

**£5 FOR FIVE MINUTES' WORK!** See the Grand Offer Inside!

No. 887. Vol. XXVII.

Week Ending February 7th, 1925.

# The Magnet 2<sup>d</sup>

Library EVERY MONDAY.  
Complete School Stories.



**CAUGHT BREAKING BOUNDS!**

**"THE WORST BOY AT GREYFRIARS!"**

*(A dramatic incident from this week's powerful story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, inside.)*



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

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

Said Brown to Bully Silvester  
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 Silvester 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. 3,  
c/o MAGNET, Gough House,  
Gough Square, London, E.C. 4,

so as to reach that address not later than February 10th, 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.

## NEXT MONDAY'S PROGRAMME!

### "HARRY WHARTON'S LAST CHANCE!"

By Frank Richards.

**N**EXT week's magnificent Greyfriars story will live long in the memories of my readers, for it marks the climax of Harry Wharton's excursions on the downward path. The chopper has fallen—and fallen heavily. The one-time captain of the Remove has crowned all his rebellious conduct with the ignominy of expulsion. This is a blow to the junior who, not so very long ago, has been reckoned one of Mr. Quelch's best pupils. It comes home to him with full significance. He finds himself thinking of his guardian and what it will mean to him. And at this stage all the stubborn pride, the arrogance that has brought about his downfall, slips from him like a cloak. He realises too late, it would appear, that he has played the "goat." Has asked for trouble, and got it. Then comes the opportunity from which is taken the title of this fine story for Wharton to redeem his past. Whether he does this successfully I will leave you to discover for yourselves next Monday. Don't, on any account, miss this ripping yarn, boys.

### "THE DEPUTY DETECTIVE!"

By Hedley Scott.

Jack Drake shows himself to be a born tracker of men in this coming instalment, for he scores where the official police fail. Brains will tell. By a clever piece of deduction the boy sleuth hits on the scheme the motor bandits have put into force in their attempt to break into Benjamin Foenzy's house. At great risk to himself Drake exposes the plot, and joins in the chase of the bandits, who make a bold getaway. Although sadly handicapped in the chase the boy sleuth strikes a bit of luck. That, combined with intelligence and a whole heap of pluck, brings him through with flying colours plus the loot from Foenzy's house, plus the two desperadoes concerned in the theft. Mind you read how he does the trick, chums.

### OUR SIMPLE LIMERICK COMPETITION!

Few words of mine are needed, as the poet says, to keep up the popularity of our new and fascinating Limerick Competition. It's the goods! For five minutes' congenial work one of my loyal readers is going to earn the fabulous "wage" of a pound a minute. Surely the prize is worth striving after. Get busy on this week's coupon now, boys, and try your skill. And if you don't succeed this week, remember that you may enter a fresh effort next week. 'Nuff said.

### "INDOOR GAMES!"

Most of you know a lot about this subject. By this time next week you will know a deal more, for Harry Wharton & Co. have chosen indoor games for their next Supplement. Some of the Removites' views on indoor games are highly amusing and original. Lord Mauleverer, for instance, declares that he's frightfully keen on "Nap." No, no! Not cards. Just forty winks on the study sofa. You'll enjoy next Monday's special Supplement. Look out for it.

# Your Editor.

#### "CROSS WORDS" LIMERICK COMPETITION.

"Our telephone system I hate!"  
Exclaimed Mr. Quelch, quite irate.  
"Pray ring off at once!  
You're a dolt and a dunce!"

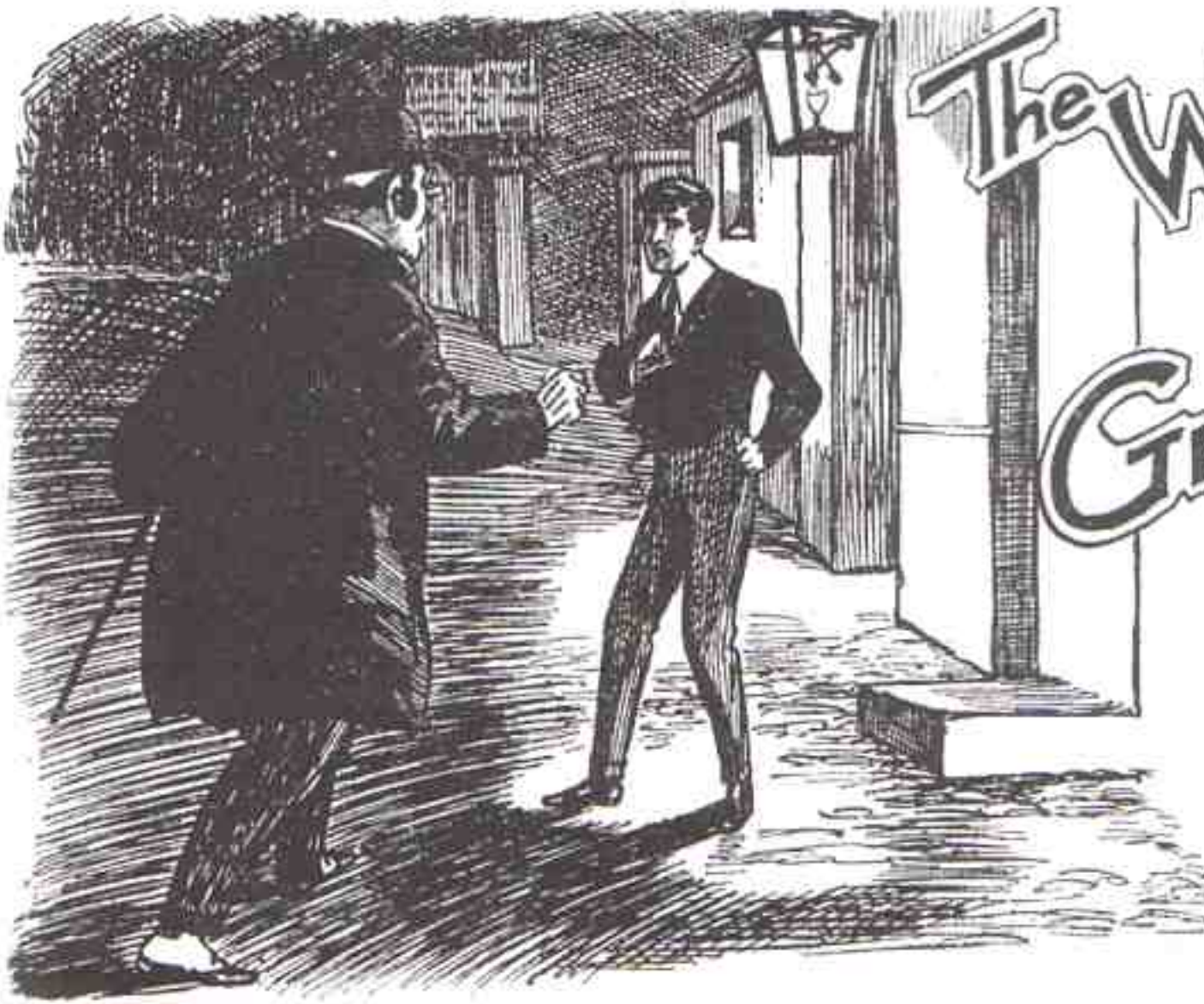
Last Line.....

Closing date, February 10th.

Name .....

Address .....

**LIVING UP TO HIS REPUTATION!** Having been dubbed the worst boy at Greyfriars, Harry Wharton does his best to justify that unworthy distinction, and his best earns him the "sack"!



# The Worst Boy! at Greyfriars!

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

By  
**FRANK RICHARDS.**

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Asking For It!

"WHARTON wants more!" Skinner of the Remove made that remark in a whisper, and there was a faint chuckle from some of the juniors at the back of the class.

Second lesson was in progress in the Form-room, and there had been trouble.

Mr. Quelch, who had the pleasure—more or less—of being Form master in the Greyfriars Remove, looked thunderous. Not a fellow in the Form was anxious to catch his eye; every fellow, in fact, was very anxious not to catch it—with perhaps one exception.

That exception was Harry Wharton, once captain of the Remove, and now no longer head of the Form, but the worst boy in it, according to Mr. Quelch.

Wharton did not seem to care whether he caught Mr. Quelch's gimlet-eye or not; indeed, he almost seemed to be keen on drawing the Form master's wrath upon him.

He was lounging at his desk, drawing figures on a blotting-pad, as if bent on amusing himself during a boring instruction, and deaf to the valuable instruction Mr. Quelch was imparting on the subject of geography.

Geography, certainly, did not thrill the Remove; nobody in the Lower Fourth was really keen on county towns, or the rivers they stood on, or the extent of their population, or even their historic associations. Many of the Remove would have found existence quite tolerable without any knowledge of geography at all.

But Mr. Quelch was a dutiful Form master. His view was that fellows were at Greyfriars to learn things. His Form did not quite agree with him on that point; but, as Smithy had remarked, you had to give a Form master his head!

All the Remove noticed that Mr. Quelch's eye strayed to Wharton, and glanced on him, and every moment they

expected to hear the thunder roll, as it were.

It had already rolled several times that morning; and Wharton had had enough trouble to last any ordinary Greyfriars fellow for one day. Yet, as Skinner whispered, he was asking for more.

He had been late for class, and had taken a hundred lines in consequence. His "con" had been bad—as bad as Billy Bunter's—and that had earned him two hundred more. He had talked to the fellow next to him, and turned a deaf ear when Mr. Quelch called for silence; and that had earned him a caning. Any other fellow would have considered that enough to go on with. But it seemed that he wanted more.

Yet Mr. Quelch, in spite of occasional gleaming glances, was passing him unheeded now.

The juniors wondered why.

Since the rebel of the Remove had set himself up against his Form master there had been incessant trouble in the Form-room. Punishments had fallen thick and fast on Wharton, and every punishment seemed to harden him the more, and make him more utterly reckless and defiant.

Mr. Quelch, as a matter of fact, was puzzled and perturbed.

He was a rather severe master, and did not spare the rod when he considered that it was needed. But it was repugnant to him to keep on punishing the perverse junior; and he realised, too, that punishment seemed to have rather an ill than a good effect on the rebel.

Willingly he would have let Wharton alone for the remainder of the lesson, if the junior had only shown some sense of the fitness of things and allowed him to do so.

But Wharton, at whom Skinner & Co. had sneered last term as a "model character," seemed bent on living up to his new reputation as the worst boy in the Remove.

As Mr. Quelch affected not to notice him, his lounging attitude at his desk

grew more pronounced, and he carried his affectation of indifference so far as to yawn.

Yawns were unknown in the Remove room.

Many a time and oft had Removites felt disposed to yawn when Mr. Quelch was improving their knowledge of things. But never had any fellow ventured upon it.

The Remove fellows could scarcely believe their eyes, and their ears, when that yawn became audible.

Mr. Quelch started.

A crimson flush came into his cheeks. He was actually being baited by this irreconcilable rebel—actually treated with derision as well as disrespect. It was not to be borne.

He laid down his book and stepped to his desk for a cane. There was a hush in the Form.

"Now for the fireworks!" murmured Skinner.

Bob Cherry gave Wharton an anxious look—Frank Nugent glanced at him, troubled and worried. Hurroo Janset Ram Singh looked distressed—Johnny Bull grunted. Harry Wharton's former friends were more concerned about him than he was about himself.

"Wharton!"

Mr. Quelch spoke sharply, but Wharton did not seem to hear. He was busy with drawing upon his blotting-pad.

"Wharton!" boomed Mr. Quelch.

Still the junior did not look up. Lord Mauleverer reached out a foot and gave him a jog.

"You are, Quelch's speaking to you," whispered Mauly.

"Mauleverer!" rapped out Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Yans, sir!"

"Take a hundred lines for speaking in class."

"Yans, sir."

"Wharton!"

Harry looked up at last.

"Yes, sir! Did you speak?"

"Stand out before the class."

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"Oh, all right!"

Wharton lounged out before the Remove. Mr. Quelch stood before him, cane in hand, glowering.

"Wharton, I have punished you already three times this morning!"

"I know that, sir."

"You are the worst boy in the Remove."

"You've told me that before, sir."

"You are indeed the worst boy at Greyfriars—the most reckless, the most impertinent, the most insolent!"

"Indeed, sir!"

Wharton answered carelessly, as if not much interested in the discussion. The Remove watched him breathlessly. Even fellows who disapproved of his attitude could not help admiring his nerve. It was no light matter to stand up to a master like Mr. Quelch with cool defiance—bearding the lion in his den, as it were. Even the iron-nerved Bounder, in his most reckless days, had never gone to this length.

"I shall now punish you more severely, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch. "Hold out your hand."

Wharton did not stir.

"Do you hear me, Wharton?"

"I'm not deaf, sir."

Mr. Quelch gasped.

"Hold out your hand at once!"

No answer and no movement! Only an expression of sullen, dogged defiance settled on Wharton's handsome face, marring its good looks a very great deal.

Mr. Quelch trembled with anger.

"Will you obey me, Wharton?"

"No, sir."

The answer came quietly and deliberately.

"Boy! What—what—stammered Mr. Quelch, quite taken aback:

"I've been caned enough," said Wharton sullenly. "I'm not going to be caned any more!"

And there was a breathless pause. The rebel of the Remove had fairly flung down the gauntlet at last.



## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Absent!

MR. QUELCH stood as if transfixed, cane in hand.

Wharton stood before him, cool, defiant, reckless of consequences.

In the Remove there was a hush. It seemed to the startled and astonished juniors time for the skies to fall.

Mr. Quelch found his voice at last.

"Wharton, you—you refuse to obey my order?"

"Yes, sir."

"I almost think that you are not in your right senses!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "I give you one more chance, Wharton! Hold out your hand at once, or I shall send you to the headmaster."

Wharton's hands remained down at his sides.

Evidently he did not intend to obey, let the consequences be what they might.

Mr. Quelch waited a few moments.

Then, as the rebel did not obey, he stepped to his desk and laid down the cane. With a set face, he took up a pen and wrote a short note, and placed it in an envelope.

"Wharton, take this to Dr. Locke in the Sixth Form room."

Wharton took the note.

His manner was undecided for a moment or two, and his glance went to the wastepaper-basket near the Form master's desk. As plainly as if he had

spoken the thought, Mr. Quelch knew that he was considering whether to tear the note into halves and toss the fragments in among the wastepaper.

Fortunately, the Remove rebel stopped short of that.

Without a word, he turned away and walked to the door, and the eyes of all the Remove followed him.

The door opened and closed.

Wharton was gone.

A sort of gasp escaped the Remove, in the relief of the tension. Mr. Quelch turned back to his class.

The lesson was resumed; but the thoughts of the Removites were not fastened very closely upon geography. They were thinking of Wharton presenting his Form master's note to the headmaster. That note, of course, explained to Dr. Locke the insubordination of which the junior had been guilty; and the outcome, equally, of course, was a Head's flogging. Wharton had asked for more, as Skinner said; and he was getting it, with a vengeance.

The minutes passed.

Second lesson was drawing to a close, and it was time for the rebel to return to the Form-room. However severe might be the punishment inflicted by the Head it was not likely to keep Wharton more than ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour at the most. Twenty minutes had passed, but the door of the Remove room had not reopened.

Mr. Quelch's lips were compressed in a tight line.

He surmised that the junior, after seeing the Head, had determined not to return to the Form-room. He had not been actually commanded to do so; but he had been expected to do so as a matter of course. But it was clear that that was not his intention; for second lesson finished and he had not reappeared.

Mr. Quelch dismissed his class.

The Removites poured out of the Form-room, excitedly discussing "Wharton's latest," as Skinner called it. They swarmed out into the quad, expecting to see Wharton there. But the late captain of the Remove was not to be seen.

"Gone up to his study, I suppose," said Skinner, with a grin. "After all, I don't suppose he wanted to sit on a form after the Head had done with him."

"Hardly!" chuckled Snoop.

"I say, you fellows, do you think he went in to see the Head at all?" grinned Billy Bunter. "I shouldn't wonder if he cut."

"Oh, my hat! Likely as not!" said Vernon-Smith. "He's asking for the sack, anyhow."

And the Bounder gave a hard laugh. Like most of the Remove fellows now he was on bad terms with Harry Wharton.

There were few fellows in the Form, indeed, with whom Wharton was even on speaking terms in these dark days.

Between him and his old chums, Bob Cherry & Co., there was a great gulf fixed—deeper and wider since Bob had become captain of the Remove. All the best fellows in the Form had gathered round the new captain—fellows like Squiff and Tom Brown, and Peter Todd, Russell and Ogilvy, Penfold and Mark Linley.

For a time Wharton had chummed with the Bounder; but their friendship had been short-lived, ending in a bitter quarrel and a fight, in which Smithy had been worsted. Since that day the Bounder had not spoken to him, and had watched his further progress on the downward path with cynical amusement.

If he had any associates left they were

Skinner & Co., the black sheep of the Form; and even Skinner & Co. were not particularly keen on the company of the most unpopular fellow in the Lower School.

Wharton, in fact, had very nearly reached the position of an Ishmael—his hand against very man, and every man's hand against him.

And he did not care, or did not seem to care.

To unpopularity, to condemnation, even to scorn, he opposed a stubborn and sullen pride—a pride that nothing could bend or break.

He seemed prepared to go on his wayward way alone, an outcast in the school, rather than swerve a hair's breadth from it.

Yet, unpopular as he now was, he had to be treated with some respect. He had been defeated in a fight with Bob Cherry; but there was no other fellow in the Remove who could stand up to Harry Wharton; and in these unhappy days he was only too ready to quarrel at a word or a look.

Unpopular in his Form, disliked by his Form master, regarded with a stern and suspicious eye by the Head, and with grim disapproval by the prefects, Wharton's position was not an enviable one. Unbending pride and passionate temper had brought him to it, and seemed to uphold him in it; in spite of all that was against him he carried his proud head as high as ever.

Where he was now was an interesting question to the Remove fellows. Fallen as he was, the late captain of the Remove still kept a prominent place in the eyes of the juniors. Once as a leader, now as a rebel, he fixed the attention of the Remove. He might be disliked, perhaps even despised, but never disregarded.

Mr. Quelch came out of the Form-room and looked into the quad. He called to Bob Cherry.

"Cherry!"

"Yes, sir!"

Bob came over to the steps of the House, where his Form master stood.

"Do you know where Wharton is?"

"No, sir," said Bob uncomfortably.

"Kindly find him at once, and send him to my study."

"Very well, sir."

Mr. Quelch went to his study with a grim brow. The new captain of the Remove set about his unwelcome task. Since the bitter trouble that had divided them, and Wharton's fierce resentment of his becoming captain of the Form, Bob had tried to keep out of his former friend's way as much as possible.

Now he had to look for him, and send him to Mr. Quelch—doubtless to be dealt with for not returning to the Form-room after the visit to the Head.

But Bob looked for him in vain. Nugent and Hurree Singh and Johnny Bull joined him in the search.

But Wharton was not to be found.

He was not in the quadrangle; and the cloisters were drawn blank; and the Remove passage searched in vain. It was fairly clear at last that the rebel junior was not in the school.

Bob Cherry gave it up at last.

"He's cut!" he said gloomily.

Frank Nugent nodded.

"I fancy he never went in to the Head at all," he said. "Looks to me as if he cleared then."

"The awful ass!" muttered Johnny Bull. "He's simply asking to be sacked from Greyfriars. Who'd ever have thought that Wharton would come to this?"

"The esteemed Wharton is hungrily seeking more trouble," said Hurree

Jamset Ram Singh dismally. "The excellent and ridiculous Quelch will be infuriated!"

"Well, I suppose I've got to tell Quelch!" growled the captain of the Remove. "Here goes!"

And Bob reluctantly repaired to Mr. Quelch's study, with the report that Wharton could not be found within Greyfriars.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips hard. "Very well, Cherry!" he said.

And Bob retired, feeling exceedingly troubled and uncomfortable.

Mr. Quelch proceeded to the Head's study, to acquaint Dr. Locke with this new phase of the Remove rebel's campaign against authority. The Head looked puzzled as he explained.

"One moment, Mr. Quelch," he said. "You say that Wharton did not return to the Form-room after you sent him to me."

"Exactly, sir—he seems to have gone out of the school."

"But I was not aware that you had sent him to me," said Dr. Locke. "Was it during second lesson?"

"Certainly." Mr. Quelch almost gasped. "Is it possible, sir, that he did not come to the Sixth Form room?"

"He assuredly did not."

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

The Head looked very grave.

"The boy seems incorrigible," he said. "This cannot be allowed to continue, Mr. Quelch."

"It cannot, sir."

"I am surprised and pained," said the Head. "Until this term Wharton seems to have borne an excellent character in his Form. You have always said as much."

"It is quite true. This term he has utterly changed—for what reason I cannot even imagine," said Mr. Quelch. "He has quarrelled with all his friends, and I think with most of the boys in his Form; and he has consistently set himself against me. He is, in fact, the very worst boy in the school."

"I shall have to consider whether he can be allowed to remain in the school," said Dr. Locke. "I shall be very sorry to cause pain to an old friend, and a gentleman whom I respect so highly as Colonel Wharton—a governor of the school, too. But if this continues, Greyfriars is no place for the boy. All other measures shall, however, be tried first—I hesitate to take an extreme step with Colonel Wharton's nephew. It would be a terrible shock to him. Let Wharton be sent to me immediately he comes in, Mr. Quelch."

"Very well, sir."

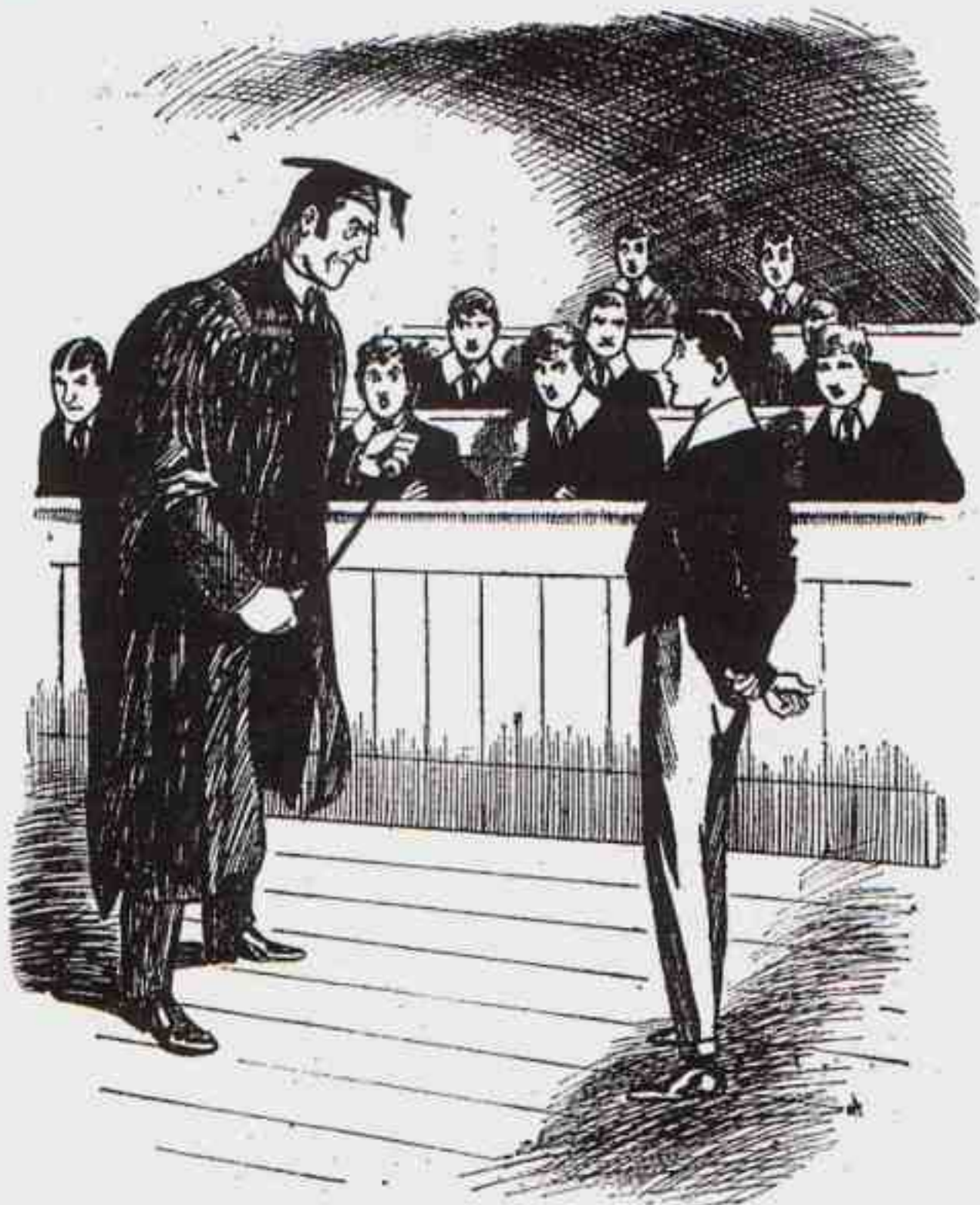
Mr. Quelch left the headmaster's study in an angry and perturbed mood. Morning break was over now, and the Remove fellows were gathering in the Form-room for third lesson. But Harry Wharton did not come in with them.

Third lesson proceeded without Wharton.

When the Remove were dismissed, he had not appeared; and at dinner he was not seen at the Remove table.

"He's makin' a day of it!" grinned Skinner.

It looked as if Skinner was right; for when the Remove went to their Form-room for the afternoon, Harry Wharton was still absent. And classes for the day finished without him.



"Hold out your hand at once, Wharton!" rapped Mr. Quelch, trembling with anger. Wharton made no movement. "Do you hear me, boy?" "I am not deaf, sir," replied the junior sullenly. Mr. Quelch gasped. "Will you obey me, boy?" "No, sir!" The answer came quietly and deliberately. "I've been caned enough—I'm not going to be caned any more!" (See Chapter 1.)

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### A Shock for Mr. Prout!

MR. PROUT stopped and stared. Mr. Prout could hardly believe his eyes.

The Fifth Form master of Greyfriars was walking down to Friardale, after classes; progressing along Friardale Lane with his slow and stately tread. The lights of the Cross Keys Inn gleamed out into the winter dusk, athwart the shadowy lane. Mr. Prout was almost opposite the building when he received quite a shock—so great a shock that he scarcely relied upon the evidence of his eyes.

The Cross Keys, which had the reputation of being one of the most disreputable resorts in the county, stood back from the road, with an unkempt patch of grass before it, and a horse-trough, and a creaking signboard. A muddy lane ran down beside the inn, giving access to the uncared-for gardens and the stables. A side door opened upon that muddy lane—and a dim lamp burned over the door, blinking in the thickening dusk. And that side door had opened, and a schoolboy in Etons had stepped out—right in the view of Mr. Prout.

The Fifth Form master stared at Harry Wharton.

He was amazed, and more shocked than amazed.

As master of a senior Form, he had little to do with the Removites, and took no particular interest in Mr. Quelch's Form. But the whole school was aware of Wharton's escapade that day—that he had been sent from his Form room with a note to the Head—that instead of delivering the note and taking his punishment, he had "cleared," and had not been seen since. Lock-up at Greyfriars was at dark—and it was after dark now—yet the truant had not returned. In the masters' room there had been some conversation on the subject, all the masters—excepting, of course, Mr. Quelch—agreeing that such things never happened and never could happen in their Forms. Indeed, Mr. Prout, in his ponderous way, had kindly offered Mr. Quelch some advice on the subject—advice which had been received so grimly that Mr. Prout regretted having offered it.

And here was Wharton!

This was the explanation of his truancy. This was where he had been spending his stolen holiday—at the Cross Keys; a place strictly out of bounds for all Greyfriars fellows.

Really, it was incredible. Nevertheless, there it was. Mr. Prout stood and stared at the junior, who had just stepped out of the side door of the public-house.

Wharton had taken a step towards

the road, when he sighted the portly figure of Mr. Prout, standing there like a portly statue, with bulging, amazed eyes fixed on him.

The junior stopped. Reckless as he was, he was startled at fairly walking into a Greyfriars master, in the act of leaving the Cross Keys.

"Wharton!" Mr. Prout gasped out the name. Wharton did not answer. He backed to the side door, which had not yet closed behind him. In a moment he had disappeared into the inn again, and the door closed.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Prout.

He stood and blinked. He had no special concern with Wharton, as a member of a junior Form with which he had, officially, nothing to do. He debated in his mind whether he should walk back to Greyfriars and acquaint Mr. Quelch with what he had seen, leaving the Remove master to deal as he thought fit with this young rascal. But he shook his head. He would not leave a Greyfriars boy in that disreputable haunt.

So the Fifth Form master, having made up his mind, marched up to the side door of the Cross Keys, and knocked a thundering knock.

The door did not open. Knock! Knock! Knock! There was a heavy, rusty iron knocker on the door, and Mr. Prout fairly thundered at it.

The crash of the knocker rang through the inn; but no one came to the side door. Mr. Prout thundered in vain, with growing anger and annoyance.

Round the building came a fat gentleman in a crimson waistcoat, with an almost crimson face. It was Mr. Ben Cobb, the landlord of the Cross Keys. He called along the path to the Greyfriars master:

"Ere! Old gent!" Mr. Prout glared round. He could scarcely believe that anyone would have the temerity to address him as "old gent!" Yet evidently Mr. Cobb was addressing him. Really, it was a day of surprises and shocks for the master of the Greyfriars Fifth.

"What? What?" he ejaculated. "That ain't the way in, old gent." "The—the way in?" "You step into the bar this 'ere way," said Mr. Cobb. "Drinks ain't served at the side door, old gent."

Mr. Prout gasped. The Cross Keys landlord knew him perfectly well by sight, and could not possibly have supposed that Mr. Prout was calling for a drink. Obviously, he was being impertinent.

Mr. Prout gave him a withering glare—a glare that ought to have shrivelled up the Cross Keys landlord on the spot. But Ben Cobb showed no sign of being shrivelled. He grinned. "Ad one too many?" he asked.

"What? What?" "You go your way quietly, old gent," said Mr. Cobb. "Don't you make a disturbance 'ere!"

"A—a—a disturbance!" "This 'ere is a respectable 'onse," said Mr. Cobb. "I got my licence to think of. Looks to me as if you've 'ad enough, and I'm bound to refuse to serve you if you've 'ad as much as you can carry."

"Upon my word!" stuttered Mr. Prout.

The English spoken at Greyfriars differed considerably from the variety of English spoken at the Cross Keys. It

was not easy for Mr. Prout to follow Mr. Cobb's meaning.

But he comprehended that the fat man in the crimson waistcoat was insinuating that he had been drinking.

Mr. Cobb jerked a fat thumb towards the road.

"You 'ook it!" he said.

"What? What?" " 'Ook it!"

"Fellow!" thundered Mr. Prout.

"Feller yourself, and many of 'em," said Mr. Cobb cheerily. "Come, come, sir; you go away quietly. You can't be served 'ere—not in that condition. You go 'ome and sleep it off!"

Mr. Prout spluttered.

"You—you rogue! You—you impertinent scoundrel!" he gasped. "Do you suppose that I have called here to—to—to partake of your—your vile liquors? How dare you!"

"Go easy, old gent!" said Mr. Cobb, unabashed. "If you kick up a row 'ere you'll 'ave to be shifted! I keep on telling you I got my licence to think of! You 'ook it peaceful!"

"There is a Greyfriars boy in this house!" thundered Mr. Prout. "I shall take him away with me. A boy named Wharton! Bring him out at once!"

"There ain't any boy in the 'ouse, excepting the pot-boy, and his name's Perkins," said Mr. Cobb. "You ain't got any business with my pot-boy, I s'pose?"

"I demand to see Wharton at once!" Mr. Cobb shook his head.

"Don't know the name," he said. "Never 'eard it that I know of. Look 'ere, old gent, you're excited! I know 'ow it is. Bless your 'eart, I've been there myself! You go 'ome quietly now."

"You—you ruffian!" roared Mr. Prout.

"Oh, dror it mild!" said Ben Cobb.

"If you want to be shifted, you'll get shifted, so I tell you. 'Ere, Bill—'Arry—"

Two grinning stablemen came up, in shirtsleeves. Three or four loafers had come out of the inn and were looking on. One or two carters had stopped in the road to observe the scene. Mr. Prout was getting an audience.

Mr. Prout strode up to Ben Cobb, and displayed an angry clenched fist under his fat nose.

"Produce that boy, Wharton, at once!" he shouted. "Do you hear? I refuse to leave a Greyfriars boy in this disreputable den!"

Mr. Cobb made a soothing gesture with a large grubby hand.

"Take it easy!" he said. "There ain't any schoolboy 'ere. No schoolboy is admitted to these 'ere premises. Go away peaceful, that's my advice!"

"You—you—"

"If you can't carry your liquor, sir, let it alone," advised Mr. Cobb. "This sort of thing don't do my premises any good. I got my licence to think of, and I can't 'ave old gents kicking up a shindy 'ere! I put it to you as a reasonable man. 'Ere, Bill, 'elp the old feller to the road and start him going."

Bill stretched out a dirty hand towards the Fifth Form master of Greyfriars, grinning. Mr. Prout knocked it savagely away.

"Cobb—I think your name is Cobb—I demand that that boy, Wharton, be sent out to me at once!"

"Shift 'im!" said Mr. Cobb.

He leered mockingly and impudently at the Greyfriars master. It was too much for Mr. Prout—never a very patient gentleman. He hit out at the impudent face, and Ben Cobb gave a startled and enraged yell as he found

himself suddenly rolling over in the mud.

"There!" gasped Mr. Prout. "There, you impertinent rascal!"

Ben Cobb sat up, gasping.

"Shift 'im!" he roared. "Chuck him out!"

"Hands off! I—I—bless my soul! Oh, dear! Good gracious!"

The two stablemen grasped Mr. Prout and ran him back to the road. Loud laughter and hoots from the gathering group of loafers followed him. A cabbage-stump whizzed through the air and knocked off Mr. Prout's hat, and there was a fresh burst of ribald laughter.

"Good gracious! I—I—" Mr. Prout spluttered, hardly knowing whether he was on his head or his heels.

"Now you cut, old gent!"

"Oh dear! Oh, I—I—" " 'Ook it!"

Mr. Prout, hustled and shoved, dazed and dizzy, clutched up his hat and tottered away. Another cabbage-stump followed him, and then a stone. It was quite an entertainment to the loafers of the Cross Keys. Mr. Prout, forgetful of his intended visit to the village, tottered away towards Greyfriars in a dazed and horrified frame of mind.

He had been mixed up in a "shindy" at the disreputable Cross Keys—he, a senior master of Greyfriars. He had been hustled and shoved and, in fact, "chucked out," and that young rascal, Wharton, had probably seen it all and was laughing at him. The derisive hoots and howls of the Cross Keys gang rang in his ears as he tottered away, hardly able to believe that this dreadful thing really had happened.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

In the Depths!

"H E'S gone, sir!" Joe Banks, the fat book-maker and billiards sharper, looked curiously at Harry Wharton as he spoke.

Wharton did not answer. He was standing at a window of the Cross Keys, hidden by a dirty curtain from without. He had seen all that had passed, and watched Mr. Prout vanish indignant and ineffectual into the winter dusk.

Wharton's face was set and hard. With utter recklessness he had absented himself from the school that day, knowing, and caring little for, the punishment that must follow. Punishment was his daily experience now, and he was hardened to it. But he had not looked for this.

To questions as to where he had spent the day he had intended to oppose a sullen silence. Now it would be known.

But he shrugged his shoulders with bitter indifference. What did it matter, after all? More and more punishment—but he could stand it! They would never break his pride, never conquer his resistance, at least. If he was, as his Form master declared, the worst boy at Greyfriars, at all events he would live up to his reputation.

Mr. Banks coughed. "Adn't you better get home, sir?" he hinted.

The Cross Keys sharper had had the surprise of his life when Harry Wharton first called at the place, in company with Skinner of the Remove. But he had welcomed the nephew of the wealthy Colonel Wharton. If Harry Wharton was resolved to go to the bad, Mr. Joe Banks was not the man to stop him—rather was he the man to give him a

heartily helping hand on the downward path. That day he had been glad enough to see him. It had meant profit to Mr. Banks, and all was grist that came to his mill. But there was something in the hard recklessness, or rather desperation, of the junior, that made Mr. Banks a little uneasy. He was willing to fleece the schoolboy; but very unwilling to risk getting into trouble over the operation.

As Wharton did not heed him, Mr. Banks touched him on the arm to draw his attention. Wharton jerked his arm away as if an adder had touched it, and Mr. Banks' bleary eyes glinted for a moment.

"This means a row for you at the school, sir," he said. "You'd better get back afore that old gent sees your headmaster—what?"

Wharton nodded.

"Rotten luck that he saw you goin' out!" said Joe Banks. "But p'r'aps you can make out that he was mistook, in the dark, too! If you get to the school afore him there's a chance—what?"

"I'd better go, certainly," said Harry.

He moved to the door of Mr. Banks' room.

"Always glad to see you 'ere any time, sir, you know," said Mr. Banks effusively. "But you take care, sir; you can't be too careful!"

Wharton made no reply to that.

He went down the rickety stairs and out by the side-door from the inn. The Cross Keys loafers had returned into the bar now. Wharton took a path across the fields to avoid running into Mr. Prout in the road.

He tramped away towards Greyfriars with a moody brow.

It was possible, as the sharper had suggested, that he might be able to deceive his headmaster with a little hard lying if he arrived at the school before Mr. Prout—which was easy enough by cutting across the fields at a run. That would have been the natural resource of Skinner or Snoop in similar circumstances.

But Wharton had no intention of adopting Mr. Banks' hint.

The same passionate, unbending pride that had caused his fall, at least saved him from some of its consequences. Lying might have saved him, but he would have bitten his tongue out sooner. In sheer reckless desperation he had dropped into Skinner's blackguardly pursuits—but he was never likely to imitate Skinner's methods. What he had done, he would scornfully admit, facing the music with savage hardihood.

He did not run—he walked across the dark fields, careless whether he arrived at school before or after Mr. Prout.

His brow was black and gloomy; his heart was not light.

His feelings had been bitter as he saw a Greyfriars master hustled and mocked by the dingy crew at the Cross Keys, and himself the cause of it. Indeed, he had been tempted to plunge into the shindy, hitting out right and left at the grinning, dirty faces. That would certainly have been a surprise for his new friends at the Cross Keys.

What had brought him to this?

His heart was not in it—he revolted at his surroundings that day, the touch of Mr. Banks' tobacco-stained fingers on his arm had made him shudder.

It had all begun with his quarrel with his friends—was he to blame for that? He told himself, with savage obstinacy, that he was not to blame.

Divided from his old chums, he had found new friends—such as Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars—a dangerous friend for a fellow in a reckless humour, nourishing grievances and

a sense of wrong. He remembered, with a bitter smile, his Christmas vacation with the Bounder. He had quarrelled with Smithy then, because he could not and would not join in Smithy's shady pursuits. Yet later at Greyfriars he had quarrelled with the Bounder again, because Smithy refused to carry on with a blackguardly expedition and face the consequences afterwards. It was a change, with a vengeance.

From bad to worse, it was so easy, so fatally easy, after the first step had been taken. And now—

Bob Cherry had his old place as captain of the Remove. He was nothing in the Form. In passionate resentment he had even given up football, and refused to play for the Form at all. He was nobody now; only the worst fellow at Greyfriars! Well, that was something—if it was the only distinction left him.

He tramped on moodily.

When he came out of the fields into the road he caught sight of a portly figure stopping at the school gates. It was Mr. Prout.

The Fifth Form master went in, and the gate closed behind him.

Wharton walked on slowly.

He had to return to the school; there was no help for that. He had to return and face the consequences of what he had done. But he was in no hurry.

He stopped at the gates at last and rang the bell with a loud clang. The gates had long been locked. Roll-call was long over. Gosling came down from his lodge and blinked at Wharton through the bars of the gate.

"Ho!" he said. "You!"

"Let me in!" snapped Harry.

"Precious goings on!" said Gosling.

"Wot I says is this 'ere—"

"Let me in, you ass."

Gosling snorted angrily and unlocked the gate. The Remove strode in, and tramped away towards the House.

Bob Cherry & Co. met him as he came in. A score of fellows gathered round to stare at him. The fellow who had cut classes for the day without leave was the cynosure of all eyes.

"I say, you fellows, here he is!" squeaked Billy Bunter.

"Had a good time, Wharton?" grinned Skinner.

"I say, what have you done to Prouty? Prouty came in bursting, and spluttering out something about you to Quelch," said Peter Todd. "I heard your name."

Wharton did not answer. Wingate of the Sixth came through the crowd of juniors with a stern face.

"Wharton! Come with me to the Head!"

"Certainly!" said Wharton lightly.

He followed the prefect, leaving the crowd of juniors in a buzz behind him.

His manner was quite composed. He had called the tune, and the time had come to pay the piper—an ordeal from which any fellow might well have shrunk. But if any of the Greyfriars fellows expected to see Wharton shrink they were disappointed.

Cool and calm, his head erect, he followed Wingate of the Sixth into the presence of the Head.



"Shift 'im!" said Mr. Cobb, impudently. It was too much for Mr. Prout. He hit out at that impudent face and Ben Cobb gave a startled and enraged yell as he found himself suddenly rolling over in the mud. "There!" gasped Mr. Prout. "There, you impudent rascal!" Cobb sat up, gasping. "Shift 'im!" he roared to his stablemen. "Chuck 'im out!" (See Chapter 3.)

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

## Facing the Music!

**D**R. LOCKE was not alone in the study.

Mr. Quelch was there, and Mr. Prout was there, red and flushed, still quivering with anger and irritation. The Head and the Remove master had listened to Mr. Prout's tale of what had happened at Friardale—listened with grave, shocked faces. Mr. Prout had finished his story, but he was not tired of the subject; he was telling it over again, amplifying it, when Wingate knocked at the door and brought the culprit in. The head prefect had orders to bring Wharton to the Head as soon as he returned to Greyfriars, and he had lost no time. Wharton, tired from his reckless day's outing, muddied from the fields, stood in the presence of his headmaster, his Form master, and the irritated Mr. Prout.

"Wharton, sir!" said Wingate. And the Greyfriars captain retired from the study with a curious glance at the rebel of the Remove as he went.

"Ah! He is here!" said Mr. Prout, in his booming voice. "The—the young rascal—the associate of—of blackguards—"

The Head made a gesture.

Mr. Prout bottled up his wrath and indignation.

"I leave him in your hands, sir!" he said with dignity, and he whisked out of the study.

Mr. Quelch's lips were set in a hard line. He could not blame Mr. Prout for his intervention in the affair, nevertheless he was deeply irritated thereby. Mr. Prout could scarcely have left a Greyfriars boy unquestioned in such a resort as the Cross Keys. Still, the Remove master wished that he had minded his own business—or, at least, that he had never seen Harry Wharton there. It was galling to him to have another member of the staff "butting" in like this. Mr. Quelch's annoyance over the incident added to his already deep anger against the rebel of his Form.

Dr. Locke fixed his eyes upon Wharton. The impassive expression on the junior's face perplexed him. He was not accustomed to such calmness, almost indifference in the looks of delinquents brought before him.

"Wharton! Mr. Quelch gave you a note to bring to me from the Form-room this morning?"

"Yes, sir!"

"What did you do with it? You did not bring it to me."

"It is in my pocket now, sir!"

"Place it on my desk."

Wharton did so.

"You have absented yourself from school without leave for a whole day, Wharton."

"Yes, sir!"

"Have you any excuse to offer?"

"None, sir!"

The Head coughed. It was fairly obvious that Wharton had no excuse to offer, unless the fact that he was in rebellion against authority was an excuse. Still, his cool reply was disconcerting.

"Mr. Prout states that he saw you at a disreputable resort near Friardale, which is strictly out of bounds."

"Does he, sir?"

"Mr. Prout was treated with gross disrespect by the habitués of the place, it appears, when he requested that you should be given up to him."

"I was not responsible for that, sir."

"No, no; I am sure you would not have desired that, Wharton. I can

exonerate you on that point. But you knew that Mr. Prout was seeking you?"

"I guessed it."

"If you had come out to him the unfortunate disturbance would not have occurred?"

"I suppose not."

"Why did you not do so?"

Wharton hesitated. The Head's manner was quiet, almost kind; it was not what he had expected. It troubled him a little.

To anger and condemnation he was prepared to oppose sullen silence or defiance. But the headmaster seemed more grieved than angry, and the junior felt a pang of remorse.

"Mr. Prout is not my Form master, sir," he said at last. "I did not think he had any right to interfere with me."

"You are aware that any Greyfriars master could not leave you there, in such surroundings."

No answer.

"Have you spent the whole day at that—that place, Wharton?"

"Only the afternoon, sir."

"What were you doing in the morning, after you left the school?"

"Walking on the cliffs."

"While you were at the Cross Keys how were you occupied?"

Wharton hesitated again.

"I must have an answer, Wharton."

"I was playing cards, sir," said Harry, and there was a flush in his cheeks now—a flush of deep shame.

"For money?"

"Yes."

"In a word, you were gambling," said the Head with a deep breath.

"Yes, sir."

There was silence in the study. Mr. Quelch stood like a graven image, without a word. The matter was in the Headmaster's hands to deal with; and if Mr. Quelch considered the Head's methods too gentle, he could not say so. Certainly he would not have dealt with the delinquent so kindly.

Dr. Locke spoke again at last.

"You are aware, Wharton, that boys have been expelled from Greyfriars for acting as you have done."

"Yes, sir."

"A vicious boy, once discovered, cannot be allowed to remain in the school," said the Head.

Wharton started.

"A—a—a vicious boy!" he repeated.

"Yes."

Wharton's face was flooded with crimson. Was that how he was looked upon? A vicious boy—a fellow like Skinner?

"Oh, sir!" he muttered. "I—I—"

He broke off. The Head's keen glance read his face.

"If I do not send you away from Greyfriars, Wharton, it is because I do not believe you to be actually a vicious boy—though your conduct would make it seem so," he said. "Reckless, disobedient, headstrong, I fear that you are; but these faults may be amended. You have done wrong, very wrong. You have brought disgrace upon the name you bear—the name of a governor of the school, your uncle, respect for whom should have held you back from this."

"Oh, sir!" said Harry miserably.

"Until quite recently you had a good character in your Form—the best of characters, in fact," said the Head. "Some strange outbreak of waywardness has led you from bad to worse. Your Form master now considers you the worst boy in the school."

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Quelch.

Wharton's face hardened again.

That he had done wrong, that he had acted badly, perhaps very badly, he might have admitted and regretted. But he was not the worst boy in the school,

at his very worst—he was very far from that. He was a better fellow than the Bounder, he was infinitely better than Skinner, or Angel of the Fourth, or Loder of the Sixth, and he knew it. Only he knew also that he had roused his Form master's implacable dislike, and that he no longer had justice to expect from Mr. Quelch.

And yet the Head did not share Mr. Quelch's opinion. He did not say so, but Wharton felt it. Had the headmaster alone dealt with the culprit, matters might have gone very differently. But Mr. Quelch, justly incensed, his patience worn out, had to be reckoned with.

"I shall give you an opportunity, Wharton, to repent and reform," said the Head quietly. "I am more willing to do so, because I firmly believe that in descending to petty blackguardism you have acted contrary to your character and indeed to your inclinations. You have done wrong, and for that you must be punished. But I shall give you an opportunity of showing that you are by no means so bad as appearances would indicate, and that you are able to pull yourself up in time. I am sure that you agree with me, Mr. Quelch?" added the Head, with a glance at the Form master.

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

It was his cue to assent—the Head expected it. But Mr. Quelch had been too severely exasperated, too intensely irritated. He did not see eye to eye with his chief, and for once he ventured to say so.

"Am I to speak frankly, sir?" he asked.

"Assuredly," said the Head, but he frowned slightly.

"It is my fixed opinion, sir, that Wharton is the worst boy at Greyfriars. Were I his headmaster, I should not allow him to remain in the school. At the same time I submit, of course, cheerfully to your judgment."

Wharton's look grew harder.

"You have decided, sir, not to expel Wharton," went on the Remove master. "Be it so. But I have been treated with flagrant disrespect in my own Form-room—my authority has been set at naught. Unless a very severe punishment is inflicted, discipline will be at an end in the Remove. I leave it to you, sir."

The Head suppressed a sigh.

His view was that the Form master was making a mistake, misled by his natural resentment. But he was bound to support the Remove master.

"You hear what Mr. Quelch says, Wharton," said the Head. "You are very well aware that your Form master's authority must be maintained. Yet I think that Mr. Quelch may take a more lenient view if you will tender a sincere apology for your conduct and promise amendment."

Mr. Quelch looked grim and said nothing. He did not feel in the least disposed to take a more lenient view; but he would have had no choice in the matter, after what Dr. Locke had said, if Wharton had tendered an apology.

But nothing was further from the Remove rebel's thoughts.

"The worst boy at Greyfriars" looked at the Remove master, and his face was hard, his eyes glinting.

Not a word passed his lips.

"You hear me, Wharton?" said the Head.

"I am willing to tell you that I am sorry, sir," said Wharton in a low voice.

"You will tell Mr. Quelch."

No answer, and Wharton's lips set hard.

"Am I to understand that you refuse, Wharton?"



"So far as Mr. Quelch is concerned, sir, I am not sorry," said the rebel of the Remove grimly.

Mr. Quelch made an angry gesture. The Head knitted his brows.

"I am sorry to hear that, Wharton—very sorry indeed! You drive me to share Mr. Quelch's view that you are incorrigible. I command you to apologise to Mr. Quelch at once, with the alternative of receiving a severe flogging."

Wharton's lips remained set.

"Very well," said the Head, angry now. "You will be flogged in public to-morrow morning after prayers. Now you may go."

Wharton went.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### The Flogging!

"LANDED at last!" murmured the Bounder with a hard grin. The school was assembled in Big Hall.

Once before they had been assembled, to see Harry Wharton flogged; but the flogging had not taken place. Now it was to take place; there was no more mercy for the rebel of Greyfriars.

The Remove fellows stood in their places, most of them silent and grave. Bob Cherry & Co. looked very grim.

It had come to this at last; it had been bound to come. Unless Harry Wharton had checked himself in his reckless career it had to come, and he had not thought of checking himself. But it was bitter enough to his old friends—friends no longer, but still concerned about the wayward fellow who had spurned their friendship.

"I say, you fellows, there he comes!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "He, he, he!"

"Shut up, you fat frog!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really Bull—"

"Silence, there, you fags!" called out Gwynne of the Sixth.

Dr. Locke had entered the hall by the upper door, followed by Mr. Quelch and the fellow who was "for it." Gosling stood ready with the birch in his hand.

All eyes were fixed on Wharton.

His face was composed; but there was a tinge of red in his cheeks. The infliction itself he was prepared to endure with hardihood. But he was not insensible to the shame of it.

"What a come-down for his giddy Magnificence!" murmured Skinner. "Thus are the mighty fallen!"

Snoop giggled.

Bob Cherry gave the cads of the Remove a fierce look. But for the presence of the Head, he would probably have given them something more than a look.

"Silence!" called out Wingate.

The Head took the birch from Gosling's hand. Harry Wharton stood erect and cool. The Head fixed his eyes upon him, with more of sadness than of anger in his glance.

"Wharton," he said, in a deep voice, "you are about to be punished for what you know to be serious wrongdoing. Yet even now I cannot forget that, until of late, you have borne a high character in the school. You stand before your Form master, who is justly offended with you. Have you even now nothing to say to him?"

Wharton's eyes glinted.

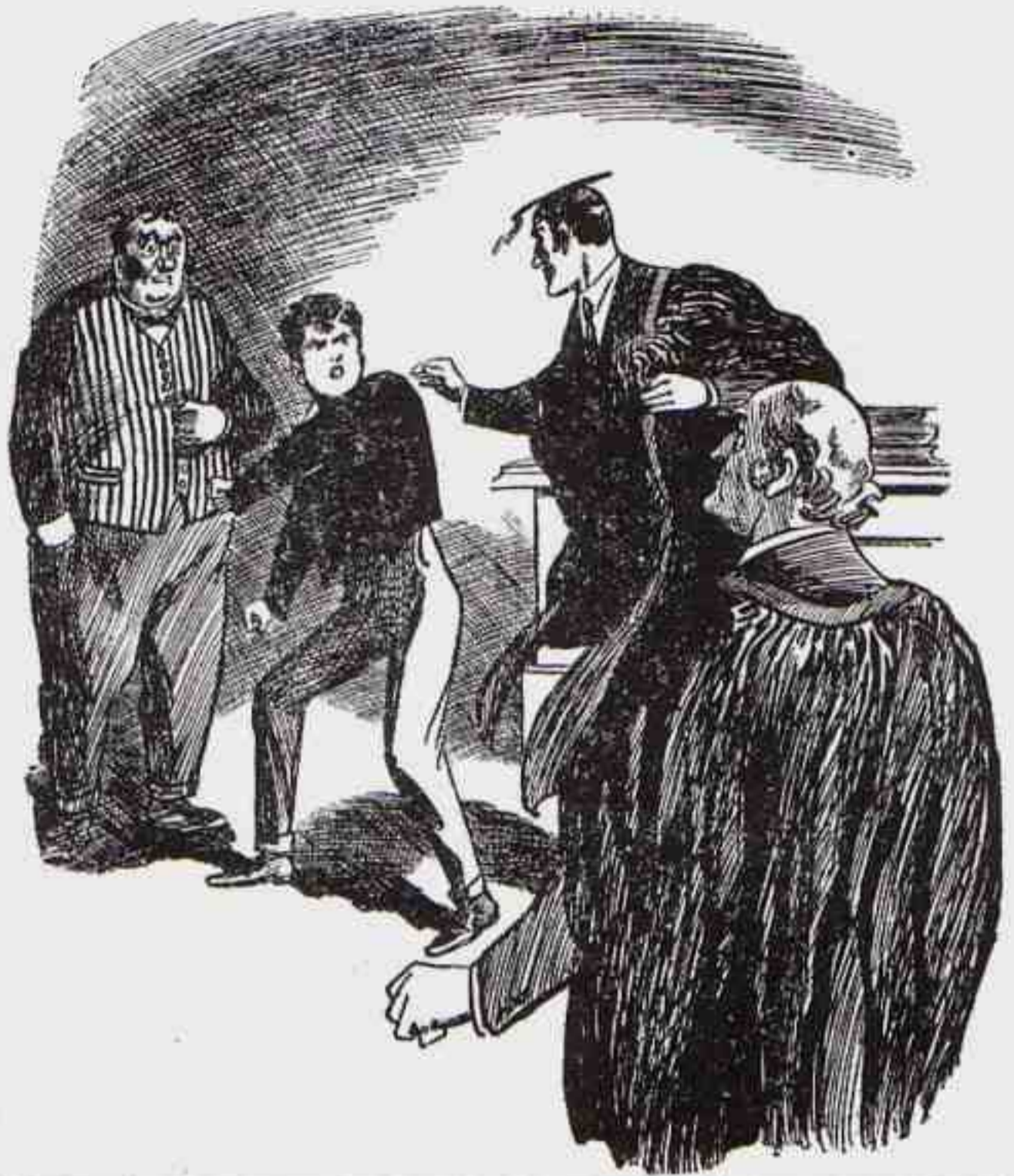
"Nothing, sir, only—"

He paused.

"Only what?"

"Only that I will try to forgive him, sir."

The words were heard through the silent hall, and they caused something



Dr. Locke signed to Gosling to set down the punished junior. Harry Wharton stood unsteadily upon his feet—his face chalky, his eyes burning. "Come!" said Mr. Quelch, and his hand dropped on the rebel's shoulder. Wharton shook it off savagely. "Let me alone!" he muttered thickly. ((See Chapter 6.))

like a sensation. Mr. Quelch's face became scarlet.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the Head. "This is too much! Gosling, take him up!"

The Head was angry now—deeply angry. Gosling stepped forward, and the late captain of the Remove was "hoisted."

Lash!

The first stroke rang.

There was a breathless silence in Hall. Only through the silence rang the sound of the lashes.

It was a severe flogging.

There were few fellows at Greyfriars who could have endured that bitter castigation without a cry. But no sound came from Harry Wharton's lips.

His set face grew harder, paler; he clenched his teeth to keep back the sounds of pain. He would not cry out—he would not utter a murmur or a moan—if he died for it he would endure in silence.

And still the lashes fell.

Lash on lash, echoing in the stillness. The hard grin vanished from the Bounder's face; even Skinner and Snoop grew serious. Bob Cherry turned away his face.

And still no sound came from Wharton. He seemed to be made of iron—only the paleness of his set face telling of what he endured.

It was over at last.

Dr. Locke signed to Gosling to set

down the punished junior. Harry Wharton stood unsteadily upon his feet, his face chalky, his eyes burning.

"Come!" said Mr. Quelch; and his hand dropped on the rebel's shoulder.

Wharton shook it off savagely.

"Let me alone!" he muttered thickly.

And he walked out of Hall, steadily, with upright head. The Head gave the signal to dismiss, and the Greyfriars fellows poured out.

Wharton went directly to his study in the Remove passage. When the Remove gathered in their Form-room the rebel of the Form came in and took his place with the rest.

His face was still pale, and it was hard and sullen. He seemed unconscious of the curious looks cast upon him by the rest of the Form. Once his eyes turned upon Mr. Quelch with deadly animosity.

He was in no state for the Form work; but fortunately the Remove master realised that, and passed him over. Wharton was a looker-on in class that morning, ignored by his Form master; an object of interest, tinged with some derision, to the rest of the Remove.

Had Mr. Quelch's persecution, as he considered it, continued that morning he was in a mood for any reckless outbreak.

But the Remove master passed him

over quite unnoticed, and did not address him or even glance at him.

Wharton sat through morning classes, aching with pain, sullen and savage.

It was a relief to him when classes were over and he was able to get away by himself. But if Mr. Quelch had expected, or hoped, that severe punishment would bring him to a better frame of mind, the Remove master was likely to be disappointed.

To the Remove rebel's resentful, exasperated mind that severe flogging was the last straw—the climax of a bitter persecution. That was all that he could or would see.

His heart was adamant now.

He was called the worst boy at Greyfriars, and treated as such—and he would make the description a true one! That was the black and bitter thought that filled the mind of the rebel of the Remove.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### A Friend in Need!

VERNON-SMITH of the Remove gave a cynical grin, and Tom Redwing, his companion, catching his expression, followed the direction of his glance. It was a few days after the flogging in Big Hall, and a half-holiday at Greyfriars. For once Harry Wharton was not under detention; and he had walked out of the gates, passing near the Bounder and Redwing. It was upon Wharton's receding figure that Smithy's cynical glance fell.

"Goin' the giddy pace!" sneered the Bounder.

Tom Redwing watched Wharton for a moment or two as the late captain of the Remove swung away towards the village. Then he looked at the Bounder.

"What do you mean by that, Smithy?" he asked very quietly.

Smithy laughed.

"The dear man is lookin' for more trouble," he said. "He will find it. I've offered Skinner three to one in quids that he will be sacked from Greyfriars before the end of the term. I fancy I should win the bet if Skinner would take it on."

"That's rotten, Smithy."

"He's askin' for it, isn't he?" grinned the Bounder. "I've played the goat myself once or twice, in my way; but I never went huntin' for trouble as Wharton's doin'. Serve him jolly well right when he gets the boot!"

Redwing knitted his brows. The sailorman's son had been away from Greyfriars for a week or two, looking after his father, who had been laid up with a sprained arm at his cottage at Hawkscliff. He had left his chum, the Bounder, on the best of terms with Harry Wharton; he had returned to find them on the bitterest terms.

The Bounder grinned at his chum's clouded face:

"You remember tellin' me to leave Wharton alone, and not give him a shove down now he's goin' to the giddy how-wows?" he asked. "Ha, ha! Do you know why I rowed with him while you were away? Wingate spotted us goin' to the races and ordered us home, and Wharton was for keepin' on and defyin' him. We quarrelled because I came back, and he called me a funk. Not quite what you would have expected, Reddy, what?"

"No," said Tom.

"Well, that's how it stands," said Smithy. "We had a big scrap, and I was knocked out—confound him! I haven't spoken to him since. So, you

see, Reddy, I'm not helpin' him on the downward path—it was rather the other way about. I'm fed up with him."

"I can't quite understand his going on like this," said Tom. "He's a good fellow, one of the best, though I suppose his temper's a bit trying to his friends."

"He's got no friends," sneered the Bounder. "Even Skinner is gettin' rather shy of him."

"He will always have one friend, if he thinks it worth while to be friendly with me," said Redwing.

"I was under the impression that you were my pal," sneered the Bounder. "You can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, Reddy."

"I can't forget that he pulled my father out of the sea, and most likely saved his life," said Redwing. "A fellow who'd do that can't be very bad. I'm sorry you rowed with him; but you're to blame, Smithy."

"Oh, am I?" exclaimed the Bounder hotly.

"Yes. You found him in a reckless temper, and led him into a silly escapade," said Redwing steadily. "You backed out when it became unsafe—I don't say you were wrong there; you were right. Still, you led him into it, and if he was keen to keep on, he had a right to complain if you backed out because of the risk. It was for him to jib at the risk, not you."

"Oh!" said Smithy.

"That's what I think. He's not a blackguard. I believe he was plunging into that dingy rot from a sort of desperation," said Tom. "He feels that everything's against him, and that nothing matters very much. And so he didn't care for the risk. You did. Well, if you weren't ready to go the whole hog, you shouldn't have got him into the thing at all."

"Oh, my hat!"

The Bounder looked rather grimly at Redwing.

"Not that I'm not glad the thing fell through," said Tom. "But you were to blame all along, Smithy—first for leading him into it and then for backing out!"

"I don't know why I let you preach at me like this, Reddy! I'd punch any other fellow's nose for half as much."

Redwing smiled faintly.

"You'll never get anything but the truth from me, Smithy. Why couldn't you have left him alone in the first place when I asked you and pointed out to you that you were doing him harm?"

"Oh, rafs! Chuck the subject!" growled the Bounder uneasily.

"Anyhow, I've got nothin' to do with him now. He's goin' his own way—headin' for the sack! I'll bet you six to one that he's goin' straight to the Cross Keys now—not because he wants to—for I believe he doesn't—but just because it's wrong and up against the beaks. And he doesn't take the trouble even to look back and see if anybody has an eye on him!"

Redwing started.

Loder of the Sixth had come out of the gates, and after a glance round walked away towards Friardale, the direction that Wharton had taken.

Smithy chuckled.

"Loder's on the giddy trail," he said. "He never had a chance at Wharton while he was Quelch's giddy model and a shinin' example to all the Form. Now he fancies he's got a chance, and I think he's right!"

"Wharton ought to be warned," said Redwing uneasily.

"You'd get slanged, if not punched, if you took the trouble to give him a tip!" sneered the Bounder.

"I shall risk that!"

"Look here, Reddy—"

Tom Redwing did not heed. He moved off at a trot in the direction taken by Wharton and by the bully of the Sixth. Vernon-Smith scowled angrily; then he shrugged his shoulders and walked back into the quad.

Redwing passed Loder in the road and ran on and joined Wharton.

Harry Wharton was walking along moodily, his hands in his pockets, a cloud on his brow.

He glanced at Redwing without speaking as the sailorman's son dropped into step by his side.

"Going for a ramble?" asked Tom pleasantly.

"No."

"Somewhere special?"

"Yes."

"Not out of bounds, I hope?"

"Just that."

"Wharton, old man—"

"No bizney of yours, I suppose," said Wharton gruffly.

"Yes," said Tom. "It's the business of anyone who wishes you well, Wharton. But don't worry. I'm not going to preach at you."

"You'd better not!" growled Wharton.

"I'm only going to tell you that Loder of the Sixth is following you and watching you," said Redwing quietly.

Wharton did not trouble to turn his head.

"Thanks!" he said. "Loder will have a report to take home to the Head. Let him!"

"It's asking for another flogging, Wharton."

"What does it matter?"

"It may be worse; it may be the sack," said Redwing earnestly.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"What's the good of telling that to the worst boy at Greyfriars?" he asked ironically.

"My father sent a message for you," said Redwing. "I haven't had a chance to speak to you yet. I'm sure you'll be glad to hear that father is well again and able to get out to sea."

"I'm jolly glad to hear it," said Wharton, his brow clearing a little. In spite of his determined sullenness he felt his black mood lightening in the company of Tom Redwing. He had always liked Redwing, and had been a good friend to him when the sailorman's son first came to Greyfriars on a scholarship.

"My father would like to see you," said Tom diffidently. "But I suppose you wouldn't care to pay a visit to our little cottage up at Hawkscliff?"

"What rot!" said Harry. "Nothing I'd like better than a walk up to Hawkscliff. Are you going home this afternoon?"

"I was thinking of it, if you'd come. I told dad I'd bring you to see him if I could."

"I'll come with pleasure."

The cloud was gone from Wharton's brow now, and Redwing was glad to see it go. A glimmer came into Wharton's eyes. Without appearing to look back, he glanced along the lane behind him and had a glimpse of Loder of the Sixth loitering at a distance behind.

"Loder's in luck these days," he said, with a grin. "He's able to pay off his old grudges now. I'm giving him plenty to report to my Form master. But I'll jolly well disappoint him this time!"

"Good!" said Tom, laughing. "Let him follow you up to Hawkscliff. A walk of ten miles will do him good!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

For the moment, at least, he was the cheery schoolboy again, and had forgotten that he was the rebel of the

Form, the sullen and obdurate "worst boy at Greyfriars."

"You cut off, Reddy," he said. "I'll join you again the other side of the village on the Pegg road. See?"

"Right-ho! I'll wait for you," said Tom.

Tom Redwing took a field-path, leaving Wharton in the road. Loder of the Sixth, loitering behind, was rather relieved. Not having the slightest doubt that Wharton was bound on some forbidden expedition, the bully of the Sixth had set out to trail him down. He had many old scores to pay off, and Wharton's fall had given him unexpected opportunities. But he had been puzzled to see Redwing join the black sheep of the Remove. Even Loder, suspicious as he was, could not suspect a frank and healthy fellow like Redwing of shabby blackguardism. So he was quite relieved when Redwing took to the fields, and Wharton walked on towards the Cross Keys alone.

Wharton sauntered on, his hands in his pockets, whistling, in a brighter mood. To pull Loder's leg was rather entertaining. And at the bottom of his heart he was glad that something had turned up to keep him away from the dingy company of Mr. Banks that afternoon.

Quite close to the Cross Keys Harry Wharton ostentatiously turned round to survey the road behind him. He gave Loder plenty of time to get out of sight. And, as he expected, Loder was not to be seen when he turned.

The watching prefect had backed behind a clump of furze by the roadside.

After a long survey of the road—well aware that Loder's eyes were upon him all the time from his cover—Wharton walked on towards the inn and made a sudden dart through a gap in the hedge close by the muddy lane that ran along the side of the Cross Keys.

He did not emerge into that lane, however.

There was a cart resting on its shafts in a corner of the field, and Wharton was lying down inside the cart in a few seconds.

There he lay low.

A minute or two later he heard the sound of running feet. Cautiously raising his head, he had a glimpse of Loder, standing in the road and scanning the lane beside the inn.

He could see enough of Loder's face to read the expression of triumphant malice there.

Loder had not the slightest doubt that Wharton, after looking behind him, had darted into the Cross Keys and disappeared there.

For a minute or two Loder stood looking about him, and then he lounged away along the road and stood leaning on a fence, watching the inn. His back was now to Wharton.

Wharton slipped out of the cart silently and scudded away across the field, and a hedge soon hid him from view. Then by a roundabout way he hurried past the village and arrived on the Pegg road, where Tom Redwing was waiting for him.

Redwing greeted him with a smile.

"What price Loder?" he asked.

Wharton laughed.

"He thinks I'm in the Cross Keys, and he's watching the place," he said. "All ready to collar me when I come out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And in a cheery mood, the two juniors started on the long walk over the cliffs to Hawkscliff.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Watching for Wharton!

**B**UZZZZZ!

Mr. Quelch laid down his pen, and picked up the telephone receiver.

"Hallo!"

"Is that Mr. Quelch?"

"Mr. Quelch speaking. Who is it?"

"Loder, sir!"

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Quelch was quite puzzled at receiving a telephone call from a Sixth Form prefect of Greyfriars. But Gerald Loder proceeded to explain.

"I'm speaking from Friardale Post Office, sir. I thought I'd better let you know that Wharton, of your Form, is now in the Cross Keys."

"Is it possible?"

"I watched him enter the place, sir. I had a suspicion that he was going there, and kept an eye on him. He dodged into the house fairly under my eyes."

Mr. Quelch set his lips.

"You are quite right to inform me, Loder. You are, of course, sure of what you say?"

"Absolutely certain, sir. He is still in the place. I watched it for half an hour, to take charge of him if he came out; but he has not come out. Then Walker came along, and I asked him to take my place while I ran across to ring you up, sir. If he comes out while Walker is

there, he will be brought back to Greyfriars."

"Very good!"

"The matter is now in your hands, sir," said Loder. "But if you have any instructions to give—"

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Quelch. "Only a few days ago Wharton was flogged for visiting that disreputable place. If he has done so again he will be expelled from Greyfriars. The Head will certainly not give him another chance. You and Walker will remain there and watch very carefully for him, while I take further measures."

"Very good, sir."

"Once more, Loder, you are absolutely certain that that reckless boy is actually in the building?"

"Absolutely, sir!"

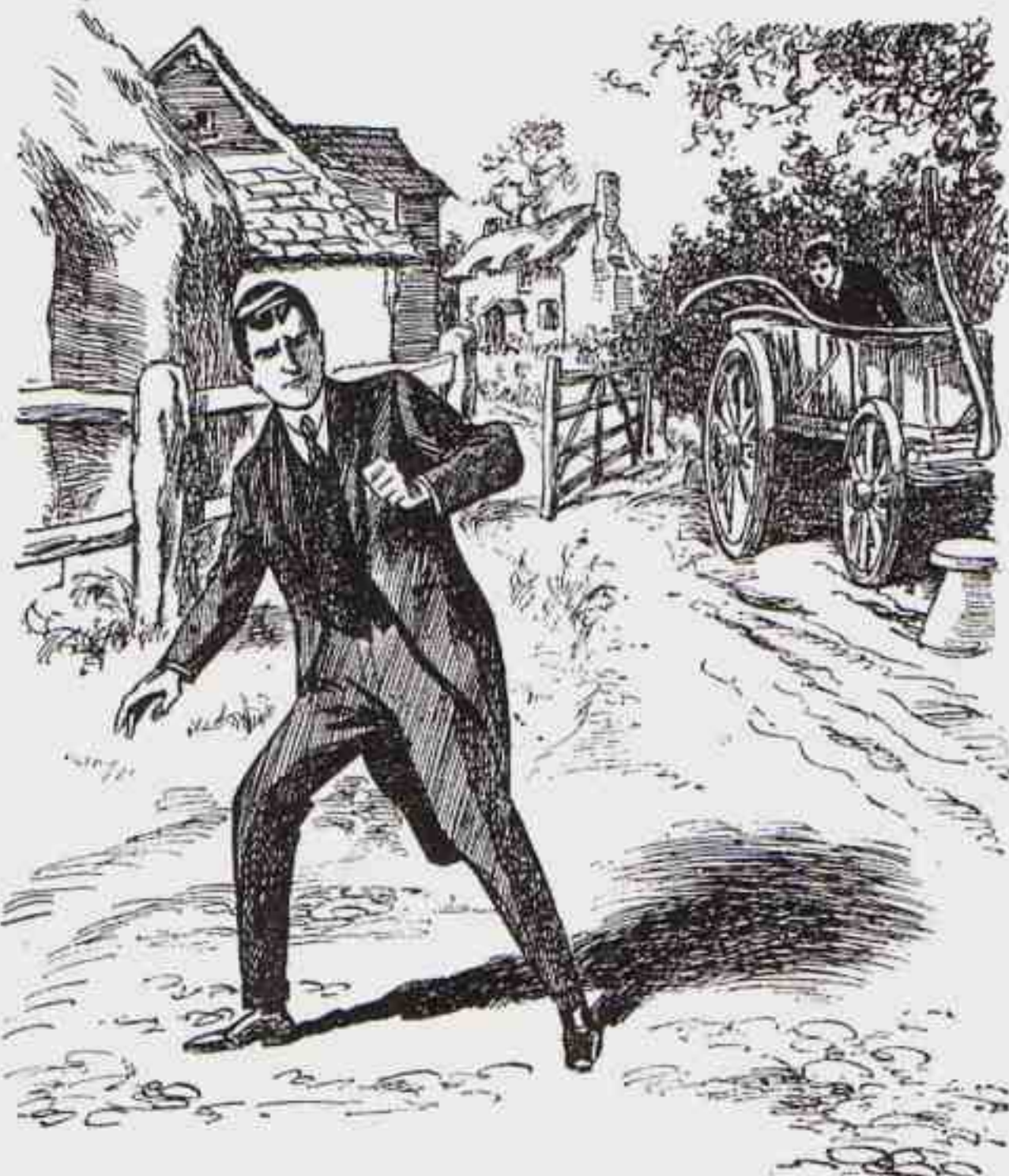
"Very well!"

Mr. Quelch put up the receiver.

The Remove master was rather busy that afternoon, but he did not give another glance at the papers on his table. The affair of Wharton demanded his immediate attention.

The matter was at a climax now.

Once more the worst boy at Greyfriars had defied authority. Only a few days after his flogging he had thrown all discretion to the winds, and repeated his offence. It was for the last time. Mr. Quelch was resolved upon that. Against the Remove master's judgment the Head had spared him once. He could not spare him again. Once there



Cautiously raising his head over the top of the cart, Wharton had a glimpse of Loder standing in the road and scanning the lane beside the inn. He could see enough of the prefect's face to read the expression of triumphant malice there.  
(See Chapter 7.)

was clear proof that Wharton had repeated his offence, his expulsion from the school must follow, as might follow day. It would be the end.

Mr. Quelch left his study, and proceeded to call upon the Head.

Dr. Locke listened with a troubled brow to the information that had been received from Loder.

"It seems scarcely possible that the boy could be so reckless, so hardened, Mr. Quelch," he said.

"Loder actually saw him, sir."

"Yes, there appears to be no doubt," said the Head, with a sigh. "I am afraid that drastic measures must now be resorted to. But if there were the shadow of doubt—"

"I shall take care, sir, with your permission, that the matter is placed beyond any possibility of doubt," said the Remove master, tightening his lips. "Two Sixth Form prefects are watching the house. Wharton can scarcely leave the place without being seen. But if you approve I will ask Wingate to take the matter in hand also."

Dr. Locke knitted his brows.

"It would be very undesirable, Mr. Quelch, for Mr. Prout's experience to be repeated in any shape or form."

"Quite so, sir; but there can be no objection to a strict watch being kept on the house until Wharton shows himself. Undoubtedly the rogues would deny that the boy was there, as in the previous instance, if questioned. We have, unfortunately, no authority to penetrate into the place and make a search, and neither do we desire a scene of any kind—"

"No, no, certainly not," said the Head hastily.

"I will warn Wingate to be very careful not to come into contact with the habitués of the place."

"Very good, Mr. Quelch; pray take what measures seem best to you," said the Head. "The matter must be settled."

And Mr. Quelch left the Head's study. A few minutes later he was in consultation with Wingate of the Sixth.

The Greyfriars captain was concerned about football that afternoon; but football had to be left over. Wingate, Gwynne, and North of the Sixth quitted Greyfriars, and walked down the road to Friardale.

None of the prefects was pleased with his task; but it was their duty, and they did it. It was, in fact, a very repugnant duty; but it had to be done. And certainly all the prefects agreed that the sooner the young rascal, Harry Wharton, was kicked out of the school, the better it would be for everybody concerned.

The great men of the Sixth would have been still less pleased had they known what happened immediately after their departure from Greyfriars. Billy Bunter, with his little round eyes gleaming with excitement behind his spectacles, rolled down to Little Side, where most of the Remove had gone for football practice.

"I say, you fellows!" howled Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! You keen on footer, Bunter?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"Yah! I say, they're after him."

"Are they?" said Bob. "Let 'em rip, whoever they are, and whomsoever they're after! Roll out of the way, tubby!"

"Wharton—"

"Eh? What?"

"They're after him!" crowed Bunter triumphantly. "It'll be the sack this time! He, he, ho!"

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Bob Cherry, forgetful of football, grasped the Owl of the Remove by the shoulder, and shook him. A dozen fellows gathered round, keen to hear the "latest" about Wharton.

"You fat duffer!" growled Bob.

"Yaroooh!"

"What's that about Wharton?"

"Ow-wow! Leggo!"

"Only Bunter's gas!" growled Johnny Bull.

"They're after him!" gasped Bunter.

"I heard the prefects talking. I happened to hear them—quite by chance, of course."

"Of course!" grinned Vernon-Smith.

"What did you hear, barrel?"

"They're after him!" squeaked Bunter.

"Wharton's blagging at the Cross Keys again, and all the prefects have been sent to look for him—they're going to catch him. He, he, he! Quelch's sent them. They're going to watch the place, and nail Wharton as he comes out. He, he, he!"

"Is that a laughing matter, you fat rotter?" snapped Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

Bob Cherry's rugged face was clouded.

"If that's true—" he muttered.

"It's true enough, I fancy!" grinned the Bounder.

"Do you know anything about it, Smithy?"

"I know Wharton started in that direction this afternoon, with Loder on his trail, watching him like a cat," said the Bounder. "Redwing ran after him to tip him a warning, but you know Wharton! A warning would only make him butt into trouble all the faster. I haven't the slightest doubt that Loder ran him down at the Cross Keys, and cornered him there, and reported to Quelch. It was bound to come, sooner or later, and Wharton seemed to prefer it sooner rather than later."

"As much your fault as anybody's!" exclaimed Bob savagely.

"What's that?" snarled the Bounder.

"Why couldn't you have let him alone, at any rate?" exclaimed Bob.

"You look after your own skin pretty well."

The Bounder crimsoned. A hot reply was on his lips, but he checked it, and swung angrily away. Perhaps it was on Smithy's conscience a little that his lawless influence had been brought to bear on Wharton at a time when the rebel of Greyfriars was in a reckless and resentful mood, and ready for any heedless action. Certainly the Bounder had never expected Wharton to fling all prudence to the winds as he had done.

Bob Cherry stood irresolute for some minutes. Bunter's news had come as a blow to him, though news of that kind was not really unexpected. But there was nothing the captain of the Remove could do. He could not help Wharton now, even if Wharton had been willing to accept help from him. With a clouded brow he returned to football practice; but in the pick-up game that afternoon Bob did some wild kicking that rather surprised the Removites. His comrades remained with him to play, but a good many Remove fellows walked off, and Bunter, who had started for Friardale to see what was going on, found himself in numerous company.

During the next hour or two quite a number of Remove fellows gathered at a respectful distance from the Cross Keys.

They could not venture too near at the risk of butting into the prefects. From a distance they observed Wingate & Co.—five Greyfriars prefects were watching the place from different points—and at the long run fifty Greyfriars fellows were watching the prefects, in growing excitement.

When Wharton emerged from the place he was likely to have a numerous escort back to Greyfriars; it would be quite a procession. But the winter afternoon glided by, and he did not emerge. The general opinion was that he knew that he was watched and waited for, and would not emerge till the latest possible moment; and, so far, it had occurred to no one that Loder had made a mistake, and that the black sheep of the Remove was not there at all!

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### A Surprising Reception!

HARRY WHARTON rose from the little table in old John Redwing's cottage at Hawkscliff. It was a long walk back to Greyfriars, and it was necessary for the juniors to start early. Tom Redwing followed his example.

"Time we were off, I suppose," said Redwing. "We don't want to be late for roll-call."

And Wharton did not reply that roll-call might go hang. In Redwing's company that afternoon he seemed to have become quite his old self—cheery, good-tempered, pleasant in looks and speech—the Wharton Redwing had known and liked last term.

Wharton had shared the frugal tea in the sailorman's cabin, and old John Redwing had been very pleased with his guest. It was clear that he was glad to see his son on friendly terms with a fellow like Harry Wharton, little dreaming of the reputation Wharton now had at Greyfriars. Wharton, indeed, had almost forgotten it himself.

"Always glad to see you, sir, when you care to walk up with Tom," said the bronzed old sailorman, as he accompanied his guest to the door. "You'll like to come up for the boating, maybe, in the summer. I was rather afeared how Tom would get on up at the big school, but—"

Wharton smiled. His friendship for Tom had reassured the simple old sailor, doubtful about his boy's prospects at the big school. And he was the "worst boy at Greyfriars," according to his Form master.

Mr. Redwing stood looking after the two juniors from the cottage doorway as they went down the rugged street of Hawkscliff, and his seamed old mahogany face was pleasantly cheerful. The two juniors walked on at a good rate, the sea winds playing on their faces as they followed the rugged paths.

A lift in the carrier's cart helped them on their way, and they came out into the Courtfield road and walked to the school.

"Lots of time," said Redwing as they came up to the gates. "Hallo! What's the matter with you, Wibley?"

Wibley of the Remove, lounging in the gateway, fairly jumped at the sight of Wharton strolling up with Redwing. He stared at him as if he could scarcely credit his eyesight—as, indeed, he scarcely could.

"Wharton!" he gasped.

"You've seen me before, I believe," said Harry sarcastically. "Anything surprising in seeing me again?"

"Well, my hat!" said Wibley blankly.

And he continued to stare after Wharton, as if mesmerised, as the late

**ANSWERS**  
EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2s

captain of the Remove walked in with Redwing.

"My eye!" Gosling looked out of his ledge and blinked. Gosling had heard the news, and he was astonished to see Wharton strolling carelessly in, unescorted by the prefects. "You, Master Wharton?"

"Little me," said Harry. "What's the matter with you, Gosling? Did you think it was my ghost?"

"You've got back, then!"

"Looks like it, doesn't it!"

"Well, my eye!" said Gosling; and he retreated into his lodge, scratching his ancient nose, greatly perplexed.

Harry Wharton was perplexed also, as he walked on across the quad with Redwing. He had almost forgotten the incident of Loder at the Cross Keys; and, in any case, he could not have guessed the excitement that had been caused on the subject. He had thought it probable that Loder might hang about the place for a time, watching for him, or report the matter to Mr. Quelch; but that he was supposed, at this very moment, to be practically besieged in Ben Cobb's shady resort never crossed his mind. He noticed that a number of fellows stared at him as he came towards the School House. Temple of the Fourth was lounging on the steps, and he stared hard; and Dabney and Fry, who were with him, stared hard also. Wharton's eyes began to glint.

"What's this game, Temple?" he demanded abruptly.

"It's really you!" ejaculated Cecil Reginald Temple.

"What the thump do you mean?"

"Didn't Wingate get you?"

"Wingate! Are you wandering in your mind?" snapped Harry. "If not, tell a fellow what you're driving at."

"I—I thought Wingate was after you—didn't you, Dab?"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"So he jolly well was!" said Fry warmly. "I saw all the prefects start together—saw them on the job afterwards, too. How the thump did you get clear, Wharton?"

"Clear of what?" howled Wharton.

"The prefects."

"I haven't had anything to do with the prefects—haven't seen any of them, excepting Loder."

"Oh, draw it mild!"

Wharton's eyes blazed.

"Look here, Fry—"

"Oh, don't rag, you know!" said Fry of the Fourth. "But you must have seen them, it stands to reason. What's the good of gammonin'?"

Wharton clenched his hand, and Fry backed away a little. Tom Redwing slipped his arm through Wharton's and drew him into the House.

"Do you know what this game is, Reddy?" asked Harry.

"Can't make it out," said Redwing, puzzled. "Hallo! Here's Coker of the Fifth. He's got something to say."

Horace Coker of the Fifth bore down on the two juniors with a loftily frowning brow.

"Precious young rascal!" he said.

"What?"

"Disgraceful young blackguard!" hooted Coker. "Sooner you're kicked out of Greyfriars the better—what?"

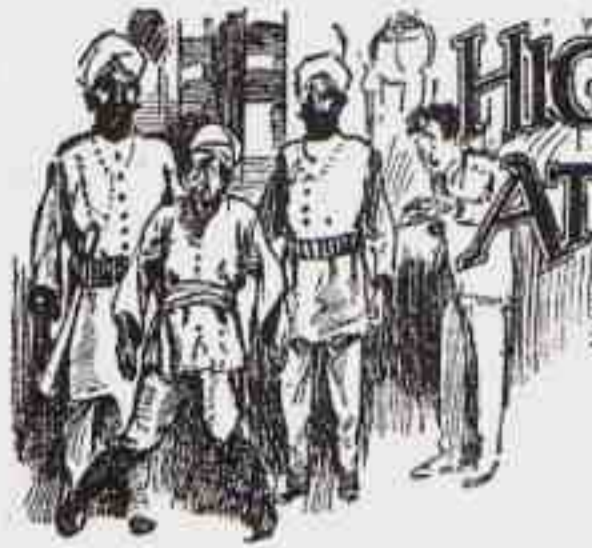
"You burbling idiot!" exclaimed Wharton angrily. "What bee have you got in your bonnet now?"

"I suppose they caught you, didn't they?" asked Coker.

"Oh, go and eat coke, fathead!"

Wharton brushed past the Fifth-Former, leaving Coker glaring with anger and contempt. Tom Redwing went to look for Smithy, and Wharton went up the Remove staircase, in an

**Chock-full of Fun and Excitement!**



**HIGH JINKS AT JUNKAPORE!**  
BY DUNCAN STORM

The magnificent long story of Dick Dorrington & Co., of the

school-ship Bombay Castle, appearing in our famous companion paper,

**"THE BOYS' FRIEND."**

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**Don't miss it whatever you do!**

angry and puzzled mood. His reception on his return to Greyfriars was perplexing and exceedingly annoying.

Bob Cherry & Co. were in the Remove passage, and their glances fell on Harry at once. They were surprised to see him coming in, apparently uncaught and unguarded. Naturally, they had expected him to return to the school in charge of the prefects, or at least one prefect. They hesitated to speak to him; but Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh came along as Harry was turning into Study No. 1.

"My esteemed Wharton—"

"Well!" snapped Harry.

"The begfulness of the excuse is great," said the nabob of Bhanipur; "but did the honourable and ridiculous prefects nab you catchfully?"

"Is this a rag?" demanded Harry sharply.

"The ragfulness is not great. If you have escapefully got clear, the gladness is terrific," said the nabob.

"Oh, cheese it!" snapped Wharton, and he closed the door of Study No. 1—the nabob having just time to withdraw his dusky nose.

With a flush in his bronze cheeks, Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh returned to his friends.

"The rattfulness of the ridiculous Wharton is terrific," he said. "I am temptfully inclined to punch his nose, but the punchfulness is not the proper caper. There has been some mistakefulness, I think; he could not have been in the excellent and ludicrous pub."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Oh, my hat! If he wasn't there—"

"But he must have been there," said Johnny Bull. "Quelch wouldn't send the prefects there to round him up if he didn't know he was there."

"It's a giddy mystery," said Nugent.

"It is, and no mistake," agreed Bob. "But it looks to me as if Wharton's come out all right, and I'm jolly glad of it."

"The gladfulness is great," assented the nabob.

Johnny Bull grunted.

"Chaps who go blagging ought to get lagged," he said.

"Well, if there's a mistake somewhere, perhaps Wharton didn't go blagging. Anyhow, I know he's had trouble enough—more than I've liked to see," said Bob. "Thank goodness he's clear of it—if he is clear."

The Co. went along to Study No. 13 to tea, perplexed, but easier in their minds. Hostile as their former chum was, irreconcilable and bitter, the thought that he might be "sacked" from Greyfriars was a troublesome one to them, and they knew that there was danger of it.

In Study No. 1, Wharton threw himself into a chair, with a moody brow. He had returned to Greyfriars with Redwing in a cheery mood, but his reception had roused his irritation. Apparently the prefects had been hunting him, and the fellows were surprised to see that he had not been caught. Why had he been sought for? Couldn't he be left alone on a half-holiday? It was some more of his Form master's persecution, he decided, and the old bitter resentment came back intense as ever.

There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and the voices of some of the Remove. It was close on lock-up now, and the fellows were coming in. Billy Bunter's voice came to him through the study door.

"I say, you fellows, they're bound to have him! He simply can't get away, with five or six prefects watching the place."

"He's sticking it out, and no mistake." That was Skinner's voice. "Of course, he's spotted them from a window."

"Of course," said Snoop. "But he may as well come out; he must know they know he's there."

"He's a cool card," chuckled Skinner. "Shouldn't wonder if he keeps it up till

(Continued on page 16.)



## Dining Hall Disasters!

GEORGE WINGATE.

A Record of Some Amazing Events in the History of Greyfriars

**T**HE Greyfriars Dining Hall, with its old oak rafters, is one of the oldest parts of the school. It has stood for generations, though in 1856 it narrowly escaped being destroyed by fire. A few years later, the ceiling showed signs of collapse. Whilst a meal was in progress, a large lump of plaster fell upon the bald pate of one of the senior masters! It was found necessary to repair the ceiling, and whilst this work was carried out the fellows had their meals in Big Hall.

The Dining Hall has been the scene of many amusing incidents. A few years ago, on a bitter, winter day, the cooks tried the experiment of making curry for the midday meal. They did not prove themselves to be hot-stuff at curry-making, but the curry proved to be very "hot stuff" indeed! Not a soul could eat it—not even Billy Bunter. And when the Head came into the Hall, and sampled the curry, to see what was wrong with it, he choked and spluttered, and the tears streamed down his cheeks, owing to the peppery nature of the curry. That was, indeed, a disastrous dinner!

In the year 1895 a more serious episode took place. The school food at that period left much to be desired. It was badly cooked, and sometimes there was scarcely enough to go round. A petition was sent to the headmaster of that time urging him to take the matter up; but the Head did nothing. Consequently, a mutiny broke out one day in the Dining Hall. The scholars declared a "hunger strike," and they refused to eat until the quality of the food had been improved. There was a turbulent scene in the Hall, and the master in charge was pelted with breadcrusts. Four of the senior boys narrowly escaped expulsion. The affair came to the knowledge of the Governors, and they investigated the boys' grievance. They found that there had been a good deal of slacking and neglect on the part of the domestic staff, and the cook was given notice. The standard of the food was raised, and all ended happily.

In recent years a sensation was caused by the members of the kitchen staff going on strike. It looked as if Greyfriars would have to go dinnerless; but Mr. Prout came to the rescue. He called for volunteers to assist him in the kitchen; and, aided by a number of zealous juniors, he prepared the midday meal. Billy Bunter did yeoman service in the kitchen. The dinner was fairly successful, in spite of the fact that somebody put alum in the greens instead of soda, and the apple-puddings were not given nearly long enough to cook. The strike did not last long—much to the disappointment of the amateur chefs, and of Mr. Prout, who ceased to reign as King of the Kitchen.

Among the minor disasters which have occurred in the Greyfriars Dining Hall, one of the most amusing—except to the victim!—was when a careless serving-maid poured a jet of steaming coffee down the back of Mr. Quelch's neck! The master of the Remove shot up from his seat like a jack-in-the-box, and proceeded to dance around like a cat on hot bricks. Practically every fellow at the Remove table was given an imposition for "unseemly giggling at a master's misfortune!"

Another calamity occurred quite recently when Oliver Kipps, the juggler of the Remove, walked down the centre gangway of the Hall with a tray of crockeryware balanced on his head. Kipps was making fine progress, when somebody shouted "Cave!" causing him to start violently. Down came the tray with a crash and a clatter, and fragments of cups and plates and saucers shot all over the place. Kipps was ordered to replace the broken articles at his own expense. He has not been seen to do much juggling since!

If the old oak rafters of the Dining Hall could only speak, what a fund of amusing anecdotes they would relate! For the Dining Hall has been the scene of many tragedies and comedies; and many more are likely to be enacted within its historic walls.

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**THE "POPULAR"**  
EVERY WEEK.

## WANTED—A FOOD CONTROLLER!

A Special "Grouse" Article.  
By BILLY BUNTER.

**I**F they want to make Greyfriars a place fit for heroes to live in, they will have to make drastic reforms in the matter of grub. Our parents pay fat fees for us to be here, and they naturally expect us to be well fed. But we're not! The grub we get is most unsatisfactory, both as regards quality and quantity.

Now, breakfast, being the first meal of the day, should be a hefty affair. Remember, the fellows have fasted for twelve hours previously, and at eight o'clock in the morning they proceed to "break fast." But how on earth can they break their fast with a miserable rasher of bacon, as stiff as leather, and a fried egg which is so stale that it resembles Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome"?

The breakfast we get at Greyfriars would disgrace a Poor Law institution. Instead of brown bread, which contains valuable vitamins, we get white bread. Instead of pure butter, fresh from the cow, we get inferior margarine. Instead of China tea, with a delicious flavor, we get stuff which is so weak that it can't stand up in the pot!

Now, a proper breakfast should consist of about ten courses. There should be soup, and fish, and ham, and new-laid eggs, and toast and marmalade, and rabbit-pie, and several kinds of cake, and fruit salad. And a fellow should be allowed to have as many helpings as he wants.

Fortified by a good breakfast, a chap could go into the Remove Form room and face the ordeal of morning lessons with a good heart. But when he is under-nourished, like we all are at present, how can you possibly expect him to translate Latin verbs, or juggle with horrible dates? The poor fellow is suffering from slow starvation, and his brain won't function properly, because he has had no brain food, such as haddock, whitebait, roast beef, and other kinds of fish.

The dinner at Greyfriars is a disgrace. It is gross flattery to call it dinner. It is merely a light snack. A few slices of meat, and not more than six sorts of vegetables, with prunes and custard, or some other horrible concoction, to follow. Do you call that a satisfying meal? I don't! I could eat a snack like that every half-hour, and then feel hungry!

Tea in Hall is such a fearful ordeal that most of the fellows dodge it, if they can, and feed in their studies. Bread and scrape, and weak tea, is all that the authorities provide in Hall; and it sometimes makes me wonder whether I'm in a public school or in a starving garrison, where they've got to go steady with the supplies!

What we want at Greyfriars is a Food Controller—some responsible person who will make it his business to see that every fellow gets enough to eat.

The number of meals should be increased to eight or ten per day, and they should be good solid meals.

Let the Head appoint a Food Controller without delay, or, as sure as I'm a true proflit, there will be a mewtiny at Greyfriars! We're fed-up with not being properly fed-up!

[Supplement 6.



# The Ballot St. Sam's!

An Amazing and Amusing Story,  
showing Dicky Nugent  
— at his best. —

**J**ACK JOLLY & Co., the mischief-making monkeys—and therefore our heroes!—of the Fourth Form at St. Sam's, strolled up to the notice-board, around which a vast crowd was buzzing, like bees round a hunny-pot.

"What's the latest, I wonder?" merrered Merry.

"We'll soon see!" said Jack Jolly. And he took a flying leap over the heads of the crowd. Merry and Bright followed suit. They were astonished to read the following announcement:

**"WHO IS YOUR FAVERITT MASTER?  
GIVE HIM YOUR VOTE IN THE GRATE BALLOT, TO BE HELD IN BIG HALL THIS EVENING!"**

"In order to decide which master at St. Sam's enjoys the greatest mezzure of popularity, a Grate Ballot has been arranged, and the St. Sam's skollers are requested to plaice the following masters in their popular order:

**"THE HEAD.  
MR. JUSTISS.  
MR. LICKHAM.  
MR. SWISHOLM.  
MR. CHAS. TYSER.  
MONSURE FROGGAY.  
HERR OTTO GUGGENHEIMER.  
MR. TARTER.**

"Voting papers will be distributed in Big Hall at 8 o'clock, and the rezult will be announsed to-morrow morning. Without wishing to inflowence the voters in any way, I may say that any boy who fails to put me at the top of the list will reseave a severer flogging!"

"(Signed) L. BIRCHEMALL,  
"Headmaster."

"Well, I'm not going to put the Head top, anyway!" declared Jack Jolly. "I shall put him where he deserves to be—at the bottom of the list."

"Same hear," said Merry. "He won't know how we voted, unless he happens to twigg our handwriting. And I shall disguise mine."

"Good wheeze," said Bright. "I'll do the same. I'm going to put Mr. Justiss top. He's an awfully decent sort."

At that moment, Binding the page came trotting up to the "Co."

"Please, Jolly," he said, "Mr. Lickham wants to see you at once, in his study."

Jack Jolly frowned.

"Is there going to be a slawter?" he asked.

"Not that I knows of, Master Jolly. Mr. Lickham seems to be in quite a good yewner."

Jack Jolly, looking grately releaved, hurried to the Form master's study.

What transpired in that apartment was never known. The interview lasted about ten minnits, and when Jack Jolly came out he refused to say what it was

all about. Even Merry and Bright were kept in the dark. They tried to pump the information out of their leader, but he was as mum as a mouse.

There was terrifick eggstiment at St. Sam's when the time arrived for the Grate Ballot to take plaice. The fellows flocked into Big Hall, eager to fill up their voting forms.

The Head and the masters were standing on the platform, and Dr. Birchmall frowned upon the assembly, as much as to say:

"Mind you put my name at the top! If you don't, there will be ruckshuns!"

As a matter of fact, the Head was confident that he would be at the top of the pole. There were no doubts in his mind as to his popularity with the boys. True, he was in the habbit of weeldding the hirsch-rod a good deal; but then, he reflected, boys admired and respected a disciplinarian. They had no patience with a master like Monsure Froggay, who had never been known to cane a chap in his life.

"Lickham," said the Head, turning to the master of the Fourth, "kindly distribute the voting forms."

"Righto, sir!"

Mr. Lickham passed round the Hall, carrying a pile of forms. He placed one in front of each fellow; but when he came to Jack Jolly, who sat all alone at the back of the Hall, he gave him a sly wink, and also fifty voting forms.

## EDITORIAL!

**T**HIS week we are dealing with no one particular subject, but the "Herald" contributions are well up to their usual standard, for all that. Dicky Nugent's story, "The Ballot at St. Sam's," is a real scream, while Billy Bunter's articles on the subject of a food controller is a "grouse" dear to his fat heart.

As a contrast, there is an interesting article by George Wingate of the Sixth on "Dining Hall Disasters." Our noble skipper takes as much interest in the past doings of good old Greyfriars as he does with the present. Methinks Quelchy and Wingate would be useful to each other in the compilation of a History of Greyfriars, but I haven't the cheek to put the notion before Quelchy; he's rather jealous of his literary abilities.

Going back again to Dicky Nugent, I have received several letters lately, in which the writers clamour for a long, complete story by this youthful author. "Let Dicky have the whole supplement to himself," writes an enthusiastic reader. Well, the demand for such a change is becoming so insistent that I shall shortly let Dicky Nugent have his head. If any of you have any suggestions to make, I should be glad if you would send them along—c.o. the Editor of the "Magnet."

HARRY WHARTON.

For the next few minnits no sound broke the silense of Big Hall, save the scratching of three hundred pens, the nervuss colfing of some of the masters, who wundefed how they would fare, and the bellowing roars of the Head, bidding the fellows buck up and fill in their forms.

At length, Mr. Lickham went round and collected up the forms. He left Jack Jolly till last, giving that youth ample time to fill in his fifty.

The school was then dismissed, and the masters remained behind, to scrootinize the voting forms, and find out the order of popularity.

Alas for the Head's hopes! When all the forms had been checked, he found himself at the bottom of the pole.

Mr. Lickham came out top. And the Head could scarcely beleieve his eyes. To think that a misserable toad like Lickham should be the most popular master at St. Sam's!

The world seemed upside-down at that moment to the unforchunitt Head.

Second on the list came Mr. Justiss, the master of the Fifth. Then came Monsure Froggay, of all people! Mr. Swisholm was fourth, Mr. Tarter fifth, Mr. Chas. Tyser sixth, Herr Guggenheimer seventh, and the Head "a bad last," as they say in the racing papers.

Dr. Birchmall nearly choked. He would have torn his hair if he had had any to tear; but he was bald. And he would have nashed his teeth if he had had any to nash, but he had been to the dentist that day, and had them all distracted.

"This—this is outrageous!" he spluttered. "It is monstrous! To think that me—me, the most popular Head who ever headed, should be beaten by a lot of misserable worms like yourselves! There has been a trick—a low-down wangle!"

"Abserd!" said Mr. Justiss. "Take your defeat like a sportsman, sir."

"After all, popularity is a fickle thing," said Mr. Lickham. "When the next Ballot takes plaice, you might easily find yourself top."

Mr. Lickham said this in order to soothe the Head. But his words had anything but a soothing effect. The Head seemed to be on the verge of an appleplectic fit. Savvidgely clenching his hands, he stamped away to his study, determined to take ample revenge on the St. Sam's fellows for having failed him at the crooshal moment.

The rezult of the Ballot was announsed next day, and Mr. Lickham was congratulated by all and sundery—egg-septing the Head.

That afternoon, Jack Jolly of the Fourth was invited to tea by Mr. Lickham.

There was a contented smile on his face as he walked into his Form master's study. The table litterally groned under a goodly array of tuck. Mr. Lickham evidently knew the sort of tuck deer to a schoolboy's heart.

"Jove, this is prime!" eggscclaimed Jack Jolly. "You know what's what, sir!"

"Thanks awfully, Jolly, for giving me those fifty votes," said the Form master, "and for putting the Head at the bottom of every list. It is due entirely to your co-operation that I am to-day the most popular master at St. Sam's. I hardly know how to thank you enuff."

"That's all right sir," said Jack Jolly cheerfully. "Only too glad to have been of service to you. Pass the tarts!"

And Mr. Lickham was kept busy passing tarts etcetera for the next half-hour.

THE END.

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(Continued from page 15.)

late at night. It would amuse him to keep the prefects hanging about a pub all the evening."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I dare say he knows it's all up with him now," said Bolsover major. "He's known to be there; he can't get out unseen. It's the long jump this time for Wharton."

"No doubt about that. The Head can't look over this."

"Impossible!" said Russell.

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them now!" chuckled Skinner. "His Magnificence is on the last lap."

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Peter Todd. "It's rotten! I shall be sorry to see Wharton bunked. He seems to have gone to the bad, but he's a better chap than you're ever likely to be, Skinner."

"Hear, hear!" said Hazeldene.

"Thanks!" sneered Skinner.

Harry Wharton rose from his chair with a grim brow. He threw the door of Study No. 1 wide open.

There was a shout of astonishment from the juniors in the passage.

"Why, here he is—"

"He's in the study!"

"Great pip!"

"I say, you fellows, he got away after all!" yelled Billy Bunter. "I say, Wharton, how did you get out? Did you climb out of a chimney?"

Wharton looked grimly at the astonished Removites.

"It's jolly kind of you to take such an interest in me," he said. "I'm sorry to tell you that, so far as I know, I'm not going to be bunked. Sorry to disappoint you, of course."

"How did you get out?" demanded a dozen voices.

"Out of what, and where?" roared Wharton.

"The Cross Keys!" yelled Ogilvy.

"I haven't been at the Cross Keys, you dummy."

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Look here—"

"Cave!" exclaimed Peter Todd. "Here comes Quelch."

There was a hush as Mr. Quelch came up the Remove staircase. He did not see Wharton inside the study; his glance fixed on the group of Removites in the passage.

"Gosling has informed me that Wharton has come in," he said. "Is he here?"

"In his study, sir," said Skinner.

Wharton stepped out into the passage.

"I am here, sir."

Mr. Quelch's glance was like steel.

"Follow me to the Head," he said curtly.

"What have I done, sir?" asked Harry in a dangerously quiet voice.

The Remove master made a gesture of disgust.

"You have the effrontery to ask me that, Wharton? Then I will tell you before your Form-fellows—the members of the Form you have disgraced. You are being taken to your headmaster to receive sentence for disgracing your Form, your school, and yourself, by frequenting a low resort known as the Cross Keys, after having been flogged a

few days ago for similar conduct. I have no doubt whatever that Dr. Locke will expel you from Greyfriars. Now follow me."

"I have not been in the Cross Keys to-day, sir."

The Remove master's lip curled with contempt.

"Falsehood will not help you, Wharton," he said.

"Falsehood!" exclaimed Harry, with blazing eyes.

"Do not bandy words with me, you wicked and unscrupulous boy! Follow me to the Head at once."

And Mr. Quelch rustled down the Remove staircase, and the late captain of the Remove with a set and savage face followed him.

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### A Narrow Escape!

"WHARTON is here, sir!"

Dr. Locke fixed his eyes on the clouded, angry face of the junior who followed Mr. Quelch into the study.

There was no kindness in his look now.

The time for kindness was past; on this occasion the Head was in full agreement with the Remove master. If Wharton, in spite of warning, had transgressed again the matter was settled; Greyfriars was no place for him, and the sooner the gates of the school closed behind him for ever the better.

"Then the boy was found at that—that resort, as you supposed Mr. Quelch?" said the Head.

"I am a little perplexed about that, sir. Gosling informed me that Wharton had come in, but the prefects have not yet returned from Friardale, and I have not heard from them."

"He must, then, have escaped from the building unseen?"

"Apparently so; though it is very perplexing. I have not questioned him; but doubtless he will explain to you."

"Wharton, you remember the warning I gave you when you were flogged less than a week ago for frequenting that low resort?"

"Yes, sir," said Harry.

"Yet you have been in the place again to-day?"

"No, sir."

"You deny it?" exclaimed the Head.

"Certainly I deny what is not true, sir."

The Head gave him a very searching look. Then he glanced at Mr. Quelch.

"I suppose it is certain that Wharton was seen to enter the place, Mr. Quelch?"

"I have Loder's statement to that effect, sir."

Wharton smiled involuntarily. The matter was growing clearer to his mind now. His jape on Loder had had far-reaching results that he had never contemplated.

"Moreover," went on Mr. Quelch, "it is practically impossible for him to have left the building unseen, with the prefects on the watch. Doubtless he eluded them and fled."

"That will be easy to ascertain when they return," said Dr. Locke. "The matter had better stand over till then. No doubt you will send a message to Wingate."

"At once, sir."

Mr. Quelch left the study.

"Wharton, you may sit down! You will wait here for the present."

"Very well, sir."

Harry Wharton sat down on a chair in the corner of the study. The Head took

up his pen again, and became oblivious of the junior's existence.

Only the scratch of the pen broke the silence of the study.

Wharton sat like a statue, waiting.

A smile lurked on his face. He understood now what had happened. His surprising reception at Greyfriars on his return from Hawkscliff was explained now. Evidently Loder had been so thoroughly taken in by his little trick that afternoon, that he had reported the matter to Mr. Quelch, and Mr. Quelch had taken extensive measures to catch the culprit in the act, and place his guilt beyond the shadow of a doubt.

His expulsion from the school was now counted on as a certainty; and, indeed, but for Tom Redwing's intervention that afternoon, it would have been practically a certainty. On that wild day when he had plunged into the foaming tide under the rocks of the Shoulder, to save Redwing's father, he certainly had never dreamed what the outcome would be for himself. Tom Redwing had saved him, in his turn—saved him from the results of his own recklessness and folly. He thought, with sardonic satisfaction, of the disappointment that was in store for his Form master—counting so surely now on seeing him expelled from the school.

He waited patiently while the Head's pen scratched on, and the headmaster remained apparently unconscious of his presence in the study.

There was a knock at the door at last. Dr. Locke laid down his pen.

"Come in!"

Mr. Quelch entered with Wingate and Loder. The two prefects glanced at Wharton, obviously puzzled to see him there.

"What have you to tell me, Wingate?" asked the Head. "I understand that you have kept observation upon the—the place that Wharton was seen to enter this afternoon?"

"We all did, sir, on Mr. Quelch's instructions," answered the Greyfriars captain. "I cannot imagine how he got out unseen."

"Then he was not seen?"

"No, sir; we were all surprised to receive Mr. Quelch's message that Wharton was at Greyfriars!"

"I fancy there must be some secret way of getting out of the place, sir," said Loder. "Of course, Wharton knew we were watching. He must have seen some of us from the windows, and Cobb came out several times, too!"

"Come here, Wharton."

Harry Wharton came forward.

"In what manner, Wharton, did you leave the Cross Keys, unseen by the prefects?"

"I did not leave it, sir, as I was not there."

"We will go into that," said the Head grimly. "It was you, Loder, who saw Wharton enter the place?"

"Yes, sir," said Loder.

"You have no doubt on the point?"

"None, sir!"

"Have you the effrontery to deny Loder's statement, Wharton?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Mr. Quelch, do you attach any importance, as Wharton's Form master, to his denial?"

"None whatever, sir!" said the Remove master. "I consider that he is speaking falsely—speaking with deliberate untruth."

Wharton's lip curled.

"I expected that of you, sir!" he said.

"Silence, Wharton! How dare you address your Form master in that tone?" exclaimed the Head sternly.

"Am I to be called a liar, sir?" exclaimed Wharton passionately. "Did I



tell you falsehoods the time Mr. Prout found me at that place? Whatever I have done, I have never told lies. Nobody at Greyfriars can say so."

"It is true that you answered with frankness, not to say effrontery, on the last occasion," said the Head. "But you will scarcely expect me to take your word against a Sixth Form prefect's?"

Loder gave the junior a bitter look. "I think Wharton will scarcely accuse me of bringing a false accusation against him, sir."

"I should certainly not listen to any such accusation, Loder. The matter is now clear, I think," said the Head.

"May I say a word, sir?" asked Wharton, and even the awe-inspiring presence of the Head could not keep a sarcastic inflection out of his voice.

"Certainly, if you have anything to say, unhappy boy."

"Loder made a mistake this afternoon, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"I do not think that he will say that he actually saw me enter the Cross Keys, sir."

"He has already said so—"

"Not exactly that, sir," said Loder hastily. "I followed Wharton to the place. At the last moment he looked round, but did not see me, and then he went through the hedge close by the inn. By the time I got up he had gone into the house."

"By the time you got up I was hidden in a cart in the field," said Harry, with icy coolness. "I saw you all the time."

"What does this mean?" said the Head.

"Only that I saw Loder spying on me, sir," said Wharton coolly. "I knew he expected to run me down at the Cross Keys, and I let him think I had gone in there. I was hiding in a cart in the field until Loder turned his back, and then I cleared off, leaving him to watch the place as long as he liked."

Dr. Locke knitted his brows.

"Your defence, then, is that you deliberately deceived Loder?"

"Not at all, sir. He had no right to follow me from the school on a half-holiday. Is that a prefect's duty?"

"It is not," said the Head. "But if Loder had cause to suspect you, he was quite right to keep you under observation. Loder, what do you say to Wharton's statement?"

"It is false, sir," said Loder at once. "It was barely possible, I suppose, for him to do as he has said; but I am quite certain that he did not do so."

"And your opinion, Mr. Quelch?"

Mr. Quelch's look was bitter.

"My opinion, sir, is that this unscrupulous boy is adding falsehood to falsehood!"

"Have you anything else to say, Wharton?"

"Not if you do not believe me, sir," said the rebel of the Remove. "I tricked Loder as I've said, because he was watching me. I considered I had a right to do so. It never occurred to me that there would be so much fuss made afterwards. That is not my fault."

"Not if your statements were true, Wharton—but I cannot believe it," said Dr. Locke, shaking his head. "Your Form master—"

"I don't expect justice from my Form master," said Harry bitterly.

"Silence, boy! Last term Mr. Quelch had a high opinion of you, and spoke always very highly of you. Whose conduct has caused him to change that opinion?"

Wharton was silent.

"I have been driven to believe that I was deceived in Wharton, Dr. Locke," said the Remove master. "I think him now the worst boy in the school. I believe that he will bring disgrace upon the school if he is not checked. I am firmly of opinion that he should be sent away."

"I am bound to agree with you, Mr. Quelch. Wharton, in the circumstances, you can scarcely expect to be allowed to

remain at Greyfriars. For the sake of your uncle and guardian, a gentleman whom I respect highly, I will spare you the shame of a public expulsion. But you must go!"

Wharton breathed hard.

"And what, sir, if I prove what I have said?" he asked.

"You cannot prove it."

"I can prove it easily, sir, if you will listen to me."

"You are entitled to a hearing, Wharton. What is this proof you speak of?"

"I spent the afternoon, sir, at Redwing's father's cottage up at Hawkscliff. Redwing was with me, and can tell you as much; and his father will tell you the same if necessary."

"Bless my soul!"

There was deep silence in the Head's study after that ejaculation. Dr. Locke removed his glasses, wiped them, and replaced them on his nose. Mr. Quelch looked almost thunderstruck, and Loder licked his lips uneasily. It was borne in upon Gerald Loder's mind that he had, indeed, made a mistake, and put his foot in it very seriously.

"Send for Redwing," said the Head, at last.

Wingate left the study, and returned in a few minutes with Tom Redwing. Tom's face was very grave. He had heard the whole story by this time, and he knew the position Wharton was in.

"Redwing, was Wharton with you this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir."

"At your home?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you return to Greyfriars together?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you go to Hawkscliff together?"

"Yes, sir."

"At what time?"

"Soon after dinner, sir."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"Were you with Wharton, then, the

(Continued on next page.)

ARE YOU FOND OF CROSS WORD PUZZLES?

THE solving of cross word puzzles appears to have caught on in MAGNET circles, for thousands of requests have reached me to publish a puzzle every week. Well, your Editor is always out to please, and the first of these puzzles appears alongside.

All you will need is a pencil, rubber, and a little patience.

I want it to be clearly understood that these puzzles are published merely for your AMUSEMENT. There is no competition attached to the scheme. Readers are, therefore, requested not to send in their solutions.

Next week's MAGNET will contain the right solution for this week's cross word puzzle, together with a new puzzle. Now for a few tips on solving cross word puzzles.

In the puzzle alongside you will see a number of white and black squares, in some of which appear numbers. Each number in the puzzle indicates the position of the first letter of the word whose definition you will find in the clue column alongside the same number in the square. From this clue you are to decide what the word is and to place each of its letters in one square until the number of white squares allotted to this word has been filled.

Each word reads from left to right (across) or top to bottom (down) according to the positions indicated in the clue column.

Remember that each black square separates one word from another.

When you have completed the puzzle you will find that all the words that cross interlock.

To give you a start in this week's puzzle, I will take square No. 1 (across). You will note that 11 white squares are allotted to the requisite word. The clue (No. 1, across) says, "A Popular Hobby." Now, there are scores of popular hobbies, but there are few that have eleven letters to their name. In this case the clue gives us the word PHOTOGRAPHY. That being so, you will see that the word required for square No. 1 (down) must commence with the letter P, and that square No. 3 (down) must start a word beginning with the letter O.

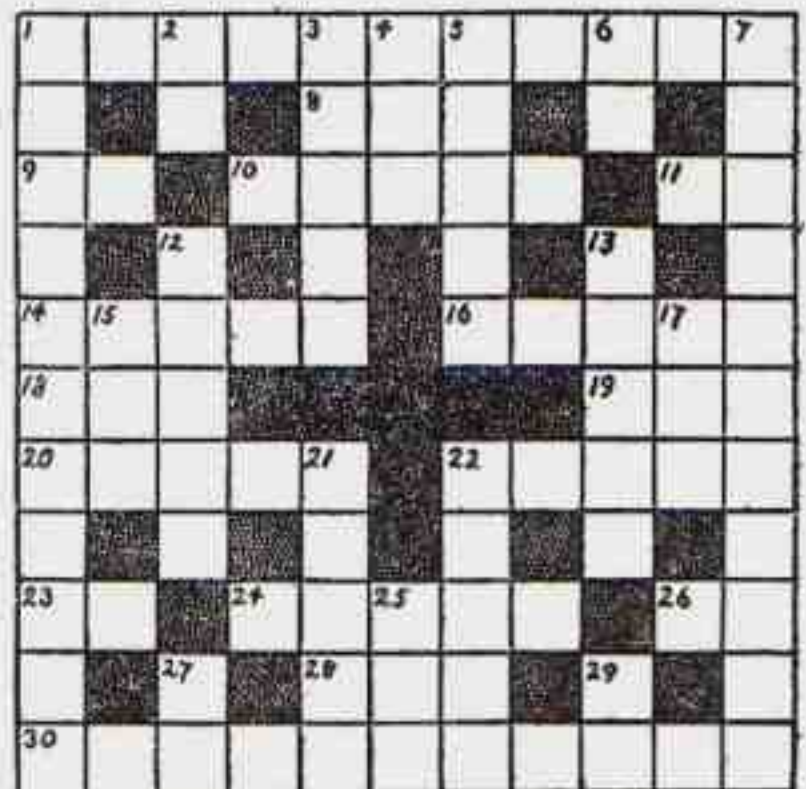
It is advisable to pencil the letters in lightly at first, so that should they be wrong you will be able to erase them with a rubber, without mutilating the diagram. Now get busy, chums!

CLUES ACROSS.

- 1. A popular hobby
- 8. Slang for "horse"
- 9. Short for "Editor"
- 10. To sing
- 11. Postscript
- 14. A map
- 16. Part of Greyfriars School
- 18. To regret
- 19. Over (poetic form)
- 20. A nautical term
- 22. A giant of Greek mythology
- 23. Implies doubt
- 24. Disrespectful name for the Head
- 26. For example
- 28. A rodent
- 30. What Billy Bunter clamours for

CLUES DOWN.

- 1. Evening task at public schools
- 2. Exclamation of pain
- 3. Hideous monsters
- 4. Short for "George"
- 5. A remnant
- 6. Policeman (abbrev.)
- 7. Old English term for "last night"
- 12. Lord Mauleverer's favourite pastime
- 13. Footwear
- 15. Schoolboy's term for "a bath"
- 17. The ocean
- 21. A New Zealand native
- 22. In your mouth
- 25. Slang for "talk"
- 27. Name of Chinaman in famous play
- 29. Myself



CROSS WORD PUZZLE No. 1.

whole afternoon since dinner, Redwing?"

"Excepting for about ten minutes, sir," said Redwing quietly. "That was when Loder was watching Wharton, near the Cross Keys. I went ahead, and waited for Wharton on the Pegg road, and he joined me in about ten minutes, and we walked up to Hawkscliff together."

Loder's face was almost green. Redwing's statement substantiated that of the rebel of the Remove.

"Mr. Quelch, is it your opinion that Redwing's evidence is to be relied upon?" asked the Head.

Mr. Quelch breathed hard.

"Undoubtedly, sir," he said. "Redwing is I believe, incapable of falsehood."

"Thank you, sir," said Tom. "But if you wished to ask my father, sir, he would tell you what time we reached Hawkscliff, and it is known how long it takes to walk there."

"It is not necessary, Redwing," said the Head kindly. "I am only too glad to learn that Wharton spent the afternoon in such honourable company. You may go, my boy."

Tom Redwing left the study. Wingate followed him out, and Loder would willingly have done the same; but the Head addressed him.

"It appears, Loder, that Wharton's statement is correct, and you were mistaken in your impression that he actually entered the Cross Key?"

"He made me think so intentionally, sir," muttered Loder.

"That is clear. I am afraid; but it is also clear that there was a mistake on your part."

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"You should be more careful, Loder. As you see, much depended on your statement, and it transpires that you were under a misapprehension," said the Head. "I blame Wharton more than you. Nevertheless, in such a matter you could not be too careful. That is all, Loder."

Loder of the Sixth left the study with set lips. Dr. Locke turned to Mr. Quelch.

"We must conclude, Mr. Quelch, that Wharton is exonerated."

"It—it appears so, sir," said Mr. Quelch, as if the words were forced out of him. "But nothing can excuse his trickery in deceiving Loder, and causing so much trouble."

"That is true, but that is a light matter in comparison with the subject of the accusation. Wharton, you will take five hundred lines for playing such a trick on a prefect."

"Very well, sir!"

"You may go!"

Wharton's eyes danced with mockery as he looked at the crestfallen master of the Remove.

"Then I am not to be expelled from Greyfriars, sir?" he asked.

"I have already said so. Go!"

Wharton left the study.

He lounged into the Rag, with his hands in his pockets and a smile on his face—the cynosure of all eyes. And all the Remove knew that the "chopper" had not come down, after all.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### The Outcast!

"IT'S the giddy jest of the term!" grinned Skinner, the next day.

Most of the Remove fellows agreed with Skinner, and most of the rest of the Lower School. Indeed, many seniors of the Fifth chuckled over the incident of the Cross Keys.

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The whole affair had been ridiculous. The rebel of the Remove had triumphed all along the line. He had, in fact, held up the Beaks to derision, almost with impunity. Five hundred lines was a cheap price to pay for such a success.

More thoughtful fellows condemned Wharton's peculiar progress in living up to his reputation as the worst fellow at Greyfriars. Nevertheless, they could not help laughing over the comic side of that incident.

Wharton, indeed, was credited with having foreseen and planned the whole thing, whereas, in reality, he had only intended to pull Loder's leg, and had never dreamed of what would follow. But the Lower School agreed in giving the credit, or discredit, for having made fools of all the Sixth Form prefects, his Form master, and the Head, at one fell swoop! The Beaks, individually and in general, had been held up to ridicule.

Naturally, they felt very sore about it.

Wingate of the Sixth, when he thought of his long vigil in a windy lane, all for nothing, reddened with annoyance. Gwynne and North and Walker shared his feeling. Loder was in a state of still greater exasperation. He was the cause of the whole ridiculous enterprise—he and his mistake—and the other prefects told him rather plainly what they thought of his blundering.

"Sittin' round like a lot of moultin' fowls!" was the way Temple of the Fourth described the occupation of the Sixth Form prefects that afternoon—a description that made the fellows chuckle.

The high and mighty Sixth did not like it. Nearly all the prefects had been concerned in the affair, and they felt that they were covered with ridicule as with a garment. It was, as the Bounder observed, a come-down for the "giddy Palladium" of the school.

Mr. Quelch was more intensely annoyed than the prefects, though they were greatly exasperated. The Head also was displeased. He had very nearly inflicted an unjust punishment—an extremely serious matter in his eyes. Wharton was to blame, certainly, for having deliberately misled Loder of the Sixth. But Loder was to blame, too. He had at least been hasty and suspicious. And Mr. Quelch had been to blame. Doubtless his strong prejudice

against the worst boy in his Form was justified; nevertheless, he should not have allowed it to mislead him. He had demanded the expulsion of Harry Wharton, and it had transpired that Wharton had done nothing to earn such a sentence.

The whole affair was galling to all concerned, excepting Wharton. He had the satisfaction, such as it was, of having made the Beaks look absurd, and having irritated and annoyed them all round.

But it was, as the Bounder sagely remarked to the fellows in the Rag, a dangerous triumph.

A junior who set against himself all the prefects, and his Form master and his headmaster, was not likely to have an easy time. The whole crowd, the Bounder remarked, would be on the look-out to catch him, and all the time they would make things jolly uncomfortable for him.

Undoubtedly the prefects were now down on the rebel of the Remove, and very sharp in dealing with him. And in the Form-room he had nothing to expect from Mr. Quelch but what he considered persecution—and what, indeed, now amounted to something like persecution. The Remove master had had more than enough of him, and was anxious to see him turned out of the school, and hardly made a secret of it.

Wharton was quite aware of it, and perhaps for that reason he was a little more careful now. He was not going to gratify Mr. Quelch to that extent, if he could help it.

It was an interesting question in the Remove, how long Wharton would succeed in dodging what they were sure the Beaks had in store for him. The Bounder offered three to one that Wharton would be "bunked" before the end of the term, and found no takers.

Harry Wharton was now more than ever an Ishmael in the school. It could not be said that he had a friend left at Greyfriars. Even Skinner & Co. were getting shy of the fellow who was supposed to be marked out for expulsion as soon as opportunity offered.

To all of which he opposed a stubborn, unbending pride, and carried his head as high as ever. Yet it was probable that, in his heart of hearts, he would gladly have had matters otherwise. What had he gained to compensate for all that he had lost?

The distinction of being regarded as the worst fellow at Greyfriars!

But there was no turning back for him. At least, it seemed to him that there was no turning back. He would not be conquered—he would not humble himself; he would not and he could not. Whatever might betide, he would go on his stubborn way defiant to the last. Yet he knew that at a sign from him his old friends would have stood by him and let bygones be bygones; and he would not make the sign. Even Redwing he now avoided, as if he feared that the healthy influence of the sailor-man's son might weaken his perverse resolution.

And though his knowledge of his danger had made him more careful, it had not changed him; his was not a nature that could be influenced by either punishment or fear. His heart was not in the wretched pursuits he had taken up, rather from desperate defiance than for any other reason; but his Form master's methods with him now were not of a kind to lead him back into better paths. On the next half-holiday Mr. Quelch called him to his desk, when he dismissed the Remove after morning classes.



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"You will remain within gates this afternoon, Wharton," he said coldly.

"Indeed, sir! May I ask what I am punished for?"

"You are not punished, Wharton! You will remain within gates, because I cannot trust you out of the precincts of the school," answered Mr. Quelch. "That is all."

Wharton's eyes glinted.

"Then I'm gated for nothing, sir?"

"That is enough! You may go."

Harry Whartoa followed the Remove out of the Form-room with a flush in his cheeks. His determination was already fixed. He was gated for nothing, and for that reason he would disregard the order. After dinner he walked down to the gates and found Gosling in his path. The school porter had evidently been told.

"You ain't to go out, Master Wharton," said Gosling. "Horders, sir."

"I'm going all the same," said Wharton coolly.

"Now, Master Wharton, wot I says is this 'ere—you run away and don't bother," said Gosling.

Wharton eyed him, as if contemplating "up-ending" the ancient gentleman and scudding for it. Loder of the Sixth came up. Probably he had had a malicious eye on the gated junior. Loder had by no means forgotten or forgiven the episode at the Cross Keys.

"What's that, Wharton?" snapped Loder. "Did I hear you tell Gosling that you were going out all the same?"

Wharton glanced at him.

"I don't know what you heard, Loder," he answered. "I didn't even know you were eavesdropping."

Loder crimsoned.

"You impertinent young sweep! Is that the way you talk to a prefect?" he exclaimed.

"Why not?" said Wharton.

Loder's ashplant was under his arm. He let it slip down into his hand.

"Bend over!" he said tersely.

"Rats!"

"You hear me, Wharton?"

"Go and eat coke!"

And Wharton turned his back on the bully of the Sixth and walked away. Gosling blinked after him.

"My eye!" he murmured.

Ten minutes later, as Wharton was strolling aimlessly under the elms, Gwynne and North of the Sixth came along. Without a word, they took the rebel of the Remove by either arm and walked him away to the House. He was walked into Wingate's study, where Loder stood with the captain of Greyfriars.

Wingate eyed the rebel grimly.

"You told Gosling you were going out, although gated by your Form master, Wharton?"

"Did I?"

"Loder heard you."

"Is it the business of a Sixth Form prefect to listen to a fellow behind his back?" asked Harry.

"You refused to bend over when Loder told you," said Wingate without heeding that question.

"Oh, yes!"

"Very good! Now we'll see whether you refuse to bend over when I tell you," said the Greyfriars captain grimly.

"Bend over."

"I won't!"

"No?" said Wingate. "Well, we'll give you something to cure all that! Bend him over."

In the grip of two Sixth-Formers, the junior was bent over a chair. Wingate made a sign to Loder, and the bully of the Sixth began operations with his ashplant.

"Six!" said Wingate.



"We'll see whether you refuse to bend over when I tell you, Wharton!" said Wingate grimly. "Bend over!" "I won't!" snapped the junior. "No?" said Wingate. "Well, we'll give you something to cure all that! Bend him over!" In the grip of the Sixth Formers Wharton was bent over a chair, while Loder began operations with the ashplant. (See Chapter 11.)

Loder put his beef into that "six." There was no sound from the rebel of the Remove. He could not resist, and what he could not resist he bore with sullen endurance.

The lashes of the ashplant rang through the study. Wharton's face was pale when the six had been administered.

"Let him go," said Wingate. "Get out, you young rascal! And if you go out of bounds this afternoon look out for more trouble. I can tell you that we're fed up with you."

"Not so much as I'm fed up with you, Wingate."

"Do you want another six?"

"I don't care."

Loder gripped the ashplant again anticipatively. But Wingate, controlling his anger, pointed to the door, and Wharton left the study.

"Who's that?" he called out, peering through the shadows.

There was no answer; but across the starlit window a shadow moved. The window was open.

"Is that you, Wharton?" called out Bob. Somehow, he guessed that it was the rebel of the Remove.

"Yes," came the cool answer.

"What are you doing?"

"Going out."

Bob Cherry jumped out of bed. The voices had awakened two or three more of the Removites, and they sat up blinking in the gloom.

The new captain of the Remove hurried across to the window. Harry Wharton was fully dressed; from the window he looked down mockingly at the captain of the Form.

"You're breaking bounds—at this time of night, Wharton?" muttered Bob Cherry.

"Yes."

"Don't be a fool! Go back to bed."

"My esteemed fatheaded Wharton," came Hurree Janset Ram Singh's voice. "The gamefulness is not worth the esteemed candle."

"Can't you mind your own business, you fellows?" asked Wharton in his most insulting tone.

Bob Cherry looked up at him. He was strongly tempted to grasp the rebel by the ankles and drag him back by main force. But he hesitated. A

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THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Finish!

BOB CHERRY awoke in the Remove dormitory and rubbed his eyes.

The hour was late.

As he lay half-awake he heard the strokes of eleven from the clock-tower. He wondered drowsily what had awakened him, and then a movement in the dark dormitory came to his ears. Bob sat up in bed.

"row" in the dormitory meant trouble—not for Bob, certainly, but for the breaker of bounds. If Mr. Quelch came on the scene and found Wharton leaving the dormitory at such an hour by the window, it would be the finish. It would be the chance which all the Remove felt that the Form master was waiting for.

It was a dangerous climb down from the high window to the quad by the thick tendrils of the old ivy. There were few fellows in the Remove who would have essayed such a descent, especially at night. But Wharton's nerve was of iron.

"Stop him!" called out Russell. "Don't let him play the giddy goat, Cherry. You're captain of the Form."

"Come down, Wharton."

"Rats!"

"You know what you're risking," said Bob earnestly. "You can't fail to know that it will be the sack next time you're nailed."

"That needn't worry you," said Wharton sarcastically. "You'll be safer in your new job when I'm gone—if I go."

"That's a rotten thing to say!" said Bob. "I never wanted to be captain of the Remove. I'd give a lot to see you back in your old place, if you'd only be decent!"

"You don't expect me to believe that?"

Bob trembled with anger.

"Wharton!" exclaimed Nugent. He had turned out of bed. "For goodness' sake, don't play the goat now! It's all up with you if it comes out!"

"The upfulness will be terrific."

Harry Wharton laughed.

With only that mocking laugh for reply, he climbed out of the window and hung on the ivy.

Bob Cherry breathed hard.

He could not intervene now without dire danger to the reckless junior on the ivy; a fall from that height was certain death.

"Won't you listen to reason, Wharton?" he exclaimed. "You know that Quelch is suspicious of you. That's why he gated you this afternoon!"

"And that's why I'm going. I was gated for nothing—and given six! Now I'm going. See!"

"If you're spotted—"

"Mind your own bizney!"

"Look here, Wharton—"

But Wharton was gone. The shadowy figure disappeared from the starlit window, and Bob heard the rustle of the thick ivy as Harry Wharton climbed down.

Angry and alarmed as he was, Bob could understand, dimly at least, the feelings of the outcast of the Remove. He had been gated for nothing, as he regarded it. He had been given a prefect's beating for a careless word. His half-holiday had been spent within gates—for no offence. And, in return, he was breaking school bounds at night.

It was not only the reckless wrongdoing of it, but the danger that troubled Bob. Wharton was under suspicion. It was even possible that a watch was kept. And if he was discovered it was the end of all things for him, so far as Greyfriars was concerned. He would feel the full weight of the authority he had derided and defied.

Bob stood irresolute; but he turned back to his bed at last. He could not intervene. The reckless fellow had to be left to go his own reckless way—whichever it might lead.

Harry Wharton, heedless of the comment in the Remove dormitory, climbed steadily down the ivy.

There was a glimmer of starlight in the old quad. The elms, leafless and gaunt, loomed up like spectres in the gloom. The ivy swayed and rustled as he descended, hand below hand.

Lower and lower, swinging lightly on the rustling ivy, without a tremor, he went, and his feet touched the ground at last.

Then as he released his grasp on the ivy he started as he heard a sudden sound. It was a footstep close at hand.

Wharton's heart throbbed.

"Collar him!"

It was Loder's voice.

A heavy grasp dropped on the shoulder of the rebel of the Remove. He sprang back, and another hand grasped him. In the gloom he recognised Loder and Gwynne of the Sixth Form.

"Caught, you young rascal!" said Gwynne.

Wharton panted.

"You rotters!"

"That's enough," said Gwynne curtly. "Come along! This will be the finish for you here, I fancy!"

The rebel of the Remove made a desperate attempt to wrench himself free. But the two powerful seniors grasped him hard, and he was powerless.

With a grip on either shoulder he was marched away and led into the house. A light still burned in Mr. Quelch's study. Gwynne tapped at the Remove master's door.

"Come in!"

Mr. Quelch rose to his feet as Wharton was led into his study. The grim, bitter expression on his severe face showed Wharton that this was not unexpected on his part. He realised that he had been suspected and watched for—that his Form master had foreseen this reckless outbreak and taken his measures accordingly. Blindly, heedlessly, he had walked into the snare. The sum of his offences was made up now, and in the grim face before him he read his condemnation.

"So it was as I suspected!" said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir," said Gwynne.

"Where did you find him?"

"He came down from the dormitory window."

"Upon my word! The reckless young rascal!"

"Wingate is waiting in the dormitory passage, sir," said Loder. "But I thought he might leave by the window, so I went out with Gwynne."

"Quite so," said Mr. Quelch. "You may leave him with me."

Gwynne and Loder left the study, the former grave, the latter with a last glance of malicious triumph at the junior. Wharton stood facing his Form master, and for some moments there was silence.

"So it has come to this, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch at last. "From one offence you have gone to another—from bad to worse, until it has come to this—breaking school bounds late at night!"

Wharton breathed quickly.

"I was gated for nothing," he said sullenly.

"You were kept within gates because you could not be trusted after your previous conduct!" said the Remove master sternly. "And with the opinion I have of you I feared—I expected almost—that you would attempt to break bounds this night. I will say nothing to you, Wharton. The Head will deal with you to-morrow. But you are aware, of course, that this is the last offence you will ever be guilty of at Greyfriars. This school is no place for you!"

Wharton's lip curled.

"I know you'll be glad to see me go," he said. "I know you've wanted it, sir. All the fellows know you've been watching for a chance like this!"

Mr. Quelch flushed.

"I will not bandy words with you, Wharton. Follow me! You are not to be trusted in your dormitory! I shall lock you in the punishment-room for the remainder of the night!"

He passed Wharton into the corridor and signed to the junior to follow him.

Wharton followed.

Even at that moment, though he knew that his long recklessness had borne its fruit at last—that this was ruin—his pride upheld him. His face was calm, his eye was mocking. He walked with erect head. His manner told of nothing but stubborn defiance.

Mr. Quelch unlocked the door of the punishment-room—a room seldom used at Greyfriars.

He motioned to Wharton to enter.

The junior hesitated for a moment;

(Continued on page 28.)

## CRACKERS!

### ACCORDING TO FATHER!

Little Charlie had been naughty, and was now doing penance in the corner.

"I can't help being naughty," he said, in a thoughtfully sad voice. "I never heard of any boy being perfect—except one."

"Who was that?" asked mother, trying to hide her smiles.

"Farver—when he was little," came the crushing retort.

### ANOTHER MATTER.

Tommy was writing a long letter to his father at the front when a visitor was brought into the room by his aunt.

In his haste to clear the table, Tommy upset the ink all over the brand-new plush tablecloth. Immediately he began to sob.

"Cheer up!" said the visitor kindly. "Remember, it's no use crying over spilt milk."

But Tommy replied, amid his sobs:

"Course it ain't. But when you spill milk you've only got to call the cat, and she'll lick it up for you. But this ain't milk; and mother will do the licking!"

### A QUESTION OF FORCE.

The musketry instructor had just been giving a lesson on the rifle to one particularly "green" set of recruits. At the end he asked:

"Now, is there any question you want to ask?"

One dull-looking "Johnny Raw" stepped forward, blushing awkwardly.

"Yes, my man?" said the instructor encouragingly.

"Please, sir," stammered the searcher after knowledge, "be it roight that the 'arder I pull the trigger thing, the farther the bullet goes?"

### EVENING THINGS UP.

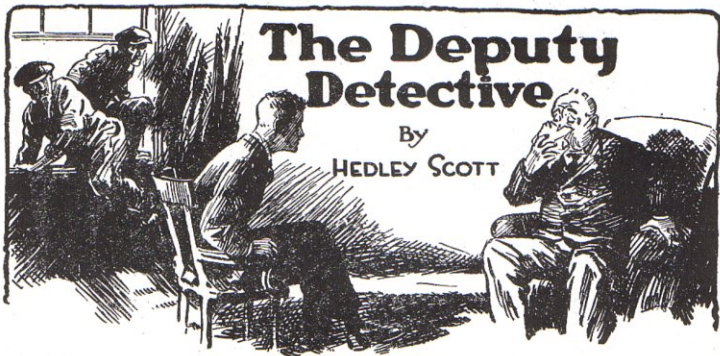
One pay-day, when Patrick Mulrooney reached the cashier's desk, he had forgotten his number, which was "100." So the cashier, a quick-tempered man, angrily told him to wait till all the others had been attended to.

Pat was roused. He meant to get his own back.

So, the following Saturday, when the cashier called out, "Your number, Pat?" the Irishman's retort was quick:

"Twice eleven, six and seven, four teens, and foive, sor!"

**NERVE!** The notorious motor bandits give full warning to the police that they intend to burgle the house of an Italian millionaire. Scotland Yard take all precautions to circumvent these daring scoundrels. But it is left to Jack Drake to "spot" something that official eyes do not see!



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

**Face to Face!**

DR. RAYNHAM seemed to be on the verge of an apoplectic fit. His startled gaze dwelt upon the new boy, and then upon Mr. Martineau.

"Bless my soul!" "Shackleton must have been the boy who gave the alarm," said the Sixth Form master. "He appears to be injured."

"He's been drugged!" exclaimed Fellowes, bending over Drake's prostrate figure. "He reeks of chloroform."

"Better let the matron take charge of him," said Mr. Brock, the master of the Fourth.

"Yes," muttered the Head. "And Martineau, hadn't you better see Mrs. Dunstan, too?"

The Sixth Form master made demur, but he was helped along to the samy's for all that. And once Mrs. Dunstan, the matron, set her eyes upon him, she at once ordered him to bed.

Drake was put to bed in the same ward. He was still unconscious, but his breathing was regular. The matron watched over him for some time, and then, satisfied that she could do nothing further for him, trod quietly away.

The dawn was just breaking when Drake rubbed his eyes and stared about him. In a flash the happenings of the night came back to him. He started up in bed in alarm. But a glance round him told him that he was in the sanatorium. That meant he had been found in the Head's study. It meant, perhaps, that the motor bandits had been surprised at their fell work; it meant, perhaps that Mr. Martineau had been caught red-handed!

"Well, and how do you feel, my boy?"

The boy sleuth almost jumped from the bed as the voice broke in upon his reflections. He recognised it as belonging to Mr. Martineau.

"You!" exclaimed Drake hoarsely. "What are you doing here?"

His eyes rested distinctly upon the occupant of the next bed, and the plentiful array of bandages that encircled the master's head.

"I am, or was, like yourself, a victim

of the burglars who broke into the school early this morning," said Mr. Martineau, feeling his bandaged head tenderly.

"What?" Drake's lip curled. "You a victim! Ha, ha!"

The laughter made Mr. Martineau glance sharply at the Fourth-Former. For a moment he wondered whether the boy's reason had suffered.

"You think I believe that story, you scoundrel," continued the boy sleuth grimly.

"Boy! What—what! Scoundrel, indeed! How dare you!" exclaimed Mr. Martineau, completely taken aback.

"That won't wash with me now!"

**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 PYCROFT, 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 discovers that the chief of the motor bandits is in some way connected with a school, and, accordingly, the boy sleuth travels down to Teudinghurst School, in Surrey, in the guise of Montmorency Percival Shackleton, a dandy and slacker.

The new boy loses no time in getting to work. His suspicions fasten on Mr. Martineau, the master of the Sixth Form.

The Head's study is burgled by the bandits. Drake comes across them at work. He accuses the chief of being Mr. Martineau, the Form master, and then gives the alarm. Drake is rendered unconscious.

When Dr. Raynham, the headmaster, enters his study he finds Mr. Martineau stretched out upon the floor, unconscious. The Form master declares that he heard a cry for help—that he hastened to the study, only to be struck down by one of the burglars. Dr. Raynham darts to the safe and swings open the door. To the astonishment of the masters and pupils who have been called to the scene, Drake, alias Shackleton, pitches forward from the interior of the safe.

(Now read on.)

growled Drake. "You think you can play the respectable Form master, do you? I'm going to put a stop to your little game."

"Boy—"

"I don't know what cock-and-bull story you've told the Head," went on Drake fiercely. "I know it's my word against yours; but I'm going to unmask you, you scoundrel!"

"Scoundrel!" repeated Mr. Martineau faintly. "The boy must be mad! The blow he received must have turned his reason—"

"Cut it out!" said Drake excitedly. "I've told you that game won't wash. I suppose the school silver has gone—"

"Yes," said Mr. Martineau gently, thinking it best to soothe this wild youth. "The thieves took every piece from the safe."

"And they've left no tracks," said Drake sarcastically. "No alarm was given, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes, my poor boy," said the Form master, now beginning to think that Drake was unduly worried about the theft of the silver. "It must have been you who gave the alarm. Your shout brought me to the spot—"

"What, you hypocrite!" shouted Drake. "You talk like that, when I know it was you who knocked me down—when I know it was you who wore that mask! Oh, I can alter my voice," he added bitterly, "as no doubt you have observed!"

"Mad, mad!" muttered the Form master, shaking his head. "I must call the matron. Mad—mad! Quite a different lad. He talks differently—"

"Cut it out!" roared Drake, leaping from his bed, and shaking a fist in the astonished master's face. "You're a villain!"

The master of the Sixth blinked at that grim fist with goggling eyes. Never in all the course of his scholastic career had a pupil taken such a liberty.

"There, there," he said soothingly. "You want a sleep, poor boy. You are over-wrought. Dear, dear! I wish the matron would come in."

No sooner had he made the remark than Mrs. Dunstan swept into the sanatorium. She had been aroused by

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the ringing of the night bell in her bedroom. With an ejaculation of dismay she hurried forward, just in time to prevent Drake from dashing an infuriated fist in the Form master's face.

"My dear Mrs. Dunstan!" gasped Mr. Martineau, "I fear that Shackleton's reason has been affected. I—I rang for you—"

"My name is not Shackleton!" roared Drake wildly. "He knows it is not, matron!"

"There, there, my poor boy!" said Mrs. Dunstan soothingly, with a meaningful glance at her other patient. "You are not well. Go back to bed. There, there!"

To Drake's dismay the matron began to lead him back to his bed. He struggled to free himself, his wild outbursts to explain the position only strengthening the good dame's belief that the boy was mad. Mr. Martineau had to go to her assistance. Between them they forced Drake back to his bed.

"Hold the poor lad, sir!" panted the matron. "I will mix him a sleeping-draught."

She rushed from the room, leaving the Form master to attend to Drake. The boy slouched began to realise what a serious position he had made for himself. He became calm. Unfortunately for him, that was also taken by the matron as another symptom of a deranged mind.

"The effort has proved too much for him!" she muttered to Mr. Martineau. "Poor lad. He'll be all right in the morning. Drink this—"

"This" was a sleeping-draught; but Drake showed no intention of swallowing the beastly stuff. He wriggled and struggled afresh. Between them, the master and the matron forced open his lips and emptied the contents of the phial down his throat.

"GUGGG!"

That was Drake's only protest—the only one possible in the circumstances.

Not content with that, Mrs. Dunstan began to strap him down to the bed, a task Mr. Martineau assisted in. Then, taking no notice of his wild outburst, a pair of them sat down by Drake's bed and waited for the draught to take effect. As was to be expected it took a long time to operate. Drake fighting against the feeling of sleepiness for all he was worth. But medicine had its way in the finish, and he sank into slumber.

"Thank heavens!" gasped Mr. Martineau. "I was beginning to feel anxious about him!"

"Oh, he'll be all right," reassured the matron. "But you, sir, you'll catch your death of cold—"

"I—I think I'll get back to my own room," said the Form master, with a glance at the sleeping Fourth-Former.

"If you would prefer it, sir, do so," replied Mrs. Dunstan, interpreting his glance.

Mr. Martineau lost no time. He rushed into a dressing-gown, and was gone from the sanny in about two minutes.

Mrs. Dunstan looked at her remaining patient, saw that he was breathing regularly, and, gathering her dressing-gown about her, made herself comfortable in the big armchair.

In five minutes her head was nodding on her chest; in ten minutes she was fast asleep.

It must have been eight o'clock when she awoke. A slight sound of someone moving about the ward disturbed her. Rubbing the sleep from her eyes, she blinked about her, conscious of the fact that she had overslept.

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"Oh!"

Mrs. Dunstan almost flew from her chair when she saw the figure of her patient, fully dressed, stealing on tip-toe out of the ward.

"Come back!"

But Drake was deaf to the command. He had had enough of Mrs. Dunstan and her sleeping draughts. He bolted.

The stairs leading to the house were taken at a bound, Drake landing in a heap on the mat at the bottom. He picked himself up, gave one glance behind him, saw the anxious face of the matron peering at him over the landing railings above, and dashed down the passage.

His first thought was to see Dr. Raynham, and at the double he made tracks for the Head's quarters. A glance at his watch told him the hour, and he knew that the school would shortly be assembling for morning prayers. Dr. Raynham would be in his study.

Like a whirlwind he broke into the Head's apartment, without even the courtesy of a knock at the door. No time for courtesy in a case of such urgency. Mr. Martineau must be exposed, arrested! Drake, before he had succeeded in breaking loose from his bonds in the sanatorium, had seen that the master's bed was empty.

"The scoundrel's on the run!" had been his instant reflection. "He's not going to try and bluff it out any longer."

Breathing heavily, Drake burst into Dr. Raynham's study. Then he jumped. By the window stood Dr. Raynham and Mr. Martineau deep in conversation.

#### A Terrible Blunder!

**M**R. MARTINEAU'S head shot forward in astonishment as he saw the "mad" junior. The Head licked his lips and fidgeted with his gown.

It was Drake who spoke first.

"I see I am just in time, Dr. Raynham," he said firmly.

"Yes, yes," Dr. Raynham had an idea that a madman had to be humourous. "Just in time, my poor boy!"

"Poor boy, fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Drake savagely. "I suppose Martineau has been stuffing you with silly rot that I'm mad. The scoundrel thought I was safe in the sanny. You wouldn't have seen him by noon to-day, sir," he added, with a challenging glare at the Form master.

"You are not yourself," broke in Mr. Martineau.

"Ha!" Drake's laugh was mocking. "An appropriate phrase, sir. You are not yourself. Ha! Do you know, Dr. Raynham," he added suddenly, "that you have been sheltering one of the biggest rogues criminology has ever known?"

Dr. Raynham almost jumped clear of the floor at that surprising statement.

"What?" he gasped. "My dear Martineau, the—the boy is really mad—"

A scornful smile flitted at the corners of Drake's mouth.

"No more mad than you are, sir!" he exclaimed.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Martineau. He had been as much surprised at Drake's statement as was the Head.

"And do you know," resumed the boy slouch, "that you have been talking to the chief of the motor bandits—"

"What, what?" stammered Dr. Raynham, almost overcome. "I—I have been speaking to him—"

"You have!" returned Drake.

"Quite gone!" was Mr. Martineau's whispered comment. But Drake, overhearing it, seized upon it.

"Not quite gone, Martineau!" he rapped. "Same enough to put the bracelets on you, clever as you undoubtedly are!"

"On me?"

"On—a master!" gasped the Head, with an awestruck expression.

"On the chief of the motor bandits, sir," returned Drake triumphantly. "Alias Mr. Martineau, the respected Form master of the Sixth at Teddington!"

"Wha-a-t!"

Dr. Raynham's pince-nez toppled off his nose in his agitation. But for the fact that he reckoned the boy before him to be insane, and therefore not responsible for what he said or did, he would have flogged him on the spot for that audacious statement. As for Mr. Martineau, he seemed too overcome for words. He gasped.

Drake was a little disappointed. Mr. Martineau, unless he were a consummate actor, although agitated at Drake's drastic statement, seemed anything but guilty. He seemed more like some huge fish floundering out of water.

"Is—is this boy Shackleton really mad?" stammered the Head, peering at the boy slouch searchingly.

Drake answered the question and provided another shock for the two learned gentlemen. With one tug he whipped off his wig of well-oiled black hair and allowed his features to return to their normal positions. Gone was the screwed-up eyebrow, the supercilious twist of the lip, the wrinkles in the brow.

"This boy is not Shackleton," he said evenly, "as Mr. Martineau is well aware."

"N-not Shackleton?"

"No, Dr. Raynham. I must apologise for the trick I have played upon you. I am no more Montmorency Percival Shackleton than you are, sir!"

Dr. Raynham had had about a dozen shocks in as many hours, and his head was beginning to reel with them.

"Then who are you, boy—wretched boy?" he asked sternly.

"Jack Drake—Ferrers Locke's assistant!"

More shocks! Dr. Raynham sought a chair and sank gasping into it. Events were moving too fast for his easy-going mentality. He looked at Mr. Martineau appealingly.

The Sixth Form master was regarding the boy slouch fixedly. At last he grunted.

"Yes, yes!" he muttered. "The boy is right. This is Jack Drake—the assistant of Ferrers Locke, the world-famous detective. I recognise him now from the newspaper photographs I have seen."

"Oh, you know all right!" said Drake bitterly. "Perhaps you will realise that the game is up, Martineau. Perhaps you will tell Dr. Raynham why I have come here, or would you prefer me to do that?"

"Boy!" gasped Mr. Martineau. "I fail to understand you! Kindly explain this preposterous charge. There appears to be something mysterious about the affair. What with your talk of motor-bandits, and your scandalous statement that I am their chief, I am beginning to wonder whether it is not myself who is insane."

"Yes, kindly explain, my boy!" put in Dr. Raynham sternly. "You have admitted your identity, which I have no doubt can be easily verified. But why have you come here to Teddington? And what in the name of Heaven do



"You're a villain!" roared Jack Drake. "Mad, mad!" muttered the Form master. "You want a sleep, my poor boy! Dear, dear, I wish the matron would come in!" No sooner had he made the remark than Mrs. Duristan swept into the sanatorium. With a gasp of dismay she hurried forward, just in time to prevent Drake from dashing an infuriated fist into Mr. Martineau's face. (See page 22.)

you mean by charging my colleague with—"

"I'll explain fast enough!" snapped Drake, seating himself in a chair, his eyes glued upon the tall figure of the Sixth Form master as though he expected to see that individual make a bolt for it.

But Mr. Martineau did nothing of the kind.

Drake swiftly outlined the object of his coming to Teddinhurst. "And you were led to believe that at Teddinhurst would be found the chief of these—these scoundrelly burglars?" gasped the Head, in conclusion. "Scandalous!"

"That is so, sir!" replied Drake. "And I had been at the school less than three weeks when my suspicions were directed at Mr. Martineau."

"Indeed!" was the master's sarcastic comment.

"In the first place," resumed Drake, watching the Form master's face intently, "I discovered that Mr. Martineau had a habit of leaving school at night—"

"But—but—" began Dr. Raynham, when Mr. Martineau cut him short.

"And that this man here," continued Drake, "was absent from school on the night of the Bramshott robbery. The next morning I happened to be nosing round his study—that's a part of my job," he added hastily, "when I saw a black crepe mask hanging on his bureau. I have that mask now!"

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Raynham, with a sharp look at his colleague.

"As you doubtless have read, sir,"

said Drake, "the chief of the gang is in the habit of wearing a black crepe mask when he plies his nefarious trade. Point number one—Martineau had such a mask!"

There was a scornful expression on the face of Mr. Martineau as he listened to "point number one."

"Clue number two," went on Drake, "concerns a gentleman by the name of Thomas, who is the bandit chief's right-hand man. Yesterday I overheard Martineau talking over the phone to Thomas; heard him give instructions that the rest of the fellows—the gang, that is—should be notified, heard him say to Thomas that he would meet him at eleven o'clock at night!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head. "You appear to have dogged Mr. Martineau's footsteps everywhere!"

"I have shadowed him as much as school regulations have allowed me," said Drake. "Now for point number three. Soon after he phoned this man Thomas yesterday, I overheard Martineau's conversation with yourself, sir—in this room!"

"How dare you!" rapped the Head indignantly. "How dare you listen outside my door!"

"Your pardon, sir," smiled Drake, "but a detective has many ungenial tasks to perform, and eavesdropping is not the worst of them by any means. Anyway, I heard him reassuring you that the motor-bandits would never dream of breaking into this school. I heard him pumping you as to what valuables you kept in the safe."

Dr. Raynham looked sharply at his

colleague. He remembered now that Martineau had scoffed at the idea of thieves breaking into the school. And now the silver had gone!

"I have not the slightest doubt that Martineau let the bandits into the school," continued Drake, "for it was barely five minutes after he had entered himself that I found them wandering along to your study. And, bear this well in mind, sir—the thieves made straight for this room. The only room in the whole of the school that offered them anything in the way of a crib. You will admit, sir, that they were informed of the school silver and where it was kept!"

"It certainly seems so," said Dr. Raynham. "Martineau," he added fiercely, "why don't you quash this absurd story instead of smiling? I suppose there is no truth in it?"

"None at all, I assure you," replied Martineau easily. "But let the boy tell his story first. How does he account for you, sir, and the other masters finding me unconscious on this floor after the thieves had broken into the safe?"

Drake laughed triumphantly.

"You thought that was a trump card, Martineau. I have no doubt. After finding me on your trail and flooring me, you had to cover up your tracks. I have not the slightest doubt that you saw the swag safely bestowed upon the persons of your scoundrelly partners, and then asked one of them to oblige you with a crack over the head—not too hard to be dangerous—to make it appear as though

you were a victim of the bandits. Very clever, but not clever enough to deceive me. You reckoned on my charging you with your villainy, and you reckoned that it would be merely my word against yours, and that you would win. But we shall see!"

Drake's outburst left Mr. Martineau strangely unmoved for a scoundrelly criminal who had been unmasked. He smiled and leaned forward on his elbows.

"I am afraid you have made a terrible mistake," he said quietly. "We will start at the beginning. You must know, my boy; that I am a keen astronomer—that I am in the habit of stargazing, as you boys call it, practically every night of the week."

"An astronomer?"  
Drake nearly shot out of his seat. Dr. Raynham came to the rescue.

"Yes, Mr. Martineau has an observatory on the top of Reynard's Hill," he said.

"Oh, crumbs!"  
"Thank you, sir!" smiled Mr. Martineau. "Perhaps it will interest this over keen detective to know that my right-hand man is named Thomas—he's fifty-six next birthday, and can be seen at the observatory every day of the week."

"Oh!"  
Drake's expression was a blank. He had an uncomfortable feeling that his theory was going to be shattered.

"And the rest of the fellows, whom you took to be the gang, my dear boy," added the Form master lightly, "are special mechanics who have just completed the installation of a new telescope in my observatory. I wanted one or two slight readjustments made, and I wanted the fitters on the spot. That, I think, disposes of Thomas, the rest of the gang, and the peculiar habit I have of mooching out of the school after lights out."

"But—but the mask!"  
Drake was surprised at the hoarseness of his own voice. Was it possible that he had made a fearful blunder?

"The mask!" Mr. Martineau's smile was more disconcerting than ever. "Why, I took it away from Smithson minor the day before I gave it to you. I found him frightening a timid youngster with it, and I confiscated it. Perhaps I had no real right to pass it on to you, my boy, but there it is. Smithson minor will hear out what I say."

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head.  
"I—I—I—" stuttered Drake, blushing to the roots of his hair.

"You will see, Drake, that the charge against me is ridiculous. You appear to have jumped, not unnaturally, mind you, to a series of hasty and serious conclusions. But had you been clever enough to have followed me to my observatory, this unpleasantness would never have occurred."

"I tried to follow you last night," said Drake, horrified now at the scandalous charge he had laid against a respectable schoolmaster. "But—but that ass of a porter collared me on the top of the wall just as I was about to drop down into the roadway. Expect he will report me this morning, sir," he added, turning to Dr. Raynham.

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head once again.

"I can see where coincidence has led you astray," said Mr. Martineau kindly enough for a man who had been wrongly accused. "And although I was near to being made the scapegoat, I can appreciate your theory, for if you expected to find the bandit chief at Teddinhurst, the only person whose movements are a

trifle out of the—er—er—ordinary, are my own."

"I—I—I—" Poor Jack Drake! He sat there fidgeting and blushing and wishing all the while for the study floor to open and engulf him. Dr. Raynham blinked at the boy sleuth, blinked at Mr. Martineau, and then ejaculated for the umpteenth time:

"Bless my soul!"  
"I need scarcely ask you whether you persist in your theory, my boy?" was Mr. Martineau's remark after an uncomfortable silence.

"Good heavens, no!" exclaimed Drake. "I'm fearfully sorry, sir. I've never felt more ashamed of myself. But if that fool of a porter hadn't caught me last night I would have saved myself from making such a blunder, would have spared you this slander—"

"Don't take it to heart, my boy," smiled Mr. Martineau. "I readily forgive you. Perhaps a stargazing master at Teddinhurst knows more of the than that assistant imagines. Besides," he added, with a meaning glance at Dr. Raynham, "you were doing what you thought to be a public service. And again you were risking your life when you entered this room and attempted to arrest the bandits and their chief single-handed. That was real plucky if a trifle foolhardy, was it not, Dr. Raynham?"

"Yes, yes," agreed the Head. "The boy has—has made a bad mistake, but there, Martineau, I believe you and I were in the habit of making mistakes when we were younger, eh?"

"And still make them!" exclaimed the Form master, with a laugh.

"You are both very kind," said Drake falteringly. "I will endeavour to retrieve something of the terrible blunder I have made. I swear to you two gentlemen that I'll restore the silver stolen yesterday or I'll die in the attempt."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Mr. Martineau, who, although he thought Drake's remark to be a trifle bumpious, disparaged it not.

"Will you indeed?" gasped the Head, sitting bolt upright in his chair. "If you can do that, my boy, you'll earn my everlasting gratitude."

"I shall not fail!" said Drake grimly. "I'll win out in the long run. But I must lose no time, sir," he added. "Of course, I cannot possibly remain at this school now, even were you good enough to allow me, for there's work to be done of a far more serious nature than Latin and maths!"

"There is indeed!" sighed Dr. Raynham, thinking of his lost silver plate. "Do whatever you wish, my boy."

Thus it was that Jack Drake startled the existence of two elderly scholars at Teddinhurst who had little reckoned until now in "Montmorency Percival Shackleton" they had entertained a real live boy detective in disguise.

There was no malice when they parted, just earnest wishes of success as Drake shook these two scholarly gentlemen by the hand and voiced his regrets and farewells.

And when Dr. Raynham and Mr. Martineau walked into Big Hall two minutes later, they smiled at each other knowingly as, from the region of the cycle shed, came the sudden burst of sound that denoted an engine in motion.

Drake had lost no time. It had been arranged that his identity should remain a secret so far as the rest of the school was concerned, that his baggage should be sent on to Baker Street.

While the boys in Big Hall were answering to their names a high-powered motor-bike was speeding out of the gates of Teddinhurst, bearing the "sacker of the Fourth," and it passed unnoticed that Montmorency Percival Shackleton's name was omitted from the roll.

**The Warning!**

There was an air of despondency around Jack Drake as he walked into Inspector Pycroft's rooms at Upper Norwood three hours later.

"What the thump are you doing here?"

Pycroft's surprise was pardonable, for he had just finished reading a letter from the boy sleuth that had been posted at Teddinhurst the previous day.

Drake explained, crimson of face, but hiding nothing.

"Well, I'm hanged!" exclaimed Pycroft at the finish of the story. "This is a regular corker! But what on earth influenced you to go to Teddinhurst in the first place?"

"Thought I had picked up a clue," replied Drake, not wishing to disclose the last words of Montague Eccleston. There was just a bare possibility that those words could be viewed from another angle, and, if so, what had been a colossal blunder might be outweighed!

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by a colossal success. "Made a confounded fool of myself, and thought I'd get out quick."

"Great Scott!" Pycroft's exclamation was a trifle too expressive. He seemed pleased to discover that there were other folk in the world capable of making mistakes besides himself. "Hard cheese, my lad!"

"But I'll get that scoundrel of a chief," said Drake, "if I go to a thousand schools! I'll get him!"

The inspector smiled indulgently. He had spoken the same words to his chief only a few hours ago. Words came easy with Pycroft.

"Then what do you think of this?" he asked, shoving a single sheet of note-paper covered in writing into the boy's hand.

Wonderingly Drake took the missive and scanned it. It ran:

"In spite of your police precautions we shall relieve Mr. Fonezny, of Chiddingfold, of a few thousand pounds to-morrow. Accept the challenge?"

"THE BANDITS."

"Sounds cheeky," remarked Drake as he handed the letter back. "Do you think they mean it?"

The C.I.D. man snorted.

"There's no knowing what they'll do these days," he growled. "The Chief up at the Yard reckons that it's only a bit of bluff. I rather think that—"

"They'll attempt it?" put in Drake.

"Yes."

"Well, you've got everything in your favour to rope them in if they do," said Drake. "Nothing like being forewarned. But who is this Fonezny merchant? Good old English name, isn't it?"

"All the way from Italy," grinned the C.I.D. man. "He's an Italian millionaire who started to make a fortune from pushing an ice-cream barrow about. His daughter comes of age to-morrow, and he's holding a reception at his house in Chiddingfold."

"Another Surrey victim!" grunted Drake. "Lemme see, Chiddingfold's only a few miles away from Hambleton. We shall know something of the country round about there, if the bandits have a bit more rope. Jolly decent of them to warn you in advance, old scout!"

"I'm taking a squad of plain-clothes men down with me," said the C.I.D. man shortly. "This Fonezny merchant has got the wind up, I think. He's received a similar note from the bandits. Wants us to take charge of things without making all his guests uncomfortable. Dress affair, you know."

"You'll never hide the policeman's feet, even if you put him in evening-dress," chuckled the boy sleuth. "Do I accompany you?" he added seriously.

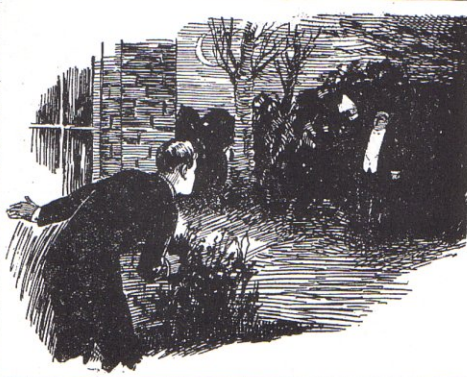
"If you like. You've got sharp eyes, my lad; you may be useful," replied Pycroft. "Besides, you know the dials of some of the bandits, and that's where the police, with the exception of your truly, are at a disadvantage."

"Sounds as if it's going to be an interesting day to-morrow," said Drake, with a smile. "Any way, it'll be better than lessons in a muggy Form-room at Teddington. Ugh!"

"It's going to be more than interesting," said Pycroft warmly. "I reckon we shall have 'em cold if they try any tricks at Fonezny's place."

"Will there be much loot knocking around?"

"A whole heap of it," answered the C.I.D. man. "Fonezny's a big gun in the City nowadays, and he's bound to invite a crowd of wealthy folk who can dub up a decent present. You know the



The boy sleuth watched the man walk out away from the house until he was almost lost to sight, his white shirt-front, cuffs, and collar contrasting with the darkness, the only signs that indicated where he was. Suddenly something white flickered aloft, and Drake instinctively knew it to be a handkerchief. The handkerchief was shaken half a dozen times. It was a signal of some sort, that was obvious. (See page 27.)

way of these stunts, my lad. 'We'll invite Lord and Lady Poof; they're pretty substantial people. Pearl necklace at least from them.'

"I get you," said Drake, smiling. "Fonezny's a business man from the word 'Go'—eh?"

"Sure. And it's well known that Count Somebody-or-other is giving Fonezny's daughter a valuable string of rubies. They alone are said to be worth twenty thousand, if they're worth a penny."

"Oh, for an ice-cream barrow!" sighed Drake. "A barrow, a bit of luck, and a title. That's the ambition of an ice-cream man, old scout."

"The presents will be on view during the evening. When everyone has nosed round and criticised each other's gifts, I'm going to suggest to Fonezny that he locks me in the room with the stuff," said Pycroft. "I'll take a pretty clever bandit to beat me at the last lap, even if he is successful in getting into the house itself."

"Then I suppose the jewellery, etc., will be packed off to the bank the next day?"

"That's it. Our job is to see it isn't snaffled during the reception," replied Pycroft. "And I'll wager my reputation it isn't, either."

Drake was theorising for the rest of that day. If the bandits intended making a raid on Fonezny's place, it seemed as if they were asking for certain capture. On the other hand, the boastful message might be a blind to keep the police busy in one quarter of the globe while the bandits, laughing up their sleeves, operated in another quarter.

The boy sleuth mentioned the latter possibility to the C.I.D. man next morning.

"We've thought of that," grinned Pycroft. "If they are fooling—well"—he shrugged his shoulders—"that's not my look-out. But, Jack, I've got an uncanny feeling that they are goin' to try

their luck at Fonezny's out of devilment. Jove!" he added. "They've had a wonderful run of luck. Must have shifted at least a quarter of a million of stuff since they came into operation."

"We'll get them," said Drake stoutly. "The luck never hangs good for ever, you know."

"Hum!"

For the remainder of that morning Pycroft and Drake busied themselves with brushing their dress-suits. At four-thirty they were driving up in the station car—a Ford—to the imposing residence of Benjamin Fonezny at Chiddingfold, the man who started making a fortune from the proceeds of ice-cream.

Benjamin Fonezny himself proved to be an affable little gentleman, swarthy of countenance and extremely voluble.

"Good-afternoon!" he said pleasantly, the slight accent betraying his nationality. "You come prepared?"

"Sure thing, Mr. Fonezny," said Pycroft pompously. "You leave things to me, sir; we'll vouch for the security of the gifts."

He touched his side-pocket reassuringly. He liked the feel of the butt of the fully-loaded automatic nestling there.

"I'm obliged, very," went on the little Italian, rubbing his hands with satisfaction. "The motor bandits, they are notoriously clever, but the polecco—ah, ah!—they make the cleverest scoundrel look silly—eh?"

The while he was talking Fonezny was leading the way into the house.

"'Twould be a peety if my little daughter lost her birthday presents, would it not?" he remarked pleasantly. "You see," he added, "one cannot insure against burglary on such an occasion, and some of the presents are yet to arrive."

Drake could scarce forbear a smile. This little businesslike Italian evidently knew within a small margin how many presents his daughter was likely to

receive, and he was perturbed because they could not be insured.

"You have other men coming down, have you not?" asked Mr. Foenenzy, as he signalled to a footman to take Pycroft's hat and coat and bag. "Other men besides your son here?"

"My son!" exclaimed Pycroft, reddening. "This is Jack Drake, Ferrers Locke's assistant, not my son!"

"Jack Drake! Ah! I know heem!" said Foenenzy. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Pycroft—and yours, Mr. Drake," he added.

The C.I.D. man and Drake broke into a hearty laugh.

"I've got six men travelling down here on the five-fifty-five," said the former at length. "They will mingle with the guests, as you yourself suggested, sir. They have already received their orders from me."

"That is good. I will show you over the house, so that you will know your way about, Mr. Pycroft. This is the ball-room," he hastened to add, indicating a spacious room to his left.

"And where will the presents be on view?" asked the C.I.D. man.

"This room," smiled the host, leading the way across the broad hall. "A dozen of my servants, all armed, are on guard there at present."

"Then the stuff is already set out," said Pycroft.

"There are still some presents to arrive," reminded the host. "Of course, I could not have a dozen servants hanging round my guests when they come to view the presents, but I thought I would protect myself against any surprise raid by these motor-thieves if they should think fit to break in before the festivities begin."

"A wise precaution, sir," said Pycroft. "But these folk don't work in the daytime, sir. It's to-night when we've got to be careful."

### The Signal!

As he spoke the inspector gazed round the small room into which Foenenzy showed him. Running the whole length of it was a narrow mahogany table, and heaped upon it was as fine a collection of silver, plate, jewellery, miniatures, and sundry other articles of value that either Drake

or Pycroft had ever seen. Daintily-printed cards accompanying the gifts, bore the names of some of the most illustrious members of the Italian Embassy in London, here and there a few English titles could be picked out, whilst some of the "lions" of the Stock Exchange were well in evidence.

Foenenzy caught the look of admiration in the C.I.D. man's face.

"Is it not a wonderful array?" he asked. "Am I not wise to have such a quantity of valuables guarded?"

"Very!" grunted Pycroft, noting, with a rather scornful glance, the dozen "armed servants." "I suppose you know these men personally? They are not imported for the occasion?"

"Most certainly not," was the reply. "They belong to my regular staff. Each man is as honest as the day," he added. "I will dismiss them, of course, Mr. Pycroft, when you take charge of affairs."

"Good!" grunted the inspector. He walked across to the solitary window the room contained and glanced out of it. A smile of satisfaction crossed his face as he noted the heavy wooden shutters that folded into position on the inside.

"With those shutters up, Mr. Foenenzy," he remarked, turning to the Italian millionaire, "access to this little lot of stuff via the window is well-nigh impossible. We shall have to concentrate on the possibility of an entry via the door."

"Exactly," smiled the Italian. "I selected this room because it is on the first floor, and, therefore, difficult for a potential thief or thieves to get at."

Pycroft's next job was to view the exterior of the house. He noted, with satisfaction, that there was little cover for any would-be burglars in the grounds that encircled the house. Most of it was lawn, with here and there a flower-bed.

The balcony that jutted out from the window of the room in which the gifts were to be displayed was at least fifteen feet from the ground, so that the possibilities of a forced entry in that direction seemed practically nil.

"Well, what do you think of it, my lad?" he asked Drake, when the pair of them were standing before the blazing log-fire in the hall. "What chances have

the bandits got of pulling off a haul like this?"

"They don't appear to have a leg to stand on," said Drake. "I can't help thinking that the blessed note warning you of their intentions is a blind. Or, maybe," he added, "it's the work of some practical joker."

"That's the latter, anyway," said the inspector. "Prior to this affair, we've had three separate notes from the gang, all done in block capitals, similar to this one, telling us of their amiable intention to crack a crib. Only on these occasions they forgot to mention what and where the crib was," he added sarcastically.

"Colossal cheek!" remarked Drake. "They're getting bolder now, it appears. Reckon they'll be telling you in their next note what time they intend to crack their crib, as well as telling you the locality of it!"

The pair of them discussed the affair from every possible angle, what time Pycroft mapped out his programme. Four of the special "squad" travelling down from the Yard were to be sprinkled about among the guests, one of them was to be stationed near the electric light main in the cellar, in case any attempt should be made to cut the cable; one of them, in the garb of a footman, was to patrol the passage outside the door of the room containing the birthday gifts.

Foenenzy's "armed twelve" were to patrol the grounds on the look-out for suspicious individuals. Nothing was left to chance.

So unobtrusively was the whole thing carried out that the guests, who began to arrive at half-past seven, noticed nothing out of the way. Pycroft and Drake were in evening-dress as were the special "squad" sent down from the Yard for the occasion.

Outside the house were parked a score of cars, the chauffeurs chatting amongst themselves as they quickly made friends with each other. Inside the house all was a blaze of light, of splendour. Flowers were in abundance, soft-footed servants seemed to spring up from nowhere whenever they were wanted, a band played special airs.

Mr. Foenenzy and his pretty daughter made a perfect host and hostess.

In a long stream the guests swept into the room and passed comment upon the birthday presents; ladies dressed in the height of fashion, joked and chatted with their male escorts, congratulated the hostess, thought longingly of the days when their twenty-first birthday had been celebrated, and passed on to the magnificently-decorated dining-room, gleaming with silver plate, rare old cut glass, and gorgeous flowers.

Each guest was announced, was carefully scrutinised before being admitted by a zealous pair of footmen; everything moved in harmony.

Pycroft and Drake, who lounged, apparently unobserved, at the passing stream of humanity in the "gift" room, felt highly pleased with themselves. There seemed little chance of the bandits keeping to their arrogant threat.

And when the last of the sightseers had passed in and out of the small room Pycroft beckoned to Mr. Foenenzy.

"That's the lot," he whispered. "Forty-five guests in all, sir. If you will take the precaution of locking me in this room for the rest of the evening and pocketing the key these clever bandits won't get so much as a smell of this stuff. I've closed the shutters of

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the window as you can see. To make assurance doubly sure, I suggest that you give me a look-in every half-hour. You, Drake," he added, "will just play a lone hand and keep your eyes well open."  
 "That is an excellent plan," agreed Mr. Fonezy. "Are you sure you will be all right, Mr. Pycroft?"  
 "Don't worry about me, sir," said the C.I.D. man easily. "I've instructed my men to keep a sharp look-out in the ball-room. I've an idea that an attempt might be made to steal some of the guests' jewellery and not this stuff. But in either case the thieves will find themselves up against it."

With a reassuring smile, the C.I.D. settled himself in an armchair that commanded a view of almost every portion of the room and placed his loaded automatic on his lap.

The door closed upon him, and he was left to keep his vigil, Mr. Fonezy and Drake walking into the dining-room.

At every half-hour thereafter the millionaire tapped upon the panels of the door in which Pycroft was keeping guard, and asked if all was well. And on each occasion the answer was a cheerful affirmative.

Meantime, Jack Drake was moving about amongst the guests on the look-out for anyone of a suspicious character. He paid particular attention to the electric light switches in the rooms in case the bandits should be concentrating on robbing the guests. To do that he knew the great ball-room would have to be plunged in darkness.

After an hour or so of this monotonous vigil the boy sleuth was firmly of the opinion that the threatening letter from the motor-bandits was a hoax. The more he viewed the position the more hopeless it seemed for the

rogues to carry out their threat. And, being a youth, Drake soon settled down to enjoy himself.

Benjamin Fonezy appeared to be well satisfied with things. He was all smiles. He buttonholed the boy sleuth as they walked towards the refreshment-room.

"Nothing to fear now," he said smilingly. "All the motor-bandits on earth couldn't break in. Excellent! You don't know how relieved I am, my boy!"

"Just a bit of bluff on the part of those scoundrels, sir," said Drake. "Poor old Pycroft—he's missing all the fun!"

"Yes, yes," said the millionaire, with a shake of the head; "but it was his suggestion, my boy. You will excuse me?" he added, as a well-known member of the Embassy strolled towards him.

"Certainly!"  
 The boy sleuth finished his drink and then sauntered over to the gift-room, where he exchanged a few pleasantries with the C.I.D. man on guard.

"Not so much of it!" called out Pycroft. "Run away and enjoy yourself, my lad!"

And Drake "ran away and enjoyed himself."

At half-past twelve, when the fun was at its height, when every couple was swaying to the dance music in the ball-room, the millionaire tapped at the panel of Pycroft's room again.

"Still smiling!" came the inspector's voice through the door. "Nothing to report from your side, sir?"

"Nothing!"

Mr. Fonezy passed into the ball-room and was soon engaged in conversation with his guests. The atmosphere in the ball-room was getting "muggy," as

Drake expressed it, although great electric fans kept up a constant drone.

Feeling in need of a breath of fresh air, and anxious to see that all was well outside the house, Drake passed out of the french window, descended the small iron staircase, and walked on to the lawn. The night was fairly dark, a crescent moon being lost for minutes at a time within the heavy clouds that scudded by.

Suddenly Drake saw an evening-clad figure moving ahead of him. He gave it but a casual glance at first, until, in an entirely unexpected fashion, the man in front began to peer about him in a furtive manner that ill befitted the wearer of an evening-dress, and one whom Drake naturally thought to be a guest of Benjamin Fonezy.

"What's the game?" Drake asked himself the question as he drew back into the shadow of the house.

More than interested now, the boy sleuth watched the man walk, out away from the house, a distance of twenty yards, until he was almost lost to sight, his white shirt-front, cuffs, and collar, contrasting with the darkness, the only signs that indicated where he was.

Then suddenly something white flickered aloft, and Drake instinctively knew it to be a handkerchief.

It was a signal of some sort that was perfectly obvious. People were not in the habit of walking about at half-past twelve at night waving a handkerchief for the fun of the thing.

For whom was the signal intended? And who was the signaller?

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(Continued from page 26.)

then he passed Mr. Quelch and stopped into the room. The Remove master turned on the light and glanced about the room. Then he stepped out, and locked the door on the outside. A few minutes later the door reopened, and Trotter, the page, rubbing his eyes sleepily, came in. He gave Wharton a wondering and rather compassionate look. Wharton stood like a statue, while Trotter was occupied in making up a bed for him, Mr. Quelch standing silent in the doorway.

When Trotter was gone Mr. Quelch, still without a word to the rebel of his Form, retired, locking the door after him. And Wharton was left to solitude, and his thoughts.

Doubtless the unhappy boy's thoughts were bitter enough as he stood in the silence, alone, unfriended, condemned, with the shadow of the morrow dark upon him.

It was the end!

Expelled from Greyfriars! That was to be his sentence! That was to be the

close of Harry Wharton's schooldays! Expelled from his school—expelled in disgrace! That was the end of a career that had shown so much promise. Step by step he had gone on, proud and stubborn, till pride and stubbornness had led him to this!

Greyfriars lay silent and sleeping round him. But sleep did not come to Harry Wharton for long hours. He sat on the edge of the bed, his eyes staring moodily before him, a prey to black reflections. It was the end—the end! And, in spite of his pride, of his passionate resentment, deep down in his heart he knew that he had deserved this. He had chosen his own way, and this was the end to which he had travelled.

He threw himself on the bed at last and slept.

The rising-bell awakened Greyfriars School in the misty winter morning.

Bob Cherry was the first up in the Remove dormitory, and his glance turned on Harry Wharton's bed.

It was empty.

"Wharton!" exclaimed Bob, his face paling. "Where's Wharton?"

"He hasn't come back, then," said Frank Nugent. "Then—then he was found—"

Frank broke off, with a catch in his voice.

"Nailed!" said the Bounder carelessly. "It's the long jump this time. He can't say he didn't ask for it!"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Bob Cherry.

Bob Cherry & Co. were very early down that morning. But the Remove

were down very soon after them, buzzing with excitement. It was not long before they knew what had happened.

Harry Wharton had been caught out of bounds. He was locked up in the punishment-room! He was to be expelled from Greyfriars that morning. That was a foregone conclusion now.

"Wharton expelled!" said Bob blankly to his comrades. "Wharton—Harry sacked from the school!"

"It had to come!" muttered Johnny Bull.

Nugent's lip quivered.

"We might have saved him. We might have helped him," he said, in a low voice. "Did we do all we could? Couldn't we—?" He choked. "He was the best pal a fellow ever had! If only—if only—!" He broke off in utter misery.

"It's too late now!" muttered Bob miserably.

It was too late!

If Harry Wharton's old friends reproached themselves it was with little cause. The blame had not been theirs. They could not have helped him, and they could not help him now. All was over, and it remained only for the gates to close behind The Worst Boy at Greyfriars.

THE END.

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