. But the four chums were still concerned to see their former friend continually booked for trouble. But many of the Remove looked keen and anticipative. They were looking for a passage-of-arms between the rebel of the Remove and his Form master.

"Wharton! I am sorry to have to find fault with you again."

"Indeed, sir!"

"This term, Wharton, you seem to have made up your mind to give me all the trouble possible, and to lose every vestige of the good character you once had in this Form."

"Do you think so, sir?"

"To carelessness and impertinence, Wharton, I am afraid that you are now adding more serious faults."

"What have I done now, sir?"

There was a sarcastic stress on the word "now," which brought a gleam into the Remove-master's eyes.

"You are aware, Wharton, that smoking is strictly forbidden for Greyfriars boys!"

"Certainly!"

"I have had to punish members of my Form for indulging in this silly and dingy form of viciousness!" said Mr. Quelch, his glance straying for a moment to Skinner. Skinner looked down at his desk, careful not to catch Mr. Quelch's eye. He was painfully conscious of the fact that he had "smokes" in his pocket at that very moment.

"But I did not suspect you, Wharton, of anything of the kind, with all your serious faults."

"Thank you, sir!" said Wharton, still sarcastic.

"I have had to change my opinion. You have been seen with a packet of cigarettes in your possession."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Do you deny it, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take care, Wharton! A prefect of the Sixth Form has reported the matter to me!"

"He must have made a mistake, sir."

"I trust so, Wharton. The facts will very soon be ascertained. If Loder was not mistaken, the cigarettes are still in your possession. Do you deny that you have cigarettes in your possession at this moment?"

"Yes, sir."

"According to Loder's statement to me, he saw you take a packet of cigarettes from your pocket as you were coming into this Form-room," said Mr. Quelch, with a stern look at the junior. "You took out your handkerchief, and the packet came out with it. You replaced it very quickly. That is Loder's statement."

Wharton did not answer.

"At one time, Wharton, I should have taken your word without question," said Mr. Quelch. "But this term you have been so reckless, so insubordinate, so determined to cause trouble and rebel against authority, that I am surprised at nothing you may do! I shall, therefore, put the matter to the test. You will turn out your pockets!"

Wharton did not stir.

"You hear me?" said Mr. Quelch, raising his voice a little.

There was a breathless hush in the Remove.

"I hear you, sir," said Harry. "But I have already denied having any cigarettes about me."

"That is not sufficient. Turn out your pockets at once."

"I give you my word, sir."

"I am sorry that since you have forfeited my good opinion, Wharton, I cannot take your word without proof. You will turn out your pockets immediately and place all the articles on my desk."

"Very well, sir."

Harry Wharton began to turn out his pockets slowly. A handkerchief was placed on the Form master's desk, then a penknife, a leather purse, and some loose copper coins, and one or two other small articles. Then Wharton stopped.

"There is still something in the pocket from which you have taken your handkerchief, Wharton."

"There are no cigarettes there, sir."

Mr. Quelch, with an angry ejaculation, stepped towards the junior and thrust his hand into the jacket-pocket. His eyes fairly glittered as he drew out a cigarette-packet.

There was a buzz for a moment in the Remove.

Mr. Quelch held up the cardboard packet. Its weight showed that it was full.

Bob Cherry gave his chums a hopeless look. Wharton had fallen low in the esteem of his old friends, but they had never dreamed that he could come to this—direct falsehood. It was a surprise to Mr. Quelch himself. But he was more angry than surprised.

"Wharton! You have denied having cigarettes in your possession—and here is a full packet! Miserable boy, what have you to say now?"

No answer.

Wharton's expression was sullen and dogged.

"That you have taken to the foolish and pernicious habit of smoking is bad enough. But it is a trifle compared with uttering deliberate untruths. Wharton, I shall punish you most severely." Mr. Quelch laid the packet on his desk and picked up his cane. "Hold out your hand!"

Wharton kept his hands down.

"Boy, hold out your hand at once!"

"I appeal to the Head, sir!"

"What!"

"I appeal to the Head!"

——

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Not Guilty!

HARRY WHARTON spoke quietly, calmly.

Mr. Quelch paused.

The Remove looked on, silent, with intense interest.

Any junior "up" before his Form master was allowed an appeal to the Head, but it was a right seldom taken advantage of; for in the event of an idle appeal wasting the valuable time of the headmaster, the punishment was certain to be much more severe.

The Remove fellows were simply amazed by Wharton's words. If there had been a shadow of doubt as to his guilt, it would have been a different matter. But with the packet of cigarettes lying in full view on the Form master's desk, there was nothing to be said. Nevertheless, he was within his rights in claiming an appeal to Dr. Locke, and the Remove master had no choice but to accede.

"Are you serious, Wharton?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch at last.

"Quite, sir."

"Your object, no doubt, is to waste your headmaster's time and mine," said Mr. Quelch bitterly; "but I warn you, Wharton, that this will not serve you. It is my intention to cane you; but if the matter goes before Dr. Locke, your punishment will be a flogging."

"I am aware of that, sir."

"If you persist in your appeal——"

"I do, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch, setting his lips, "I shall take you to the headmaster at once. Follow me."

The Remove master was deeply annoyed. The recalcitrant junior had at least succeeded in disregarding his authority, though at the cost of a much more severe punishment for himself.

Mr. Quelch glanced at his class.

"I shall leave you for a few minutes, my boys," he said. "I shall rely upon you to keep order while I am gone."

He made a sign to Wharton, and rustled from the Form-room.

Wharton followed him.

Immediately they were gone there was an excited buzz in the Remove.

"The awful ass!" said Peter Todd. "He's for it now, and no mistake."

"Yes, rather!" said the Bounder. "The Head's with the Sixth now; he won't like being interrupted."

"It's a flogging," said Bob Cherry dismally.

"The flogfulness will be terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head.

"Blessed if I can make it out," said Nugent, with a deeply troubled look. "It's not like Harry to tell lies—like Skinner——"

"Thanks!" said Skinner.

"He's come down, and no mistake," said Johnny Bull. "Unless—unless——" Johnny paused. "Do you think he's pulling Quelchy's leg somehow? I can't believe that he'd stand up like that and tell lies."

There was breathless discussion in the Remove. Harry Wharton was no longer captain of the Form—he was, indeed, no longer anybody in particular, as some of the fellows were quite pleased to tell him sometimes. But there was no doubt that he was still succeeding in keeping himself before the public eye—he was still in the limelight, if only as a rebel against authority, and a fellow who was always in the wars. And nerve and pluck, even when misdirected, could not fail to win some admiration. There had always been malcontents in the Lower Fourth; but even the Bounder, in his most reckless days, had never ventured to set himself up against his Form master as Wharton was now doing.

Mr. Quelch rustled away to the Sixth Form room with a frowning, clouded brow.

Third lesson was beginning in all the Form-rooms, and the Head had gone to the Sixth Form room to take the Sixth. So it was there that the Remove master had to seek him.

With the tell-tale cigarette-packet in his hand, Mr. Quelch marched into the Sixth Form room, Wharton at his heels.

Dr. Locke glanced round in surprise.

He was about to entertain the Sixth with some of the delights of Sophocles. It was a congenial task to the Head—perhaps not quite so congenial to the top Form of Greyfriars. He did not like being interrupted; but it is probable that a good many of the Sixth welcomed the interruption, being quite willing to give Sophocles a rest.

"Mr. Quelch—what——"

"I am sorry to interrupt you, sir," said Mr. Quelch; "but as Wharton has chosen to appeal to you——"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. He glanced at Wharton severely. He was not ignorant of Wharton's bad record that term.

"Will you deal with the matter now, sir, or later?"

"I will deal with it now, Mr. Quelch."

Mr. Quelch held up the cigarette-packet.

"Loder saw this packet in Wharton's possession, sir, and very properly reported the matter to me, as his Form master."

"Very properly," said the Head.

Loder of the Sixth smirked a little. He had done his duty as a prefect in reporting Wharton to his Form master, but it had been a very pleasant duty to the bully of the Sixth.

"When questioned, Wharton denied point-blank having any cigarettes in his possession, sir. He gave me his word. Yet I found this packet in his jacket-pocket."

The Head's brow grew very stern.

"Is it possible, Mr. Quelch?"

"Instead of taking his punishment from me, sir, he exercised his right of appealing to his headmaster. I leave the matter in your hands, sir," said Mr. Quelch, with dignity.

"Wharton!" The Head's voice was like the rumble of distant thunder. "Wharton! Every Greyfriars boy has the right of appeal to his headmaster, but an idle and frivolous appeal is a new offence. You are convicted of a serious infraction of the laws of the school, yet you have chosen to have the matter brought before me. You will take the consequences. You will be flogged——"

"May I speak, sir?"

"Certainly, if you have anything to say!" snapped the Head.

"Mr. Quelch accused me of having cigarettes in my possession, sir," said Wharton evenly. "I denied it—and deny it still."

"What! You do not deny that Mr. Quelch took this packet from your jacket-pocket, as he has stated to me?"

"No, sir."

"Then what do you mean?"

"I mean that I have no cigarettes, and never had any," answered Wharton. "That is a cigarette-box, sir, but there are no cigarettes in it."

"Wha-a-at?"

The Head fairly stuttered. Mr. Quelch gave an almost convulsive start. Loder, in the ranks of the Sixth, stared. Some of the seniors grinned.

"I picked the box up, empty, in the Cloisters this morning, sir," went on Wharton calmly. "I kept it, as I needed a box to keep pen-nibs in."

"Pen-nibs!" said Mr. Quelch faintly.

"Yes, sir."

Dr. Locke's expression was extraordinary as he took the cardboard box from the Remove master's hand and opened it. He drew the interior box from the outer case, and revealed—pen-nibs. Two or three dozen pen-nibs were stacked in the cigarette-packet, filling it tightly; but there was no sign of a smoke."

"Bless my soul!" murmured the Head.

Mr. Quelch's face was a study.

The Sixth were all on the broad grin now. They seemed to find something entertaining in this peculiar incident.

Wharton stood silent, with an impassive face. There was no sign in his looks that he had deliberately planned to mislead his Form master, and to make that hapless gentleman look an egregious ass in the presence of the headmaster and the Sixth Form.

"Pen-nibs," said Mr. Quelch faintly. "Upon my word! Pen-nibs!"

Dr. Locke coughed.

He was quite aware of the grinning of the Sixth-Formers, and of the ridiculous turn the affair had now taken.

"Really, Mr. Quelch! Did—did you not examine the contents of the box before—before bringing Wharton to me?"

"I—I admit I—I never thought of doing so, sir," stammered the Remove master. "I—I—I found a cigarette-box filled apparently with cigarettes—it did not occur to me that it contained anything else, and Wharton was very careful not to tell me so. He—he had deliberately deceived me in the matter."

Mr. Quelch's face was crimson.

"Wharton, why did you not tell Mr. Quelch that the contents of the box were—were of so harmless a character?"

"I gave him my word, sir, that I had no cigarettes," said Harry.

"Quite so! Hem! But—but——"

"Mr. Quelch refused to take my word, sir," said Wharton. "I couldn't do more than tell him the truth, sir."

"Really——" The Head paused, quite at a loss.

"May I have my pen-nibs, sir?" asked the junior demurely.

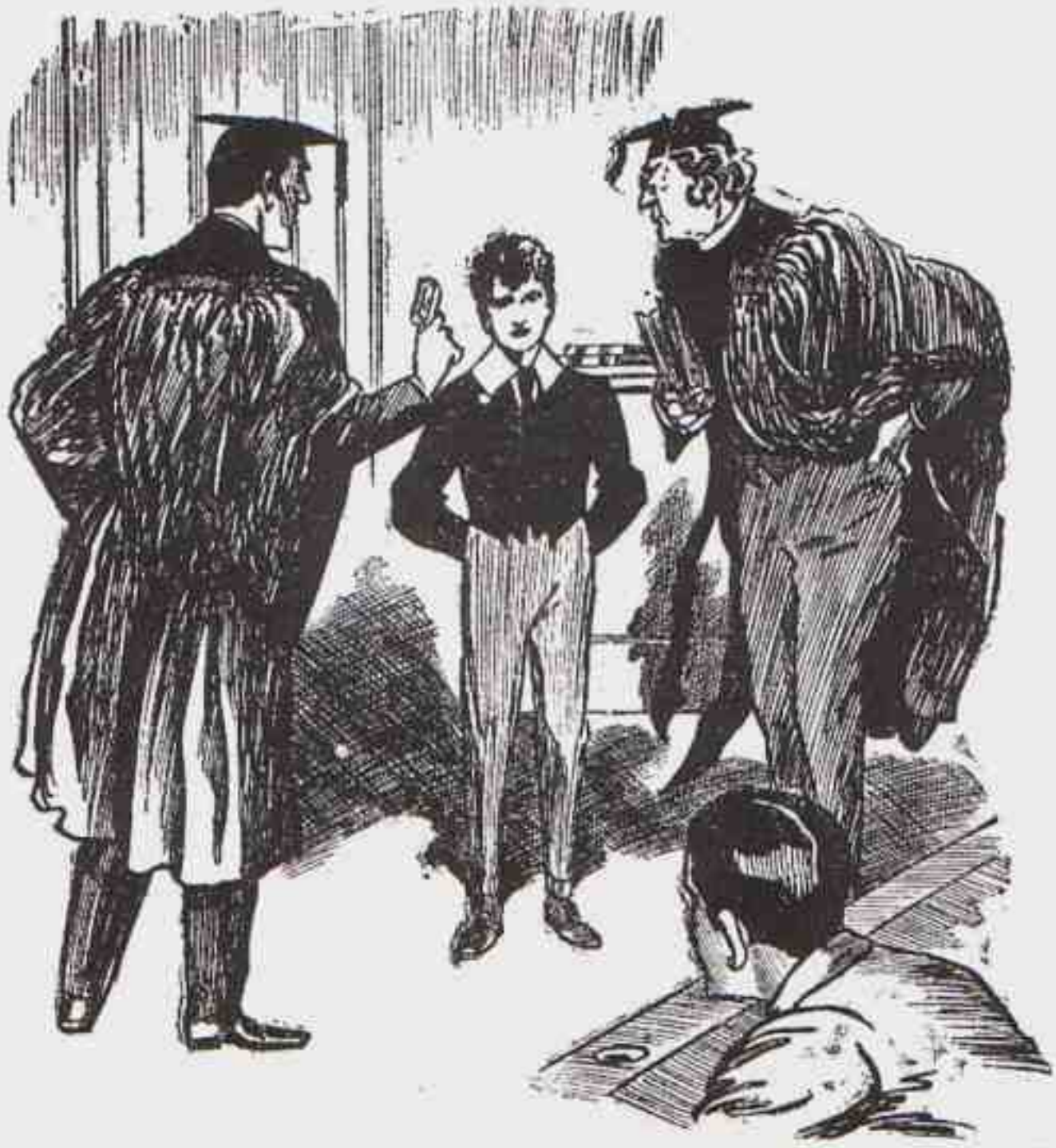
"I—I suppose the boy may—may have his property, Mr. Quelch, since—since it is not as you supposed?"

"Certainly!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

The Head hastily passed the cigarette-box to Wharton, who slipped it into his pocket.

"I advise you, Wharton, to find some other—some other receptacle for your—your pen-nibs," said the Head. "There is no harm, certainly, in picking up an empty cigarette-box, nevertheless, appearances should be considered. Is—is there anything more, Mr. Quelch?"

"No, sir," gasped the Form master.



"You do not deny that Mr. Quelch took this packet from your pocket as he has stated to me, Wharton?" asked the Head grimly. "No, sir!" "Then, boy, what do you mean?" "I mean that I have no cigarettes," answered Wharton. "That is a cigarette box, sir, but there are no cigarettes in it." "Wha-a-at?" Dr. Locke fairly stuttered. Mr. Quelch gave an almost convulsive start. *(See Chapter 2.)*

He rustled out of the Sixth Form room, only too acutely conscious of the grinning glances that followed him. Quite unintentionally, he had provided the Sixth with a little entertainment that morning; an entertainment compared with which Sophocles was a very secondary "also ran."

Wharton followed his Form master.

In the corridor Mr. Quelch paused and fixed his eyes on the junior.

"Wharton, this was deliberate on your part. You intentionally misled me."

"Do you think so, sir?"

"I am assured of it. Do you deny it?"

"I have nothing to say, sir," answered Wharton calmly. "I was accused of smoking, and I appealed to the Head. The Head has found me not guilty."

Mr. Quelch trembled with anger.

"If you had told me that the box did not contain cigarettes, but something else, I should have examined its contents, as you are very well aware, Wharton."

"I did tell you that I had no cigarettes, sir, which comes to the same thing."

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

He realised that he was defeated, that the rebel of the Remove had deliberately made a fool of him, and could not be punished without the appearance, at least, of injustice.

"Very well, Wharton! The matter ends here; but I shall not forget this! Return to the Form-room."

"Yes, sir."

Harry Wharton walked back to the Remove room.

All eyes in the Lower Fourth were fixed upon him as he entered. The Remove were surprised to see him saunter into the room with careless unconcern, evidently unpunished.

"Not licked!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith.

Wharton raised his eyebrows.

"Why should I have been licked?" he asked. "The Head's not likely to lick a fellow for keeping his pen-nibs in an old cigarette-box."

"Pen-nibs!" yelled the Bounder.

Wharton opened the box and held it up to view.

There was a roar of laughter in the Remove. All the fellows understood now.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Skinner. "Pulling Quelchy's leg all the time. Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter.

"Waal, I guess that takes the bun!" chuckled Fisher T. Fish. "What a nerve! What a neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quelchy must have looked an awful ass!" exclaimed Redwing.

"He did!" said Wharton.

"It's too thick!" said Peter Todd.

"Is it?" said Harry, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"You let Loder see that packet on purpose, then?" exclaimed the Bounder.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Yes; Loder is always so keen to catch a fellow out I thought I would make him happy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mind your eye, here comes the beak!" whispered Bolsover major.

Wharton sat down in his place as Mr. Quelch came in. The Remove master had lingered a few minutes, perhaps to control his anger and agitation, before he returned to his Form. The laughter died away as if by magic as he was seen in the doorway. His look showed the Lower Fourth that it was no time for merriment.

Third lesson that morning progressed in an electric atmosphere in the Remove-room. Mr. Quelch's temper was at its sharpest, and the Remove had never been so glad to be dismissed.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

BOB CHERRY came out of the dining-hall after dinner with a corrugated brow.

That afternoon the Greyfriars Remove were playing St. Jim's—the first big fixture under Bob's captaincy. Tom Merry & Co. were coming over to Greyfriars from St. Jim's, and were expected early. Bob had already posted the list of the Remove eleven, but even at the last moment he was anxious to make one change—to put in Harry Wharton's name. The late captain of the Remove had signified his intention of standing out of the football so long as he had to stand out of the captaincy of the Form—an attitude which some of the fellows put down to sheer swank, and others to a desire to make Bob's task harder. Certainly, Bob's team was weakened by the loss of the finest junior footballer at Greyfriars, for Wharton undoubtedly was that. Smithy and Hurree Singh in the front line, Bob Cherry at half, and Johnny Bull at back, Squiff in goal, were all first-class men, but there was no doubt that Wharton was the best of the Remove bunch, and all acknowledged it.

Bob had a natural desire to make his first big match a win, and, anyhow, he wanted to see his side victorious. But that was not all. Far apart as he now was from his old comrade, he had seen Wharton's downward course with distress, and giving up football seemed to him to mark a very decided stage on the downward path. He wanted Wharton to play, as much for Wharton's own sake as for the sake of the side.

But it was difficult to raise the matter again. Wharton's decision had been plain and expressed in quite unequivocal words.

Hence the deep corrugation in Bob Cherry's brow.

Wharton lounged in the hall, talking to Skinner and Snoop and Stott—often his companions now. There had been a time when he had kept the black sheep of the Remove at more than arm's length, but it was so no longer. Indeed, in these days Wharton hardly spoke to anyone in the Form outside Skinner & Co., excepting the Bounder. He seemed to have become rather chummy with Smithy, which was not a thing to please fellows who concerned themselves about his welfare. Vernon-Smith was a rather dangerous friend for a fellow in a mood of recklessness, bitterness, and general rebellious discontent.

Redwing stopped to speak to Bob. Tom Redwing's name was in the team—provisionally, as it were. It was understood that he would not be wanted if Wharton decided to play after all. Some fellows would have found that condition of things rather irksome—it really was not flattering. But Tom was a sensible and good-natured fellow, quite aware that Wharton was worth two or three of him to the side; and keen, too, to see the late captain of the Form take his old place in Remove games.

"Will you want me, Cherry?" he asked cheerily. "I know my name's down, but if——"

Bob looked rather uncomfortable.

"Well, it's not treating you very well, Reddy, old man," he said ruefully. "But if you don't mind, I'll ask Wharton once more."

"Of course I don't mind," said Redwing, with a smile. "The fact is, if you don't want me, I'm going up to Hawkscliff this afternoon to see my father. Of course, I'm ready if you want me; but if not——"

"I'll let you know in a few minutes, then," said Bob.

"No hurry, old chap."

And Tom Redwing strolled away with the Bounder. Bob Cherry regarded his friends dubiously.

"You fellows agree that I'd better speak to Wharton?" he asked.

"The agreefulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, and Frank Nugent nodded. Johnny Bull gave a grunt.

"Wharton's been asked," he said.

"Yes. But——"

"Well, you're captain, old man," said Johnny Bull. "Do as you jolly well think best, of course."

Bob looked worried.

"I can't quite forget that Wharton used to be our best pal, though he seems to have forgotten it," he said.

"He does!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I—I hoped that things might pull round," said Bob. "We've had rows before, and they've blown over. But since he insisted upon fighting me in the Rag last week——"

"That's all over," said Frank Nugent quietly. "But apart from that, Bob, Wharton's needed in the team. He ought to stand by his Form."

"He's frightfully sore at being turned out of the captaincy," remarked Peter Todd.

Bob made a grimace.

"Goodness knows, I'd like to see him back in his old place," he said. "But that's impossible. Quelchy wouldn't hear of it, even if the fellows wanted it. Wharton gets his rag out afresh every day now. And I don't think the fellows want him now."

"I know they don't!" said Peter.

"Well, then—well, I'll ask him," said Bob. "Last time of asking. If he says no again, I'll take him at his word."

Bob walked across to the hall window, where Harry Wharton stood in conversation with Skinner & Co. Wharton did not seem to see him, and did not glance at him when Bob came to a halt. Skinner and Snoop and Stott exchanged winks.

Bob reddened.

"Just a word with you, Wharton," he said abruptly.

Wharton glanced at him then: an icy glance that was like steel. He did not speak. There were still traces on Wharton's handsome face of the fight in the Rag, though more than a week had passed. He did not, and could not, forget how he had stood up to Bob Cherry in a desperate struggle, and had been defeated. He could not forget and he could not forgive; probably he did not want either to forget or to forgive.

"St. Jim's will be here soon," said Bob. "We shall miss you from the eleven, Wharton, if you don't play. Redwing's willing to stand out, if you care to join up. Will you?"

"No!"

The answer was short and sharp.

"You're still a member of the club," said Bob patiently. "You ought to play when you're wanted."

"I resign from the club."

"That's all very well," said Bob warmly. "But a Remove chap is supposed to stand by his Form."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"You won't play, then?"

"No, I won't."

"That settles it, then." Bob turned his back, and walked away. He called across to Redwing, who was talking in the doorway with Vernon-Smith. "You'll be wanted, Redwing."

"Right-ho!" called back Tom cheerily.

"That's the stuff to give him, Wharton," murmured Skinner. "I don't see why you should help him win matches, when he's got your job."

Wharton nodded, without speaking. Something perverse in his nature had made him accept Skinner as a companion, but he could not like him, and Skinner jarred on him now as much as ever in the past.

"Look here," went on Skinner. "Come out with us for the afternoon, Wharton. We're going to kick over the traces a bit, and that's rather in your line now, ain't it?"

Snoop and Stott grinned.

"I'll come," said Harry.

"Good. Let's get out before the merry footballers arrive—I'm fed-up with football."

A good many fellows noticed Harry Wharton walking down to the gates with Skinner & Co. But it did not cause very much surprise; Wharton was not what he had been, and, indeed, it was fairly clear that he was on the way to becoming a black sheep himself, though it was not likely that he would ever be quite like Skinner.

Bob Cherry had no time to give him further thought. The St. Jim's match claimed all his attention that afternoon. When Tom Merry & Co. arrived, and Bob led his men into the field, most of the Remove gathered on Little Side to see the game, even Lord Mauleverer taking the trouble to walk down to the football field. And Harry Wharton, once the captain of the Remove, and the keenest footballer in the Form, was not to be seen there; he was not seen, and was almost forgotten.

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Caught in the Tide!

"WHITHER bound?" asked Snoop.

"Oh, the Feathers," said Skinner.

Stott whistled.

The Feathers was a rather disreputable inn, up the river, far enough away from the school for a visit there to be fairly safe for the amateur blackguards of the Remove.

Skinner spoke carelessly, but he kept an eye on Wharton as he spoke. That Wharton was going down—fast approaching Skinner's own level—was pretty well known. It was said in the Remove that he had already been on more than one mysterious expedition in company with the Bounder. But Skinner was feeling a little dubious, wondering, in fact, how the former captain of the Remove would accept his suggestion.

"Jolly place," went on Skinner. "We can get a game of billiards and a smoke

there, without any danger of the beaks butting in. May meet some of the Highcliffe chaps, too—Ponsonby, and Gaddy—what?"

"Good!" said Snoop. "You on, Wharton?"

Wharton paused.

His evil star was in the ascendant; he was, as so often of late, in a reckless and bitter mood. But something within him rose against his present companionship and its dingy associations.

"What about a walk over the cliffs?" he asked.

Skinner stared.

"What the thump do we want to walk over the cliffs for?" he asked. "I'm not tramping over any dashed cliffs, I know that!"

"Well, I am!" said Wharton abruptly.

And with a curt nod to the shady trio, he turned and walked away by a footpath across the fields.

Skinner set his lips.

"Still high and mighty, though he's come such a mucker," he sneered. "We're not good enough for him."

"Well, we don't want him," said Snoop. "Let's get on."

And Skinner & Co. went on their way up the river, leaving Harry Wharton to his own devices.

Wharton tramped on moodily, with his hands driven deep into his pockets.

Sharp as his answer to Bob Cherry had been, he would have been very glad to be playing in the football match that afternoon. But his stubborn pride stood in the way. He had "chucked" football along with the captaincy of the Form, and he would not go back on his word. Never for a moment now did his thoughts dwell on the possibility of bridging the gulf that had opened between him and his old friends. That was over and done with, a thing settled, and he had, or believed that he had, no regrets. But it was bitter to know that they had taken the other fellows with them in the division; the Form had gathered loyally round Bob Cherry as their captain, and Wharton's reckless course had alienated all the best fellows in the Remove. Rank outsiders like Skinner & Co. were left for him to consort with. The only fellow of consequence in the Form with whom he was still friendly was the Bounder. But that afternoon Smithy was playing in the St. Jim's match, and his company was not available, though Wharton would have been glad of it. Skinner & Co.'s company had been available, but Wharton had turned from it with a touch of his old disdain.

He came out on the cliffs in the strong sea breeze, and tramped on with a moody brow.

But the sea wind and the winter sunshine cheered him, and his brow gradually cleared. On the cliff top he threw himself down in a nook of the rocks, and gazed seaward. Far away to the right lay the village of Pegg, with a glimpse of the red roofs of Cliff House School. Before him was the open bay, and beyond the wide, rolling waters of the North Sea—rolling turbid in the wind, and breaking on the rocks of the Shoulder with a deep, echoing boom. It was some time before the junior, deep in thought, and gazing idly at the cresting billows, observed a boat dancing in the frothy waters under the shadow of the great Shoulder.

It was a dangerous spot for a boat, amid the cross-currents that raced and foamed among the sunken rocks, as the tide came rolling in.

Wharton rose to his feet, and stood looking down at the boat, tiny in the distance.

A bronzed-faced sailorman was in the boat, and even at that distance there seemed something familiar in his looks to Wharton's eye. He had seen the man before.

"My hat! It's Redwing's pater!"

He knew him now—old John Redwing, of Hawkscliff, the father of Redwing of the Remove. More than once the Famous Five had gone up to Hawkscliff with Tom Redwing, to visit his humble home, on a half-holiday.

Skinner & Co. had found matter for many gibes and sneers in Tom Redwing's cabin at Hawkscliff, and his sailorman father. But in that, at least, Wharton was never likely to see eye to eye with the cads of the Remove. He had been cordially glad when Tom won the scholarship that entitled him to a place in the Greyfriars Remove, and he liked and respected Mr. Redwing.

Wharton's brows were knitted as he watched the brown-faced sailorman. The boat was dancing almost like a cork on the wild waters, that roared and foamed as the tide rolled in, swelling and flooding among the rugged rocks.

It dawned upon his mind that the sailorman in the boat was struggling for his life.

The boat's mast was gone—broken off short in a jagged stump. And old Redwing was handling a single oar with his left hand—his right seemed to be useless. Wharton comprehended that he was hurt—perhaps by the crash of the breaking mast.

The junior's face was pale now.

A strong man would have been in dire peril, caught in the inrushing tide among the rugged rocks at the base of the great Shoulder. And it was a disabled man who was struggling there, pitting his failing strength against the might of the wild sea.

Harry Wharton ran down the cliff path. It was a steep and irregular path down to the shingle, but he tore along it recklessly. He knew that it was a matter of minutes before old Redwing would be struggling in the water, dashing helplessly among the cruel fangs of the rocks. For a second he thought of Tom, playing football at Greyfriars while his father was fighting for his life in that lonely waste of water and rock and shifting sand. He tore on breathlessly. Twice he stumbled and rolled, and picked himself up again and ran on.

He came out on the waste of shingle at the foot of the cliff—shingle broken up with rugged rocks, already washed by the incoming tide, that poured and raved and swelled among the water-worn boulders.

In his hurried descent he had lost sight of the struggling boat. Now he sighted it again, floating keel upward, dashing on the rocks with the swing of the billows. In that brief space the disaster had come.

Trampling among shifting sand, slipping on wet rocks, drenched by the breakers that crashed on him unheeded, Harry Wharton stared round wildly for the sailorman.

He caught sight of a burly form in a woollen jersey, that rolled and pitched in the dashing waters, still struggling feebly. Heedless of his own peril, the Greyfriars junior plunged into the water. The tide swelled round his neck, over his set mouth, as he plunged on desperately. The ebb of a receding wave caught him, and plucked him away, and he was struggling in deep water. But his grasp was on the woollen jersey, and Tom Redwing's father was in his grip.

The next few minutes were terrible. Holding on to the half-conscious sailorman, Harry Wharton fought for his life

There was a rush and a shout as Bob Cherry came up, and he was collared on all sides. "Up with him!" shouted Squiff. "Cheese it!" said Bob, laughing. "Shoulder high!" roared Peter Todd. "Hurrah!" "Good old Bob!" The captain of the Remove was hoisted on the shoulders of Johnny Bull and Squiff and paraded along the passage. *(See Chapter 5.)*

—for two lives. The rush of the tide swept him far up the shingle, and carried him back as it receded, helpless as a floating cork. Twice he felt his feet grinding in the shifting shingle, and twice he was plucked away again—blinded, deafened, dazed, and dizzy. And still his convulsive grasp was upon the man who could not help himself.

Again he swept on, swamped by the rolling waters. Again the receding waves plucked and wrenched at him; but with one hand he had caught at a jagged point of rock, and he held on desperately. The rush of the water left him clinging to the rock, and as he stood free he trampled frantically up the beach, dragging the heavy sailorman after him with the strength of desperation. The roar of the waters was behind him, the tide welled and swelled round him up to his knees, to his waist; but he was beyond the power of the sea now.

He staggered on, almost blindly, still grasping the rescued man. Beyond the lap of the water he sank down, exhausted, fainting. The blue sky, the great Shoulder, the rolling, roaring waves, the white seagulls, swam in a mist before his eyes. His strength was spent to the uttermost, and darkness rushed on him.

He opened his eyes at last wildly, to see an anxious, bronzed face bending over him.

"Thank Heaven, sir!" John Redwing's voice was husky. "Thank Heaven you've come to! I—I was afraid you——"

Wharton panted.

"It's all right," he said faintly.

And then he lay silent, breathing hard, waiting for his strength to return, conscious that he had been through the valley of the shadow of death, and had been spared almost by a miracle.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

After the Match!

"HERE he is!"

"Up with him!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

The football match was over, the home team winners by three goals to two. Tom Merry & Co. had departed in their brake for the station, and Bob Cherry, after seeing them off, walked back to the House with his friends, in a cheery and satisfied mood.

His captaincy of the Remove had begun well; the St. Jim's match had been won, in spite of Wharton's defection. Some of the fellows wondered whether Wharton would be disappointed to hear it. But no such thought crossed Bob's honest, unsuspicious mind. He was elated with his success, and had no room in his honest heart for any uncharitableness.

The Remove passage was crowded with fellows, and as Bob came up the stairs there was a rush and a shout, and he was collared on all sides.

"Up with him!" shouted Squiff.

"Cheese it!" said Bob, laughing.

"Shoulder high!" roared Peter Todd.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Bob!"

The captain of the Remove was hoisted on the shoulders of Johnny Bull and Squiff, and paraded along the Remove passage, amid cheers and laughter. Few could help liking Bob Cherry, and his success as captain of the Remove, his victory over St. Jim's, had given the finishing touch to his popularity. The Remove passage rang with cheers for the captain of the Form.

The length of the passage went the shouting crowd, and then back again to No. 13, Bob's study. Mark Linley, his study-mate, opened the door with a smiling face, and Bob was marched in, and landed at last, flushed, breathless, and very merry and bright.

Vernon-Smith had stood at the door of his study, watching the demonstration with a rather cynical smile on his face, taking no part in it. Tom Redwing had shared in it, and he came back to the study with a smiling, flushed face—chilled a little, however, as he caught the expression of the Bounder.

"Why didn't you cheer, Smithy?"

The Bounder laughed satirically.

"Plenty without me," he said. "Come in, old bean; I want my tea. Cherry is going great guns, isn't he?"

"He's a good chap, and a good skipper," said Tom, following the Bounder into Study No. 4.

"They used to cheer Wharton just as enthusiastically. Fellows have their ups and downs," said the Bounder. "I wouldn't bank too much on the giddy enthusiasm if I were Cherry."

"Oh, rot!" said Tom uneasily.

"He's a good chap and a good skipper, as you say," went on the Bounder. "But he's not a patch on Wharton as captain. I dare say he's the better fellow of the two."

"Not much doubt about that," said Redwing dryly.

"But Wharton's the man for my money. I'd be glad to see him back in his old place, especially now we've become such pals."

Redwing gave his study-mate a quick look, but made no answer. The Bounder ran on in a light and cynical vein, Redwing answering only by monosyllables as they sat down to tea. The Bounder broke off at last and fixed his eyes on Redwing with a rather mocking expression.

"What's the trouble?" he asked bluntly. "You've got somethin' on your mind, Reddy."

Redwing coloured.

"Well, I have, Smithy," he said. "You won't mind my speaking out?"

"Not in the least."

"Well, I don't like your chumming with Wharton in the way you've done lately, Smithy."

Vernon-Smith laughed.

"You used to tell me you'd like to see me on more friendly terms with him," he remarked.

"Yes, that was so, but he's changed," said Redwing seriously. "I can't quite understand Wharton this term. It really seems as if he's taken a turn for the bad and is determined to go to the dogs about as fast as he can get there. I'm sorry to see it—awfully sorry—for I always thought him a splendid chap. But at least, Smithy, you needn't have a hand in it. He will come to harm enough, I'm afraid, without you helping him on."

"What the thump do you mean?" demanded the Bounder gruffly.

"I'm not blind," said Redwing quietly. "With Wharton in this queer mood, you've found him a fellow you can pal with. I'm not finding fault with you, Smithy. There's a lot of things we don't agree about, and I'm not the chap to preach to you. We can be good friends though our tastes are different. I shut my eyes to things that aren't my business. But I know, of course, that you kick over the traces at times. Most of the fellows know. I wish you wouldn't. But my wishes don't count."

"They do," said the Bounder. "If you'd known me before you came to Greyfriars, old bean, you'd see a big difference."

"I'm glad of that. At least, glad if I ever have kept you from acting in a way that's really unworthy of you, Smithy."

"What a solemn old judge you are, Tom!" said the Bounder, laughing. "But what's the matter now?"

"I hate to say it, but your friendship won't do Wharton any good," said Redwing.

"Thanks!"

"I mean it!" said Tom quietly.

"Does it do you any harm?" sneered Vernon-Smith. "If so, you can chuck it as soon as you like!"

"Now you're getting ratty. I can't help that. It doesn't do me any harm, because I've no taste for—for——" Redwing hesitated.

"Blackguardism?" said the Bounder coolly.

"Well, that's the word, though I shouldn't have liked to use it. You couldn't influence me that way, and I know you wouldn't if you could," said Tom. "But it's a different matter with Wharton. He's in the state of mind now when he's open to any influence of a reckless or rebellious kind, and I repeat you won't do him any good. If you want a comrade for breaking bounds or playing the goat, there's Skinner——"

"I don't pal with Skinner," said Smithy disdainfully.

"Better than helping drag down a decent chap to Skinner's level!" said Redwing sharply.

The Bounder shrugged his shoulders.

"Wharton can look after himself," he said. "I sympathise with him. I think he's had hard measure, and I back him up. He's up against the beaks—and so am I, in my own way. You'd better not butt in, old man!"

"I sha'n't say any more, Smithy, but I wish you'd think over what I've said," answered Tom wistfully. "You're a good fellow—one of the best if it wasn't for that kink in you. Let Wharton alone, and if he's going down don't give him a shove."

"Here endeth the first lesson!" grinned the Bounder. And the subject dropped. But Vernon-Smith's face was very thoughtful afterwards. Tom Redwing's words had given him food for thought.

The two juniors sat down to prep later—quite amicably, in spite of the little lecture Redwing had given his chum. Redwing certainly was the only fellow in the Remove from whom the Bounder would have taken a lecture. He was, indeed, sometimes surprised himself by the extent of the influence the sailorman's son possessed over him. That influence was wholly good, and the change in the Bounder had been great since he had chummed with Tom Redwing. But there was a strain of reckless blackguardism in the Bounder which probably would never be quite eradicated; generally it was latent, but at times it would break out, in spite of Redwing's influence and of his regard for Redwing's good opinion.

Prep in Study No. 4 was interrupted by the door opening and a fat face grinning into the study.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"Haven't you heard?" grinned Billy Bunter. "I say, Wharton's going it again!"

"Is he?" said Vernon-Smith, with interest. "What's the game now?"

"I suppose you know it's past lock-up?"

"I suppose so as lock-up's at dark, and it's been dark more than an hour," said Vernon-Smith. "What about it?"

"Wharton hasn't come in."

"He missed roll-call," said Redwing.

"And he hasn't come in yet," grinned Bunter. "Quelchy's going up and down asking about him. He, he, he!"

"He went out with Skinner," said the Bounder. "Skinner's come in."

"Yes. I've asked him and he says Wharton went off by himself. Of course, he's staying out just to get Quelchy's rag out!" chuckled Bunter. "I say, he's going it, isn't he? Rather an ass, if you ask me. Quelchy's awfully sore about being made to look such a fool this morning before the Head. He will simply jump at this chance. He, he, he!"

"Is that anything to cackle over?" growled Tom Redwing gruffly.

"Oh, really Redwing——"

"Roll away!" snapped the Bounder.

"Yah!"

Billy Bunter rolled away to impart his news to other studies in the Remove.

Vernon-Smith glanced at Redwing's troubled face.

"He's asking for it!" he said.

"I can't understand him," said Tom. "I'm sorry to see this. He must know that he made Mr. Quelch awfully wild this morning, and he can't expect Quelchy to go easy with him."

"He's got a neck, and no mistake!" said Smithy.

When prep was over the Bounder left his study, rather curious to know whether Harry Wharton had turned up yet. But Wharton had not come in, and most of the Remove fellows in the rag were discussing the matter. Wharton's latest, as Skinner called it. Skinner had his own theory on the subject.

"He pulled my leg," said Skinner to his friends. "I admit it; pulled my leg a treat. Of course he wasn't going for any old walk over the cliffs. He was going out of bounds. Wapshot races, most likely."

"Phew!" Snoop whistled.

"Ten to one on it!" said Skinner sapiently. "That's why he's late; he's been going it. I wonder what yarn he will spin Quelchy when he come in?"

"Whatever yarn he spins he will get it in the neck," said Snoop shrewdly. "Quelchy is just watching for a chance at him, after what happened this morning. Quelchy's not likely to forgive that."

Skinner nodded and grinned.

"And to think that Wharton was the giddy model, the shinin' example to erring youth, only last term!" he said. "Looks to me as if he's heading for the long jump just about as fast as he can—what?"

"Looks like it," agreed Snoop.

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter rolled in to the Rag, his little, round eyes gleaming with excitement behind his big spectacles. "Wharton's come in—just come in!"

There was a rush of the Remove fellows from the Rag at once.

Frank Nugent set up a sheet of Wharton's writing to keep a model in view, and made up his lines as like Wharton's as he could. The lines grew apace as Nugent worked and at last the completed stack of twelve hundred lines lay on Harry Wharton's table. *(See Chapter 11.)*

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

"For It!"

HARRY WHARTON had come in. He looked tired and a little pale.

As he stood in the lighted hall two or three score of eyes were turned on him curiously. He glanced about him indifferently.

It was the fixed opinion in the Remove that the rebel of the Form had deliberately stayed out of gates, a couple of hours after lock-up, as an act of defiance to his Form master. It was one more incident in the almost open warfare between Harry Wharton and the master of the Remove. It was natural enough that the fellows should think so, but as a matter of fact Wharton was not to blame. Of what had happened on the rocks under the Shoulder that afternoon no one at Greyfriars was aware.

"Here he is!" chortled Skinner. He noted the tired, worn look on the handsome face of the late captain of the Remove, and he had no doubt that his surmise was correct—Wharton had been at the Wapshot Races, and doubtless had lost money there. Certainly he did not look as if he had enjoyed his half-holiday.

"Where have you been, Wharton?" grinned Hazeldene.

"Walking over the jolly old cliffs, what?" chuckled Snoop.

Wharton looked at him.

"Yes," he answered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Wharton, what are you going to tell Quelchy?" squeaked Billy Bunter. "He's awfully wild, you know."

"Is he?" said Harry indifferently.

"Put some exercise books in your bags when you go in to him," advised Wibley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What yarn are you going to spin?" asked Bolsover major. "Better have something ready, old man."

Wharton smiled sarcastically.

"Is he likely to believe any yarn I spin?" he asked.

"Well, no; but you can't tell him that you've stayed out of gates just to cheek him, can you? For goodness' sake, Wharton, mind what you say to him," said Bolsover major. "He's frightfully ratty, and you can't wonder at it. Tell him something to soothe him."

"That's a good idea," said Skinner.

"I'm no great hand at lying," said Wharton. "What do you suggest, Skinner? It's more in your line."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Skinner sulkily.

"Lost a train, or something," suggested Micky Desmond.

"Won't wash," said Snoop. "Quelchy would want to know what train, and where, and why. Too thin."

Wharton's lip curled.

"Oh, I dare say I could think of something," he remarked. "What about going into the sea to fetch out a drowning man?"

"Great Scott! Too thick!"

"Draw it mild."

"Quelchy wouldn't swallow that, old chap. There's a limit."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, that would account for missing lock-up," he said. "Suppose I tell him I went in for a drowning man, and was quite knocked up, and had a rest, say, in a fisherman's cottage at Pegg, and couldn't get back to school for roll-call? Too fagged out, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, if you spin that yarn to Quelchy you're a thundering ass!" said Vernon-Smith. "He would want to

know the man's name, at least, and inquire into it. It's too thick, anyway. You're not serious?"

"Oh, no! I'm not going to tell him anything," said Harry carelessly. "As you say, a yarn like that wouldn't wash—not with Quelchy. Didn't he say this morning that he couldn't take my word? What's the good of spinning a yarn to a man who can't take your word?"

"Well, if you told him something reasonable——"

"I'm such a rotten hand at lying," said Wharton. "I must get some tips from Skinner. But there's no time now."

And the late captain of the Remove walked away to Mr. Quelch's study to report his arrival. He left the Removites in a buzz.

Wharton knocked at Mr. Quelch's door and entered. The Remove master laid down his book and rose to his feet, fixing his eyes upon the junior with an almost baleful expression. The rebel of the Remove had long worn out the patience of his Form master, and he had no consideration or mercy to expect from Mr. Quelch now.

"So you have returned, Wharton?" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice.

"Yes, sir."

"You are more than two hours late for lock-up."

"Two hours and ten minutes, sir," said Wharton.

"Have you any excuse to offer?"

"No, sir."

The junior's eyes met the Form master's fearlessly. Mr. Quelch set his lips with anger. It seemed to him that he could read disdain, as well as indifference, in the handsome, fearless face before him.

"That is all you have to say, Wharton?"

"That is all, sir."

"You do not expect, I presume, to be allowed to set at naught the laws of the school to which you belong with impunity?" said Mr. Quelch, almost gasping.

"No, sir."

"Very well—very well indeed. I can only take this, Wharton, as an act of defiance—an act intended to show your contempt for all authority," rasped Mr. Quelch.

No answer.

"There was a time, Wharton, when I regarded you with esteem and confidence, as one of the best boys in my Form. Now I am driven to the opinion that you are one of the worst boys at Greyfriars."

"Indeed, sir!"

"You offer me no explanation, you express no regret for this defiance of authority?"

"No, sir," said Wharton stubbornly.

"Very good! In the circumstances, Wharton, I shall not punish you myself. I shall report you to the headmaster for a public flogging," said Mr. Quelch harshly. "That, I hope, may have some effect upon your obdurate nature. Now you may go."

Without a word Harry Wharton turned and left the study.

A few minutes later he strolled into the Rag with his hands in his pockets. He came in humming a tune.

There was a shout at once.

"What's the giddy verdict?"

Bob Cherry & Co. looked at Wharton anxiously. He did not glance in their direction.

"Flogging," he answered lightly. "I'm for it. It seems that I'm one of the worst boys at Greyfriars—if not the very worst—and so a flogging is the only thing to meet the case, you see."

"My hat! It's going before the Head, then?" said the Bounder.

"Yes."

"You're rather an ass, old chap. Raggin' Quelchy is all very well, but it's safer to keep the Head at arm's length," said the Bounder. "The Head's liable to sack a fellow when he gets fed with him."

"Well, I didn't ask Quelchy to take it to the Head," said Wharton in the same light tone. "The dear man seems to think it his duty to pile it on thick. I think he rather enjoys doing his giddy duty this time. I fancy he was annoyed this morning over the cigarette-box."

The Bounder chuckled.

When the Remove went to their dormitory Wingate of the Sixth came in to see lights out, and he had a message for the late captain of the Remove.

"Wharton, I'm to tell you that the Head will flog you to-morrow morning after second lesson."

"Thanks," said Harry.

"The school will assemble in Big Hall for the flogging," added the prefect with a curious look at Wharton.

"I hope they'll find it entertaining," answered Harry, and there was a laugh from some of the Removites.

"Why did you come in so late, Wharton?" asked Wingate, not unkindly. "Your Form master is very angry with you, and with jolly good reason. But if you had any explanation to give it might not be too late yet. I'd put in a word for you, if I could. What were you doing?"

"Let's see. Oh, swimming!" said Wharton carelessly.

"Swimming, in this weather?" exclaimed Wingate with a stare.

"Well, you asked me."

"Where were you swimming, then?"

"In the sea, just by the Shoulder," said Harry.

"For goodness' sake draw it mild, Wharton," whispered Redwing anxiously. "What's the good of getting Wingate's rag out?"

Wharton laughed.

"I suppose you're pulling my leg," said Wingate, staring hard at the rebel of the Remove. "If you went into the sea at that place, in this weather, you'd jolly well get a flogging for that alone. I suppose you don't want me to tell Mr. Quelch that?"

"Not at all."

The Greyfriars captain eyed him in a very puzzled way; but he said no more. The lights were turned out, and Wingate left the Remove dormitory.

For some time there was talk in the dormitory, from bed to bed; but the Removites dropped off to sleep one by one. After the rest of the Form were in slumber, Harry Wharton's eyes were still open.

He was still tired from his desperate struggle in the boiling tide under the cliffs that afternoon—the strain had told on him, and the effects of it still lingered. He was thinking, too, of what was to happen on the morrow. Flogging in Big Hall—before the eyes of the assembled school. His cheeks burned at the thought of it; but it was inevitable—there was no escape.

Certainly, if he explained to Mr. Quelch, the punishment could scarcely be administered. He had probably saved the life of John Redwing—at all events, he had risked his own to drag the old sailorman from the roaring tide under the Shoulder. He had been too utterly worn out to tramp back to the school—old Redwing had had to help him along to a fisherman's cottage to dry his clothes there, and rest; and he was still fatigued and heavy when he started back to the school—the heaviness still hung upon him as he lay watching the midnight stare at the high windows of the dormitory. He was not to blame; he had but to say the word——

He clenched his teeth savagely. He would say no word! His Form-master would not even believe him. The punishment, doubtless, would be postponed, for inquiry—and inquiry at John Redwing's cabin, up at Hawkscliff, would prove that he had spoken the truth. He would be pardoned then—he knew that.

Not to save himself from a flogging, not to save his life, would he have told his story—to face the searching, doubting eyes of his Form-master—to seem to be making capital out of what he had done—to submit to the humiliation of waiting, under doubt, while inquiry was made into the truth of his statement. Better a flogging than that—better a dozen floggings!

His stubborn pride held him silent—he would not speak. Let them do as they chose; what he could not resist he would endure—his pride unconquered, at least.

That was his determination—a wayward arrogant determination, but fixed, unalterable. He slept at last.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Just in Time!

"I SAY, you fellows, it's rotten!"

Thus William George Bunter the following morning after breakfast. He addressed Bob Cherry & Co., in the quad.

The Co. were not looking bright that morning. Harry Wharton, strolling under the leafless elms with his hands in his pockets, looked cool and unconcerned, apparently unmoved by the prospect of what was to happen after second lesson. But his old friends were not unconcerned. What they had long feared had come to pass at last—Wharton was up for a Head's flogging—it had been bound to come sooner or later. And they could not help thinking that the public punishment and shame would do more harm than good to the proud, passionate fellow. It was only too likely to cause him to throw the last vestige of prudence to the winds, and become still more reckless and ungovernable. And in the distance loomed the danger of expulsion from the school—it must come to that at long last, if he did not check himself in time.

"Isn't it rotten?" went on Bunter, blinking at the troubled Co. through his big spectacles. "Wharton's up after second lesson, you know."

"Oh!" said Bob Cherry, rather surprised to find the Owl of the Remove concerned about anything that did not touch his own fat person. "Is that worrying you, Bunter?"

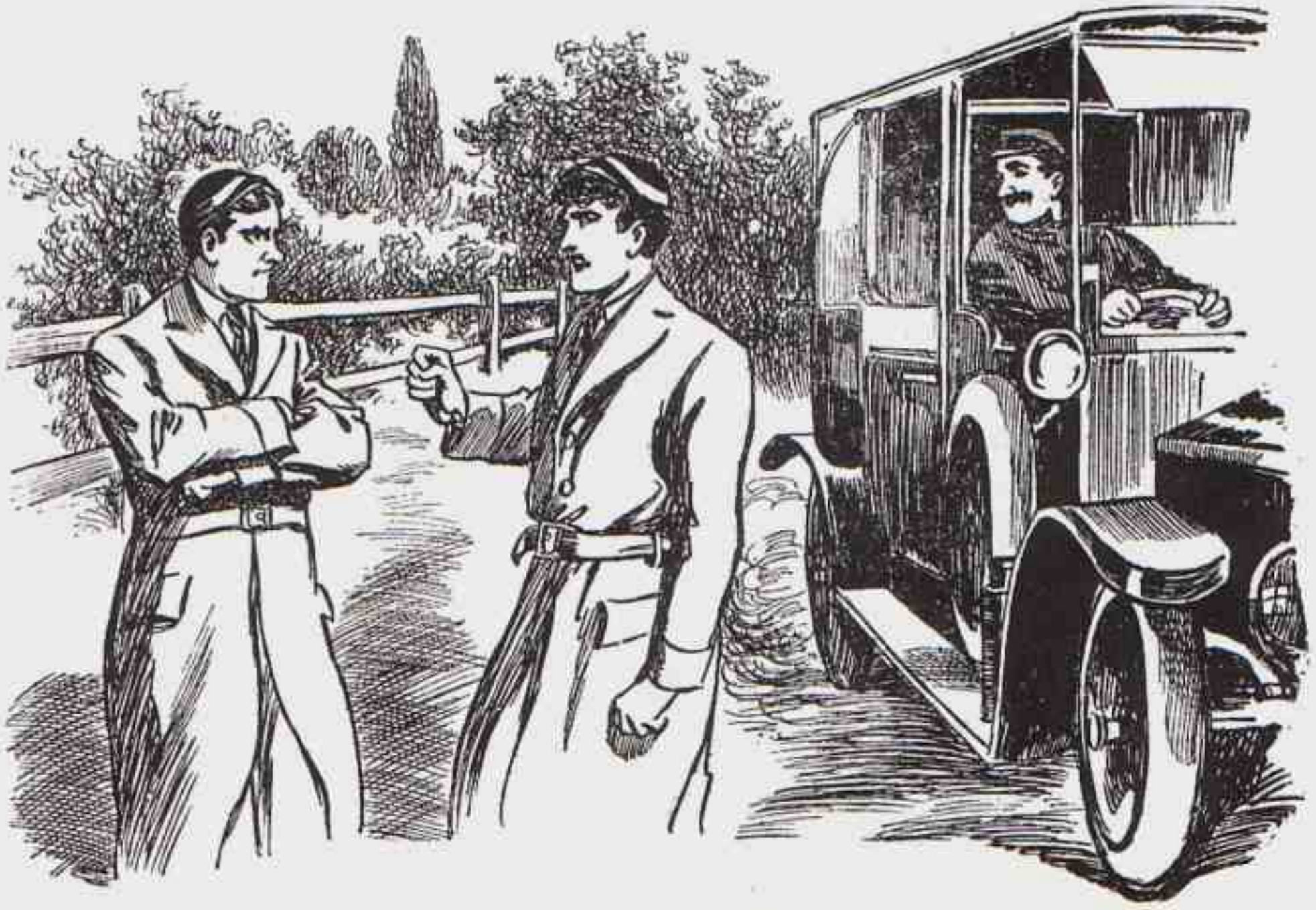
"Well, it's rotten, ain't it?" said Bunter.

"Yes," grunted Bob.

"We only get a quarter of an hour break," went on Bunter indignantly. "We've got to turn up in Hall and listen to the Head wagging his chin, you know, and then there's the flogging. It will jolly well be time for third lesson by when he's through. We lose the break, you see—and I jolly well think it's a shame."

"My esteemed, fatheaded rotten Bunter——" began the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Oh, really, Inky! I think it's rotten! Wharton could be flogged just



"Funk!" said Wharton, with a curl of the lip. "Stop!" shouted Vernon-Smith to the chauffeur. The car halted. The Bounder jumped out and Harry Wharton followed him into the road. "Take the car along a hundred yards or so, and wait for me," snapped Vernon-Smith. The car glided on. "Now come on, you cad!" said the Bounder, pushing back his cuffs. In a moment the two juniors were fighting fiercely. *(See Chapter 12.)*

as easily in second lesson, or third lesson," argued Bunter. "It's a bit thick to take up morning break with the job, I think. Look here, Cherry, you're captain of the Remove now—I think you ought to take it up, you know, and speak to Quelchy about it."

"You fat dummy!" growled Bob. He comprehended that Bunter's anxiety was not, after all, on Wharton's account.

"Oh, really Cherry——"

"Shut up, for goodness' sake!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Cut off!" snapped Nugent.

"That's all very well!" snorted Bunter. "You fellows don't seem to catch on! They're doing us out of morning break—they're going to fill up the time between second and third lesson with this silly flogging! I call it jolly inconsiderate of the Head!"

"Cheese it!"

"If you pointed it out to Mr. Quelch, Cherry, as captain of the Form——" argued Bunter.

Bob Cherry drew back his boot, and William George Bunter dropped the subject and hastily retired. For reasons which the Owl of the Remove could not possibly comprehend, the four chums were not worrying about the loss of morning break.

The bell rang for classes, and the Remove went in to their Form-room. Wharton swung into the room carelessly, apparently unconscious of the fact that all eyes in the Remove were upon him.

"He's carrying it off well," Skinner whispered to Snoop. "But it's all swank, you know, Snoopey. He doesn't like being flogged any more than any other chap."

"He's got nerve," said Snoop, with unwilling admiration.

"Oh, lots! Perhaps the Head will take some of it out of him, though, when he gets going with the giddy birch."

And Snoop grinned.

These two were friends of Wharton's now—at least, they consorted with him a good deal of late. But they seemed to derive considerable satisfaction from his misfortunes, all the same.

Harry Wharton was called upon to construe, and his construe was exceedingly bad; he had not prepared the lesson the evening before. The Remove expected Mr. Quelch to take the opportunity of "jumping" on him; but the Remove-master simply told him to stop. No doubt Mr. Quelch felt that what was to happen after second lesson was sufficient for the offender, and did not wish to pile it on.

When the Remove came out after second lesson, the Bounder joined Harry Wharton.

"Hall in five minutes, old man," he said.

Wharton nodded.

"I'm awfully sorry," said Smithy, sincerely enough. "It's rotten to see you up against it like this."

"I can stand it."

"It's not nice," said the Bounder. "I've been there, you know. But you did ask for it, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes!"

Tom Redwing broke in quietly.

"Wharton! Isn't there anything to be done?"

"Nothing," said Harry indifferently.

"Is it too late to explain to Mr. Quelch why you were late last night?" said Redwing earnestly. "I know you're feeling bitter now against him; but you know he's a just man."

"Is he?" said Wharton, with a curling lip.

"Old man, you know he is, if you choose to be fair to him," said Redwing. "I'm afraid you've made him dislike you; but he's just. Why can't you tell him why you stayed out?"

"He's made up his mind about that. Besides, isn't it quite clear that I stayed out just to break the rules, and cheek him?" said Wharton mockingly.

"It's clear enough," said the Bounder. "There's nothing doing, Redwing. You're not advising Wharton to stuff Quelchy?"

"Certainly not. I'm advising him to explain," said Tom. "I know he could if he liked. He told Wingate last night he was in the water——"

"Pulling his leg," said the Bounder. "We all know that."

Redwing shook his head.

"There was more in it than that, Smithy. Wharton had an accident or something. His clothes looked as if they'd been soaked and dried. I've noticed that he's got another suit on this morning. Something happened while he was out of gates yesterday."

The Bounder started a little.

"By gad! I'd never noticed," he said. "Wharton, old bean, if there is really any good reason to be given, you're an ass not to give it. A Head's floggin' is no joke, I can tell you!"

Wharton made no reply. Ogilvy of the Remove came along with a letter in his hand. Letters for the juniors were generally placed in the rack during first or second lesson, and the fellows took possession of them in morning break.

"Redwing," called out Ogilvy, "there's a letter for you."

"Oh, thanks!" said Tom.

Redwing had not looked at the rack. He seldom or never received letters at Greyfriars. He went to take his letter, while most of the fellows moved off towards the arched doorway of Big Hall. The prefects were already shepherding the school into Hall for the flogging.

"Wharton"—it was Mr. Quelch's voice—"you will come with me!"

"Oh, certainly!"

The late captain of the Remove followed the frowning Form master. Vernon-Smith went into Hall with the rest of the Remove. He looked round for Tom Redwing; but the sailorman's son was not there. Doubtless his letter had detained him.

Hall was soon crowded, all the Forms in their places, and the prefects walking up and down with their canes to keep order. On the dais stood Mr. Quelch, with the sentenced culprit beside him, and a sea of eyes turned on Harry Wharton. He held his head very erect, and his face was calm and composed.

The Head entered by the upper door. The buzz of voices died away as the headmaster was seen; and Gosling appeared with the birch under his arm.

"Now for the giddy execution," murmured Skinner. "Friends, Romans, and countrymen, if you have tears, prepare to shed them now."

There was a subdued chuckle from Snoop and Bunter, and Bob Cherry gave the cad of the Remove a fierce look. The Bounder was still looking about for Tom Redwing. Tom was absent from Hall, in spite of the order for the whole school to assemble; but as the roll had not been taken the absence of one junior was not specially noted. Smithy wondered what had become of him.

"Hallo! What the thump——" exclaimed Peter Todd suddenly.

The big oak door had been closed. It flew open suddenly, and Tom Redwing, flushed and breathless, rushed into Hall.

Wingate glared at him.

"You young ass! Keep quiet! Go to your place!"

Redwing did not heed the Greyfriars captain.

To the astonishment of the prefect, and of all the Remove, he ran on up the Hall breathlessly, straight to where the Head stood.

"Redwing!" shouted Wingate in amazement.

But Tom did not heed. Dr. Locke had taken the birch in hand, and signed to Gosling to "hoist" the sentenced junior. Mr. Quelch stood looking on with a grim face. Redwing burst breathlessly on the group.

"Stop!" he panted.

And there was a buzz of amazement in the crowded Hall.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Hero!

"STOP!"

Redwing's excited voice rang through Big Hall.

Dr. Locke turned an astonished glance on him. Mr. Quelch looked daggers.

"Redwing, how dare you!" exclaimed the Remove master. "Go to your place at once! I shall deal with you——"

"I must speak, sir!" panted Tom, his face crimson. "I—I've only just found out why Wharton was late——"

"What! Go to your place at once! Loder, remove that boy!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Loder, stepping forward.

"Dr. Locke!" Tom Redwing almost shouted, in his anxiety and excitement—"Dr. Locke, you will hear me? Wharton was late yesterday because he went into the sea to save my father——"

"What?"

"Nonsense!"

Harry Wharton stared at Redwing.

"It's true, sir!" gasped Redwing. He held up a letter. "I've just had this from my father. He—he thinks Wharton has told me about it. He's written—— Oh, sir, will you look at the letter?"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

Mr. Quelch's face was a study. A mocking smile played over Wharton's features. The whole Hall was in a buzz. The prefects called for silence, but they called in vain.

"My father was wrecked in his boat yesterday, sir!" panted Redwing. "Wharton saved him from the tide."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the Head. He laid down the birch, and signed to Gosling to stand back.

"Yes, sir. The mast went, and injured my father's arm in falling, and the boat went into the breakers under the cliffs," said Tom. "Wharton saw him and went in for him. He saved my father's life, sir. He might have been drowned. My father says it was a miracle he was not drowned along with him, sir. He couldn't get back to Greyfriars. He was too exhausted to move for a long time. Oh, sir, I—I thought I ought to tell you——"

"Quite so!" said the Head.

He looked at Mr. Quelch.

"I had no knowledge of this, sir," said the Remove master, biting his lip. "If this actually occurred, Wharton said nothing of it to me."

"Will you look at the letter, sir?" said Redwing.

"Give it to me," said the Head.

There was a breathless hush as Dr. Locke took the letter from Tom and adjusted his glasses to read it. Possibly the Head—certainly Mr. Quelch—suspected some trickery in the matter; some attempt to save an offender from a well-deserved punishment by this dramatic and audacious intervention at the last moment. But the simple sailorman's letter was evidently the genuine thing. It ran:

"Dear Tom,—Just a word to tell you not to be anxious about me. My arm's set, and getting on fine. I'm none the worse, or not much, though I'm afraid your friend, Master Wharton, must be rather knocked up. I suppose he's told you about what happened under the Shoulder. The mast broke, and caught my arm in coming down, and I had only one hand to use, and the boat went into the breakers. Tom, my boy, you'd never have seen your old father again if Master Wharton hadn't been there. It was a miracle we weren't drowned together. He is a plucky one, he is, and grit all through. I was mighty anxious about him when I got him to Judson's cabin, but he wouldn't let me send for the doctor for him. He would have it that he was all right, and made me go off to the Cottage Hospital about my arm. He was worn out, poor lad, and no wonder. I shall be glad to know he's all right again.—Your affectionate father,

"J. REDWING."

Dr. Locke read the letter through, and passed it to Mr. Quelch. The Remove master perused it, with a grim brow. Wharton's face was expressionless.

"I—I hope you'll excuse me, sir, for butting in like this," said Redwing, with crimson cheeks. "But—but, sir, I thought you ought to know——"

"You did quite right, my boy," said the Head kindly. "Take your letter, and go back to your place."

Tom Redwing backed into his place in the Remove with a light heart. He was pretty certain that the flogging would not take place now. The Bounder squeezed his arm.

"So that was it?" he whispered. "And he never told Quelchy, never even told you. He's a queer beggar!"

"He's one of the best," said Tom.

"Silence!" called out Wingate.

Dr. Locke fixed his eyes upon Wharton. At a sign from him Gosling disappeared with the birch. It was clear that there was to be no flogging that morning.

"Wharton!" said the Head, in a deep voice.

"Yes, sir."

"The reason why you were late last evening was that you were lying exhausted in a fisherman's cottage, after risking your life to save a drowning man."

"Yes, sir."

"It was a gallant act, worthy of the best traditions of Greyfriars," said the Head. "You must be aware, Wharton, that Mr. Quelch would have excused your late return had he known the facts. Why did you not tell him?"

Wharton was silent.

"He did not tell me, sir," said Mr. Quelch bitterly, "because, from sheer perversity, he wished me to cause a punishment to be inflicted which I should have regretted when the truth came to my knowledge."

"Is that the case, Wharton?" said the Head sternly.

Wharton coloured a little.

"Yesterday morning, sir, Mr. Quelch told me before all the Form that he could not take my word," he answered sullenly. "If I had told him this he would not have believed me."

"Was that your only reason for keeping silent?"

No answer.

"In the circumstances, Wharton, the flogging will not be administered. You agree with me in that, Mr. Quelch?"

"Assuredly, sir."

"You have acted, it appears, with great bravery, and you were not to blame for missing roll-call and lock-up yesterday," went on the Head. "Courage is a great quality, and in view of what you have done you are pardoned. But I cannot commend you, Wharton. I cannot but think that you were taking a disingenuous and unfair advantage of your Form master, and failing to treat him with the respect which is his due. If he is unable to take your word without corroboration, it is due to your own bad conduct. For that you have only yourself to blame. I fear very much that you desired to place your Form master in a false position."

Silence.

"For the present you are pardoned," said the Head severely. "But I shall take the occasion to give you a very serious warning. That you have shown great courage and devotion is undeniable, but in every other respect your conduct

has been bad and unfeeling, dictated, I fear, by a stubborn and over-weening pride. I warn you, Wharton, to take care. If you continue in this course, it may be my duty to expel you from Greyfriars. No boy in this school can be allowed to disregard authority, and to make a mock of those set over him. I hope, Wharton, that you will take this warning to heart. I will say no more."

The Head turned away from the sulky face before him.

"Dismiss!"

And the Greyfriars fellows swarmed out of Hall.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Return of the Native!

BOB CHERRY'S face was very bright as he came out of Hall with the Remove. There was a smile on Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky face, and Nugent and Johnny Bull looked as if a weight had been lifted from their minds. Only a few minutes remained before third lesson, and those few minutes were expended by the Removites in excited discussion.

"So that was it!" said Bob gleefully. "I'm jolly glad! The old chap's true blue with all his blessed temper—what?"

"The truefulness of the blue is terrific!" said Hurree Singh, and his comrades grinned.

"It was jolly decent of him," said Johnny Bull. "But he ought to have told Quelchy. Quelchy was bound to hear sooner or later, and he would have felt an awful brute if Wharton had been flogged."

"That's what Wharton wanted, of course," said Skinner.

"Oh, rats!" snapped Frank Nugent.

"Fancy old Wharton doing swimming stunts while we were playing St. Jim's yesterday," went on Bob. "And he really told us about it, only the fellows all thought he was funning. I say——" Bob paused and looked at his chums. "Do you fellows think——" He paused again.

The Co. could read what was in his mind. Frank Nugent nodded at once, and the nabob nodded, too. Johnny Bull looked dubious.

"After all, he always had a temper, and we stood it," said Bob. "It makes me feel ill to see him hanging around with Skinner and his crowd."

"Thanks!" said Skinner.

"Oh, are you there? You're always where you're not wanted!" growled Bob. "Take your face away, Skinner!"

Skinner sneered and lounged away.

Bob Cherry & Co. glanced towards Wharton, who was standing in the Form-room passage, chatting with Vernon-Smith and Redwing. He did not look at his old friends, and evidently was not thinking of anything like a reconciliation. But Bob had made up his mind.

"I'm going to speak to him," he said. "If he bites—well, let him bite. Can't be helped. You fellows come."

Bob walked across to Wharton, his friends following him rather doubtfully.

"Wharton, old man," said Bob, in his cheery way, "I'm jolly glad it's turned out like that."

"Thanks!" said Harry dryly. And he shifted his position a little to turn his back to the Co.

Bob reddened, but he went on determinedly.

"Listen a minute, Wharton!"

"I'm talking to Smithy."

"Oh, rot!" said the Bounder. "Let him speak, Wharton!"

"Look here, Wharton!" said Bob discouraged but still determined. "We used to be good friends. I never wanted a row, and I dare say you didn't. There was a lot of misunderstanding. I'm willing to let bygones be bygones if you are."

"Dear me!"

"Wharton——" murmured Redwing appealingly.

"Saturday afternoon, Smithy," said Wharton. "That will suit me all right. You've fixed about the car?"

"Yes. But——"

"I mean what I say, Wharton," said Bob Cherry.

"You're awfully good," said Wharton satirically. "It's an honour to have my humble existence noticed by the captain of the Form. Are you proposing to hand the captaincy back to me?"

"That's impossible, as you know. Quelchy——"

Wharton laughed.

"So kind of you to offer to take me up when you've bagged my place by crawling up to a Form master!" he sneered.

Bob Cherry's rugged face became crimson.

"That's not true, and you know it!" he broke out.

"It's a thumping lie, to put it in plain English!" growled Johnny Bull. "Come away, Bob! I knew it would be no good. Let the fellow go his own way, and be blowed to him!"

"Harry——" said Nugent, in a low voice.

"I'm Harry to my friends," said Wharton coolly.

"Oh, very well!"

Nugent walked away, biting his lip. Johnny Bull and the nabob followed him, and, last of all, Bob Cherry, hurt and disconcerted. Wharton glanced after them with a sarcastic smile. The bell rang a few moments later, and the Remove went in for third lesson.

Tom Redwing did not join the class. When the Remove came out they learned that Redwing had leave from school, to go home for the rest of the week to look after his father.

The Bounder's face was thoughtful as he walked in the quad. He missed his chum, and would have missed him more but for his new friendship with Wharton. The two were likely to be thrown more together now. That afternoon Wharton "tea'd" with the Bounder in Study No. 4. Billy Bunter blinked into Study No. 1 and found it vacant, and rolled along to Study No. 4.

Since the beginning of the term, when Bunter had "wedged" into Study No. 1, the Owl of the Remove had had a thin time. Wharton had had to accept him as a study-mate, but he regularly went down to Hall to tea, and there was no study supper to cheer the fat Removite. Deeply did Bunter regret that he had turned his plump back on Study No. 7 and Peter Todd. But, so far, Peter had declined to take him back. It was in vain that Bunter explained to him, almost with tears in his eyes, that Wharton was a mean beast, even a meaner beast than Toddy himself. Toddy

(*Continued on page* 16.)

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Pests!

By William Gosling

WAPSES is pests, and flies is pests; and so is rats and mice and moskeeters. But the biggest pests of all is schoolboys. Which I've said it afore, and I says it again, that all young rips of schoolboys oughter be drownded at birth! Then there would be peace for poor, hard-working porters.

The young varmints in the Remove Form are the worst pests I has to contend with. They are always a-teasing and a-tormenting of me, as ever was! The other evening a whole gang of 'em came and stood outside the door of my lodge in the pitch darkness. One of 'em—I fancy it was Master Bull—had a concertina, and a horrible noise he made with it, too! The other young rips had mouth-organs and tin-whistles, and they kicked up a regular shindy. I rushes to my parlour winder and pokes my head out, and I says, says I:

"Jest you go along orf out of it, you young rapscallions! 'Op it at once, or I'll report yer to the 'Ead for causin' a disturbance! 'Op it! That's wot I'm a-tellin' of yer!"

They hopped it all right, and I settled down in me armchair again, to puff my pipe in peace, and to take a little light refreshment from the ginger-ale bottle. But in a few minutes they comes back again, and makes a bigger confusticator than ever. What with the screeching of the tin-whistles, and the piercing notes of the mouth-organs, backed up by Master Bull's concertina, I thought I should go clean off me head like!

Again I rushes to me winder and I says, says I:

"If you don't clear orf at once, you disgustful young warmints, I'll report yer to the 'Ead this werry minute! I'll 'ave the whole lot of yer 'oisted on my shoulders in Big 'All, an' birched black an' blue!"

"Bow-wow!" says Master Cherry.

"Go and eat coke!" bellows Master Bull.

And they starts playing "Rule Britannia," all out of tune, until I gnashes my teeth and tears my hair. But presently they clears off again, and leaves me in peace.

"But I don't trust 'em," I mutters to meself. "They came back before, an' most likely they'll come back again. When they do, I'll give 'em a warm reception!"

What I really meant was a chilly reception. I went upstairs into my bedroom, and filled the water-jug with icy water, and waited for the moosicians to return, so that I could give the young brats a shower-bath.

I waited in the darkness of me bedroom for about ten minutes, and then I hears footsteps crunching on the gravel outside. As soon as the footsteps halts outside my lodge I tip-toes to the winder, and tilts the jug upside down.

Swish! Swoosh!

"That's got 'em!" I chuckles to meself. "An' serve 'em right for disturbin' the peace of a sober an' respectable porter!"

Then I hears a choking, spluttering noise, and the next minute I nearly jumps out of me skin, for a terrifying voice booms through the darkness.

"Gosling! How dare you? How dare you play pranks upon the headmaster! I am shocked and surprised that a man of your mature years should perpetrate a stupid, practical joke! I am drenched—soaked to the skin! You will take a month's notice, William Gosling!"

"Oh crumbs!" I mutters, in horror. For I had given a shower-bath to the reverend and respected headmaster of Greyfriars!

Of course, I apologised most humbly, and matters was smoothed over, and the month's notice was cancellated, so to speak. But it was them young rips what had caused all the trouble. Drat 'em, says I! And once again I repeats my favourite slogan:

"All young rips of schoolboys oughter be drownded at birth!"

STOP PRESS!

William Gosling was found in a semi-unconscious condition outside his lodge. It transpires that Skinner of the Remove tipped him a whole half-crown for carrying a hefty parcel into the House for him. Skinner is semi-unconscious, too. We learn that he intended to give Gosey a penny—with a hole in it—but somehow the penny and the half-crown got mixed up. A sad case of Gosling's good fortune is Skinner's loss!

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

A SHORT time ago I was startled to receive a deputation in my Editorial sanctum—Study No. 1.

The deputation was headed by Gosling, the porter, and other members of it were Dame Mimble, the tuckshop proprietress; Trotter, the page; Joseph Mimble, the gardener; Mrs. Kebble, the House Dame; and Janet, the maid-of-all-work.

"What the merry dickens——" I began.

"Axin' yer parding, Master Wharton," said Gosling, who was evidently the appointed spokesman, "but we wants to know when you're goin' to publicate a special number of the 'Greyfriars 'Erald,' dealin' with the 'ardworking school staff?"

"I had no intention of publishing such a number, Gossy," I replied.

"Then the sooner you forms such a hintention, Master Wharton, the better we shall be pleased!" said Gosling.

"'Ear, 'ear!" chimed in Trotter.

"Which I subscribes to them sentiments," said Mr. Joseph Mimble impressively.

I burst into a laugh.

"You needn't glare at me, ladies and gentlemen," I said. "I haven't refused your request. In fact, I propose to grant it."

"Oh, good!" said Gosling.

"A special number dealing with the school staff ought to make a big hit," I went on. "You had better get busy with your contributions, and let me have them as soon as possible."

"Which I shall hinsist on writin' the Heditorial," said Gosling.

"No, no," I said. "I must put my foot down there. We must have at least one dignified contribution in the issue. You can write a half-page article, Gossy, if you like; but hands off the Editorial!"

Gosling gave a grunt of displeasure. But on the whole the members of the deputation seemed satisfied, and they thanked me and withdrew. Since then they have been very busy putting pen to paper, and the first fruits of their labours, so to speak, appear in this issue. I feel sure my readers will vote this amusing number as good as a pantomime!

Dicky Nugent is in great form just now. For next week we have a special election story from his nimble pen, entitled "The Ballot at St. Sam's." In it we see Dr. Birchemall endeavouring to find out how popular or unpopular he is at the school. There's a surprise in store for you, chums, even as there was a surprise for Dr. Birchemall when the result of the ballot became known.

HARRY WHARTON.

Do We Work Too Hard?

The members of the domestic staff air their views — and their grievances!

DAME MIMBLE:

I'm quite sure that I work too hard. But, then, I thoroughly enjoy it! I simply hate being slack, and when the young gents have no pocket-money to spend I am downright miserable. I like to see my shop packed to overflowing—"the more the merrier!" After serving all day at the counter I retire behind the scenes, and prepare the pies and cakes and pastries for the next day. Sunday is my only day of rest; and my customers mustn't grumble if Monday's cakes are a bit stale, having been left over from Saturday. I'm getting on in years now, and one day's rest a week is very necessary.

JOSEPH MIMBLE (the school gardener):

Work too 'ard? I should jest think I did! I'm on the go mornin', noon, an' night, a-diggin' an' a-weedin' an' a-plantin'. I ought to 'ave a big staff of gardeners under me; instead of which, I 'as to do all the work single-'anded. It's a crool shame! But there's a nice pension waitin' for me after I've completed about ninety-nine years' service, so I s'pose I ought not to grumble.

FRED TROTTER (the school page):

Don't you take any notice of what Mr. Mimble says. Work? Why, he don't know the meanin' of the word! He lies in bed till nine o'clock every mornin', an' I 'as to be up at five. I've done a day's work before Mr. Mimble thinks of makin' a start! What with cleanin' boots, an' runnin' errands, an' bein' at everybody's beck an' call, a page-boy's life ain't a bed of roses—not by any means! I wish I could win a scholarship, an' become Trotter of the Remove! I think the Greyfriars fellows 'ave a fine time. The life of a junior at this school would suit me down to the ground. But, there, what's the use of cryin' for the moon?

JANET (the maid-of-all-work):

"Work, work, work, and be contented," as the saying goes. But how can you be contented when you have no leisure or pleasure, but just keep going all the time, like a galley-slave? I haven't been able to go to a dance in Courtfield for at least two days, and I haven't been to "the pictures" since yesterday! I'm rushed off my feet with work. Life is one long round of sweeping and scrubbing, and dusting and tidying, and washing and ironing. And all for a paltry pittance of twelve-and-sixpence a week! Whenever you hear anybody say that slavery was abolished in 1832, don't you believe it!

WILLIAM GOSLING (in sarcastic mood):

Does we work too 'ard? Perish the thought! Pussonally, I never does a hand's turn. I jest lie on the couch in me parlour all day long, and the 'Ead an' the masters waits on me 'and an' foot. They brings me my meals, an' my liquid refreshment, an' they moves 'evving an 'earth to make me comfortable. If I was a millionaire, livin' in a gilded palace, I couldn't get better treatment. Work? Why, wot's the use of workin' when you can get your sooperiors to do it all for you? I don't believe in puttin' me nose to the grindstone. It might get squashed!

STAFF SNAPSHOTS!

By BOB CHERRY.

GOSLING, the porter, celebrates his birthday on Friday. I believe the old buffer will be ninety-nine, though he declares he's still on the sunny side of sixty! We intend to club together to present him with a new broom, in the hope that he will sweep clean in future!

GOSLING'S face wears a perpetual scowl. Yet when I asked him to tell me the secret of attaining a ripe old age, he said, "I always wears a sunny smile, Master Cherry, in addition to me porter's uniform. I jest laughs my way through life, so to speak." Well, if Gossy's normal expression is a laugh I shouldn't care to see him frown!

DAME MIMBLE complains that her legs get very tired, owing to the fact that she is standing behind the tuckshop counter all day. We sympathise with the worthy dame. Her grievance is a "long-standing" one!

TROTTER, the page, intends to change his name by deed of poll to Crawler. Certainly he never trots—unless there's a cricket-stump behind him to stimulate his progress! I once heard a little anecdote concerning Trotter. He came across a tortoise one day in a field, and tried to capture it, but it outran him and escaped!

JANET, the maid-of-all-work at Greyfriars, deplores the fact that she has to work four hours a day, and only gets six evenings off a week! Her summer holidays, moreover, are restricted to three months. Verily, one half of the world doesn't know what the other half has to suffer!

JOSEPH MIMBLE, the gardener, has been complaining that somebody has pur*Supplement is.*

loined his rake and hidden it for a lark. Why all this fuss, Mr. Mimble? You'll find another Rake in the Remove.

MARTHA, one of the under-cooks, has handed in her notice, as she intends to get married shortly. We understand that Billy Bunter has made application to take over her job in the school kitchen!

COMPLAINTS have reached the Head, from the matron, that certain cheeky fags allude to her as "Old Fussy." She maintains that she is neither old nor fussy; and, to be quite fair, she isn't. The fiat has gone forth that the next fag who speaks disrespectfully of the matron will be given a dose of medicine—not in the sanny, but in Big Hall!

THE QUEEN OF HEARTS!

Everyone at Greyfriars has a good word to say for Dame Mimble. Even Billy Bunter admits that she *can* make tarts. What's more, she can make our fat porpoise pay his way when he visits her shop. In that alone she merits distinction—for we can't!—Ed.

THE TUCKSHOP DAME!

By DICK PENFOLD.

UNDER the elm-trees in the Close
The Greyfriars tuckshop stands;
A snug retreat that's hard to beat,
Besieged by boys in bands.
And good Dame Mimble hovers there
To deal with our commands!

Her hair is crisp and black and long
(Not bobbed in modern style).
For all her favoured customers
She has a charming smile.
But she fixes Bunter with a frown
Which makes him run a mile!

Week in, week out, from morn till night
Her pastries she dispenses
To hungry schoolboys by the score,
Who do not mind expenses.
The good dame's popularity
Both widespread and immense is!

And fellows coming out of school
Look in at the open door;
They call for this, they call for that,
And then for something more!
The counter's swamped with ginger-pop,
And cake-crumbs strew the floor!

The Bunter-bird comes rolling in,
He pines for puffs and pies;
But good Dame Mimble fixes him
With cold and steely eyes.
"It's not a *tick*-shop!" she exclaims,
And Billy Bunter flies!

But those who pay up "on the nail"
Can always eat their fill;
Dame Mimble then presents them with
A large and hefty bill.
And silver coins and copper ones
Go chinking in her till!

Telling, rejoicing, sorrowing,
Onward through life she goes;
But always keeps a smiling face
And never airs her woes.
On schoolboy bards who flatter her
A free feed she bestows!

(You'll be lucky, Pen!—Ed.)

(*Continued from page* 12.)

grinned and heeded not the voice of the charmer.

Bunter tapped at the door of Study No. 4 and blinked in doubtfully. His fat face brightened at the sight of the good things on the Bounder's table.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Cut!" said the Bounder briefly.

"Oh, really, Smithy, you might be a bit civil to Wharton's study-mate, you know. You want me to come in to tea, don't you, Harry, old chap?"

"Not at all," said Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

Smithy picked up a loaf.

"Where will you have it, Bunter?" he inquired.

"Beast!"

Bunter backed out of the door.

"Not that I want to come in to tea," he said disdainfully. "I'm a bit particular whom I associate with. You're a precious pair, you are—I know jolly well you're going blagging out of bounds on Saturday. Jolly good mind to give Quelchy the tip."

Whiz!

The loaf flew—and Bunter flew just in time.

He rolled along disconsolately to Study No. 7 to try his luck with Peter Todd once more. Toddy and Dutton were in the study.

"I say, Peter——" said Bunter appealingly.

"Roll away, old barrel!"

"I say, old chap, I want to come back!" wailed Bunter. "I'm fed-up with that cad Wharton! He's a beast—ever so much more a beast than you are, Toddy! I'm not flattering you, really—he is."

Toddy chuckled.

"I always liked you, Toddy, old man," urged Bunter. "I—I've missed you fearfully. It—it's so nice to see your good-looking face about."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And—and your manners are so nice," said Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter.

"C-c-can I come back, old chap?"

Peter Todd seemed to consider.

"Well, I've stood you for whole terms, so I suppose I can stand you again," he said. "Roll in and shut up."

Bunter rolled in thankfully. Dutton gave him a stare, but did not speak. Bunter sat down comfortably in the arm-chair.

"It's nice to be back again, Peter, isn't it?" he said.

"May be nice for you," said Peter; "not much niceness for me. Don't talk so much."

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

"Look here, Toddy——"

"Cheese it!"

"Well, what about tea?" said Bunter peevishly.

Peter grinned cheerfully.

"We've had tea in Russell's study."

"Oh, my hat! Is—is—isn't there anything in the cupboard?"

"Yes—my football boots."

"Beast!"

Peter and Dutton strolled out of Study No. 7. Billy Bunter glared after them with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles. The fat prodigal had returned, but it was evident that there was no fatted calf for him.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

The Heavy Hand!

"WHARTON!"

"Sir!"

"You are late!"

Wharton laughed.

By the Form-room clock Wharton was precisely twenty seconds late for third lesson on Monday. But one second would have been enough for Mr. Quelch.

The fellows were not in their places yet, indeed, Sampson Quincy Iffley Field, following Wharton in, was a second or two later than the offender himself. But Squiff went to his place unaddressed by Mr. Quelch; Wharton was called to account.

It was something like persecution.

All the Remove knew now that Mr. Quelch was down on the rebel of the form, with a very heavy "down."

The Remove master's feeling towards that extremely trying pupil was now one of settled dislike.

He had the lowest opinion of Wharton—he felt that he had previously been deceived in him, and had thought better of him than he deserved. By the natural swing of the pendulum he now thought of him worse than he deserved.

Wharton had justice to expect from his Form-master, but strict justice—very strict. The slightest fault, the most trifling transgression, would never pass unnoticed—it was likely to be construed into an act of defiance or at least impertinence.

Wharton had no reason to be surprised by this attitude of his Form-master: he had, as the whole form knew, asked for it—exasperating Mr. Quelch beyond the limits of patience or forbearance. But now that he was selected for special and unsparing severity he found the hand of the master a very heavy one. He did not think of blaming himself—of placating the incensed master by better conduct. He looked on Mr. Quelch's present attitude as one of persecution, and resented it, and resisted it as much as he could, provoking still more unsparing severity. It had grown to be something like a duel now between master and pupil: and all the stubbornness of Wharton's nature was roused.

He laughed aloud, in sheer mockery, as Mr. Quelch called him to account for a few seconds' tardiness, while another fellow, later, went unquestioned to his place.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eyes glittered at him. He was not accustomed to being laughed at in his own Form-room.

"Wharton! You will take a hundred lines!"

"Is that all, sir?"

"What—what?"

"How many lines for Field, who was later than I?" asked Wharton coolly.

Squiff, who had just sat down at his desk, looked very uncomfortable.

"I will answer that question, Wharton, insolent as it is," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "in order that my Form may not suppose that there is any injustice. Field is a few moments late, and I have passed over that slight unpunctuality because Field is not a rebel against authority. You, on the other hand, are the worst boy in the Form, and I have no doubt whatever that your unpunctuality is intentional and intended as disrespect. You will, therefore, take a hundred lines for being late, and another hundred lines for answering insolently. Now go to your place."

Wharton lounged to his place, with his hands in his pockets. Mr. Quelch's sharp voice rapped out again.

"Wharton!"

"Dear me! Yes, sir?"

"Take your hands out of your pockets! Take another hundred lines for slovenliness!"

"Thank you, sir!"

Wharton sat down, the richer by three hundred lines. Lines filled up a great deal of Harry Wharton's leisure hours in these days.

But Mr. Quelch was not finished with him yet. Now that he was fairly on the warpath the Remove master was ruthless. He had told himself that severity was the only possible method with this rebellious boy, and severity was not lacking now.

"What did you say, Wharton?"

"I said 'Thank you,' sir."

"Very well! That is not a proper reply to make. Your imposition is doubled."

"Thank you, sir."

Some of the Removites grinned. Few of them approved of the line Wharton was taking; but undoubtedly he was displaying an iron nerve in "ragging" a master of Mr. Quelch's calibre.

"You venture to repeat your impertinence, Wharton," said the Remove master grimly. "Your imposition is doubled again!"

Wharton seemed to be making a calculation.

"Let's see, how many is that, sir?" he asked, with an air of mock respect; "I'm rather losing count."

"That is twelve hundred lines, Wharton, and you are ordered to remain within gates until the whole imposition is written out and handed in to me," said Mr. Quelch.

"Thank you, sir!"

Mr. Quelch paused, breathlessly watched by the Removites. Wharton had repeated his impertinence, as Mr. Quelch called it, once more; but doubling his impot again was scarcely practicable. Twelve hundred lines was a staggering total already; the thing was in danger of becoming ridiculous, which was, as Mr. Quelch knew, Wharton's intention.

"I shall not give you more lines now, Wharton——"

"Thank you, sir!"

"I shall cane you instead. Stand out before the class."

Mr. Quelch picked up the cane from his desk.

Swish!

It was a severe cut, and it made the late captain of the Remove wince.

"You may sit down, Wharton."

"Thank you, sir."

The mocking, sarcastic inflection in Wharton's voice was too much for Mr. Quelch.

"Hold out your other hand, Wharton."

Swish!

"Now go to your place!"

"Thank you, sir."

The Remove fairly gasped. Two severe cuts like those would have taken the nerve out of most fellows. But the rebel of the Remove was still cool, defiant, and insolent as ever. It was a contest between two stubborn wills; power and authority on one side, savage resistance on the other. Mr. Quelch's face was almost crimson with anger. Yet he felt that he could administer no further caning after those two heavy lashes. He did not want a member of his Form to be displaying swollen hands to a crowd of fellows in the quad after class. And yet to report the junior to the headmaster for a flogging for so absurd an offence

as saying "Thank you, Sir!" was hardly feasible. A report to the Head was reserved for the most serious offences, and Mr. Quelch had a natural disinclination to take a step which was something like an admission that he could not keep discipline in his own Form-room.

There was a brief pause, the Remove looking on breathlessly. Mr. Quelch laid down his cane.

"I warn you to take care, Wharton," he said in a deep voice. "You will not be allowed to continue setting an example of insubordination to the Form in this manner. Go to your place at once."

Wharton went to his place.

Third lesson began—several minutes late. The rebel was unconquered—in the opinion of the Remove he had had the last word. But as he sat with aching hands and sullen brow, the rebel scarcely enjoyed his triumph, such as it was.

And the prospect of twelve hundred lines ahead was not attractive. The lines had to be done, or there would be more canings—perhaps a flogging. The rebel was, in fact, "up against" a power that was irresistible—in the last resort, if rebellion was carried too far, there was "the sack" hanging over his head. It was not, as Smithy had warned him, a "paying game." A fellow always had to toe the line sooner or later.

But that reflection did not bring a change of heart to the sullen rebel sitting with aching palms, throbbing with a sense of injustice and persecution. He would go on his own way—he might break, but he never would bend. That was the sullen, savage determination in Wharton's breast as he sat wearily through third lesson.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Good Samaritan!

HERBERT VERNON - SMITH strolled along to Study No. 1, on Saturday afternoon. Redwing was still away from Greyfriars—it was understood that he might be away for two or three weeks. Old John Redwing was laid up at his little cottage at Hawkscliff, with his disabled arm, cared for by his son; but the Bounder was not, perhaps, wholly sorry that Tom was away. Redwing was the only fellow at Greyfriars for whom Smithy had ever felt anything like sincere friendship; but their tastes and their ways were wide as the poles asunder. With his chum's good influence removed, the Bounder was only too likely to kick over the traces again in his old style; and there was a comrade ready for any reckless escapade.

Harry Wharton was in the study, sitting at the table, pen in hand, turning out lines.

He looked up and nodded as the Bounder stood in the doorway.

"Finished?" asked Smithy.

"Not likely! Five hundred more."

The Bounder whistled.

"That rather knocks on the head our little trip for this afternoon," he remarked.

"Not at all! I'm ready when you are."

"But the lines——"

"Hang them!" said Wharton, rising from the study table and throwing down his pen. "I'm fed-up with them."

"It means more trouble, old bean."

"Let it."

Vernon-Smith looked very serious.

"Look here, Wharton, old man," he said, "I'm with you all the way—I'm up against the beaks from my very nature. But the beaks have got the upper hand; we have to toe the line. I've told you that before."

"Quite so! No need to tell me again."

"What I mean is, you can't rag Quelchy beyond a certain limit. Once the matter goes to the Head it's a flogging, and the lines have to be done all the same. Let me pile in and help you. I can make my fist like yours. Hand in the lines, old chap, and keep clear of Quelchy for a bit."

Wharton shook his head.

"Let the lines alone," he said. "I'm going out."

"But——" urged the Bounder. At heart the Bounder of Greyfriars was a good deal more of a rebel than Wharton was ever likely to be. But his cool sagacity kept him within the safe limit.

"I'm done, I tell you," said Wharton irritably. "I'm going out! If you don't want my company I'll go on my own."

"Rot! If you're going we're going together. Come on, then."

"Right!"

The two juniors left the study together. On the table was left a stack of impot paper—a stack of seven hundred lines already written. The half-holiday would have been required to finish the heavy task, and six o'clock that evening was the latest time for handing in the impot. And Mr. Quelch was not likely to give his victim a respite. But Wharton walked away with the Bounder, cool and apparently unconcerned.

Bob Cherry & Co. were chatting by the window on the Remove staircase. Outside in the quad the rain was falling and football was off. The chums of the Remove were discussing what was to be done with the half-holiday, when Wharton and the Bounder came by. Bob made a step towards them.

"Have you done your lines, Wharton?"

"Find out!"

"I mean——"

"Is it one of a Form-captain's duties to see that the fellows do their impots?" inquired Wharton satirically.

"You know it isn't!" snapped Bob.

"Then I don't see what you are butting in for."

"You know what will happen if the lines aren't done, Wharton," said Bob, earnestly. "We're not friends now, but I don't want to see you up before the Head! For goodness' sake have a little sense and finish your impot before you clear."

"Mind your own business."

"It's good advice," said the Bounder.

"Rot! Are you coming or not, Smithy?" snapped Wharton.

"Oh, I'm coming!"

The two juniors went down the staircase together. Bob Cherry rejoined his comrades with a troubled brow. From the window the four saw Wharton and Smithy crossing the quad to the gates. Mr. Quelch was walking in the quad, and they saw him glance at the two juniors and noticed that he set his lips. But he did not interfere with them; he had given Wharton till six o'clock to hand in his lines, and he could not know for certain that a great part of the impot was still unwritten. Wharton and his new comrade went out of gates unquestioned.

"More trouble!" grunted Johnny Bull. "See that look on Quelchy's chivvy? The fellow's an ass."

"It will be a flogging this time," said Bob, with a sigh. "Well, I suppose it's his own bizney. But it's rotten to see Wharton going on like this. I can't understand what's come over him."

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh shook his dusky head dubiously.

"Perhaps he's done the lines," said Frank Nugent.

"Couldn't have yet."

"Let's see."

Frank Nugent walked along to Study No. 1—the study he had shared with Wharton in the days of their friendship, but which he had never entered since the first day of the term. He entered it now, however, his friends following him as far as the door.

Frank looked over the written lines on the table, and counted the sheets, totalling up the lines.

"Seven hundred!" he said.

"What a whacking lot!" said Bob. "But that leaves five. Wharton might as well not have touched the impot at all. Quelchy will be down on him like a ton of bricks!"

Nugent smiled faintly.

"The lines are going to be done," he said.

"How?"

Nugent sat down at the table.

"We often did each other's lines when I was in this study," he said. "I can make my fist near enough to his to pass in this sort of thing. You fellows get off, and leave me to it!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Wharton's as likely as not to cut up rusty if a fellow gives him a helping hand!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"I know that," said Frank ruefully.

"Well then——"

"I'm not going to sign the paper," said Frank, laughing. "Wharton will find his lines done, that's all. He won't know who did it."

"He will know that some giddy Good Samaritan butted in, that's all!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Go it, Franky!"

Frank Nugent dipped Wharton's pen in the ink. His comrades withdrew, shutting the door.

After some discussion, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and the nabob decided on a tramp up to Hawkscliff, to fill in the wet afternoon, and, incidentally, to see Tom Redwing and ask how his father was getting on. So they put on their raincoats and left the House, and Frank was left to his self-appointed task, in which his chums could not have aided him.

There were few fellows in the Lower Fourth who would have sat down on a half-holiday to write five hundred lines for another fellow. And in this case, the good Samaritan was on the worst of terms with the fellow he was benefiting.

But Nugent did not care for that; he worked on cheerfully, glad that he was giving his former friend a helping hand.

On Wharton's side the bitterness of the quarrel seemed to intensify day by day, till he had not only become utterly indifferent to his old friends, but actually hostile. The fight with Bob Cherry had been the climax of his bitter hostility.

But on the side of Frank Nugent there was no bitterness. He had forgiven, if he could not forget, his fight with Wharton in the Christmas vacation, and he remembered that, after that fight, Wharton had sought to make friends, and it was he, Nugent, who had rejected friendship.

From that hour Wharton had been as hard as steel; but Nugent wondered what would have been the case had he been able, at that bitter time, to be a little more forgiving. He did not blame himself; but he did not blame Wharton so much as might have been expected. And the downward course of his old chum gave him deep pain.

The parting of their ways would not have hit him hard if Wharton had been his old self—respected, liked, popular. But Wharton on the road to ruin touched Frank's heart strangely.

It was an easy task for Nugent. In the old days the two chums of Study No. 1 had often helped one another with impots—not an uncommon thing in a junior Form. But Mr. Quelch had much keener eyes than Mr. Capper of the Fourth or Mr. Twigg of the Third.

Nugent set up a sheet of Wharton's lines, to keep a model in view, and made his lines as like Wharton's as he could. Lines were not generally written in elegant caligraphy; indeed, sometimes they had to be done a second time when scrawled too recklessly. One scrawl was not very unlike another; but it was necessary to be careful when Mr. Quelch was the master to be dealt with.

The lines grew and grew; but the task, though not difficult, was a long one. But it was finished at last, and the completed stack of twelve hundred lines lay on Wharton's table.

It was the biggest impot ever handed out in the Remove; and it was done.

Frank Nugent rose from the table with a sigh of relief, laid down the pen, and quitted Study No. 1.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Black Sheep Fall Out!

"OH, gad! Wingate!"

"Stop!"

The Bounder gritted his teeth.

The rain had ceased, and a glimmer of wintry sunshine shone on wet roads and dripping trees. On the high-road towards Lantham the car was buzzing along at a good rate. Wharton and the Bounder had picked up the car in Courtfield, and started on their reckless expedition—the object of which was the race-ground at Lantham.

It was a trip quite in the Bounder's old style, but new to Harry Wharton—new, and possibly not very palatable, in spite of the angry bitterness which was now his constant companion, and which had turned him, not only from his old friends, but from his old ways.

But if he felt any repugnance to the expedition he did not show it. Outwardly, at least, he was heart and soul with the reckless Bounder, and they seemed birds of a feather.

The car hummed along at a good speed, and it was some miles out of school bounds when a motor-cyclist turned into the road from a lane, and they recognised Wingate of the Sixth.

Wingate turned in the same direction as the car, and glanced idly at it, and then gave a little start as he recognised the Remove fellows. He waved a hand to them, and called to them to stop.

"Sold!" muttered the Bounder savagely.

Wharton glanced back.

The car easily out-distanced the motor-cycle, though Wingate was coming along at a good rate.

Vernon-Smith leaned forward to speak to the chauffeur. Wharton caught his shoulder and pulled him back.

"We're not stopping," he said.

Smithy stared at him.

"That's Wingate on the bike——"

"I know that."

"Well, he's told us to stop; we're out of bounds!"

Harry Wharton curled his lip contemptuously.

"We've been out of bounds before," he answered. "We've got to take our chances, I suppose. Keep on!"

"Wingate's a prefect—head-prefect!"

"What about it?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" exclaimed the Bounder irritably. "Do you think we can keep on to the races, with a prefect of the Sixth scooting behind us?"

"Yes."

"You're game, are you?" said Smithy, with a stare.

"I'm game!"

"Well, I'm jolly well not!" said Vernon-Smith emphatically. "Up against the beaks as much as you jolly well like; but I'm not goin' to butt my head against a stone wall. We've got to stop."

"So you're funking?" sneered Wharton.

Vernon-Smith set his lips hard. He was a reckless fellow himself, and it was hard for him to endure an accusation of funk. He was tempted, strongly tempted, to throw prudence to the winds and tell the chauffeur to let out the car to its top speed, and drop the Greyfriars prefect behind in the race.

He looked back.

Wingate, with a grim and angry look, was coming on behind the car as fast as the motor-bike could travel. He was keeping pace; but it would have been easy to drop him.

The Bounder was tempted. But always the cool sagacity of Smithy had saved him from going too far. He was lawless enough, but he was not disposed, as he put it, to butt his head against a stone wall.

Wingate could be shaken off now; but he would have to be faced when the juniors returned to the school. It was not good enough, as the Bounder realised after a very few moments of reflection.

"It won't do, Wharton," said Smithy quietly. "Wingate jolly well suspects where we are goin', I believe."

"Let him!" said Wharton indifferently.

"I'm not askin' for the sack from Greyfriars, thanks all the same," said the Bounder coolly. "I know enough to go in when it rains, if you don't! Wingate means business, and we've got to toe the line."

Wharton sneered.

"So that's it?" he said. "We're kicking over the traces, breaking all the rules, playing the giddy goat, and we stop when a prefect shouts to us. My hat! I thought you had a little more nerve than that, Smithy!"

Vernon-Smith breathed hard.

"You can get bunked from the school, if you like," he said sulkily. "I'm not tired of Greyfriars yet."

He leaned forward again, and spoke to the chauffeur. The car slowed down and halted. The motor-bike came up with a rush, and Wingate slowed, and stopped, and jumped down. The Greyfriars captain's face was red with anger as he strode up to the car window.

"Vernon-Smith! Wharton! What are you doing out of bounds?"

"Are we out of bounds, Wingate?" asked Smithy meekly. "It's rather hard to tell exactly when a chap's takin' a joy-ride."

"Have you an exeat?"

"No."

"You know perfectly well that you're miles out of bounds," said the prefect angrily. "You are going to Lantham?"

"Yes," admitted the Bounder.

"You know perfectly well that you have to ask your Form-master for an exeat to go so far from the school. I remember that you were flogged once, Vernon-Smith, for going to the races at Lantham."

"That's a long time ago, Wingate," answered Smithy, still meekly. The Bounder was never at a loss for the soft answer that turneth away wrath.

"Why didn't you stop at once when I called to you?"

"Well, you see——" Smithy hesitated.

"My fault," said Wharton lightly. "Smithy was going to stop, and I prevented him."

"Oh, you did!" said the Greyfriars captain, with a grim look at Wharton. "That's frank, at all events. Well, I don't trust either of you, and you're miles out of bounds. You'll go directly back to Greyfriars, and report yourselves to Mr. Quelch."

"Yes, Wingate," said Smithy.

Wharton did not speak.

Wingate looked at his watch.

"It's three now. You can get back in about half an hour in that car. I shall ask Mr. Quelch what time you get in, and if it's much later than half-past three look out for serious trouble."

"Yes, Wingate."

The Greyfriars captain turned away with that, remounted his motor-bike, and disappeared up the road. Vernon-Smith laughed ruefully.

"Sold!" he said. "But one swallow doesn't make a summer. We sha'n't have such rotten luck next time. Get back to the school!"

The chauffeur wheeled the car round.

"We're going back?" asked Harry.

"You heard what Wingate said."

"Oh, cut it out!" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "I'm not a funk, if you are, Smithy! Let's get on to Lantham."

"Don't be a fool!" said Smithy gruffly. "Wingate will ask Mr. Quelch what time we got in; he's said so. I don't want to have to bend over and take six from Wingate."

"And that's the Bounder!" sneered Wharton. "That's the fellow who's supposed to have an iron nerve! That's the hard case of Greyfriars—scuttling home like a frightened fag? Well, I'm not going, and Wingate can go and eat coke!"

The Bounder's face was crimson. He prided himself on his recklessness, on his nerve, and Wharton's taunts touched him on the raw. He was tempted again strongly to carry out the original programme, at all risks, if only to prove that he had the nerve to do it.

But prudence prevailed. It was not only "six" from an ashplant that had to be faced; it was a keen and stern inquiry as to where and how the juniors had passed their half-holiday, and Wingate was already suspicious. Smithy had more than once been within measurable distance of the "sack," and he had not liked it. And he did not intend to get anywhere near it again if he could help it. And he could help it—at the cost of submitting to his comrade's taunts.

The car raced on, heading for Greyfriars now. Vernon-Smith sat with a crimson face and glinting eyes, feeling at that moment as if he hated his more reckless and daring companion.

"You heard what I said!" snapped Wharton. "I'm not going back."

"We're going straight back to Greyfriars," said the Bounder savagely. "Give us a rest!"

"Stop the car, then, and I'll get out," said Wharton scornfully. "If you haven't the nerve to let a prefect rip, you'll see that I have. Stop the car, Smithy. Do you hear?"

"I won't!"

"You will!" shouted Wharton. "I tell you I'm not going back. Stop the car, Smithy, or, by Jove, I'll hammer you!"

The Bounder gave him a baleful look.

"You'd never get to Lantham, without the car," he said. "You know that well enough. It's all up with the races for this afternoon, even if you were fool enough to go there."

"Stop the car!"

Wharton clenched his hand.

"So you want to row with me, after rowing with nearly every other fellow in the Remove!" sneered the Bounder. "Your own friends have thrown you over for your rotten temper, and now, by gad, I'm as fed with you as your old friends are. I'll drop you like a hot brick after to-day."

"You'll do that, anyhow," said Wharton contemptuously. "I'm not so hard up for pals that I want to chum up with a funk."

The Bounder's eyes blazed.

"Say that again, Wharton, and by Jove, I'll stop the car and give you a hiding before I leave you on the road."

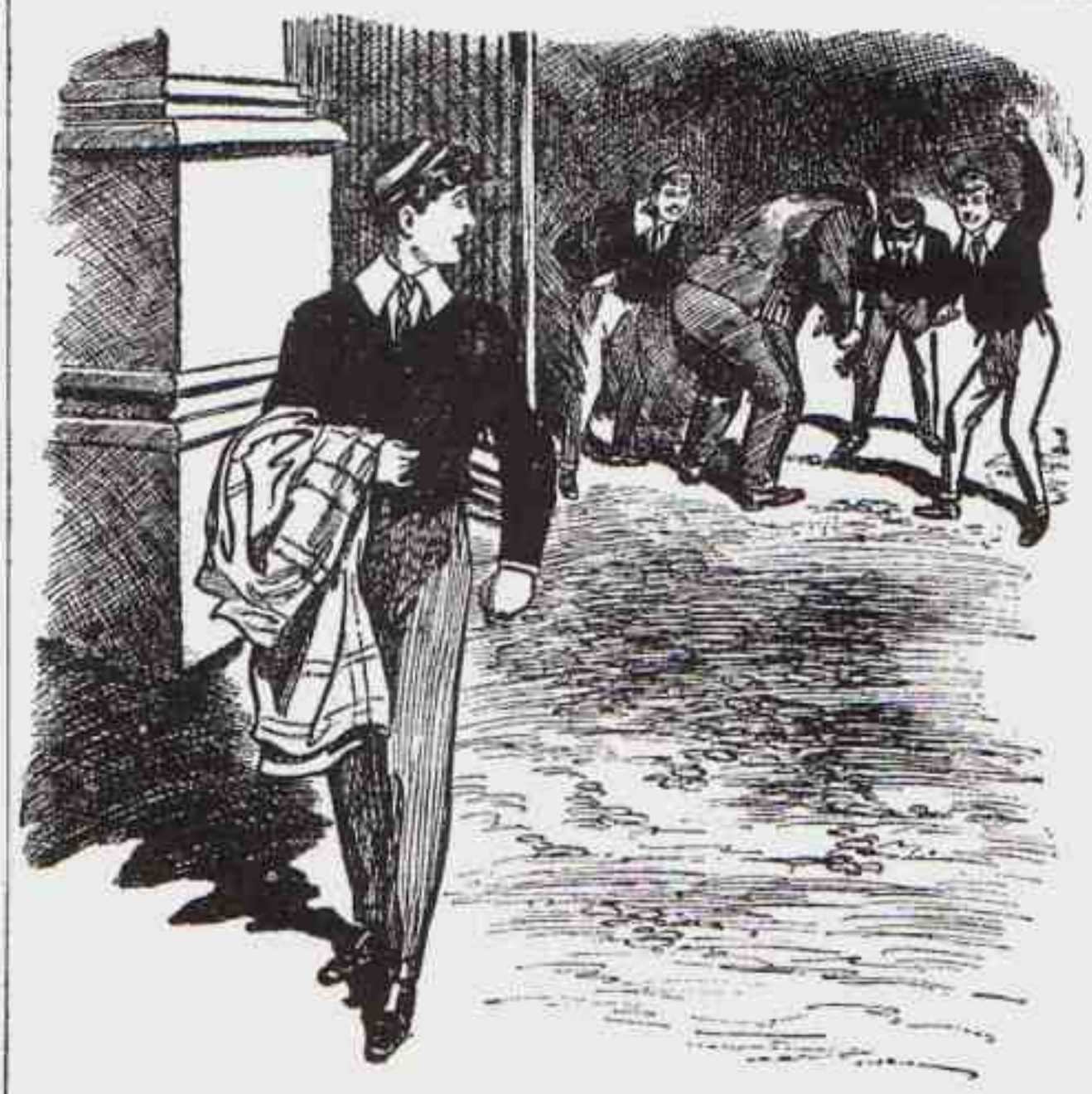
"Funk!"

"Stop!" shouted Vernon-Smith to the chauffeur.

The car halted.

The Bounder jumped out, and Wharton followed him into the road. The Courtfield chauffeur eyed the two flushed and angry juniors curiously.

"Take the car along a hundred yards or so, and wait for me!" snapped Vernon-Smith.



"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" called out Bob Cherry. "Did you drop that half-crown, Gosling?" The porter swung round. "Wot 'arf-crown?" he demanded. "Can't you see it?" asked Bob. "Help Gossy look for his half-crown, you chaps." The Co caught on at once. They helped Gosling look for an imaginary half-crown—away from the gates—and while they were thus employed Harry Wharton was able to enter. *(See Chapter 13.)*

"Yes, sir."

The car glided on. Vernon-Smith turned towards the former captain of the Remove, and pushed back his cuffs. His face was black and bitter.

"Now come on, you cad!"

He followed up the words with a blow, with all his angry animosity behind it. Wharton was not slow to retaliate. A moment more and they were fighting fiercely.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

After the Scrap!

MR. QUELCH looked up from a pile of papers, and called out "Come in!" as a tap came at his study door. It was four o'clock, and the Remove master was busy correcting exercises; but at moments his thoughts strayed to one member of his Form, now out of gates.

Mr. Quelch was practically certain that the heavy impot had not been written—not completed, at any rate—and that it would not be handed in by Harry Wharton at six o'clock. The rebel of the Remove had walked out of gates under his eyes, cool and indifferent, leaving his task undone, as Mr. Quelch felt assured. When he thought of it the Remove master compressed his lips hard. If it was as he supposed, there should be no mercy for the rebel.

It was Herbert Vernon-Smith who entered his study. The Remove master started as he looked at him. There was a dark shade round one of the Bounder's eyes. His nose was red and swollen, and bruises showed on his face. It was evident that the Bounder had been in the wars that afternoon.

"What is it, Vernon-Smith?" asked Mr. Quelch curtly.

"Wingate told me to report to you, sir. I've been out of bounds," said the junior.

"Oh, you appear to have been fighting, also!"

Smithy passed a hand over his damaged face.

"Yes, sir! Only a—a—a scrap with a fellow!"

"Very well, you may go, for the present."

Vernon-Smith left the study, and the Remove master resumed his task. Smithy walked away, not in a cheery mood, and at the end of the passage he was greeted by a fat cachinnation.

"He, he, he! Where did you get that eye, Smithy?"

The Bounder scowled at the Owl of the Remove, and walked on. Billy Bunter's fat chuckle followed him.

"Phew! What a chivvy!" Harold Skinner met the Bounder on the staircase. "Been in the wars, Smithy?"

"Find out!" snapped the Bounder.

"Well, you look like it," grinned Skinner. "You went out with Wharton, I noticed. Has he come in?"

"Find out, again!"

Skinner whistled.

"You've been scrapping with him, have you? The dear man's temper is a little uncertain, isn't it? Did you lick him?"

The Bounder's savage look in reply was a sufficient answer to that question.

He brushed angrily past Skinner, and went on to the Remove passage, leaving Skinner chuckling. Skinner scudded away to the Rag at once to spread the news that Smithy had been fighting with Wharton, and had bagged a licking.

The Bounder tramped into his study and threw himself into a chair. He was tired and in a savage humour. His feeling towards Wharton was bitterness itself.

He thought of Tom Redwing and the appeal Tom had made to him, and laughed bitterly. He was not likely to take a further hand in helping Harry Wharton on the downward path. That friendship had been short-lived. He rubbed his aching eye, that was growing steadily darker and darker. And he scowled when, a little later, Frank Nugent looked into the study.

"So you're back, Smithy?"

"Can't you see I am?" growled the Bounder.

"Where's Wharton?"

"I don't know!"

"But——"

"And I don't care, either," said Vernon-Smith. "Wharton can go and eat coke, and be hanged to him!"

Nugent stared.

"So you're not friends, now?"

"Is anybody friends with Wharton for long?" asked the Bounder sardonically. "No, we're not friends now. We had a row and a fight. Wharton got the best of it, if you're keen to know all about it. Anything else?"

"I'm glad to hear it," said Frank quietly. "You were not doing Wharton any good, Smithy, and the less he has to do with you the better for him, in my opinion."

"Keep your opinion until you're asked for it. But I don't think I could do that sportsman much harm," sneered the Bounder. "We were caught by a prefect going to the races, and Wharton wanted to keep on when I turned back. That's why we had a row."

"Where did you leave him?"

"On the Courtfield road, a good five miles off. He's got a jolly old tramp before him," said the Bounder. "Serve him jolly well right. And when he comes in he's got a row ahead of him, and I'm glad of it. He's licked me, confound him, but he will be up before the Head over his impot."

"His impot?" repeated Frank.

"Possibly you don't know that he left five hundred lines undone to go out this afternoon? Well, he did. And he can't get back in time to finish them, now, if he wanted to. He got out of a flogging the other day, owing to that ass Redwing buttin' in. He won't get out of it this time. And I'm jolly glad."

Frank smiled faintly.

"And I don't see that he matters to you, anyhow," added the Bounder. "From what I've heard, he picked a row with you in the Christmas vacation, and gave you a lickin'. Isn't that so?"

"No business of yours, anyway," said Frank contemptuously, and he walked out of the study, leaving the Bounder to rub his eye, and grumble and grouse over his damages. Certainly, the shady expedition of that afternoon had not been a success from any point of view.

Frank Nugent went down to the gates, in the falling dusk, to wait for his friends to come in from Hawkscliff. Bob Cherry & Co. arrived, tired with their long tramp, but in a cheery mood. They were only just in time. Gosling was already coming down to the gates with his keys.

"Wharton's not in yet, you chaps," Nugent whispered.

"Isn't he?" grunted Johnny Bull.

"He had a row with Smithy, and was left to walk home, it seems," said Frank. "They had a scrap, too."

"Is Wharton going to scrap with every fellow at Greyfriars, one after another?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

Nugent made no reply to that. He stood at the gates looking out anxiously into the thickening shadows.

"Now, then, young gentlemen," said Gosling, rattling his keys. "Let a man close the gates. Wot I says is this 'ere—it's time for them gates to be locked, and you stand outer the way, Master Nugent."

"Here he comes!" said Frank. He sighted a figure on the road towards Courtfield, and knew that it was Wharton.

"You 'ear me, Master Nugent?"

"Hold on a minute, Gosling."

"I ain't 'olding on 'arf a minute, sir," said Gosling stolidly. "Horders is horders, as very well you know. You let a man close this 'ere gate, or I'll report yer."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "Did you drop that half-crown, Gosling?"

The porter swung round.

"Wot 'arf-crown?" he demanded.

"Can't you see it?"

Gosling stooped, blinking at the ground in the dusk. If there was a half-crown anywhere at hand Gosling was prepared to believe that he had dropped it.

"Can't see the blinking thing," he said. "Jest where is it, Master Cherry?"

"Help Gossy look for his half-crown, you chaps," said Bob, with a wink at his comrades.

"This way, Gosling," said Johnny Bull, catching on at once.

"Is that the esteemed half-crown, my worthy and ridiculous Gosling?" asked Hurree Singh, pointing with a dusky finger.

"No, it ain't! That's a blinking stone," growled Gosling. "I can't see any 'arf-crown, Master Cherry."

The shadowy figure on the road arrived at the gates. Harry Wharton, with a careless glance at the four, came in, and walked on towards the house. Bob Cherry gave a chuckle. He had gained his point, and there was no need for Gosling to continue his search for a non-existent half-crown.

"Sure you can't find it, Gossy?" he asked.

"Well, I don't see it. 'Zactly where did you see it?" demanded Gosling.

"My dear chap, I didn't see it," said Bob cheerily. "I only asked you if you'd dropped half-a-crown, old chap. No harm in asking a harmless question, is there?"

And Bob Cherry & Co. sauntered away, leaving Gosling staring after them with feelings that he could hardly have expressed in words. Gosling locked the gates at last, grunting wrathfully, and fully confirmed in his long belief that all boys ought to be "drownded" at birth.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

"ADSUM!"

Harry Wharton's voice answered, from the ranks of the Remove, when Mr. Quelch rapped out his name at roll-call.

Mr. Quelch's gimlet eye singled him out. Perhaps he had hardly expected Wharton to be there in time. But he was there, and there was nothing to be said. Wingate's eye also was on the late captain of the Remove. When the roll was finished, and the school dismissed, Wingate called to the junior in the corridor.

"Wharton!"

Harry came towards him wearily. He had had the best of the "scrap" with the Bounder, but it had been a hard fight, and it had been followed by a five-mile tramp. He was tired out and in a sullen mood. Wingate scanned his marked face.

"I've spoken to Vernon-Smith," he said. "You did not return to Greyfriars with him?"

"No."

"I told you to come back directly and report to Mr. Quelch."

"I know you did."

"You did not do so?"

"No."

"Follow me to my study."

Wharton, with a bitter look, followed the captain of Greyfriars. A few minutes later Billy Bunter burst into the Rag with excited news.

"I say, you fellows, Wharton's getting six in Wingate's study!"

"Good!" said the Bounder.

"He, he, he!"

"Nothing to what he's going to get!" smiled Skinner. "Quelchy will want his impot at six. Only a few minutes now."

"Hasn't he done it?" asked Hazeldene.

"I fancy not! Too jolly independent, you know. And Quelchy——"

Skinner broke off suddenly, as Mr. Quelch appeared in the doorway of the Rag. Six was booming out from the clock tower.

Mr. Quelch glanced over the juniors in the Rag—evidently looking for Wharton. He turned away without speaking, and some of the fellows, looking out after him, saw him go up the stairs. His face was set as hard as iron.

Mr. Quelch rustled on to Study No. 1 in the Remove. It was turned six now, and the impot was due. If it was not ready, the delinquent had to take the consequences. And the consequences were to be as severe as the incensed master of the Remove could make them. Study No. 1 was dark when Mr. Quelch arrived there; Wharton was not in his room.

The Remove master glanced in, and then turned back into the passage. Ogilvy had just come up, and the Form master called to him.

"Do you know where Wharton is, Ogilvy?"

"Yes, sir—in Wingate's study."

"Oh!" said Mr. Quelch, rather taken aback. "Very good!"

"He's coming up now, sir," added Ogilvy, with a glance over the banisters. "He had to go to Wingate's study, sir—I heard Wingate tell him."

"That will do, Ogilvy."

(*Continued on page 28.*)

THE NEW BOY! At Teddinghurst school young Jack Drake expects to find the chief of the motor bandits. There's a whole heap of excitement that he doesn't expect, amongst which is a caning from his Form-master!

A Full-of-Thrills Detective Story Featuring JACK DRAKE, Ferrers Locke's Capable Boy Assistant.

Drake's Resolve!

JACK DRAKE, feeling instinctively that he was on the verge of a discovery, bent his head still lower.

Another draught from the flask succeeded in opening the secretary's eyes once more. Words tumbled from his ashen lips, mostly in an unintelligible babble. But some of the words were distinct enough:

"He's—saw his face—he's at—hurst School—near Hindhead—Surrey!"

"He's what?" cried Drake eagerly, almost forgetting that the man before him had but a second or two to live. "You know him? Tell me his name! His name!"

Eccleston smiled feebly up at the excited lad, his lips moved in speech, but no words came to Drake's expectant ears.

The next moment the boy sleuth reverently laid the inert figure on the carpeted floor and covered it with a blanket.

Eccleston had atoned for all his earthly sins.

Even as Sir Willoughby laid his hands on the precious document hidden in the bureau, Drake finished his task. The baronet raised a weary hand to his head as he sensed what had happened, and with a cry of distraction staggered out of the room.

Slowly Drake followed him out. In the hall below he came upon Morrison—very much out of temper—and the local police. From the C.I.D. man's lips he learnt that the bandit chief had made good his escape in a car that stood awaiting him in the roadway. Morrison had taken the number of the car and scrawled it down for future reference in his notebook, but on looking again at the departing car he discovered to his dismay that the number-plate was one of the automatic type that registered a different number with every passing minute, if the driver so wished it.

Useless to follow the car, for the bandit chief had got a clear start of five minutes. And in five minutes a fast car can soon be swallowed up in the undulating countryside of Surrey.

"Well, that's the finish of this case!" grunted Morrison savagely. "I owe Sir Willoughby an apology for letting that rascal escape with the document——"

"Indeed you don't," said the baronet, with a weary smile. "For I have the papers here! Rather do you owe young Drake a dinner!"

And Morrison's reply took the form of an expressive snort.

* * * * * *

It was six o'clock that same evening when a tired but jubilant youth walked into Inspector Pyecroft's sitting-room at his Norwood flat.

"Well," growled the C.I.D. man, "how did you get on?"

"How did you get on first?" was Drake's cheeky response.

"Oh, I've been hanging around town all day—left a fellow to take my place a couple of hours ago—waiting for the document to be handed over to the foreign agent," said Pyecroft dismally.

"Won't need that chap shadowed now," said Drake, spreading himself in the armchair. "Better call your plain-clothes man off, old scout."

"Don't you be funny, my lad!" growled Pyecroft. "This foreign agent has got to be watched day and night until the blooming document is handed over to him!"

"Then he'll be shadowed to the grave!" grinned Drake.

"What the thump are you talking about?"

"I mean that the Government document has been restored to Sir Willoughby Fortescue a couple of hours ago!" replied Drake, with a joyous grin.

"What!"

"It's a fact!" exclaimed Drake.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Pyecroft, and his relief was obvious. "Did Morrison strike oil, then?"

"No! Your humble servant traced the crime to the right party——" began the lad.

"Well I'm blessed!" hooted Pyecroft.

"And was instrumental in recovering the document," resumed Drake. "By the way, you owe me a dinner, Pyecroft," he added. "That'll be two—yours and Morrison's."

Forthwith he plunged into a detailed account of the day's happenings, to the amazement and admiration of the inspector.

"Gee!" exclaimed Pyecroft as Drake concluded. "You're a giddy marvel! Suppose you'll arrest the chief of the motor bandits next?"

"That is my humble ambition," replied Drake. "Pyecroft," he added, after a moment's silence, "I'm going back to school."

"To school?" ejaculated the C.I.D. man in amazement. "What on earth for?"

"To arrest the chief of the motor bandits," answered Drake.

And, leaving Inspector Pyecroft to think out that little puzzle, the boy sleuth eagerly attacked a portion of cold chicken and ham, the while he traced in a directory the names of

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.

* * * * * *

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.

Some time later Drake is instrumental in saving a State document from falling into the hands of the motor bandits. Montague Eccleston, the secretary of Sir Willoughby Fortescue, is implicated in the theft. He is shot by the bandit chief, who makes a bold bid for liberty. While Eccleston is dying he attempts to tell Drake the name of the bandit chief, but his words trail off unintelligibly.

(*Now read on.*)

schools in Surrey, near Hindhead, that ended in "hurst."

Pyecroft was still thinking it out when Drake snapped the directory shut. There was only one school situated near Hindhead, in Surrey, whose name ended in "hurst."

And that was Teddinghurst—"collegiate school for sons of gentlemen!"

The New Boy!

"TEDDINGHURST!"

With a hissing of steam and a clanking of couplings, the three twenty-five from Haslemere fussed its way into the station.

"Tedding-'urst!"

The raucous notes of the porter mingled inharmoniously with the spirited chirping of the birds that honoured this sleepy village with their company.

"Tedding'urst! Ted-din-'urst!"

From the number of times the porter shouted the name of the place, and the amount of vocal energy thus absorbed, a casual person without troubling to raise his eyes would at once conjure up a picture of an exceedingly busy town where people did nothing else but get in and out of trains all day. Upon raising his eyes he would observe in his mild surprise a venerable old gentleman clad in a blue serge suit, a red tie and a gold laced peak cap—the stationmaster—a porter wearing much the same type of apparel, without the gold laced peak cap—a couple of wooden shanties with corrugated iron roofs, a two-way track, and an antiquated piece of machinery that snorted and hissed in rightful indignation at its daily burden of four obsolete carriages.

Furthermore, he would observe that this "one-eyed" station lay basking in all the splendour of a wintry sun. On each side of it rose towering hills densely populated with pine-trees, their proud heads reared towards a sky of unclouded blue.

"Tedding—urstttt!"

This time the guard of the three twenty-five joined in the chorus. But no one alighted. The guard scratched his head reflectively. He had a distinct recollection that someone or something had to be "put off" at Teddinghurst. A glance into the van assured him that no luggage therein bore the requisite label.

With a grunt of disgust he began to unfurl his green flag. The stationmaster, who had taken up a position near the wooden barrier to collect the tickets—that was one of the many tasks that fell to his lot as stationmaster—winked at the guard knowingly.

"Theso 'ere be slow an' peaceful times, Garge!"

But the slow and peaceful times underwent a startling change as a carriage door was suddenly flung open and a silk-hatted, monocled youth in spotless Etons jumped out.

"Stop the train, guard!" he commanded with an air of boredom that fitted in well with the surrounding scenery. "I believe my ticket says Teddinghurst, don't you know!"

The guard lowered his flag and strolled ponderously over to the passenger.

"Look 'ere, young feller me lad," he reprimanded, "this 'ere's a railway, not a bed-room. You wants to wake hup!"

"I'm glad to hear it!" yawned the youth, polishing his monocle. "I was beginning to entertain certain doubts, you know. We've been exactly an hour coming from Haslemere."

"Well, it's six miles ain't it?" retorted the guard loyally. "And where's yer luggage, young man? I knowed you 'ad a whole heap of it somewhere."

The youth motioned to the carriage. The porter, scenting a tip, moistened his hands and proceeded to bring out from the compartment half a dozen large travelling cases marked "M. P. S.," and a couple of hat-boxes. The task completed, the engine shrieked its warning, and the three twenty-five pulled slowly out of the station at exactly three forty-five!

"Jove!" muttered the youth in Etons. "What a service! Say, porter," he added, "is this a private railway company?"

"It be, sirr," replied that stolid individual. "Run for the benefit of the gentry livin' in these 'ere parts to catch the main line trains at Haslemere. I s'pose you be for the college?"

"Yaas," drawled the boy. "Two miles from the station, isn't it?"

The porter replied in the affirmative, and followed up with an expressive gesture at the pile of luggage.

"Is there a conveyance of some sort?" queried the youth in Etons.

"There's old Henticknap's cab," was the reply. "That's if he's a-workin' today. I'll go and see."

The porter shuffled off, the stationmaster disappeared into his office, leaving the youth gazing about him with interest.

"What a one-eyed place!" he muttered. "Old Pyecroft was right in his description of Teddinghurst."

From which it will be gathered that the youth was none other than Jack Drake, the boy sleuth. None of his acquaintances would have recognised him, however, in his present guise. A thick wig of well-oiled black hair covered his own fair locks successfully, his eyebrows were darkened over, the semi-supercilious curl of the lip distorted completely his natural boyish and open expression.

Ever since the affair of the stolen document Drake had lost no time in making preparations to enter Teddinghurst School. The two people had "pulled the strings" on his behalf with the result that Drake, under the assumed name of Montmorency Percival Shackleton, had dodged the waiting list, and had been accepted by the Head at Teddinghurst as a fee-paying pupil.

Had those in authority at Teddinghurst known of his purpose, however, they would have entertained doubts as to his sanity, for Drake's intention was to lay the chief of the motor bandits by the heels. And in Teddinghurst he hoped to find this precious personage.

That his part was going to be difficult Drake had not the slightest doubt. And to render it more easy, to allay the suspicion that would soon begin to point at him and his movements, the boy sleuth had taken unto himself the role of dandy and slacker. A bore, too, he had every hope of carrying out this small imposture with success—thus the number of suit-cases, the spotless Etons, the glossy silk hat, the air of boredom, the monocle.

As he stood waiting for the porter's return, Montmorency Percival Shackleton surveyed himself in a mirror that advertised the use of a certain soap. The reflection pleased him. His collar was spotless, his tie spoke eloquently of extravagant tastes, the Eton jacket fitted to perfection, the hat was tilted at the correct angle. Into this pleasing picture came the reflection of two less resplendent youths similarly attired, with the exception of the silk hat. Drake watched their progress in the mirror with deep interest.

"Two blighters from the school," he mused. "Come to meet the new boy!"

He laughed softly to himself and waited. The newcomers appeared to be about the same age as himself. He liked their cheery faces, the healthy glow in their cheeks, and failed not to note the mischievous twinkle in their eyes.

He stood about, bringing his monocle into play.

"Are you Shackleton, the new kid?" inquired one of the youths, treating Drake to an appraising glare that finished with a disdainful curl of the lip.

"Yaas!"

"Yaas!" mimicked the two juniors wearing Teddinghurst colours. "Doesn't his mother keep him nice?"

Drake's nose tilted a trifle, his expression was supercilious.

"I observe you are from Teddinghurst," he said languidly.

"He observes," said one of the juniors with a grin. "Marvellous how he does it with that window-pane stuck in his eye. Here, new kid, my name's Williams—Curly, my friends call me. This chap is Truscott——"

"Delighted to meet you, don't you know!" yawned Drake. "Are there any more at Teddinghurst like you?" he added innocently.

"Look here!" growled Curly Williams, a trifle taken aback by the resplendent figure before him. "No cheek, New kids are expected to behave themselves, you know. Like your blessed cheek to turn up at Teddinghurst in that rig. We don't wear lavender-coloured waistcoats at Teddinghurst——"

"So I have observed," remarked Drake coolly, indicating with a well-manicured finger the grubby vests of the two juniors. "Shocking bad taste, you know."

"Come off it!" growled Curly Williams, making a playful swipe at Drake's shining topper.

But with a quick move Drake eluded the outstretched hand and promptly whipped Williams' cap from his head.

"Well, I'm blessed!" exclaimed Curly. "This blessed dude is not so tired as I thought. Do you mind giving me back my cap?"

"Certainly," drawled Drake. "I don't like the look of your untidy mop—better not start again with the cap."

And to Williams' wrath he jammed the cap on his head.

Fortunately at this juncture the porter returned.

"Henticknap's cab is outside," he said. "I fetched him from the stable."

"He doesn't want a cab, Jerry," chimed in Truscott. "The walk will do him good. We'll send the school cart for his luggage."

"Thank you, my young friend," said Drake. "But I'm not walkin' two miles"—he shuddered—"two miles. The mere thought of it makes me tired, Jerry," he added, turning to the porter. "Do me the favour of taking this beastly luggage to the cab."

And, stifling a yawn, the new boy turned on his heel and sauntered out of the station, leaving two amazed Teddinghurst Fourth-Formers staring blankly after him.

"Well, he beats the blessed band!" said Williams. "We've got some freaks up at the col, Trusty, but this new merchant takes the whole giddy biscuit factory."

"He's not such a freak as he would have us imagine," said Truscott thoughtfully. "He looks jolly fit and sturdy for a slacker, anyway."

Upon reflection Williams agreed with his chum. Undoubtedly the new boy was something of a mystery character. The two Fourth-Formers had come to the station with the express intention of ragging him, but, somehow or other, Williams felt convinced that the new boy slacker and dude as he was, would not submit peacefully to a ragging.

And as Curly Williams was the acknowledged leader of the Fourth Form at Teddinghurst, and saw fit to leave the new boy to settle down at his leisure, the remainder of the Form followed suit.

Thus Drake's coming to Teddinghurst provided a subject of discussion amongst the juniors, likewise the number of suitcases that accompanied him, his gleaming monocle, his lavender-coloured waistcoat, his patent leather shoes. And when these subjects were exhausted interest faded out and attention was directed to football and kindred topics.

Conscious of the impression he had made, Jack Drake settled down once again to school routine in the role of Montmorency Percival Shackleton, ever remindful of the purpose that had brought him to Teddinghurst, and keen as ever to accomplish it.

The Clue of the Mask!

FOR the first two weeks of his stay at Teddinghurst, Jack Drake confined his attentions to studying the movements of the various Form masters. With something like despair in his heart, he discovered that they were, one after the other, what they appeared to be—learned individuals wrapped up in their scholastic duties. Not even in the wildest flight of imagination could Drake class them as being in any way connected with the notorious motor bandits.

And yet the last words of Montague Eccleston had pointed to the fact that at Teddinghurst was to be found the chief of the motor bandits.

"This is a poser and no mistake," muttered Drake, as he gazed moodily out of his study window across the deserted quad. "One of them is the guilty party. Now who the deuce could it be?" He rattled off the names of the masters, starting from the Second Form and upwards. Trevison, Plumson, Brock, Myers, Martineau, and the giddy old doctor. Now which one out of that little lot is the bandit?"

"What the human are you talking about, you slacker?" demanded Williams, coming into the study. "What's this about a bandit?"

Drake started violently.

"Er—I was summing up our dutiful Form master, he he yaas. "Regular slave-drivers, real bandits!"

"Oh, they're not so bad if you don't slack!" grinned Curly brightly. "Done your prep?"

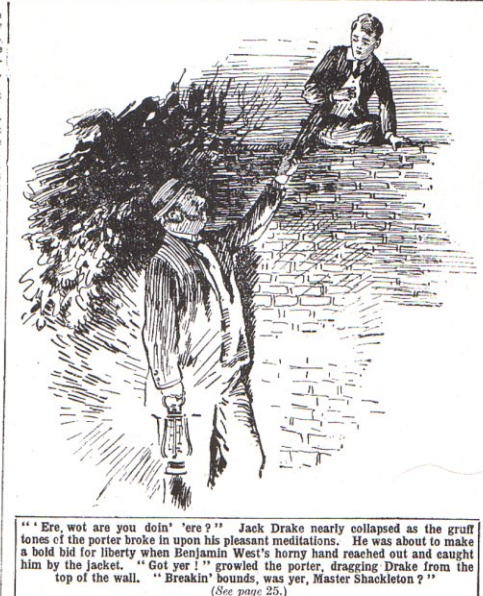
"Yaas."

"Care for a game of chess?"

"No jolly fear," said Drake, with a grimace. "Too much beastly fag."

"Look here, old scout!" said Williams. "I don't believe you're half such a slacker as you make out. You look as if you could play footer, and play it well. Why don't you turn out at practice to-morrow?"

Drake shrugged his shoulders and turned again to the window. In the role of Montmorency Percival Shackleton he found life a trifle irksome. If he once played footer he would be expected to turn out regularly, and that would put a stop to his freedom of movement. As things were now he was able to stroll out of gates after lessons without exciting any suspicion.



"'Ere, wot are you doin' 'ere?" Jack Drake nearly collapsed as the gruff tones of the porter broke in upon his pleasant meditations. He was about to make a bold bid for liberty when Benjamin West's horny hand reached out and caught him by the jacket. "Got yer!" growled the porter, dragging Drake from the top of the wall. "Breakin' bounds, was yer, Master Shackleton?"

(*See page* 25.)

"Oh, you're a hopeless slacker!" grunted Williams, seeing that the new boy was in no mood for company.

"Yaas!"

And with that irritating reply ringing in his ears Williams stamped out of the study and slammed the door.

For quite five minutes Drake remained staring out of the window across the dusky quad. Suddenly he observed the tall figure of Mr. Martineau, the master of the Sixth, stride out into the gloom.

"I wonder if that merchant is the giddy bandit?" mused Drake. "He's more likely to be than any of the others. Lemme see. Creeps round the passages without making a sound, has little in common with his fellow-masters, not frightfully popular, and supposed to be an eccentric fellow keen on astronomy. Moons about at night star-gazing. Hum!"

The more Drake pondered over Mr. Martineau the more convinced he became than the Sixth Form master was the man he wanted. And a glance at the newspaper the next morning helped to confirm his suspicions.

Once more the motor bandits had success-fully broken into a house and lifted a few thousand pounds' worth of jewellery. And again they had made a complete getaway without leaving any tracks.

"Bramshott," muttered Drake. "Why, that's only five miles from here. And Martineau didn't come in until turned twelve o'clock last night. That would have given him time to stage the robbery, hide his plunder, and return to the school. Drake, my lad, Martineau is the bird for you."

So full of the night's doings was Jack Drake that his Form work suffered. What time had a detective to waste on the industries of Canada when he could drop his hand on the chief of a gang of motor bandits? Mr. Brock, the master of the Fourth, glanced in Drake's direction several times, and each time his glance grew grimmer.

"Shackleton," he rapped at last, "you are not paying attention to the lesson!"

"I am, sir," protested the new boy.

"Don't argue with me, boy!" said Mr. Brock severely. "Take a hundred lines for inattention and a hundred lines for impertinence!"

"Yaas, sir. Thank you, sir!"

The lesson was resumed, but Drake was too excited to pay much heed to Canada and all its works.

Once more Mr. Brock's eyes rested on his new pupil.

"Shackleton," he rapped suddenly, "what are the exports of Canada?"

"Martineau, sir," replied the new boy absent-mindedly.

"Wha-a-at?"

A titter of laughter ran round the class, but it was instantly quelled as Mr. Brock's gimlet eye roved over the assembly. "Old Fireworks," as he was called by his pupils, was not to be trifled with.

As for the new boy he stood there, a crimson flush surmounting his face, waiting for the worst.

"Boy," stormed Mr. Brock, "how dare you! I have already had occasion to punish you for your inattention, have I not?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Kindly step to the front!" ordered the Form master, picking up his cane.

Drake, with burning cheeks, complied.

When he returned to his place both his hands were smarting, a sensation he hadn't experienced since he had left Greyfriars. Thence onwards the new boy was most attentive to the lesson, and Mr. Brock, perhaps imagining that he had dealt too severely with his refractory pupil, had the kindness of heart to rescind a hundred lines when the bell rang for the cessation of classes.

After dinner Drake could have been seen sauntering about the Sixth Form passage, a proceeding that was strictly against the rules. But luck was with him, for he encountered no one in authority. Five minutes earlier he had seen Mr. Marteau, the master of the Sixth, enter the Head's study with a sheaf of papers. Drake had reckoned that Mr. Martineau would be closeted with the Head for some time. This was an opportunity the boy sleuth had been waiting for, and with a bold front he entered the apartment.

That his action was akin to spying troubled him not in the least, for was he not seeking evidence to lay the chief of the motor bandits by the heels? And was not Mr. Martineau that mysterious acoundrel?

With beating heart the lad closed the door of the study and looked about him. The first thing that caught his eyes was a pair of muddy boots that stood in the far corner of the room.

Upon examination Drake deduced the fact that these were the boots the Sixth Form master had worn the previous evening, for the soles were still damp. Replacing the boots in their original position, he crossed the room and gazed as if fascinated at a black crepe mask that reposed on the top of the bureau.

With a suppressed cry of excitement Drake snatched up the mask. Even as he did so the study door opened, and the tall figure of the Sixth Form master stood framed in the aperture.

With a guilty start Drake let the mask fall to the floor.

"Boy!" exclaimed Mr. Martineau grimly. "What are you doing in my study?"

For the space of five seconds Drake felt like a criminal caught in the act, and then his composure returned.

"Your study, sir?" he queried in amazement.

"Yes, my study!"

"Then I beg your pardon, sir," said Drake earnestly. "I—I made a mistake in the studies. Fellowes sent me to his study to fetch——"

"Oh, I see!" smiled Mr. Martineau, the grim lines in his countenance relaxing. "Quite a natural mistake, I suppose. Fellowes' study is next door, my lad. You appear to be very interested in that mask?"

"Yaas, sir," said Drake. "I'm the masked ruffian in the next play the Fourth Form Dramatic Society is putting on. It—it interested me when I saw it there, and—and I picked it up. I'm sorry, sir——"

"That's quite all right," said Mr. Martineau with a smile. "If you would care to have the mask, take it, my boy."

"I—thank you, sir!"

And Drake, now thoroughly perplexed at this generous offer, took the mask mechanically, drawled his thanks almost as mechanically, and beat a hasty retreat.

Once outside in the passage he breathed a sigh of relief.

"Gee! That was a close thing!" he muttered. "Good job I knew Fellowes' study was next door, and that Fellowes had gone out. Martineau isn't likely to tax the skipper of the school on the subject."

And with the mask tucked away safely in his pocket Drake made his way to his study.

He had collected his first piece of evidence at Teddinghurst. The rest should be easy.

Getting Warm!

"EXCUSE me, sir—you're wanted on the phone!"

The drawling voice of the new boy of the Fourth greeted Mr. Martineau's ears as he rustled along the Sixth Form passage a fortnight later. It was on the tip of his tongue to ask this junior boy what business he had in the Sixth Form passage, but Mr. Martineau recollected judiciously that perhaps he was fagging for one of the prefects. Certainly he would have been surprised and annoyed had he known that it was his presence in the Sixth Form that had attracted the slacker of the Fourth.

Drake, on his part, had cunningly offered to fag for Fellowes—the captain of the school. That the skipper had been surprised at his request from a Fourth Former was natural in the circumstances, for fags were supposed to be taken from the Second and Third Forms. But he had humoured Shackleton, thinking it a good plan for knocking some of his "slacking" habits out of him.

Thus Drake came to be installed as Fellowes' fag—a proceeding that evoked the scorn of his Form mates, who were "above" fagging, and the derision of the cheeky imps of the Third.

To the skipper's amazement and satisfaction, however, "Shackleton" proved to be a model fag. His only vice, as Fellowes called it, was his habit of "living" in the study when he should have repaired to his own quarters. But every time the skipper had been about to remark upon this peculiarity Drake had suddenly discovered something that required his attention in the study—a book perhaps to be dusted and put away, the fire to be made up, the clock to be wound, etc. And so Fellowes, the most indulgent fagmaster at Teddinghurst, allowed the new boy to have his "head" providing he didn't overdo the "living in" business.

There was method in Drake's peculiar behaviour, however. As Fellowes' fag he was able to keep a very special eye upon the activities of Mr. Martineau without drawing suspicion upon himself, for the skipper's study was next door to that occupied by the Sixth Form master.

"Who wants me on the phone?" demanded Mr. Martineau sharply.

"Gentleman of the name of Thomas, sir," drawled Drake; and he was quick to note the gleam that shot into the eyes of the Form-master at mention of the name.

"Thank you, my boy!"

Mr. Martineau rustled on to the master's room, leaving the slacker of the Fourth staring after his retreating figure.

"I thought the name would give him away," muttered the boy sleuth. "He evidently doesn't think that Mr. Thomas and I have met before, which makes it absolutely certain that in Montmorency Percival Shackleton Mr. Martineau doesn't suspect Jack Drake."

The passage was now deserted save for himself, and with leisurely strides the boy sleuth made his way to the masters' room. He stopped outside and listened.

"Yes, yes, Thomas!" There was no mistaking Mr. Martineau's sharp, penetrating voice. "To-night, then—eleven o'clock. I will leave here at ten-fifteen. You will tell the rest——"

Drake did not wait to hear more. There was a thrill of excitement running through his veins as he withdrew from the door of the masters' room. To-night. Eleven o'clock! What was the game? Who was the game?

"I'll shadow him like a bird to-night," muttered the boy sleuth. "This is a bit of luck, and no mistake. Actually overheard talking to one of the gang. Mr. Thomas, the house painter!"

The boy sleuth referred to the occasion when the chief of the motor bandits had raided Ferrers Locke's chambers, in Baker Street—when his right-hand man, Thomas, had filled the role of house decorator.

Drake disappeared into Fellowes' cosy study as the quick footsteps of the Sixth Form master rang along the passage.

"Hallo, Shackleton!" said Fellowes, looking up from a sheaf of papers on the table. "You always seem to turn up at the right moment. You might take these papers into the Head's study."

"Yaas," drawled Drake. "Certainly."

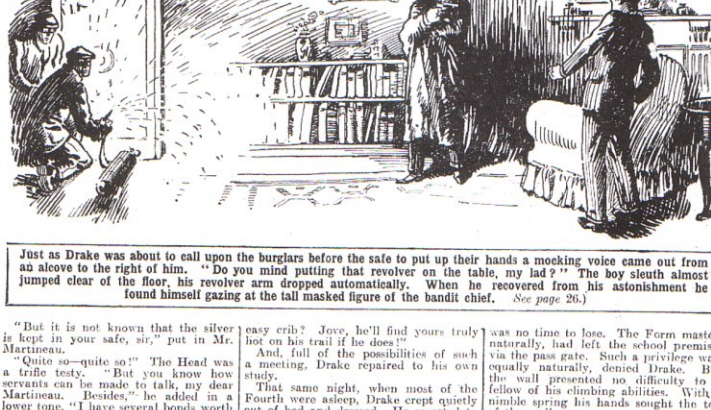
He picked up the bundle of papers and withdrew.

A moment later he was standing outside the door of the Head's study, his hand raised about to rap upon the panels. But he paused as there came to his ears the heavy, well-known voice of Dr. Raynham, punctuated at intervals by the equally well-known, incisive tones of Mr. Martineau.

Drake was about to turn away when a fragment of the conversation caught his ears and roused his curiosity—a curiosity pardonable in the circumstances when one remembers his object at Teddinghurst.

"The bandits!" Mr. Martineau was saying. "Why, sir, you don't for one moment imagine that they would attempt to rob a school——"

"I must confess to a certain uneasiness upon that point," said Dr. Raynham ponderously. "It is well known in the village that the school silver is worth several thousand pounds——"



Just as Drake was about to call upon the burglars before the safe to put up their hands a mocking voice came out from an alcove to the right of him. "Do you mind putting that revolver on the table, my lad?" The boy sleuth almost jumped clear of the floor, his revolver arm dropped automatically. When he recovered from his astonishment he found himself gazing at the tall masked figure of the bandit chief. *See page 26.)*

"But it is not known that the silver is kept in your safe, sir," put in Mr. Martineau.

"Quite so—quite so!" The Head was a trifle testy. "But you know how servants can be made to talk, my dear Martineau. Besides," he added in a lower tone, "I have several bonds worth a small fortune secured in that safe."

"You are thinking of transferring them to the local bank?"

Mr. Martineau's query seemed to Drake's listening ears over-anxiously expressed.

"No," replied the Head with finality. "I shouldn't be surprised if these rascally bandits pay that a visit before long. No, no, Mr. Martineau, I was feeling rather anxious, that is all. But you don't think the bandits will take notice of a place like Teddinghurst?"

"Most emphatically not," answered the Sixth Form master. "And if they did your safe would give them a few hours' trouble to force. Burglars like to do their work quickly, sir."

Dr. Raynham laughed a little constrainedly as he gazed at the six-foot safe standing in the corner of the room. It certainly would give a burglar a few hours' work to force it.

The subject of the motor-bandits dropped abruptly, and Drake heard footsteps coming towards the door. He rapped the panels sharply.

"Come in!"

Dr. Raynham was all smiles as he took the papers from Drake. He had taken a great fancy to his latest pupil. Despite the monocle, the drawl, the spotless appearance, the Head detected a strong character in Montmorency Percival Shackleton.

"And how are you getting on, my boy?" he asked, with a kindly smile.

"Topping, don't you know, sir," replied Drake languidly. "Quite settled down now, sir!"

He was conscious of Mr. Martineau's eyes boring into him as he stood there, was conscious of them still on him when he walked out of the study. Once in the passage Drake's "monocled" features relaxed into something like their normal expression.

"Gee!" he reflected. "The plot thickens! The school silver. My hat! What a fool I was not to have thought of that before! I wonder if Mr. blessed Martineau is tempted to crack such an easy crib? Jove, he'll find yours truly hot on his trail if he does!"

And, full of the possibilities of such a meeting, Drake repaired to his own study.

That same night, when most of the Fourth were asleep, Drake crept quietly out of bed and dressed. He resorted to the old trick of propping the bolster in the bed so that a casual observer, upon looking at the bed, would naturally conclude that it was occupied.

Then as the school clock chimed the quarter — a quarter past ten — Drake padded softly out of the dormitory in his socks, and, shoes in hand, made his way downstairs.

Without making a sound Drake reached the passage on the ground floor and darted into his study. Gazing out of the window, he was just in time to see the light in Mr. Martineau's study die out.

The Sixth Form master was going to keep his appointment.

And Drake was going to keep it with him!

The boy sleuth heard the patter of the master's footsteps as he crossed the quad a few moments later. Then he acted. The study window, well oiled for the occasion, was raised without a sound. Quickly Drake tied his shoe-laces together and slung the shoes round his neck.

Then, with an agile leap, he was astride the broad window-sill. Another moment and he was hanging by his hands six feet above the quad. The drop was nothing.

Breathing hard with excitement Drake darted into the shadows of the wall and listened for a minute or two. But no sound reached his ears save the thumping of his own heart beats.

"So far so good!" he muttered grimly. "Reckon I've got to go slow for a bit."

He glanced up at the lights that twinkled from several windows. Some of the masters evidently had not retired. With infinite caution the boy sleuth padded out of the danger zone and reached the gravel drive. With less caution now he made a bold bid for the shelter of the high brick wall that encircled the school buildings.

Feverishly he put on his shoes. From the other side of the brick wall he heard Mr. Martineau's measured tread. There was no time to lose. The Form master, naturally, had left the school premises via the pass gate. Such a privilege was, equally naturally, denied Drake. But the wall presented no difficulty to a fellow of his climbing abilities. With a nimble spring his hands sought the top of the wall.

His grip held.

Slowly he drew up his body until he was able to throw one leg over the top of the wall. The rest was easy. A little breathless, he sat for a moment on the broad bricks, watching the fast disappearing figure of Mr. Martineau down the winding lane.

"'Ere, wot are you doin' 'ere?"

Drake nearly collapsed as the gruff tones broke in upon his pleasant meditations. With a gasp of dismay he recognised them. Turning his head, he found himself gazing into the bright beams of a lantern held in the school porter's brawny hand. Benjamin West apparently had been doing the rounds.

Even as Drake was about to chance it and spring down into the roadway, the porter's disengaged hand reached out and caught him tightly by the jacket.

"Got yer!" growled West, the porter. And he almost dragged Drake from his perch. "Nice goings on, I must say! Breakin' bounds, was yer, Master Shackleton? Goin' exploring, like the other bloke, with your monica, eh?"

And, laughing at his own joke, the porter dragged the Fourth-Former from the top of the wall.

In a sprawling heap the boy sleuth landed at West's big feet. The grip was changed from his jacket tail to his jacket collar. For a moment he was tempted to make a bolt for it, but West, who had had long acquaintance with breakers of bounds, gave him no chance. His grip on Drake's collar was like a vice. In this fashion Drake was hauled across the lawn, across the gravel drive to the big House door. He could have kicked himself for being beaten in his self-appointed task by a thumping idiot like West, and he could have kicked the zealous porter a deal sight harder for his meddling interference.

Without deigning to reply to any one of the questions, the triumphant gate porter put to him, the "slacker of the Fourth" was escorted into the House and up to his dormitory.

"Which I'll report yer in the morning to yer 'eadmaster, you young rascal!" was West's parting remark. "Caught in the act of breakin' bounds!"

"Report and be blowed to you, you old bottle-necked fossil!" exclaimed Drake bitterly.

"Which I'll make a note of that himpertent remark," muttered West, as he tramped away.

One or two of the Fourth-Formers had been disturbed, and they murmured grumpily as Drake crept over to his bed. But their eyes were heavy with sleep, and that "slacker's" escapade remained unknown to them.

Thankful on that score at least, Drake, fully dressed, stretched himself on his bed and decided to wait up for Mr. Martineau's return. He had an instinctive feeling that an attempt would be made to burgle the Head's safe, and he was prepared to take a hand in the proceedings.

Eleven o'clock chimed out, and Drake was still wide awake, listening for any strange sound. Half-past eleven, a quarter to twelve—twelve o'clock!

Not so wide awake now, the boy sleuth shrugged his shoulders as the last chime rang out.

"This won't do!" he reflected. "I'd better get up and tramp about a bit. Good idea! I'll see if there's a light in Martineau's study."

Off came his shoes. In his socks the boy sleuth trod warily down the big staircase and made tracks for his study. Even as he peered out of the study window a light flickered up from across the quad. A moment later a strong glare beamed out from the direction of the Sixth Form master's study.

"He's returned!"

Shocks!

DRAKE saw a silhouetted figure outlined against the window for a fleeting moment. Then the blind was drawn. But he knew Mr. Martineau had returned.

Undecided how to act now, the boy sleuth sat down in his armchair and stared unseeingly into the darkness. For fully five minutes he remained thus, lost in thought.

Creak!

He sat bolt upright as the slight noise pierced the night air.

Creak, creak!

He knew the noise now. The big House door made such a sound when it was being opened. Had not he come in through that door a few hours before?

Who was entering the school at this hour of night?

His heart beating a trifle faster than usual, Drake tiptoed to the door of his study and peered out into the darkened passage. Instinctively his hand closed upon the small revolver in his jacket pocket. It might be needed!

To his listening ears came the soft padding of feet.

"More than one visitor," was the boy's unspoken thought. "Expect Martineau has let his friends in. That being the case they'll not come this way. Their destination will be the Head's study. Drake, my boy, you're wanted!"

It was characteristic of the lad that he gave not a thought to the risk he was running whether the midnight prowlers proved to be masters, prefects, or burglars. Revolver in hand, he padded softly up the passage, keeping hard against the wall.

From behind a curtain that divided a portion of the hall from the main staircase the boy sleuth saw three tall figures entering the House. That they were burglars was proclaimed by the fact that they wore masks, that the foremost of them carried a shuttered lantern.

Eagerly Drake waited.

The House door was closed. The three familiar "creaks" told him so. When Drake peeped out from the curtain again the masked figures were nowhere to be seen.

"Evidently made for the Head's study," thought Drake. "It's an open invitation, so I'll go, too!"

With a grim chuckle he detached himself from the curtain and stole silently down the passage until he neared the door of Dr. Raynham's study.

A shaft of light penetrated the slit between the flooring and the bottom of the door, and it told the boy sleuth that the thieves were working in full light. He remembered then that it was a habit of the Head to close the window shutters before retiring.

All to the good! Drake much preferred to tackle this trio of rogues in the light.

JACK DRAKE.

Gripping his revolver tightly, the lad softly turned the handle of the door. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, it opened.

Drake's eyes gleamed as, directly before him, he saw two men kneeling before the big safe. An oxy-acetylene apparatus was going at full blast, the steel was already beginning to fall away under that intensive heat. A few moments more and the boy sleuth knew that the safe would be opened.

Inch by inch he inserted himself into the room until he had his back to the door. But so intent was he upon observing the every movement of the safe-breakers that he failed to note the reflection of a masked face in the mirror over the mantel, failed also to note that but two of the marauders were kneeling before the safe, although he had seen three enter the House.

He was soon to be reminded of his error, however. Just as he was about to call upon the burglars to put their hands above their heads, a mocking voice came out from an alcove to the right of him.

"Do you mind putting that revolver on the table, my lad?"

Drake jumped almost clear of the floor, his revolver arm dropped automatically. When he recovered from his astonishment he found himself gazing at a tall, draped figure, masked like the safe-breakers, who held a glinting automatic levelled at his breast.

The men before the safe wheeled sharply, but they grinned when they saw that their chief had the matter in hand.

"A pleasant surprise," went on the cool, mocking voice. "Gentlemen, a young friend is anxious to see the motor bandits at work. I beg you gentlemen not to feel self-conscious in the presence of youth. Pray proceed."

With subdued chuckles the two masked men resumed their task. Meanwhile, their chief advanced, and, with a dexterous twist of his free hand, relieved Drake of his revolver.

"Shout for help, and I'll plug you where you stand!" The chief's tone was cruelly significant now.

"You—you——"

Drake's tongue refused him office. He was completely nonplussed at the turn events had taken. For the second time that night he had been baffled—through his own carelessness.

"Wonderfully useful—mirrors," said the masked chief, with a soft, mocking laugh.

Drake immediately looked at the mirror supported over the mantelpiece, and saw how he had been betrayed.

"Confound you, Martineau!" he exclaimed fiercely. "You've proved one better than me this time. But I'll get you! I would give the alarm now if I thought by so doing I could effect your capture. But your word would carry more than mine, I know!" he added bitterly.

The masked chief grinned at the boy's outburst.

"Ha, ha!" He was laughing unrestrainedly now. "Why, if it isn't our old friend Jack Drake! Black hair doesn't suit you, my boy. Neither does the monocle. This is interesting. Dear, dear! To think that Locke's young assistant should return to school!"

Not for one moment did the boy sleuth doubt that the masked man before him was Martineau, the Sixth Form master. The height of the man, the broad shoulders, those mocking eyes, were Martineau's to the life. Only in one respect was he different, and that was the voice. But a voice is easily disguised.

"And so I am Martineau, am I?" came the chief's mocking tones.

The taunt stung Drake into recklessness.

With an inarticulate cry of rage he sprang at the masked man regardless of the leveled revolver.

Still with that mocking expression in those cruel eyes, the chief stepped back a pace, lowered his revolver, and lunged forward with clenched fist.

It took Jack Drake full between the eyes.

A cry of pain escaped the plucky lad's lips as the blow connected. Blindly he rocked upon his feet, his arms thrashing the air spasmodically. For one fleeting moment sufficient of his senses remained for him to give the alarm.

"Help!" It was not a powerful cry, but it would reach anyone near at hand.

Thud!

A second blow stretched the plucky lad upon the floor in a crumpled heap. And the moment of his fall was the moment of the bandits' triumph. The safe had been forced.

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The subdued whoop of triumph that escaped the lips of the two masked men kneeling before the big safe was never heard by Jack Drake, however; he was unconscious—knocked out.

* * * * * * * *

It was exactly an hour later that Dr. Raynham, victim of a neuritis headache, took it into his head to leave his bedroom for a bottle of aspirin tablets which he knew he had left in his study.

A lighted candle trembled in his hand as he walked along the stone passage, for the night was cold and Dr. Raynham was a chilly mortal. Muttering to himself something about nerves, insomnia, and the inclemency of the weather, he reached the door of his study. The candle nearly fluttered from his hand when he found the door of that sacred apartment wide open.

But the first shock was nothing to the second shock he received. For upon peering into the study his startled eyes made out a prostrate figure upon the carpeted floor—apparently lifeless.

The candle almost dropped to the floor as the Head's hands trembled his agitation.

"What—what——" he stammered.

And then his jaw dropped. A close examination of the prone figure disclosed the features of Mr. Martineau, the Sixth Form master. With shaking hands the Head turned the inert figure over, breaking out into a cold perspiration as he did so. Then——

"Help!"

Standing in the passage-way the Head shouted at the top of his lungs.

In a moment Teddinghurst was wakened into life. From all parts of the building came the scurrying of feet, sleepy voices, and lights.

A swarm of seniors, juniors, fags, and Form masters came hurrying to the scene. Some of the juniors were armed with cricket-stumps, evidently thinking that burglars had broken in.

With a bound, Fellowes, the captain of the school, and Turner, his chum, were supporting Mr. Martineau. Mr. Brock hurried off for some brandy. When he returned, Mr. Martineau was showing some signs of returning consciousness.

The raw spirit did its work. The Form master's eyes opened wide, and he gazed about him with interest.

"Wh-what has happened, my dear Martineau?" asked the Head tremulously. "You have been assaulted——"

"Burglars!" said the Form master laconically. "Someone gave a cry for help, and I hurried here!"

"Burglars?" gasped the Head, his eyes straying to the safe, and noting, with a gasp of relief, that the door appeared to be closed and secure.

"Burglars!" repeated Mr. Martineau, rubbing the back of his head tenderly. "I rushed in here because I saw the light. But the moment I put my foot inside something struck me on the head. I believe it was a sandbag!"

"Thank heavens the rogues didn't get away with anything from the safe!" said the Head, but his relief was momentary, for Mr. Brock, who had been examining the safe, gave a sudden cry.

"It's been forced!"

"Wha-a-at? Goodness gracious!" The Head fairly flew across the room. Feverishly he tore at the knob of the safe and swung back the massive steel door.

And then he had the third shock of the night. For as the door hinged outwards there fell from the interior of the safe a figure that was known to all present, a boyish figure clad in Etons.

"Heavens!" said Dr. Raynham faintly. "Shackleton!"

For it was Jack Drake—alias Montmorency Percival Shackleton!

(Don't miss next Monday's grand instalment of this ripping story, chums: order your MAGNET *now!)*

THIS is a competition in which everyone 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 coupleting 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.

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 IN INK, and post it to:—

"Cross Words" Limerick Competition, No. 2,
c/o MAGNET, Gough House,
Gough Square, London, E.C. 4,

so as to reach that address not later than February 3rd, 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" LIMERICK COMPETITION. **No. 2.**

"Banter's borrowed my skates," bellowed Bull,
"He's the biggest sneak-thief in the school!"
Just then came a crash,
And a shriek and a splash—

Last Line.....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Closing date, February 3rd.

(Continued from page 20.)

Harry Wharton came up the Remove staircase rather slowly. "Six" from a prefect's ashplant had told upon him, especially after his earlier experiences that afternoon. Mr. Quelch looked at him, and the junior's pale, set face might have touched his heart at any other time. But Wharton's offences had been too many.

"Wharton! It is past six," said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir," said Harry, too weary to be rebellious. He had only a bitter feeling that there was more rebuke, more punishment, more trouble, to come—that in the school where he had once been happy and careless, he was down and out—with every hand against him.

"You were told to hand in your imposition by six, Wharton."

"Yes, sir."

"As you appear to have been detained by a prefect, I will say no more on that point, if the task is done!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "If it is not done, Wharton, you know what to expect. You will receive a flogging from the Head, and you will be detained every half-holiday until the lines are written."

"Very well, sir."

"Well—the lines?" snapped Mr. Quelch.

Wharton passed into his study and turned on the light. On the table lay a stack of written manuscript. He had left the task unfinished, to join the Bounder on a blackguardly expedition—which had ended in a quarrel, a fight, and mutual bitterness. It had been hardly worth while, he thought sardonically. Now he was "for it," and he could only face the music with all the hardihood he could muster.

Mr. Quelch's grim glance fell on the pile of impot paper.

"That is your imposition, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir—all I've done."

"If you have left so much as one line unwritten, Wharton, you need not expect me to excuse you."

"I don't, sir," said Harry, in a low voice.

In grim silence Mr. Quelch proceeded to count the pages. Surprise dawned in his face. Frank Nugent had done his task well.

The Remove master drew a deep breath.

He turned from the table and looked at Wharton. The rebel of the Remove waited, with a sullen, set face.

"Wharton! If I have thought too harshly of you, you have only yourself to blame. I certainly had the impression that you had deliberately gone out of gates under my eyes, with your task undone. I am glad that I was mistaken!"

Wharton stared at him.

He wondered for a moment whether Mr. Quelch was wandering in his mind. The Remove master's grim face had relaxed.

"I trust, Wharton, that this is a sign of amendment," he said, and he rustled out of the study, and disappeared, taking the imposition with him, to be duly consigned to the waste-paper basket.

Wharton stood almost dumbfounded. He had scarcely more than half-written his impot, yet Mr. Quelch had been satisfied that the twelve hundred lines were all there. What did it mean?

It meant, as a very little reflection showed him, that some good Samaritan had "butted" into the study in his absence and saved him. Who had done him that good turn?

There was a tramp in the passage, and four juniors came along cheerily from the stairs, heading for Bob Cherry's study. Wharton's glance fell on them—and rested on Nugent's face. Nugent coloured faintly. The fallen captain of the Remove stepped into the passage.

"It was you, Nugent?"

Nugent's flush deepened.

"Yes."

There was silence for a moment. Wharton thought of what his recklessness had almost brought upon him—of the severe flogging which would have been taking place in those very moments—and there was a struggle in his breast. He spoke at last.

"Thanks!" he said.

He stepped back into the study and closed the door.

THE END.

(Now you can look forward to another brilliant story from the pen of the famous author, a story with excitement in every line of it. The title alone—"The Worst Boy at Greyfriars"—is sufficient to whet your appetites, I'll warrant. Don't miss it!)