

ENLARGED XMAS NUMBER! FREE GIFTS INSIDE

The MAGNET

2d



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PRICE 6/-



*Bunter
on the slide!*

Come Into The Office, Boys!



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. A stamped addressed envelope will ensure a reply.



GOSH, it seems only a few weeks ago that I was wishing my readers all the usual compliments of the season—and here we have arrived at another Christmas number already! Well, chums, all my staff join with me in wishing you all

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

And, as usual, you have not been forgotten by Frank Richards! Here is the message he wishes me to pass along to you:

Once again, as Christmas comes,
I send greetings to my chums;
May you have the best of luck,
Lots of fun and tons of tuck;
Skating, sledging, pantomimes,
Tons of really topping times;
And, in 1933,
All the best to you from me.
To amuse you all I'll strive,
With more about the Famous Five.

By the same post came another message, scribbled on a piece of sticky toffee paper. It took me some time to decipher the writing, but, anyway, here it is:

For your Kristmus sellebrashuns,
All my titelled, rich relashuns,
Join with me in wishing you
Tuck enuff for twenty-two!

I don't think I need tell you from whom that greeting comes!

What do you think of our bumper Christmas Number? Frank Richards has certainly given you a "winner" in this week's splendid yarn—and there are many more to follow in the New Year, so look out for them.

By the way, The "Greyfriars Holiday Annual" makes the ideal Gift-book. Have a look at this year's edition when you visit your newsagent next time.

I'VE got a bit of news for you this week! Who says a new serial? The last serial which we published, from the pen of Hedley Scott, proved so popular with my readers that I have prevailed upon him to write another for me, and you'll get the first instalment in next week's issue. It is entitled:

"NOBBY, THE 'SHOOTING STAR'!"

and, as you can, perhaps, guess from the title, it deals with footer. It introduces you to a new chum in the person of "Nobby," and to two better-known

characters in Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, and Jack Drake, his young assistant. So, what with footer and detective adventure, it makes a yarn that will appeal to every one of you. You'll find fuller particulars about it on another page.

And now for a joke for which P. Griffiths, of 42, Market Street, Chorley, Lancs, will receive a Christmas present of a handsome Sheffield steel penknife.



"Strange as it may seem," the teacher explained, "quite a number of flowers have the prefix 'dog.' For instance, the dog-rose and dog-violet. Can any of you

name another?"
A happy look illuminated the face of a boy at the back of the class.



"Please, miss," he called out, proud of his knowledge, "collie-flowers!"

They say that seeing is believing! Then get your newsagent to show you a copy of "The Popular Book of Boys' Stories." Once you've seen it, chums, you'll want to buy it. It's only 2s. 6d.

THE six picture stamps given free with this issue are splendid, aren't they, chums? Here is a brief description of them:

You'll find a neat way of rendering an attacker powerless, in the first of this week's set of stamps. Seize him in the manner shown, and then press your right hand against his bended wrist. Both his wrist and elbow are locked by this method, and you'll have him "groggy!"

The second "Self-Defence" stamp shows you a smart boxing trick. If your opponent swings or hooks a left towards you, duck and step quickly in. Then you can counter smartly with your left to the mark, as shown in the illustration.

There are two great railway systems in Canada, and the third of this week's stamps illustrates an oil-burning locomotive belonging to the Canadian Pacific Railway. Oil-burners, being cleaner and less cumbersome than coal-burning locos, are being extensively used nowadays on the North American continent, where, of course, oil is easier to procure, and also cheaper than it is in England.

The C.P.R. has carried out some wonderful engineering achievements. Only seven years ago they spent two-and-a-half millions pounds in constructing a five-mile tunnel under the Rockies. In other places the railway track has had to be carved out of the solid rock. And, as you will see by our picture stamp, this railway is as much up to date in locomotives as it is in engineering works!

LOTS of people think that the rotor blades of an Autogiro C. 24 are power-driven, but this is not so! The blades, which work from a central axis, are driven by the air forces acting upon them. The Autogiro C. 24 can attain a maximum speed of 120 m.p.h., and a cruising speed of 95—100 m.p.h. It can climb at the rate of 600 feet per minute, and has a Gipsy III inverted engine.

How would you like to serve on a Dogger Bank Trawler, chums? You've got to be a good sailor to do so, because the North Sea can produce storms that make even these stout little craft bob about like corks on the water. But they are trim and cosy little craft, with a forecabin for the crew, and a warm cabin aft, just astern of the engine-room, for the skipper and his first and second hands. The entire portion of the middle of the vessel is reserved for fish—and it's surprising what fine hauls these intrepid vessels can collar!

Have a look at the Great Dane, which is pictured on the sixth of our stamps. It is one of the most faithful, intelligent and courageous dogs there are. Its grand figure, bold outlook, and commanding appearance make it one of the finest dogs you could own. It stands about 34 inches high and weighs as much as 180 pounds. The first Great Dane ever seen in England was a savage brute named "Sultan," which was exhibited in 1870, but the Great Dane of to-day is as peaceful—unless provoked—as its early ancestors were pugnacious!

Ready for a Greyfriars limerick? Then here's one in return for which Ralph Taylor, of Hockley Crossing, Hockley Road, Utttoxeter, Staffs, will receive one of our topping leather pocket wallets!

Billy Bunter, one day, for a lark,
Thought he'd go for a row on the Sark.
So he hired a boat,
And set it afloat,
Alas, when he woke up it was dark!

Bear in mind, chums, that I've got lots more penknives and pocket wallets in stock, so pile in with your jokes and Greyfriars limericks.

AND now for the splendid programme I have in store for you next week. To begin with, you'll enjoy reading:

"THE BOY FROM THE UNDERWORLD!"

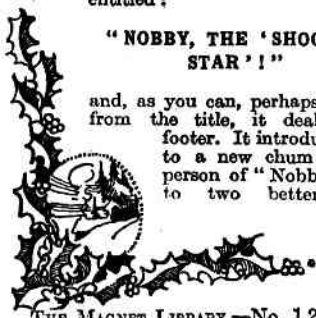
By Frank Richards.

There's no need for me to tell you what a ripping yarn it is, because you know what "F. R." can turn out in the way of first-class school stories. So don't miss it, whatever you do!

In addition to this, there will be another amusing issue of the "Greyfriars Herald," an interesting Soccer talk by "Linesman," the opening instalment of a grand new footer and detective story, and last, but by no means least, six more gorgeous free picture stamps to add to your collection. Could you wish for better value for money?

Till next week, then,
Cheerio,

YOUR EDITOR.





The First Chapter.

Slippery!

“OOOOOOOOOOGH!” roared Billy Bunter. Bunter was taken by surprise.

Bunter roared. Any fellow might have roared, when the solid globe on which he was treading, suddenly slipped away from under his feet! And that, it seemed to Bunter, was what was happening.

Bunter had not been aware that the Remove fellows had made a slide on the path under the old elms in the Greyfriars quad. While the juniors had been sliding, Billy Bunter had been frowning over a fire in his study, which he vastly preferred to anything in the way of strenuous exercise. Slides in the quad, of course, were strictly forbidden; and the fellows had cleared off at a warning that Mr. Quelch was coming out of the House. So the fat Owl of the Remove found the slide deserted—and stepped on it without seeing it—and then, so to speak, the band played!

Billy Bunter hadn't been thinking of slides. He had been thinking of matters much more important than slides. With break-up only a few days off, Billy Bunter was thinking of the Christmas holidays—and debating in his fat mind who was going to have the honour of his fat company over the holidays. Catching sight of Harry Wharton walking under the leafless elms, Billy Bunter headed for him, to touch on that important subject. It was true that Wharton had been an utter beast this term, and was more likable than not to snap a fellow's head off. Still, something had to be done about the “hols”—at least, somebody had to be done! So the fat junior bore down on Harry Wharton.

He did not reach Wharton! He

By

Frank Richards.

reached the slide, which lay between him and his prey.

It was a very slippery slide! Bunter's feet slipped as soon as they landed on it.

His feet flew!

It seemed to William George Bunter that the solid earth was vanishing from beneath him, and the whole solar system getting wildly mixed up.

“Oooooogh!” roared Bunter. “Help! Yarooooop! Bump!

Bunter sat on the slide with a con-

At last the “chopper” has fallen. Harry Wharton, the rebel of Greyfriars, is under sentence of expulsion. But even now Wharton flings a last minute challenge to authority—for he bolts!

cussion that almost shook Greyfriars School.

“Whoop!”

Bunter was sitting down! But there was no rest for the wicked! In a sitting posture he shot along the slide.

With his fat arms waving, his extensive mouth wide open, and yell after yell proceeding therefrom, Billy Bunter travelled at a dizzy speed.

“Ooogh! Help! Yarooooop! Whoop! I'm killed! Yow-ow-woooooop!” roared Bunter.

Harry Wharton glanced round.

He had been pacing under the tree in deep and rather gloomy thought; he also had been thinking of the coming Christmas holidays. But Billy Bunter's frantic roars drew his attention. The thoughtful frown vanished from his face as he beheld Billy Bunter doing the slide, sitting down, at about sixty miles per hour. He chuckled.

“Yarooop! Help!” roared Bunter.

Wharton started to the rescue.

The fat junior shot along to the end of the slide, where snow was banked high. He shot into the snow-bank, and almost disappeared from view. Half-buried in snow, he rolled and roared.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Oooooogh! Rescue! Groooooogh! I say, you fellows—groooooogh!” Bunter spluttered wildly.

Harry Wharton stepped on the slide and whizzed along. He had not been sliding with the other fellows—he was an outcast in his Form now, and never joined the Remove in games or anything else. Neither was he in a mood for sliding. He took the slide because it was the quickest way of reaching Bunter. He went along it like an arrow.

It was then that Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, appeared in the offing. Mr. Quelch had heard that there was a slide, and he had come out to investigate. Slides in the quad were anathema to the beaks. An elderly gentleman who stepped on a slide did not enjoy the experience as a junior did! The culprits had disappeared long before Quelch came to hand. But he arrived in time to see Harry Wharton whizzing along at top speed.

Black as midnight grew the brow of the Remove master. It was the scape-grace again—the worst boy in the school—he might have guessed as much!

“Wharton!” he shouted.

Wharton whizzed on.

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"Do you hear me!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "Stop! Stop this instant!" In giving that command, Mr. Quelch was not displaying sweet reasonableness. A fellow going top speed on a slippery slide could not stop! It was a sheer impossibility!

Wharton heard—but, like the ancient gladiator, he heard but he heeded not! He shot onward!

"Boy!" roared Mr. Quelch.

Unheeding, Harry Wharton whizzed on to the end of the long slide. There he was able to stop at the snow-bank. Billy Bunter, rolling in snow, spluttered and gasped and howled.

"Ow! Help! Where's my specs? Yaroooh! Beast! Help a chap! Oh crikey!"

Harry Wharton stooped, grasped the fat Owl by the collar, and dragged him up. Billy Bunter clutched at him and held on.

"Ooooh! Oh crumbs! Wow! Beast, why didn't you help me? Ow! I'm winded! I've broken my neck! Wow!"

"Wharton!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

He came towards the two juniors, picking his way very carefully. Mr. Quelch did not want to step on the slide. In the far-off days when Henry Samuel Quelch had been a boy, no doubt he had slid. But his sliding days were long over. He approached in a very gingerly manner.

"Let go, fathead!" grunted Wharton, as the fat Owl clutched and clung.

"Ow! Beast! Hold me! Gimme my specs!" howled Bunter. "Wow! Where's my specs? Mind you don't tread on my specs! I say, you beast—"

"Here you are, ass!" Wharton rescued the specs from the snow, and Bunter jammed them on his fat little nose.

"Wharton—"

"Yes, sir—"

Harry pushed the clinging Owl off at last and turned to his Form master. For a whole term he had been in Mr. Quelch's black books. But accustomed as he was by this time to the vials of wrath, he wondered what was the matter now. So far as he was aware, he had given no offence.

"How dare you, Wharton!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Wharton simply stared.

"I repeat, how dare you?"

"If you'd kindly explain what you are talking about, sir—" said the scapegrace of the Remove, with polite sarcasm.

Sarcasm, polite or otherwise, was not supposed to be handed out to beaks! Mr. Quelch reddened with wrath.

"Wharton! You are well aware that sliding, and making slides, is forbidden—strictly forbidden—"

"Oh, quite!" drawled Wharton.

"Yet I find you sliding in the quadrangle, under my very eyes! You and this foolish boy Bunter—"

"Oh, really, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I wasn't sliding! I never knew there was a slide! I just stepped on it, sir, and went wallop—"

"You may go, Bunter! As I did not see you sliding, I shall accept your excuse! Wharton, you will take five hundred lines."

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"Will you let me explain—"

"You need say nothing, Wharton! What I have seen is enough for me! Go into the House at once. You will take five hundred lines, as I have said."

"I tell you—" shouted Wharton.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch in a formidable voice. "How dare you raise your voice to me! I warn you to be careful, Wharton, if you do not wish to be expelled in the last week of the term. Silence!"

Mr. Quelch turned and stalked away to the House. Harry Wharton stood looking after him, with black bitterness in his face. Quelch evidently believed that he had made the forbidden slide, and had been disporting himself upon it—and refused to give him the slightest chance to explain. And he had done nothing, but rush to the rescue of the clumsy Owl!

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter. Bunter seemed amused. "I say, old chap, Quelch is down on you, ain't he? He, he, he! You've got his rag out, and no mistake! It's your cheek, you know—you're too jolly cheeky—and your rotten temper, old chap, and—yaroop!"

A backward smite from Wharton sat Billy Bunter down in the snow again. He sat and roared.

"Ow! Beast! I say, you rotter, come and gimme a hand—beast! Oh crikey!"

Harry Wharton walked away to the House, with a black brow, leaving the fat Owl to struggle out of the snow unaided this time.

The Second Chapter. Parted Pals!

THE dim December dusk was falling.

Harry Wharton stood at the window of his Study, No. 1 in the Remove, and looked down into the snowy, windy quad.

On the study table lay a pile of foolscap—blank! The scapegrace of the Remove had come up to the study to write his lines. But he had not touched them.

There was bitter anger and rebellion in his heart. The imposition was an act of injustice—and it was a long and heavy one! The rebel of the Remove did not, or would not, realise that his Form master did not intend to be unjust. Offence after offence, exasperation after exasperation, had embittered the Remove master; but Mr. Quelch was a just man, and would not willingly have given an undeserved punishment. Had Wharton gone to him, after he had calmed down, and explained the matter respectfully, Mr. Quelch would have seen reason. But the angry fellow was not thinking of doing anything of the kind. He was thinking of leaving the impot unwritten—reckless of the consequences.

Fellows were coming towards the House, in the falling dusk. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and Frank Nugent, came under Wharton's eyes, as he looked down from the window. Three of them were chatting as they walked towards the House; but he noted that Frank glanced up at the study window, though he could not see Wharton there in the dusky room.

Wharton's hard and angry face softened a little.

He was on the worst of terms—almost fighting terms—with his old friends; but what, after all, was it all about? They had turned from him—and he had bitterly resented it—he believed, and was determined to believe, that none of the fault was on his side. And yet a still small voice whispered sometimes that it takes two to make a quarrel.

Bob and Johnny and the nabob seemed to have settled down to the new state of affairs, leaving him to go his own way. But he was well aware that Frank only wanted a sign, to make friends again. Stubborn pride and bitter resentment prevented him from giving that sign.

But his heart was heavy.

Christmas was close at hand—and in happier circumstances his old friends would have spent part of the vacation with him. Hurree Singh would have gone home with him to Wharton Lodge; the other fellows would have come along. Now he was going home alone!

Home?

What was home to be like? His uncle was deeply displeased with him—with or without reason. He had come a "mucker" at school that term—early in the term he might have been expelled, but for Colonel Wharton's intervention. He had gone from bad to worse, and his uncle and guardian did not believe that he was wholly in the right, and his Form master, his headmaster, his friends, wholly in the wrong. As the thought shaped itself like that in his mind, Wharton started a little. Possibly there was something to be said for the old colonel's point of view.

And yet— He was under a cloud, and perhaps something was due to his own stubborn spirit and obstinate pride. But if he was a rebel, a ragger, a scapegrace, he had plenty of cause. He was looked on as a "bad hat," a "shady sweep"—a "pub-haunter"—and in that, at least, his conscience was quite clear. Yet he could hardly deny that he had placed himself in such circumstances as to justify the suspicion, at least.

Tap! He turned from the window as a knock came at his study door. It was Trotter, the page, who looked in, blinking across the dusky study at the junior standing at the window.

"Master Wharton—"

"What is it, kid?" asked Harry.

To other fellows in the Remove Wharton was abrupt enough; to masters and prefects he was scarcely respectful. But his manner was quite pleasant to Trotter; he was not the fellow to fail in civility to anyone who was not in a position to hit back.

"Mr. Loder would like to see you, sir—if you'd go," said Trotter.

"Loder!" repeated Wharton.

Loder of the Sixth, the scapegrace's bitter enemy, had not been seen about the school for some days. Loder was laid up in the sanatorium with a bad cold. It had been a relief to Wharton to see nothing of the bully of the Sixth—who was the cause of many of the troubles that had fallen on him so heavily that term. And certainly he did not want to see him now.

"You can tell Loder to go and eat coke, Trotter!" he said.

Trotter grinned.

"What the thump does he want me for?" grunted Wharton. "He can't give a fellow six, when he's in sanny."

"He said he would like to see you, sir, if you'd go," said Trotter. "P'r'aps it's because you pulled him out of the water, sir."

"Yes—that will make a fat lot of difference to a cad like Loder. All right—I'll go," said Harry.

Trotter disappeared. Wharton crossed slowly to the door, and as he did so, his eyes fell on the untouched impot paper on the table. He had not written a line, so far, and they had to be handed in on the morrow. He paused a moment, and then, shrugging his shoulders, walked out of the study. He was not going to do the lines, and that was that.

On the Remove staircase he passed the Co. coming up. Three of them passed him without a sign. Frank Nugent stopped.

"Wharton—" he began. The others went on.

"Well?" rapped Wharton. "I'm in a hurry."

"You can spare a minute," said Frank, in a low voice. "Look here, Wharton, can't anything be done?"

"What do you mean?"

"I've been to blame," said Nugent, in the same low voice. "It was you to blame at first, and then—"

"Oh! Was it?" said Wharton bitterly.

"Well, let that pass, anyhow—I was to blame afterwards. Since you've taken up your new ways—"

"Smoking, pub-haunting, punting on the races, and all that?" said Wharton, in a tone of bitter mockery.

"I'm not judging you," said Frank. "I hate to see you going the way you're going, but it's not my business to set up in judgment."

Wharton looked at him, his face hardening. Even Frank, who had been his oldest and best friend, believed what the fellows said about him. If the scapegrace's heart had softened for a moment, it hardened again now.

"I—I was ratty when my young brother look up with you," went on Frank, faltering. "I—I thought it was bad for him, considering your new ways. I—I don't think you ought to blame me for that."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Then I found out—from Dicky—that he was in bad trouble, and that you had helped him out, and—and that that was all. And—and I told you I was sorry—"

"You found out that you were a fool?" said Wharton contemptuously.

"Pu. it like that if you like."

"But you haven't found out yet how big a fool you were—or are!" said Wharton mockingly. "You know I was flogged for being caught at that putrid den, the Three Fishers. If you think over it for a year or two, it may occur to you that I never went there to bet on a glovefight or to play billiards or to see a book-maker. It might possibly dawn on you—if you thought it out for a year or two—that I might have had some other reason—not a rotten one at all. But you haven't thought of that."

"The Head thought—"

"Oh, quite! Well, I can't tell the Head what I think of him—it would be the sack if I did. But I can tell you, Frank Nugent—and what I think of you is that you're a fool and a rotter and a false friend. And now leave me alone."

And with that, Harry Wharton tramped down the stairs, leaving Frank Nugent staring after him rather blankly.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came Bob Cherry's boom from the Remove passage. "You coming up to tea, Franky?"

Frank Nugent went up the stairs, his face flushed and distressed. Once more he had tried to bridge the gulf, and once more he had failed. There was nothing doing—and matters had to go on as they were. But his heart was heavy as he followed his friends to Study No. 13.

Harry Wharton tramped out of the House into the dusk. A few light flakes of snow were falling. His brow was darkly knitted. A fat figure loomed up in the dusk.

"I say, old chap, I've been looking for you," said Billy Bunter.

"Look for somebody else, then," snapped Wharton, and he passed on. Bunter rolled after him.

"I say, Harry, don't be shirty!" urged Bunter. "Harry, old fellow—"

"If you call me Harry, you fat villain, I'll bump you over in the snow!"

"Oh, really, Wharton! I say, what about Christmas?" asked Bunter, tugging at the scapegrace's arm. "I suppose you're going home to your uncle's for the vac—what? I know you've put the old donkey's back up; but nobody's likely to ask you for the hols, so you'll have to go home. As you've rowed with all your friends, they won't come! You'll be lonely, old chap!"

stand by him like a pal, Bunter had expected civility, if not gratitude. All he had got was a bump in the snow! So it was not surprising that Bunter was wrathful. He grabbed up snow, kneaded a hurried snowball, and rushed after Wharton.

A shadow loomed up before him in the dusk.

"Beast! That's for you!" roared Bunter.

And the snowball whizzed.

Walker of the Sixth jumped almost clear of the ground as he stopped the snowball with his nose.

"Why—what—who—" gasped Walker.

"Oh lor'!" gurgled Bunter, as he saw what he had done.

It wasn't that beast Wharton; it was a still more dangerous beast—a prefect of the Sixth! Bunter goggled at James Walker through his big spectacles in terrified dismay.

Walker brushed powdered snow from his face, rushed forward, and gripped the Owl of the Remove by the collar.

"You young sweep!" he roared.

"Owl! Leggo! I didn't! It wasn't me!" roared Bunter. "I never saw it was you, Walker! I thought it was another beast—Wow! Yaroooh!"

"Snowballing a prefect, by gad!" gasped Walker. "My hat, I'll give you something to cure all that!"

"I say, Walker—I say—Oh crickey!"

Walker of the Sixth hooked Bunter into the House. He led him to his study in the Sixth.

There he picked up an ashplant from the table.

"Bend over, Bunter!"

"Oh crickey!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"I say, Walker—yaroooh! I never meant it for you—Whoop!"

Whack! Whack! Whack! "Next time you go snowballing," said Walker genially, "mind you don't catch a prefect by mistake. Now get out!"

And Billy Bunter got out and groaned his dolorous way to the Remove passage.

The Third Chapter.

Burying the Hatchet.

GERALD LODER of the Sixth Form sat propped against pillows, with an open novel in his hand and a scowl on his face. He looked pale and rather worn and fed-up to the back teeth.

Several days in sanny had tired Loder of being an invalid. He did not miss football much or yearn after lessons in the Sixth Form Room; but he missed the game of banker with Carne in his study, and the game of billiards at the Cross Keys on surreptitious occasions. Likewise, smoking was out of the question in sanny. And, though he had kind attention, and was asked to state anything he wanted, Loder could not even state that he wanted a cigarette!

Altogether, Loder's temper was rather sore, and he had not drawn much solace from Walker's visit. Walker had come

**A Merry Christmas,
EVERYBODY**



**FROM
Your Editor**

"Can you possibly mind your own business, Bunter?" asked Harry.

"My dear old chap, let a fellow speak!" urged Bunter. "You're let down all round for the hols. Well, you've been rather a beast this term, but I'm not the man to let a pal down. I'm sticking to you, old chap! It will be a bit rotten at your place, with you in your usual rotten temper, and your grumpy old uncle and frumpy old aunt! But I can stand it! Dash it all, I'd do more than that for a pal! So I was going to say—Beast! Leggo! Whooop!"

Harry Wharton walked on, leaving the fat Owl distributed in the snow. He passed Walker of the Sixth coming away from sanny, where, apparently, he had been visiting his invalid pal Loder.

Billy Bunter scrambled up, red with wrath.

Even the worm will turn—and Bunter was rather a worm! Having offered to take pity on a fellow's loneliness and

rather reluctantly, and cleared off as soon as he decently could. Carne had not come at all.

Loder adjusted the electric bed-lamp, and yawned and scowled over his novel. He was glad when Harry Wharton was brought in as a relief from the monotony.

His scowl faded away a little. Wharton's manner was civil, but it was not friendly or very agreeable. He did not like Loder, and could not forgive the harm the scheming prefect had done him. He did not want to see him at all; but he had come, as the fellow was laid up and had asked him to come. He was rather surprised to receive a genial nod and something like a smile from Loder of the Sixth.

"Sit down, kid," Loder gestured to the bedside chair. "I wanted to speak to you."

Harry Wharton sat down. "I hope you're getting better, Loder?" he said politely.

"Yes. But I've got to stick here for two or three days yet!" grunted Loder. "I was fairly knocked out—a plunge in icy water, and a chill afterwards before I got my wet clothes off. I'm lucky, really, that it's no worse, but it's rotten enough! I don't suppose I shall see you again before the school breaks up."

Harry Wharton could not feel sorry for that.

"Look here, kid," said Loder abruptly, "you helped me out of the water when that plank slipped and I tumbled in. It was plucky of you!"

Loder spoke half-grudgingly.

The junior smiled faintly. He was aware that Loder liked him no more than he ever had liked him, and he felt the same himself. But the bully of the Sixth could not help understanding that the junior had run a great risk in helping him out of the woodland stream; both of them might have been washed away into the Sark and drowned. And Loder had been "after" him at the time, spying on him in the hope of catching him in some delinquency for which he could be reported and sacked.

Even Loder's hard and selfish heart was touched a little, and it was plain that he had been thinking over the matter, and was a little bit ashamed of himself. Possibly, when he was quite well again, he would forget all about it, and be the same old Loder! But at present he was in rather a chastened mood.

Wharton said nothing. "It was plucky," said Loder again, "and it was jolly decent! Look here, kid, we've had a lot of trouble this term. You're a cheeky young rascal, and you know it."

"Admitted!" said Harry, with a smile.

"I've given you six often enough."

"Too often!"

Loder grinned.

"Well, look here," he said in the same half-grudging tone, "I'm rather sorry for some things. You put my back up, and I was down on you, and—and I dare say I went rather over the odds. I've got you into rows with the Head and Quelch—not—not always in the way of duty, I'm afraid. Well, I'm sorry; and if you keep off the grass next term I'll leave you alone, and there needn't be any more trouble."

It was not much, but it was a good deal from a fellow like Loder.

"Wash it all out," said Loder—"what?"

"You can't undo what you've done," said Harry quietly. "I'm in disgrace in the school, my uncle's down on me, and you did it all, Loder."

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"Not all," grinned Loder. "You've taken a lot of trouble yourself to put yourself in the wrong and get fellows' backs up. You're about nine-tenths to blame for the scrape you're in now."

Wharton looked at him.

"Well," he said slowly, "what's done can't be undone, and it's no good whining about it. I can stand it. Wash it all out, as you say. I'll be glad enough to have no more trouble next term."

"Right!" said Loder. "And I'll give you a tip, Wharton." He lowered his voice. "Chuck up playing the giddy ox! It leads to no good. You'll be nailed and sacked as safe as houses if you don't chuck it. Keep straight!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Thanks!" he said. "But if you'll try to believe me, Loder, that's all bunkum. I haven't played the giddy ox. That time you spotted me at the Three Fishers, I'd gone there for a good reason—nothing in your line at all. I've never smoked in my study, never backed a gee-gee, never looked at a racing paper, and never wanted to. It's all rot!"

Loder looked at him long and hard.

"Honest injun?" he asked.

"Honest injun!" said Harry.

"Well, you've taken a lot of trouble to make the whole school think otherwise, then," said Loder. "But I believe you, kid, and—and I'm sorry I've been rather a rotter to you!"

Harry Wharton's face was very thoughtful as he left the school sanatorium. His feud with Loder of the Sixth had been a bitter one, and in that, at least, the blame had not been on his side. But with Loder in this new mood, the feud was apparently at an end. The leopard cannot change his spots, nor the Ethiopian his skin, and Loder would always be a bully; but his persecution of the scapegrace of Greyfriars was at an end.

Wharton, on his side, was willing to bury the hatchet, so far as that went. But, as he had said, the harm had been done, and could not be undone. But for Loder, matters would not have gone so terribly wrong that term, and now they were so wrong that nothing could set them right. He had one enemy the fewer, that was all.

Wharton went back to the House, and went into Hall to tea. Fellows there were discussing break-up and the Christmas holidays with cheery faces and cheery voices. There were a few of the Remove in Hall to tea, but none of them spoke to the outcast of the Form.

Wharton sat in silence, with a face of indifference but a heavy heart, and he got away as soon as he could. Schoolboy memories are not long, and much as the former captain of the Remove had exasperated the Form, it was chiefly his own icy pride and haughty temper that kept open the breach. He was hardly conscious of that, however.

When he went up to his study for prep his eyes fell again on the impot paper. Five hundred lines to be written—or a row with Quelch! His eyes glinted and his face hardened. He pushed the impot paper aside and sat down to prep. When the Remove went to their dormitory that night not a line of the five hundred had been written.

The Fourth Chapter.

Seagulls' Cove!

"WHARTON!" Mr. Quelch called Wharton back when the Remove were dismissed after class the following morning. That day was the last half-holiday of the term.

"Yes, sir!" said Harry, stopping.

"Have you written your lines?"

"No, sir!"

"Very well," said Mr. Quelch. "I will give you till tea-time, Wharton! The lines must be handed in before tea."

"Is that all, sir?" asked the scapegrace coolly.

Mr. Quelch breathed rather hard.

"That is all, Wharton! You may go!"

Harry Wharton followed the other fellows from the Form-room. Herbert Vernon-Smith was waiting for him. Frank Nugent had lingered in the corridor, but Wharton did not seem to see him, and Frank followed Bob Cherry & Co. into the quad. But the Bouncer went out with Wharton. Smithy was the only fellow in the Remove who kept up anything like a friendly footing with the rebel of the Form.

"Wharton, old bean," said the Bouncer quietly. "I'd draw a line if I were you! Five hundred lines, in fact!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Only a few more days to break-up," said Vernon-Smith. "You'll get a long rest from Quelch in the hols—and he will get a long rest from you! He needs it more of the two, I fancy. Next term you'll have a chance to start fresh. But—let there be a next term, old bean! See?"

"What do you mean?"

"I think you know! Quelch would give a term's salary to get shut of you. If you give him a chance he will wangle it for you not to come back next term. He's fed with you, right up to the back teeth. If I were you I'd play a careful game till break-up."

"No doubt—if you were me," assented Wharton. "But you're not."

"Well, if you won't take a tip, you won't," said the Bouncer, shrugging his shoulders. "A wilful man must have his way, even if it leads to the long jump. But if you'll take a friend's advice you'll go to your study after dinner and grind out those lines."

"You see, I'm going along the cliffs this afternoon," drawled Wharton. "I'd arranged that already, and I can't let Quelch's antics interfere with my arrangements."

"Look here, man, don't be a fool!" urged the Bouncer. "I'll tell you what—I'll come to the study and lend you a hand with the lines."

"Thanks—but nothing doing!"

"You've made up your mind, then?"

"Quite!"

"Then you're a silly ass!"

"I shouldn't wonder."

The Bouncer laughed, and walked away to join Tom Redwing. Harry Wharton strolled in the quad till dinner. The Bouncer had given him good advice, and he knew it. Smithy was a sagacious fellow, and it was rather unusual for Smithy to take so much trouble about another. But good advice was not what the scapegrace wanted. That afternoon he was going on the cliffs to take a last look round before the holidays, with Dick Trumper, the fisherman's son, and Solly Lazarus. He was not staying within gates to grind out an undeserved impot, and that was that!

After dinner he walked down to the gates. A pair of gimlet eyes fell on him from Mr. Quelch's study window. As a matter of fact, the rebel of the Remove deliberately passed that window and lingered a little for his Form master's eyes to fall on him. And the gimlet eyes glittered. But Mr. Quelch had given the scapegrace



Bunter grabbed up some snow and kneaded a hurried snowball. Then he let fly as a shadow loomed up before him in the dusk. "Beast! That's for you!" he roared. Walker of the Sixth jumped almost clear of the ground as he stopped the snowball with his nose. "Why—what—who!" he gasped. "Oh lor'!" gasped Bunter. "I—I thought it was Wharton!"

till tea-time for the lines, and he could only resolve that if the imposition was not handed in at the due time the punishment should be hard and heavy.

Many glances followed Wharton as he went. All the Remove knew by this time that the scapegrace had lines to write, and that he was not going to write them. Some of the fellows grinned, and Skinner winked at Snoop. "Asking for more!" sighed Skinner. "What a fellow he is to keep on asking for more!"

"Some fellows never know when they've had enough!" grinned Snoop.

"We shan't see him here next term," said Skinner. "I've jolly well seen that in Quelch's eye! And the silly ass is giving him his chance!"

Lord Mauleverer walked down to the gates after Wharton. There was a shade of thought on his lordship's face. Harry Wharton started a little as he found Mauly walking by his side.

He looked at him rather grimly.

"Want anything?" he asked.

"Nothin', old bean," answered Mauly amiably.

"Take it and cut!" suggested Wharton.

"Goin' out?"

"Yes."

"You're an ass!"

"I've had that from Smithy!"

"Look here, Wharton," said Lord Mauleverer earnestly, "we haven't been speakin' for some time—you're rather a rotter, if you don't mind my mentionin' it—"

"Not at all," said Wharton sarcastically. "Pile it on—but guard with your left if you pile it on too thick." He broke into a laugh. "Aren't you afraid of contamination, speaking to a smoky sweep and a pub-haunter?"

"Oh, that's all rot!" said Mauly

cheerfully. "I've never believed a word of that!"

"You're the only man here that hasn't!"

"Well, I've got more sense than most, you know," said his lordship placidly. "I don't claim to be one of those brilliant fellows—plain common sense is my long suit. You've let yourself be misunderstood, and you've made things look worse than they are out of sheer obstinacy and cussedness and rotten stiff-necked pride! Isn't that it?"

"Perhaps," said Harry, half laughing.

"When I say you're rather a rotter, I mean your beastly temper, and gettin' shirty over nothin'. o. next to nothin'," explained Lord Mauleverer. "It's a fault you ought to try to cure. I'm a patient chap myself, but I got fed with you. I'm still rather fed, if you don't mind my sayin' so. But I don't want to see you askin' fo. it like this. May I, without unduly bustin' in, advise you to go back and get those lines done?"

"You may advise me, certainly."

"Well, will you do it?"

"No!"

"Floored!" sighed his good-natured lordship; and he gave it up, and Harry Wharton went out at the gates.

Wharton walked briskly along the lane and turned into the footpath through the frosty wood. He reached the cliffs and descended a gully to the beach below. On the beach he found Dick Trumper and Solly.

"Here we are again!" said Trumper cheerfully. "Lots of time to explore the cave before the tide comes in."

"Lots, old thon," said Solly. "But we musn't leave it too late—the tide washes into that cave, old thon, and a fellow who was caught there would find himself in Queer Threet."

The three schoolboys went along the cliffs and stopped at a spot where the chalk rose steep and rugged, seventy feet or more to the summit. The billows of the North Sea had piled sand and seaweed deep at the rugged foot of the cliff. Seven or eight feet above, a cave opened in the chalk, far above the water at low tide, but at flood tide filled with the roaring sea. The tide was far out now, on the turn but they had plenty of time. They scrambled up the rough chalk ledges, and clambered into the cave.

The cave extended thirty feet back into the chalk, irregular fissures opening from both sides of it, black and gloomy. In several places the chalk roof almost touched their heads, in others it soared high aloft, out of sight of the electric torch that Wharton turned on.

A cheery hour was spent in exploring the cave, and then the three came back to the entrance, where Trumper unwrapped a bundle of sandwiches, and Solly produced a thermos with hot coffee—both of which were grateful and comforting. From the high cave there was a wide view along the ridged beach, and the sea beyond, though the irregular line of the cliffs hid the village of Pegg from sight.

Out on the bay danced a little lugger, and, great as the distance was, old Trumper, the pilot and fisherman, could be recognised on board. Dick waved his hand to his father, though even old Trumper's keen eyes could never have picked him out against the cliff.

"Jolly little craft, what?" said Trumper. "In a day or two I'm going in her—coasting trip with the dad, Christmas at sea for me."

"Lucky bargoe!" said Harry, his eyes

lingering on the trim little lugger coming down the bay before the wind.

It seemed to the Greyfriars junior just then that the fisherman's son was to be envied. Life on a coasting lugger was rough and hard, but the salt wind and the open sea had a call for Wharton, as for most English boys. There was but a gloomy home-coming for him when he went home for the holidays, and he spoke with sincerity, though his words made Dick Trumper chuckle.

"Well, I shall like it all right," said Trumper. "But you— Oh, my hat! Too rough for you, old chap. You'd perish."

"What rot!" said Harry. "I've roughed it, and could rough it again. We're not soft at Greyfriars!"

Trumper laughed.

"Well, if you're fed-up with downy beds and a butler at dinner, trot along and join up for a coasting cruise," he said. "I'd be jolly glad to have you, I know that. Hallo, is that your beak?"

A tall, angular figure came along the beach. Harry Wharton's brow darkened as he looked down at Mr. Quelch walking below. The Remove master was taking a walk that the keen air from the keener air from rather unfortunate

Billy Bunter uttered that warning as the Remove fellows gathered at the door of the Form-room the following morning.

"Queelch is as mad as a hatter!" went on Bunter impressively. "I saw him talking to the Head. Furious!"

"Fathead!" said Bob Cherry. "Grinding his teeth!" said Bunter, still more impressively.

Some of the juniors chuckled. It was quite likely that Quelch was in a tantrum that morning. But they could not quite fancy him grinding his teeth while talking to Dr. Locke.

"I heard him mention Wharton," went on Bunter.

"You hear a lot of things, you fat frump!" said Squiff.

"I wondered what they were talking about, you know," said the Owl of the Remove, "and I heard Quelch mention Wharton. Then the beast looked round and saw me, and I cut. I could see by his look that he fancied I was listening. Suspicious beast, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He's got his rag out," said Bunter. "I'm going to be jolly good in class this morning. I wish I'd done my prep last night now. I hope to goodness he won't put me on can!"

"Done your impot, Wharton?" asked Skinner, with a wink at Snoop.

"No."

"Heard from Quelch about it?"

"Not yet."

"You'll hear soon, I expect!" said Skinner, with a grin.

"Very likely," said Harry indifferently.

"Well, you're the man to ask for it, old bean," said the Bounder.

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

It was time for Mr. Quelch to let his Form in for first school; but the Remove master, for once, was not punctual. Possibly he was still talking to the Head on the subject of Wharton.

Billy Bunter was not the only fellow who had made up his mind to be very good in class that morning. Every fellow who had noticed Mr. Quelch's face had made the same resolve.

Except, perhaps, Wharton. The scapegrace of Greyfriars was not in a good mood, and it was his belief, right or wrong, that whatever he did made no difference. Quelch was down on him, and that was that.

The five hundred lines had not been written. Wharton had expected to hear from Quelch on that subject, but, so far, his Form master had not spoken to him. Possibly he was stretching a point, and had given the rebel of the Remove time to reconsider his defiance. If so, he made that concession in vain, for Wharton had not written a line of the impot, and did not intend to do so. All the Remove expected the Form master to deal with the matter in the Form-room that morning, as it had not been dealt with yet. It could scarcely be left in suspense much longer. What was going to happen was an extremely interesting question to all the Form.

That a fellow could "get away" with such a defiance of authority was, of course, impossible. Quelch would come down heavy, and there was much speculation as to exactly what he would do. The impot might be doubled. But that was not likely. A "whopping" was much more probable. The doubtful question was whether it would be an ordinary whopping in the Form-room or a Head's flogging. And there was a probability that it would not be merely a whopping at all, but the "sack." Quelch was well known to be fed-up with the rebel of his Form, and Wharton's offences all through the term had



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The Fifth Chapter. The Chopper Comes Down!

I SAY, you fellows! Look out for squalls!

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been numerous. It was quite likely that this act of disobedience would be the last straw. If ever a fellow had asked for the sack Wharton had. He had, as the Bouncer put it, sat upon his hind legs and begged for it.

There was a good deal of excitement in the Remove. Wharton, the fellow who was in trouble, was least excited. His face was cool and calm, and absolutely indifferent in expression. Fellows who blamed him most could not help admiring his nerve.

"I say, you fellows! Hero comes Quelch!" murmured Billy Bunter, as there was a rattle in the corridor. "Mind your eye!"

Mr. Quelch came up the passage and opened the Form-room door. The juniors took their places, and there was a deep breath of anticipation.

But Mr. Quelch did not call Wharton out; did not, in fact, take peculiar notice of that troublesome member of his Form. Lessons began as usual. Billy Bunter, much to his dismay, was called on to construe, and as he had not even looked at his prep the previous evening, his con was rather worse than usual. Bunter had had no time for prep. He had been pondering on the subject of the Christmas holidays, Bunter's plans for the holidays being still unfixed. Prep, in the circumstances, seemed merely an unnecessary worry. The fat Owl wished, however, that he had given it a little attention when the gimlet eyes fixed on him.

A hundred lines rewarded Bunter for his con, and he sat down gasping with relief that it was no worse. Nobody liked the look in Quelch's eye that morning.

Lord Mauleverer, who had gone to sleep over his prep, handed out a con almost as bad as Bunter's. Two hundred lines fell to his lordship. He, too, was glad that it was no worse.

Wharton was called on next. Mr. Quelch knew, and every fellow in the Remove knew, that Wharton could have given a good con if he had liked. He gave a very bad one. It was not quite so bad as Bunter's. A fellow had to have a genius for bungling to translate as badly as Bunter. But it was very bad. The gimlet eyes were seen to glint, and the Removites waited for the storm to burst.

But no storm burst. "You may sit down, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, in a cold and cutting tone, and the Remove exchanged wondering glances. "You will go on, Cherry."

Wharton perhaps wondered, as well as the rest. While every man in the Form was on his guard, anxious not to catch the gimlet eyes, the scapegrace was asking for trouble. Mr. Quelch, as every fellow could see, was in a state of deep and suppressed anger. Yet he took no notice of the rebel's obvious "check." Until morning

break he ignored Wharton's existence.

It was not till the Form were dismissed for break that the Remove master addressed a word to the scapegrace.

"Wharton, you did not hand in your imposition yesterday."

"No, sir," said Harry.

There was a deep breath in the Remove. It was coming now!

"Have you written it, Wharton?"

"No, sir!"

"Have you written any of it?"

"No, sir!"

"Am I to understand, Wharton, that it is not your intention to write out the imposition I have given you?"

There was a breathless pause. Harry Wharton's answer came cool and clear.

"Yes, sir!"

Another breathless pause.

To the amazement of the Remove, the

thunder did not begin to roll. Mr. Quelch compressed his lips in a tight line. But he was icily calm.

"That is direct disobedience, Wharton," he said quietly.

"I did nothing to deserve the lines, sir," said Harry.

"You will hardly expect me to discuss that with you," said Mr. Quelch. "For the present you may go. I shall consider this matter."

Wharton left the Form-room with the others

There were significant looks among the Remove fellows. They knew that there was only one possible explanation of Mr. Quelch's icy self-control. His mind was made up. He had, as it were, given the rebel of the Remove enough rope to hang himself! It was not going to be a caning—it was not even going to be a Head's flogging! It was going to be the "sack."

"You've done it now, old bean," said the Bouncer.

"Think so?" asked Wharton carelessly.

"Bet you ten to one in doughnuts."

Harry Wharton laughed, and walked out into the quad. He passed the Co. and they looked at him. He did not glance at them, but he knew what their looks expressed, all the same. Bob Cherry's ruddy face was glum, Johnny Bull's was clouded, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's dusky countenance was troubled, and Frank Nugent was deeply distressed.

They knew that the scapegrace had overstepped the limit at last, and that there could be but one result. And now that it looked like a certainty that the rebel of Greyfriars was going to be expelled from the school, they realised that, deep as the breach between them was, the old friendship was not dead. Frank Nugent left his friends, and hurried after the fellow who had once been his best chum.

"Wharton!" He touched Harry's arm.

"Leave me alone, please!"

"I've got to speak! Can't you see how it is?" panted Nugent. "Quelch has gone to the Head!"

"I'm not interested in Quelch!"

"He's taken it so quietly because he's made up his mind. Harry, don't be a mad fool!" pleaded Frank. "It's the sack! You can't defy a Form master to his face and carry on! With all the rest, too—"

"It needn't worry you, so far as I can see!" Wharton walked on. Nugent followed.

"There's a chance yet. Harry, have a little sense! Go to Quelch and tell him you're sorry you haven't done the lines, and—"

"But I'm not sorry!" said Wharton mockingly.

"I tell you it's the sack! Think of your people—think of Colonel Wharton—"

Wharton gave a harsh laugh.

"My uncle's let me down! He's as down on me as anyone else. Why should I think of him?"

Greetings from the FAMOUS FIVE.



BOB CHERRY :—

*What cheer, old tops? Here's all the best
At Christmas-time for you.
May turkeys grace the festive board
And Christmas puddings, too!
When 1933 arrives
May luck be on your side,
I hope your masters will not find
The need to tan your hide!*

JOHNNY BULL :—

*Best wishes to you, one and all
For Christmas '32,
And all through 1933
I wish the best for you!
May lines and impots pass you by,
Your punishments be few,
And may good luck be on your side
Whenever you construe!*

FRANK NUGENT :—

*A Merry Christmas to you all,
Good luck in '33!
"Be good, sweet child," as Shakespeare (?) said,
That goes for little me!
But if you simply can't be good,
And must set rules at naught,
I hope your luck will stand by you—
And that you won't get caught!*

HURREE SINGH :—

*The wishfulness of what I wish
This Christmastide to you,
Is quite terrific, honoured friends,
Esteemed and stupid, too.
May the eatfulness of your food be good
And your luckfulness be grand,
If you were here I'd like to shake
Your esteemed and ridiculous hand.*

HARRY WHARTON :—

*What-ho, you chaps! All's well again,
The hatchet's buried now,
The Famous Five are friends again,
For good and all I trow!
A Merry Christmas, "Magnetites,"
Wherever you may be,
In Timbuktu or Woolanmarroo,
In London or Dundee.*

"Think of your aunt, then—Miss Wharton—what will she feel like when you're turned out of Greyfriars?"

Wharton winced.

"Leave me alone!" he broke out savagely. "Can't you mind your own business? If I'm going, I'm going with a stiff upper lip! I will not yield an inch—not to save myself from the sack—not to save my life! Leave me alone!"

He trumped away with a black brow. Frank Nugent rejoined his friends, with a hopeless look.

"It's all up!" he said.

"The upfulness is terrific!" groaned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"The chopper's coming down at last!" said Johnny Bull slowly. "He's been asking for it all the term. He can't wonder—"

"It—it's partly our fault!" muttered Nugent miserably. "If we'd stood by him—"

"We did all we could!" said Bob.

"I—I know! But—"

"A fellow who goes blagging—"

grunted Johnny Bull. "I don't believe he ever did! That's what's got his back up so much—fellows thinking that of him. I believe he could explain if he liked."

"Well, if he chooses to let fellows think—"

grunted Johnny. "We might have trusted him!"

muttered Frank.

"Look here, Franky, old man!" said Bob Cherry quietly. "It's no good blaming ourselves! Wharton rowed with us—not us with him! I dare say there was blame on both sides—there generally is, in any row. But we did all we could. I'd be jolly glad to wash it all out. I'd give anything to save him from what's coming to him. But he's got his own dashed temper and pride to thank for most of the trouble—and that's that!"

When the bell rang for third school Harry Wharton came into the Form-room with the Remove. He could not help wondering whether that was the last time he would ever enter the Remove-room. The other fellows were sure of it. Third school passed off as usual. Mr. Quelch neither looked at Wharton, nor addressed him, and his manner indicated plainly that he no longer regarded the rebel as a member of his Form.

Wharton was there, because he had not been turfed out—but that was all. Wharton realised that himself, and, though his face gave no clue to his feelings, his heart was like a stone in his breast. But there was no thought of surrender in his mind. Even now he might have saved himself by "eating humble pie." If that thought came to him, he spurned it away.

He had not expected it to come to this. He had expected the usual punishment for failing to hand in his lines—more severe in his case than in the case of another, that was all. But Quelch, as he reflected bitterly, had been too many for him. Instead of doubling the impot, or caning him for not having written it, Quelch had turned it into a personal matter—a direct question of obedience or disobedience. The plain fact of the matter was that Quelch was "sick" of him, and wanted him to go—and this latest act of rebellion had given him his chance.

When third lesson was over Mr. Quelch addressed Wharton in calm, quiet, icy tones. The Remove listened breathlessly.

"Wharton, I have discussed the matter with your headmaster. Dr. Locke fully agrees with me that a boy who directly refuses to obey an order

from his Form master cannot remain at Greyfriars."

Wharton drew a hard, deep breath. "After dinner to-day," continued Mr. Quelch, "you will pack your box. You will then go to your study, and remain there until Dr. Locke sends for you. I have no more to say to you."

The Remove went out. "Sacked!"

The word passed from lip to lip. All eyes were on the rebel of the Remove.

Harry Wharton sauntered away with his hands in his pockets, whistling.

The Sixth Chapter.

Harry Wharton's Resolve!

SACKED! It had come at last! It had been bound to come, unless the rebel of the Remove mended his ways, and he had, it seemed, no intention of mending them. Luck had befriended him again and



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But I'll bet ten to one
You weigh more than a ton."
And he's not far wrong, one may say!

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again—for a fellow who had run such a reckless course his luck had been wonderful. But it had failed him at last!

At dinner in Hall all the eyes of Greyfriars turned on Harry Wharton. Sixth Form men at the high table looked round at him—Fifth Form men stared at him—Shell and Fourth, Remove and Third and Second, all gazed at the fellow who was going to be sacked.

Wharton seemed unconscious of it. He ate a good dinner with a good appetite. His air was careless when he walked out of Hall.

Wingate of the Sixth stopped to speak to him outside.

"Sorry, kid!" said the Greyfriars captain. "I hear it's all up with you, and I suppose you'll admit that you've asked for it pretty earnestly. But I'm sorry."

"Thanks," said Harry, a little touched by the kindness in Wingate's look and tone.

Several other fellows came to speak to

him—even the ineffable Cecil Reginald Temple, captain of the Fourth, generously forgetful of the fact that the Remove fellow had pulled his lofty nose once upon a time.

"Sorry, kid!" said Temple. "Nothin' to be done, I suppose?"

"Fraid not," said Harry.

"Hard cheese, just before Christmas!" said Fry.

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

Nugent minor of the Second came running up to Wharton in the quad a few minutes later. Dicky's usually chubby and careless face was distressed.

"I say, Wharton, they're saying that you're sacked!" he exclaimed.

"Not yet!" said Harry. "I'm seeing the Head presently. That's all."

"But it's the push?" asked Dicky.

"Well, yes, I think so."

"It's rotten!" said Dicky. "I say, is it pub-haunting, or what?"

"You young ass!"

"Well, I'm awfully sorry," said the

bag "You did me a jolly good turn last week. I should have been dished, but for you! I dare say you thought I'd forgotten all about it, but I haven't. I suppose old Quelch has caught you out at last. Everybody knew he was watching for a chance. It's a shame!"

Harry Wharton walked on when Dicky left him, his face thoughtful. He had been an outcast in the school of late, but now that the chopper had come down, fellows seemed to feel kindly enough towards him. Even Coker of the Fifth stopped him for a rough, kindly word. Hobson of the Shell made it a point to tell him that he was sorry. But he could not help seeing that nobody was surprised, or blamed Mr. Quelch, except perhaps Dicky of the Second.

For a long time fellows had taken it for granted that the scapegrace of Greyfriars was booked for the sack, and that it was only a question of time. They were sorry, not because they fancied that he had had injustice, but because they regarded him as a fellow who might have done better, whose headstrong temper had led him to disaster. No fellow at school could set himself up against authority and "get away" with it for long. The most phenomenal run of luck was certain to peter out at last. Wharton was "for it" now, and in the general view he was a fellow who had hard measure, but only because he had left the beaks no choice in the matter.

Wharton had plenty of food for thought as he walked in the quad—not by any means pleasant thought.

He had always known that it might come, but, somehow, now that it had come, it seemed unexpected, as well as crushing.

His interview with the headmaster was to be merely a formal one. Judgment had been decided on, and Dr. Locke simply had to tell him so. There was no question of doubt in the matter. His departure from Greyfriars was left till the fellows were in class. He was to drop out unseen and unnoticed. Quelch, relieved to be rid of him, was willing to spare him the ignominy of a public expulsion. So long as he went, that was all Quelch cared about.

A word from Quelch to the Head would have saved him. It was all Quelch. Wharton smiled bitterly at that thought. Even now, if he had "kow-towed" to Quelch, he might have been given another chance. He had only to eat humble pie—a sufficiency of it. And his lip curled with scorn at the thought. Never that!

In a few hours now he would be at home—home! He could picture the grim displeasure and knit brows of Colonel Wharton, greeting the nephew



Harry Wharton's brow darkened at the sight of Mr. Quelch coming along the beach. "Ah!" rapped the Remove master. "So I find you here, Wharton! What about your lines?" "I haven't touched them," answered the Greyfriars rebel. "Then go back to the school at once!" said Mr. Quelch, controlling his anger in the presence of the Courtfield fellows.

sent home in disgrace from school. What was he to say to his uncle?

His teeth set. "Wharton!" Mark Linley came up to him. "I—I hope you'll believe me when I say I'm sorry for this."

Wharton looked at him. Mark had taken his place as head boy of the Remove that term—that had been one of his bitter grievances. But he was not feeling that bitterness now, and as he looked at the kind, honest face of the Lancashire junior, a faint feeling of shame came over him.

"Thanks, Linley!" he said, in a low voice. "It's all right. Look here! I'm sorry for some things. Let's part friends."

"That's more like you used to be, old chap," said Mark. "I'm jolly glad to hear you say that! But, look here, can't anything be done?"

"No!" "Quelch isn't the hard man you seem to fancy, Wharton," said Mark earnestly. "You never thought so badly of him last term, you know. He's hard in some ways; but he's a just man, if you could only see it. You've really got his rag out this term an awful lot, you know."

Wharton smiled faintly.

"I know."

"If you'd go to him——"

"Never!"

The bell rang for classes at last. Remove fellows headed for the Form-room. Wharton watched them going in the bright, cold winter sunshine. They were going into class without him. He would never go into the Remove-room again. The thought gave him a pang at his heart. Yet, as he saw Bob Cherry & Co. pause on their way, and turn towards him, he walked in another direction. They went on silently to the Form-room.

"I say, old chap!" He almost walked into Billy Bunter.

"Cut off, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Cut off, for goodness' sake!"

Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"You're pretty checky for a fellow that's sacked," said the fat Owl reprovingly. "Pride goes before a fall—what? He, he, he! Look here! About the Christmas holidays——"

"Oh, dry up!"

"It's not every fellow who would stick to a chap that's bunked from the school," said Bunter. "I can tell you that! But I'm not the man to let down a pal. Kindest friend and noblest foe, you know, and all that. If you'd like me to come along in the vac——"

"I wouldn't!"

"What I mean is, I'm afraid I couldn't do it," said Bunter calmly. "Can't be mixed up with a fellow who's kicked out of the school, you know. A man must draw a line somewhere, and I draw it at that. I was simply going to say—— Beast!"

Bunter sat down suddenly, and Wharton walked on, leaving him to splutter. He went into the House at last, after all the Greyfriars fellows were in the Form-rooms. Rather to his surprise he came on Mr. Quelch. Quelch was not with his Form.

"Have you packed your box, Wharton?" asked the Remove master coldly.

"No!"

"Go and do so at once!"

Wharton made no reply.

"You will then wait in your study till Dr. Locke has leisure to see you. It will be soon I shall personally take you to the station and place you in the train for home. You will be ready. That is all."

Wharton went up the staircase.

A prefect was in charge of the Remove that afternoon, leaving Mr.

Quelch at leisure to see the "sacked" junior safely off the premises. Wharton's lip curled bitterly. It really seemed as if Quelch could not feel sure that he had got rid of the rebel until he had seen him off with his own eyes. But there were other thoughts in Harry Wharton's mind.

He did not pack his box. He went to his study and packed a rucksack. His face was set and quiet, his mind made up. He was not going to see the Head, and hear the sentence of expulsion. If he was to go, he could go without that. A last act of defiance was a solace to his pride. He was not going home to meet the grim displeasure of his uncle, the tearful distress of his aunt. He was not wanted at Greyfriars, he was not wanted at Wharton Lodge. But the world was wide.

He remembered Dick Trumper's words in the Seagulls' Cave the previous day. There was a resource. Trumper had spoken half in jest, but he meant what he said. He and his father would make the Greyfriars junior welcome, if he cared to join them in the coasting trip in the little lugger. That would see him through a couple of weeks, and give him time to make further plans. He was done with Greyfriars, done with school life, and he was done with Wharton Lodge. To that desperate resolve, at last, had the rebel of Greyfriars come.

The Seventh Chapter.

Bolted!

STOP!"

The quadrangle was deserted—all the fellows were in class. By the gates, old Gosling could be seen, looking out of his lodge into the wintry sunshine. Wharton had

expected to walk out of the school without let or hindrance; but he had counted without the Remove master. The sharp voice fell on his ears as he was crossing to the gates, and Mr. Quelch came hurrying towards him.

Wharton set his lips as he halted. His mind was made up; his resolve irrevocably fixed. He gave the Remove master a look of cool and hardy defiance.

"What do you want?" he asked.
"How dare you leave the House? Have you seen the Head?"
"I'm not going to," answered Wharton coolly.

"Take care, Wharton! What are you doing with that rucksack?"
"That's my business."
"Have you packed your box?"
"No."
"Where are you going?"
"Find out!"

Mr. Quelch stood in the scapograce's path, breathing hard with anger. It was open war now. The last rag of respect had been thrown aside by the rebel of the Remove, no longer a member of the Remove.

"You're done with me," continued Wharton, with cool mockery. "You've wanted to get rid of me all this term. Well, now you've done it. Now you can leave me alone."

"You are to see the Head."
"I won't!"
"Do you dare to make me such an answer, Wharton?" gasped Mr. Quelch, scarcely believing his ears.

"Why not?" asked Harry, with the same mocking coolness. "I'm sacked! You're not my Form master now! I'm done with you!"

"It is my duty to see you safely home, in your guardian's house," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "Knowing your reckless nature, your headstrong and self-willed obstinacy, I had some suspicion of this."

Evidently Henry Samuel Quelch had been rather keener than the rebel had supposed. All the Remove knew that Quelch was a downy bird!

"It crossed my mind," said Mr. Quelch, "that you might make some attempt to leave the school surreptitiously—that you might not intend to go home to your guardian's house, Wharton."

"Indeed, sir?"
"As I cannot trust you, Wharton. I shall accompany you on your journey home, and hand you over to Colonel Wharton personally! There my responsibility ends; but until you are in your guardian's charge my responsibility continues! Go back into the House!"

Wharton drew a deep breath.
"You've guessed it!" he said quietly.
"I'm not going home! And you're not going to take me home, Mr. Quelch."

"Where are you thinking of going, Wharton?" asked the Remove master, in a gentler voice. "If you have your guardian's consent to visit friends—"

"Colonel Wharton knows nothing about it. He doesn't even know I'm bunked yet, unless the Head has phoned! I shall not tell you where I am going! But I am not going home—and you shall not take me there!"

"Do you imagine for one moment, Wharton, that you will be allowed to go out into the world at your own devices—"

"Yes!"
"Enough! Go back into the House instantly!"
"Rats!"

That was enough for Mr. Quelch—more than enough! He made a grasp at the rebel of Greyfriars.

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Wharton leaped back. The next moment he had dodged round the Remove master and was springing for the gates.

"Gosling!" shouted Mr. Quelch. The gates were open. Gosling, blinking in amazement, stepped out of his lodge and stood in Wharton's path.

"Stop that boy!" shouted Mr. Quelch, hurrying in pursuit.

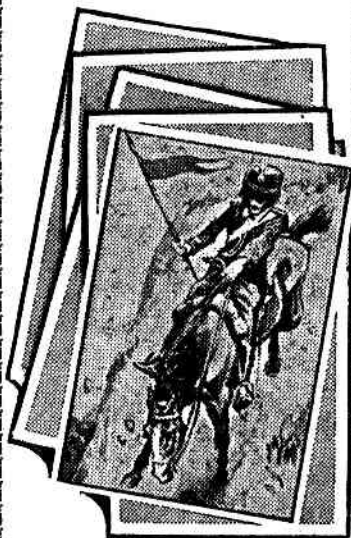
Gosling held up a horny hand. "You 'old on, Master Wharton!" he said. "Wot I says is this 'ere—

Oooooogh! Wooooogh! Groooooogh!" Wharton did not hold on. He charged! William Gosling pitched forward as if a cannon-ball had struck him.

Leaving the old porter sprawling, face downwards, Harry Wharton sprinted out of the gateway.

Mr. Quelch came panting breathlessly to the gates. He passed the gasping

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Gosling, and stared out into the road.

"Wharton!" he roared.
Wharton, at a safe distance, looked back, with a mocking grin. The Form master had no chance in a foot-race with the active junior, and he did not attempt it. He stopped in the gateway.

"Wharton! Come back at once!"
"No fear!"
"I command you—"

"Rats!"
"Boy!" shrieked Mr. Quelch. "Listen to me! I shall immediately telephone to the railway authorities, and you will be detained at the first station you enter!"

Harry Wharton laughed.
"Get on with it!" he said.

"I shall immediately call on the Sixth Form prefects to follow you, and bring you back to the school!"
"I don't mind!"

"For the last time—"
"Go and eat coke!"
Wharton swung away down Friardale Lane.

Mr. Quelch made a stride after him—and stopped! It was useless for him to pursue! Crimson with rage, the Remove master turned into the gateway again, and hurried back to the House. He almost ran to the Head's study.

"Ah, Mr. Quelch!" said Dr. Locke, as he entered. "You have brought Wharton—"

"No, sir!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "He—"

"I will deal with the boy before I go to the Sixth Form room," said the Head. "If you will—"

"He is gone!"
The Head blinked.
"Gone!" he repeated.

Mr. Quelch panted.
"He has had the audacity—the impudence to run away!"

"Mr. Quelch, why did you not detain him?" asked the Head.

"He eluded me, sir! He has admitted that he does not intend to go home. He appears to be utterly reckless and irresponsible. Indeed, I fear that it may be his intention to join some disreputable associates of some sort!"

"This must be stopped, Mr. Quelch! The boy must be taken to his home, in charge of a master or a prefect! We are responsible for him until his guardian receives him! Let him be brought back to the school at once. I will request the prefects to give their assistance."

"I was about to ask it, sir."
Five minutes later, Mr. Quelch, in coat and hat, walked out of the House, accompanied by Wingate, Sykes, Walker, and Carne of the Sixth. Wingate ran out his motor-bike, Walker and Carne and Sykes mounted push-bikes, and Mr. Quelch followed on foot. The hunt was up!

Where Wharton had gone none knew; only that he had walked off towards Friardale. But the hunt was up, and it was scarcely likely that he could escape.

In the Remove-room, where Gwynne of the Sixth had charge of the Form in Mr. Quelch's absence, the fellows wondered whether Wharton was gone yet. They little dreamed in what dramatic circumstances he was going!

The Eighth Chapter.

The Hunt for Harry Wharton!

HARRY WHARTON heard the chugging of a motor-bike in the lane, as he was stepping over the stile into the footpath through Friardale Wood.

He had kept on the trot, and lost no time.

Nothing was known of his plans at Greyfriars; once he was out of sight he had no doubt that he would be secure from recapture.

That night he would pass on board the lugger in Pegg Bay. In the morning, the Trumplers, father and son, were starting on the coasting trip; and he would be far from Greyfriars. Whatever they imagined had become of him, they were not likely to guess that he was gone to sea.

But, looking back along the lane at the sound of a motor-bike, he started as he saw Wingate of the Sixth. He had expected pursuit—the beaks could not possibly leave him to his own devices, if they could help it! But he had hardly looked for such prompt action as this!

Wingate, coming down the lane like the wind, had spotted him, and he was waving his hand as Wharton stared back. His voice reached the junior:

"Wharton! Stop!"
Wharton's eyes flashed.

He vaulted over the stile, and ran up the footpath into the leafless, frosty wood. Pursuit was swifter and closer than he had counted on; but he was not beaten yet.

The motor-bike chugged on to the stile, and Wingate jumped down. He leaped the stile and sprinted up the path.

"Wharton! You young rascal! Stop!" roared the captain of Greyfriars.

There was no answer from the fugitive.

Wharton had left the path, and was winding away among the trees and the frosty bracken. Again and again Wingate had a glimpse of him as he pursued; but pursuit was not easy in the wood, with snow banked among the trees, and the elusive junior dodged him successfully.

Wharton was out of sight when he ran out into Pegg Lane; but he did not keep on to the fishing village. He dropped into a deep ditch, fortunately frozen—it was cold, but dry. Under a screen of frosty brambles and drooping willows he crouched, silent.

A minute or two later he heard Wingate's tramping footsteps and panting breath.

The prefect stopped only a few yards from his hiding-place, staring up and down the lane. Wharton hardly breathed.

He heard Wingate tramp away at last, in the direction of Pegg. The Greyfriars captain concluded that Wharton had taken that direction—as

had, indeed, been his intention, had he been unpursued.

Wingate's footsteps died away, and Wharton peered out, and grinned breathlessly as he saw the stalwart form of the Greyfriars captain vanish in the distance.

He crept out of the frozen ditch. To go on to Pegg was impossible now. Wingate was there, searching for him. He struck off through the wood, again, taking a path that led to the cliffs at a distance from the fishing village.

By descending the gully in the cliffs he intended to reach the beach and follow the sands to the bay. If the coast was not clear he could easily hunt cover till the early December dusk set in; after which he could cut down to the luggor unseen.

He came out on the path over the cliffs and hurried along to the gully. Then he caught sight of James Walker of the Sixth on a push-bike, coming along from the direction of Priardale. He dropped behind a rugged mass of chalk, and waited.

Walker came on slowly. He did not seem to be in a hurry. He stopped, and dismounted on the road a few yards from the junior; but Wharton was in no danger of discovery unless the prefect left the road and searched among the rugged inequalities of the cliff-tops. That was a task rather too extensive for James Walker to think of undertaking it. Wharton wondered why the Sixth Form man had stopped; but soon he heard the whir of another bicycle, from another direction.

"See him Walker?" It was Carne's voice calling.

"No Have you?"
"Not a glimpse of the young villain!"

"He was making for Pegg," said

Walker. "Goodness knows why—there's no railway station there. But it looks like it."

"Well, we'll run him down sooner or later. Can't see that there's a fearful hurry," remarked Carne. "This is better than Greek with the Head."

Walker chuckled.
"I spotted Wingate near Pegg! Sykes is rooting in the wood. Seen anything of his nibs?"

"His nibs," apparently, was Mr. Quelch.

"Yes; he's gone along the beach," answered Walker. "If the young rascal went that way, Quelch will spot him, I fancy."

Wharton breathed quickly as he heard that.

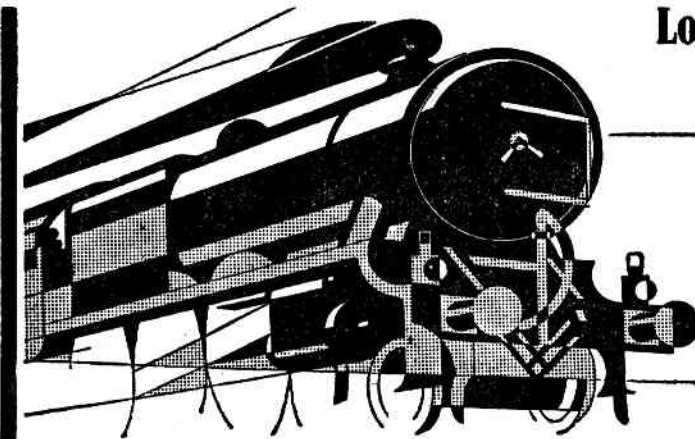
If Mr. Quelch was down on the beach, the way was not clear for him to reach Pegg Bay by the sands. Still, the beach was wide, and dotted with outcrops of chalky rock—there was plenty of cover there. He had to chance it, anyhow.

"Well, we'll get the little idiot, sooner or later," said Carne. "Ten to one Wingate will bag him in Pegg. Let's keep an eye open along these cliffs. If he dodges this way we can run him down fast enough!"

Wharton heard the two seniors wheeling their machines away along the road. When he ventured to peer out from behind the chalky boulder, they were at a distance, with their backs to him.

Keeping his head low, he ran for the gully, and in a few minutes was in it, descending to the beach below.

He came out on the ridged sands, and his glance swept keenly to and fro. Of all his pursuers, he had learned that only Mr. Quelch had gone along
(Continued on next page.)



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the sands; he had now only one pair of eyes to fear. But those gimlet eyes were very keen indeed.

Quelch was not in sight.

Wharton hoped that he had already gone on as far as the village, round the great sweeping bend of the cliffs a quarter of a mile ahead.

He tramped along the wet sand.

On his left the North Sea rolled to the horizon, steely grey under the wintry sun. The tide had turned in, and was booming on sand and rocks, great waves rolling up towards the line of high chalk cliffs.

But as yet, the tide was distant; there was ample time to get to the bend of the cliffs before it was anywhere near. If he was caught before he got round the rugged, rocky base of the great Shoulder, he was lost. But there was a good hour yet before the tide would be washing the rocks of the Shoulder, and he gave that no thought. Once round that great cliff, he would see the fishing village, and the craft moored at the old wooden quay—among them the lugger he intended to board. He walked slowly. He could not linger on the beach till dusk, for the tide was in before dark. But once round the great Shoulder, he could hunt cover among the rocks till the early darkness fell. But he was not round the Shoulder yet!

Not a living thing was in sight on the beach that windy winter's day. The incoming tide roared with a deep, booming sound, foaming over chalk rocks, piling up masses of sand and seaweed. The keen salt air blew in his face, and he breathed it deep. As he came opposite the Scagulls' Cave, where he had been with Trumpler and Solly the day before, he glanced up at the dark opening in the cliffs. Had it been above high-water mark, it would have been a safe refuge till the hunt was over. But at high tide the sea washed right into the high cave. In an hour's time it would be filled with foaming, booming salt water.

He tramped on.

"Wharton!"

From behind a ridge of high chalk a tall and angular figure came into sight. Wharton stopped dead.

Mr. Quelch was, as he had supposed, ahead of him. But he had not gone on to Pegg; he was still on the beach. The high ridge of chalk had hidden him from the junior's eyes till this moment.

He was scarce six yards distant when he sighted Wharton, and he came striding towards the junior with glinting eyes.

Wharton cast a desperate glance round.

The Form master's outstretched hand was almost grasping him, when he sprang up the rugged cliff, and scrambled into the Scagulls' Cave. Mr. Quelch, with an angry exclamation, sprang after him, slipped on the wet chalk, and fell back on the sand.

He gained his feet, panting for breath, his face pale and set with anger. Harry Wharton, from the dark opening of the cave above, looked down at him with cool defiance in his look.

The Ninth Chapter.

Escape!

HENRY SAMUEL QUELCH breathed hard and deep as he looked up at the cool, defiant face of the rebel. Never had the Remove master's severe face expressed such concentrated anger.

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"Wharton!" His voice came hard as steel. "Descend at once!"

"Not likely!" answered Harry.

"You reckless young rascal—"

"Can it!"

"Wha-a-t!"

"Can it!" said Wharton coolly.

"Will you come down, Wharton?"

"No, I won't!"

"If you refuse to descend," said Mr. Quelch, his voice trembling with rage, "I shall ascend and remove you by force."

"Get on with it," said the rebel of the Remove, laughing.

Wharton had little doubt that he would be able to dodge successfully, in the dark interior of the cave. Of that interior, Mr. Quelch knew nothing—all he could see was the gap in the face of the cliff.

He approached, picking a spot to ascend. The ledge at the mouth of the cave was only two feet above his head; but the chalk was wet and slippery. Mr. Quelch was long past the age when clambering over cliffs had any appeal. He cast a searching glance along the beach, in the hope of seeing some of the prefects. But not one of them was to be seen—the beach had been left to Quelch. It was impossible to go and call them to the spot—the junior was only waiting for him to turn his back, to escape. If Wharton was to be rooted out of the cave, Quelch had to do the rooting; and he made up his mind to it.

Taking careful hold of projections in the chalk, Henry Samuel Quelch clambered up.

Wharton watched him coolly.

Had it been one of the Sixth-Formers, he would have had no hesitation in shoving him back, to fall on the sand; the climber was entirely at the mercy of anyone above. But even the reckless rebel of Greyfriars, in his most reckless frame of mind, did not dream of laying hands on an elderly man—that was very far outside the limit. He stepped back from the ledge, still watching, as Mr. Quelch's grim face rose before the cave. The Remove master breathing hard, got a knee on the ledge, and clambered up, and stood on his feet in the mouth of the cave, panting.

Wharton retreated into the dusky interior.

"Boy!" boomed Quelch. His voice rang with a thousand echoes in the hollows and fissures of the chalk cliff.

"Stop!"

"Rats!" came echoing back from the gloom.

Mr. Quelch, his teeth set, his eyes glinting, tramped into the cave. The floor was rough and irregular, heaped here and there by sand and seaweed washed in by the last flood-tide, with pools of water in the hollows. The angry Form master had to pick his way carefully.

He glimpsed the shadowy figure dodging away in the gloom, and followed on. Even at its mouth, the Scagulls' Cave was dusky; farther in, the gloom was deep, and farther still, the blackness intense. Innumerable fissures opened in the chalk. In a very few minutes Mr. Quelch lost sight of the junior. He paused to listen for his footsteps; but no sound came to his ears save the hollow echoes in the cliff. Suddenly there was a flapping sound, and a gull rushed past him, startling him so much that he slipped and fell.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Quelch, as he sat down in a pool left by the last tide.

He splashed water right and left. The gull whizzed on to the opening of the cave, and vanished skyward.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a mocking laugh from somewhere.

Mr. Quelch staggered up.

His fury was at white heat now. Water dripped from the tail of his overcoat. He stared round him, trying to trace the junior by that sound of disrespectful laughter. But the echoing cave multiplied the sound on all sides.

"Wharton!" shouted Mr. Quelch.

"Adsum!" called back the unseen junior, as if he were answering to his name at call-over.

"Where are you, you young rascal?" roared Mr. Quelch.

"Here, old bean!"

"Upon my word! Wharton, I shall chastise you severely as soon as I lay hands upon you!"

"Go it, old thing!"

It seemed to Mr. Quelch that he could trace the direction of the voice, and he made a rush. In the gloom his foot caught in trailing seaweed and he fell on his knees.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The cavern boomed with sound.

The Remove master scrambled up again. He realised by this time that he had set himself an exceedingly difficult task. But he was so bitterly enraged and exasperated that nothing would have induced him to relinquish it. He scrambled on savagely in search of the elusive junior.

From far up the cave came the sound of a falling, clinking stone. Mr. Quelch tramped on up the cave.

Behind him Wharton's mocking face looked out of a narrow fissure in the rugged cave-side. He grinned after the Remove master. That falling stone had been hurled by Wharton to fall at a distance and lead Mr. Quelch on a false scent. The Remove master disappeared into darkness, tramping furiously up the cave into the very heart of the cliff. A distant glimmer showed Wharton that Quelch was striking matches to assist him in the search for the fellow who was not there.

With a subdued chuckle, the young rascal crept away back to the mouth of the cave. Mr. Quelch was welcome to go on exploring the dark interior by the light of matches as long as he liked. Evidently he had no suspicion that he had been tricked—that he had passed Wharton and left the junior behind him. Leaving him to his rather unprofitable task, Harry Wharton dropped down from the ledge to the sand and scudded along the beach.

He laughed as he went.

How long Mr. Quelch would root about in the deserted cave before he discovered that the junior was gone was an entertaining question.

Having scudded a hundred yards, Wharton dropped into a walk and strolled on towards the curve of the great Shoulder.

The tide was much closer in now.

Between the utmost bulge of the Shoulder and the incoming waves was only a narrow strip of sand, and this was crossed by flooding water as far as the cliff when a wave came in with unusual force.

But there was plenty of time yet; only shallow water reached the cliff, and it receded again, leaving the way clear. It was a good quarter of an hour yet before it became dangerous to walk there.

Wharton sauntered round the base of the Shoulder. A wash of water wetted his boots as he went and that was all.



Wharton cast a desperate glance round, and then sprang up the rugged cliff. Mr. Quelch, with an angry exclamation, sprang after him, slipped on the wet chalk, and fell back on the sand. "Wharton!" he bellowed. "Descend at once!" "Not likely!" answered the rebel of Greyfriars.

He came in sight of the distant fishing village across the bay, and the lugger, with the lug-sail down, moored at the pier opposite the Anchor. Even at the distance he could make out a figure in jersey and top-boots on board the little craft, and knew that it was old Dave Trumper. But he did not follow the curve of the bay towards the village. Wingate was there somewhere—and perhaps some of the other prefects by this time. The runaway did not intend to show up in Pegg till dark—or, rather, he did not intend to show up there at all. His plan was to get on the lugger under cover of the winter dusk when it fell. In the meantime, once round the Shoulder, he had to hunt cover. Any minute now Mr. Quelch might be following; whether he discovered or not that Wharton had fooled him in the cave, he could not linger there till the tide came in.

Wharton sat down on a bank of sand screened by chalk rocks to wait. He was out of sight when Mr. Quelch should come along.

But Mr. Quelch did not come along. A startling thought came into his mind. He gave a low whistle and rose to his feet, looking back at the great bulging cliff he had passed round. The tall, angular figure of the Remove master was not in sight.

"My hat!" murmured Wharton blankly.

Surely the Remove master would not linger in the cave, knowing that the tide was coming in. He was not fool enough to be cut off by the tide. He had never been in the Seagulls' Cave before, but he knew that it was below high-water mark—he must know that. Was it possible that in his anger and exasperation he had forgotten about the tide?

Wharton felt a sudden sinking of the heart.

He had escaped pursuit; there was no eye on him now. He was free to carry out his reckless plans. Had he only glimpsed the angular figure of the Remove master coming round the cliff he would have hunted cover till Mr. Quelch had passed, and laughed when he had gone. But he did not glimpse that angular figure. Mr. Quelch was not coming round the Shoulder; he was still on the unsafe side of the great bulging cliff. And now the incoming sea was washing right up to the chalk.

Wharton compressed his lips. Was the man fool enough, mad enough, to have forgotten the tide?

Was he still rooting about in the Seagulls' Cave for the fellow who was not there, while grim death was closing in on him?

For it was death—death without hope—if he did not come round the cliff before the tide cut him off. Once the sea was up to the steep face of the Shoulder Cliff, no mortal man could win to safety; the strongest swimmer would have been dashed to death on the rugged chalk. Why did he not come?

Wharton watched, with sinking heart. Then he ran back to the bulging curve of the great cliff and looked beyond. Foaming waves dashed up to the chalk and receded. Only by running, and dodging the waves as they came, could anyone get past the cliff now. If Quelch was coming—

But he was not coming! It was forced upon Wharton's mind that he had forgotten the tide. There was a chill at the schoolboy's heart as he realised it. Probably Mr. Quelch did not even know the time of the flood-tide. It had been coming in, but was still distant, when he entered the cave.

Likely enough it had not occurred to his mind how fast it was closing in while he rooted about in the dim interior of the hollow cliff. Anyhow, he was not coming; he was not in sight.

Wharton tramped on back round the cliff.

He had regarded this man as an enemy; he had grown almost to hate him. Now it seemed as if the scales fell from his eyes. In a fearful mental picture he saw the wild sea booming into the cave; he saw a man struggling in merciless waters—struggling till his strength was spent—and then—Then a lifeless form washed to and fro in the darkness till the obbing tide carried it out to sea.

He dashed along the wet sand. He had to get to the cave—to call Quelch, to warn him of his fearful danger before it was too late. Likely enough it was too late already—but he had to try. His own escape, his own plans and projects were forgotten now. He had to save—if he could—the life that had been endangered by his own reckless rebelliousness. Heaven send that he was in time! That was his only thought now as he dashed and scrambled on between the steep cliff and the roaring tide.

Booming, foaming, the sea rolled in—foaming round his knees, round his waist, driving him against the cliff. It receded, and he splashed and plunged desperately on. Slipping on wet sponges, stumbling in tangled seaweed, he tore on. Another great wave came booming in, flooding the sand, washing up the face of the cliff, tossing him on the rough chalk like a feather. He clung on somehow till the wave went back, holding on to rugged chalk to save himself from being torn away to the hungry

(Continued on page 18.)



(Continued from page 15.)

sea. Then, panting, blinded by spray, with ebbing water washing round his knees, he raced on—and rounded the bulging curve of the cliff just as another billow thundered in.

He was beyond the outmost bulge of the great chalk Shoulder now. Beyond, the cliffs receded in a deep embayment, and there was a strip of sand as yet uncovered by the tide. The junior raced along the sand towards the Seagulls' Cave, the sea booming behind him—flooding in as if eager for its prey. But even as he ran and stumbled on the knew, with a shudder, that the way behind him was closing fast; that it was a thousand chances to one that before he could return, the tide, foaming up to the cliffs, would have cut off all escape!

The Tenth Chapter. Caught by the Tide!

HARRY WHARTON reached the foot of the cliff where the Seagulls' Cave opened above. He stared up, but nothing was to be seen of the Remove master. He scrambled up to the ledge at the mouth of the cave and plunged breathlessly in. Far in the distance, in the dim interior, he caught a glimmering flicker of light. It was a match. It flickered out, and was followed by darkness. Echoing from the dim depths of the cave came the sharp, angry voice of the Remove master of Greyfriars.

"Wharton!"

Evidently Mr. Quelch had not discovered yet that the junior had dodged unseen out of the cave. He was still seeking him, in a state of intense anger and exasperation, in those dim recesses.

Wharton ran up into the cave.

"Mr. Quelch!" he shouted.

He heard a sharp exclamation.

"Wharton! Is that you, Wharton?"

"Yes—this way!" shouted Harry.

There was a sound of footsteps in the darkness. Mr. Quelch was coming towards him—astonished to hear the junior's voice behind him. Up to that moment, he had had no doubt that Wharton was ahead of him, in the utmost recesses of the cave.

"Quick!" shouted Wharton.

The tall, angular figure loomed out of the dimness. The Form master's face was pale and set with anger, his eyes glinting. Mr. Quelch had had more than one fall, and he was bruised and shaken and wet.

"You—Wharton—I thought—you young rascal! You have been in hiding all this time—"

"I've come back—"

"You have come back?" repeated Mr. Quelch. "What do you mean?"

"The tide!" panted Wharton.

"The tide?" Mr. Quelch started.

"I'd cleared off—but I came back to warn you! The tide—the tide! There's barely time—if there's time yet! Don't you understand?" gasped Wharton. "If

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we're caught here we shall be drowned like rats in a trap!"

Mr. Quelch gave him a long, hard look.

"Come!" he said curtly.

He strode away to the mouth of the cave, Wharton panting by his side. He stopped on the outer ledge, and looked seaward. A long line of billows boomed in towards the cliffs, under the sinking winter sun. Below the cave a strip of sand was still clear for some distance on either hand. But on the right and on the left; the cliffs bulged out to the sea—and the tide was already washing at their bases.

Mr. Quelch's lips set, and he breathed hard. On the left lay the way back to the gully by which he had descended to the beach; but on that side the sea was right up to the cliffs, and the gully itself was flooded deep. On the right lay the great Shoulder, and round it the way to Pegg Bay and safety. But the tide was roaring round the Shoulder now.

"Good heavens!" breathed the Remove master.

Wharton caught his arm.

"We've got to get round the Shoulder—if it's too late, we're done! Quick! Quick!"

"Come!" said Mr. Quelch.

He slipped down from the cave-mouth to the sand, and Wharton jumped. Side by side they ran along the cliffs. But it was too late—long minutes too late, as Wharton had feared it would be. Where the junior had scrambled round the bulging cliff, barely escaping being washed away to sea, there was now deep water, thundering against the high rocks. So far from passing round the utmost bulge of the chalk, they could not even approach it. A roaring wave drove them stumbling and breathless back.

"We've got to get through!" panted Wharton. "It's the only way! If we're shut in here—"

But he broke off hopelessly. He knew that they could not get through. They had to back away from the tide before it engulfed them. There was deep water all round the Shoulder now, foaming and booming. Only by swimming could the attempt be made—and in those wild and whirling waters, the stoutest swimmer would have been dashed to death.

"We're done!" breathed Wharton.

Mr. Quelch stopped. His face was pale, but perfectly calm. Booming, another great billow came rushing in, and the wild water surged round the Remove master up to his neck. Wharton grasped his arm and dragged him back. Only by a desperate scramble they escaped being torn away by the swirling waters. Panting, stumbling, they reached the cliff below the Seagulls' Cave again. Retreat was out off now. Scarce six feet of sand remained uncovered by the tide, in the extremity of the embayment of the line of cliffs. And the water was creeping over it, the spray dashing into the cave above. On that narrow strip, they leaned back against the chalk, and panted for breath.

Wharton cast a desperate glance at the cliffs above. Seventy feet over his head rose the summit, and the ascent was steep and slippery. There was a chance—a chance in a thousand—that the active junior might have climbed to safety. But there was no chance that the elderly Form master could have done so.

A foaming billow washed round them. They scrambled up to the ledge again. But the tide was rising fast now, and

it was soon washing over the ledge into the Seagulls' Cave.

"Good heavens!" breathed Mr. Quelch. There was a stony look on his pale face. He knew that there was no hope.

The tide was running into the cave now. It was round their feet, rising to their knees.

The noise of it boomed in the cave, filling the hollows of the cliffs with unceasing echoes.

They backed farther away, on higher ground inside; the floor of the cave sloped upward. But the wash of the water followed fast. The mouth of the cave was now a small gap, glimmering with surging water. The minutes could be counted before it was entirely closed by the incoming sea. In the deep dusk, Mr. Quelch peered at the face of the junior, and saw that it was calm and steady. The Remove master spoke.

"You had left the cave, Wharton—"

"Yes."

"Why did you come back?"

"To warn you."

"But, you foolish boy, you must have known that the tide would cut off your return to safety."

"I took the chance!"

"I wish that you had remained in safety, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch quietly. "But it is too late to think of that now. I have never been in this cave before—but, doubtless, you are well acquainted with it?"

"Yes; I've explored it more than once, sir."

"Is there any way out—on the landward side?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then—we are shut in here—"

"Yes."

"Do you know how high the tide rises here, Wharton?" Mr. Quelch's voice was as calm as if he had been asking the junior a question in class in the Remove-room at Greyfriars. "Does it rise to the rock over our heads?"

"Yes, sir! Farther back the roof's higher though—plenty of room to swim," said Harry.

"To swim?" repeated Mr. Quelch. He went on quietly. "If there is some portion of the cave floor that rises above high-water mark, we may be saved yet. Do you know of any?"

"No, sir!"

Mr. Quelch drew a deep breath.

"I am glad to see you are keeping up your courage, Wharton," he said, after a long pause.

Wharton smiled faintly.

"No good whining, that I can see, sir! We've got to face it!"

"Quite so," said Mr. Quelch. "While there is life there is hope—and we must not despair, my boy. If our situation were known, a boat might reach the cave—and it is possible that Wingate—or some other may guess—"

A rushing billow flooded into the cave, and foaming water filled the gap, shutting off the last gleam of daylight. It was the sea's answer to Mr. Quelch's words. No boat could enter the cave now, even if it came—and who was likely to guess that the Remove master and the rebel schoolboy were prisoners in the Seagulls' Cave, shut in by the tide?

In the darkness, Wharton's voice came in low, but steady tones.

"It's not much good now, sir, saying that I'm sorry! It's my fault—I've got you into this."

"I am afraid the fault was partly mine, Wharton. I should have been more on my guard. But I am not well acquainted with the tides here—and I

did not think of it. I supposed you were still in the cave—" Mr. Quelch broke off. "It was brave and generous of you to come back to warn me—you must have known the terrible risk you were taking! But let us not give up hope!"

The tide was swelling round them again. They retreated farther up the cave, knee-deep in water. In black darkness they stood, while the water gurgled round them, rising higher and higher.

The Eleventh Chapter.

Missing!

"I SAY, you fellows!"
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo!"
 "They've come in!" grinned Bunter.
 "Have they got him?"

"No fear!"

The December evening had closed in, dark and misty. All Greyfriars had heard by that time that the scapegrace, who was booked for the "sack," had bolted without waiting to be sacked, and that the Remove master and some of the prefects had gone in pursuit. There was the keenest interest to learn the result. What the rebel's intentions might be, no one could guess; but there was much speculation on the subject. Billy Bunter had rolled into the Rag with the news that "they" had come in—without the fugitive. Evidently, so far, the rebel had succeeded in keeping clear.

Wingate and Sykes, Walker and Carne, had come back unsuccessful. As Mr. Quelch had not returned, it looked as if he was still on the hunt. Now

that darkness had fallen, however, the pursuit did not seem likely to be successful.

"Wharton's got clear!" said the Bouncer. "But what the dickens is his game? He can't have gone home—there was no need to bolt, if he was going home! Quelch was going to see him safe home—that's why we didn't have the dear man in the Form-room this afternoon."

"I say, you fellows, perhaps he's run away to become a pirate!" suggested Billy Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Goodness knows what he's up to," said Bob Cherry. "He can't have gone anywhere by train; the beaks will have taken care of that."

"The carefulness will have been
 (Continued on next page.)

The Footballers' Christmas Fare!

CHRISTMAS is really half-time in the football world. Half the season has gone when the Christmas games have been played, and the big football clubs know, more or less accurately, where they stand. There is very little interval, however, although it is half-time. In fact, it is a busy time for the footballer. This Christmas is not so bad as some Christmases, for the footballer will at least have the actual Christmas Day to himself—because it falls on a Sunday. But he won't be able to let himself go in the festivities line; and this, believe me, is a matter over which plenty of professional footballers think they ought to have a bit of sympathy.

The good things of the Christmas table are not for the footballer. They have a feast, but it is a feast of football, with three matches in four days, often on muddy pitches, and certainly demanding for most of the players a considerable amount of travelling under other than the most perfect of conditions.

Mention of the Christmas feast reminds me of a story told by Hughie Gallacher, the centre-forward of Chelsea, concerning his Newcastle days. One Christmas Day some time ago, Hughie was on his way to the St. James' Park ground to play a match after a lunch of the sort which a footballer must have—quite light. As Gallacher entered the ground, he came across a young lad with a half-eaten mince-pie in one hand, and another mince-pie, untouched, in the other hand. They smelt hot, those pies—tantalising, too, as Gallacher said in telling me the story.

As he passed the boy with the pies, this polite invitation to have one was conveyed:

"Here, Mr. Gallacher, take this pie. It will put some kick into you!"

Hughie confesses that never in his life had he ever wanted anything quite so much as he wanted that pie. But he had to go without it.

Black-Eyed Santa Claus!

UNFORTUNATELY, footballers who have to play three games in four days often get hurt, and a long tale of tragedies could be told concerning players who have had legs broken at Christmas. But that is a doubtful subject which can well be left out of our Christmas ideas.

Let us hope that the footballers will have nice full stockings of points, because that is what makes the festive season really festive for the footballer.

There is just one more or less serious story of a tragedy which may be told,

OUR FOOTER FANS' FEATURE!



Our sporting contributor is never happier than when he's dealing with problems of interest to the Soccer fan. If you're in doubt at any time write to "Linesman," c/o MAGNET, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

however. A famous forward, playing a match at Christmas-time, went up near goal to head a ball. The goalkeeper came out to fist the ball away at the same time, and by one of those accidents which do happen occasionally, the forward ran his eye right into the fist of the goalkeeper.

After the match was over, the forward taking a look at himself, noticed that he had a "beautiful" black eye.

"That's done it!" he said to his colleagues. "I've got to dress up as Santa Claus to-night, and a nice sort of figure I shall out with this eye. The kiddies will think I have come down the chimney all right!"

Although the footballer, generally speaking, has our sympathy when Christmas comes, the fact remains that there are quite a lot of young lads who want to join the ranks of the big footballers. This is evident from my post-bag. This week I have a note from a reader on these lines: "How can a boy of sixteen years of age set about becoming a professional footballer?" Rather a tall order, that question, but as the same sort of query has reached me from other boys I must try to answer it.

Sound Advice!

IN the first place, of course, the one real way to become a professional footballer is to play the game in such a way with your particular club that attention will be drawn to your doings. Let me tell you what happened, not long ago, when I was in the office of a big football club. A young fellow came in and asked if he might be given a trial, as he wanted to become a real footballer.

"Don't be in such a big hurry to have a trial," was the advice given to him by the manager who interviewed the lad. What you must do is to get attached to a good amateur club: one in which you

are capable of at least holding your own. Then write to me and let me know where you are playing, and what you are doing. I will then send one of my scouts to watch you—when you don't know he is there—and if his report is favourable you will be asked to come along and have a trial."

Now this, I think, was very sound advice. It is not much use for a young player who thinks he is good enough to be promoted to professional rank merely asking for a trial. He must have some sort of record behind him; must be able to produce evidence that he is a good footballer. If he does that, then there is not much risk of his going for long without a trial in the best company. Managers and their scouts are always on the look-out for the better than-ordinary youngsters.

Many letters, too, reach me regarding the best position for young footballers to occupy on the field, that is, the position which is likely to suit them best in view of their qualifications and physique. It is really very difficult to give advice under this heading. To one of my readers who says that he is fifteen years of age, five feet three, and can kick well with either foot, though he is not a good dribbler, I should say off-hand that he ought to develop as a full-back.

Pace and skill in dribbling are essential to attackers, and some dribbling skill a good (or half-) back. But full-backs do not need to dribble. They must be good, though with both feet.

In any case I always doubt the wisdom of a young player really making up his mind, when he is still young, as to his best position without experiments. Try playing in different positions; switch about a bit. That is the best way to find your particular "corner" in the game

terrific," agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But he may have hired an absurd car in Courtfield, and cleared off motorfully."

"Old Gosling says he went off towards Friardale," said Johnny Bull. "He couldn't get a car there."

"What the dickens is his game?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"Goodness knows!"

Every fellow at Greyfriars was eager for news. The scapegrace had been very much in the public eye of late; but his latest exploit brought him more than ever into the limelight. From the Sixth to the Second, every fellow was keen to learn what had happened. Dozens of fellows watched for Mr. Quelch to come in, wondering whether he would bring the fugitive junior with him.

It was known that Walker, Sykes, and Carne had seen nothing of him. But Wingate had seen him, making through Friardale Wood, and had lost him in Pegg Lane! That looked as if he had been making for the fishing village. On the other hand, the Greyfriars captain had inquired up and down and round about Pegg, and nothing had been seen or heard of him there. Mr. Quelch, it was known, had gone along the beach from the gully, in the direction of Pegg; but evidently he had had no luck, or he would have been back long ago. It seemed rather odd that the Remove master did not come in, for obviously it was futile to keep up the search after dark. But he did not come in.

"Quelch is sticking to it!" remarked Vernon-Smith, as the Remove fellows went up to the studies for prep. "May be on the jolly old track and following Wharton across country! I don't envy Wharton if Quelch's hand drops on his shoulder."

Prep claimed the Remove, and the subject had to be dismissed for a time. After prep, the fellows came down from the studies eager for news. But there was no news.

By that time nobody doubted that the elusive rebel had got clear. But it was surprising that Mr. Quelch did not return. Billy Bunter went along to his study, and ascertained that the Remove master was not there. The fellows learned that the Head had sent for Wingate and questioned him, and that he seemed perturbed and anxious. No message had been received from Mr. Quelch. If he was, as the Bouncer had suggested, following the fugitive across country, he would surely have let the Head know. As the evening grew older, the continued absence of Mr. Quelch, and of any news from him, caused more and more surprise.

"I say, you fellows, I've got it!" Billy Bunter announced in the Rag, his fat face full of excitement. "I say, old Quelch went along the beach, you know. He never got as far as Pegg, or Wingate would have seen him there. Ten to one he was still rooting after Wharton when the tide came in—what!"

"The tide!" repeated Frank Nugent. "You silly ass!" roared Bob Cherry. "Oh, really, Cherry! I think it's jolly likely that old Quelch has been caught in the tide and drowned—"

"Kick him!"

"Yaroooooh!"

Billy Bunter was kicked for his cheerful suggestion. But now that the idea had been mooted, a good many fellows thought it over, with serious faces. Between the gully and the Shoulder the beach was dangerous when the tide turned; people had been caught there before, more than once. And fellows remembered that the tide would be in before dusk that day.

"Utter rot!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Quelch wouldn't be such an ass! But where the dickens is he all this time!" Nobody could answer that question.

That the "bolted" junior had not gone home was known for certain at last. It transpired that the Head had telephoned to Wharton Lodge, to make the inquiry, and that Colonel Wharton had replied that he had heard and seen nothing of his nephew. It was rumoured that the colonel was coming down to the school—no doubt very much perturbed by the news that his nephew had bolted. And when the headlights of a car gleamed through the mist in the quad, there was a rush of fellows to see whether the new arrival was Harry Wharton's uncle.

"It's the jolly old bean!" murmured the Bouncer, as the tall, bronzed-faced old military gentleman was seen to step from the car.

Many eyes were turned on Harry Wharton's uncle. Nobody failed to notice the deep frown on his grim brow. He stopped as Trotter was showing him in to the Head, and called to Frank Nugent.

"Nugent! Is my nephew here?"

"No, sir!" answered Frank.

"Do you know where he has gone?"

"No!"

The colonel bent his grim brows at the junior.

"I believe you are his closest friend here, Nugent! Did he tell you nothing of his intentions?"

Nugent coloured deeply.

"We—we haven't been so friendly lately—" he stammered. "Wharton never said anything to me—"

Grunt from the colonel.

"You know nothing of him then?" he snapped.

"No! Mr. Quelch is still out looking for him," said Frank.

The colonel grunted again, and followed Trotter to the Head's study.

"Looks like a merry Christmas for Wharton, when he goes home, with that jolly old gent!" murmured Skinner, and some of the fellows grinned.

Frank Nugent went to the window of the Rag and stared out into the December darkness. Far away, the boom of the sea came faintly. Mist hung over the quadrangle, and light flakes of snow were falling, whirling on the wind.

Where was his estranged chum that grim winter's night? He wondered, with a clouded face and a heavy heart, little dreaming of the terrible truth.

The Twelfth Chapter.

In the Shadow of Death!

HARRY WHARTON groped in the inside pocket of his drenched coat as he stood in the blackness of the flooded cave.

A sudden bright beam of light shot into the gloom, and Mr. Quelch gave a start. "What—"

"Thank goodness I had it, sir!" said Harry. "It's my electric torch. I had it with me yesterday when I was exploring this cave with Trumper and Lazarus, and left it in my pocket."

In the dense blackness of the cave the light was a great relief. But the gleaming beam showed only the rough, wet chalk walls, and the surging water sweeping in, washing against the sides of the cave, and flooding on far beyond where they stood. Strange lights and shadows danced on the water as Wharton flashed the light round. The sea was washing into a hundred fissures in the chalk, booming with hollow echoes.

They had retreated as far as possible, and the rough chalk at the back of the cave stopped farther retreat. Round

them now the water was to their knees, with an icy chill. It was fast rising.

Wharton flashed the light up.

At the back of the cave the roof was high, soaring beyond the gleam of the light. A boat could have kept afloat there till the falling tide made egress from the cave possible. But no swimmer could have kept up through the long, long hours. Both the Form master and the junior knew that when the deepening water washed them off their feet the end would be near.

With the torch in his hand, Wharton scanned the wall of rugged chalk. It was almost as steep as the wall of a house. Here and there hollows and projections made it possible for an active fellow to climb. But a climber could not have held on long. But the junior's brain was busy now, the peril of death sharpening his wits.

"Will you hold the light, sir?"

Mr. Quelch took the torch.

"What are you thinking of, Wharton?" he asked quietly.

"I'm going up the rock, sir! It's barely possible that there may be a ledge or shelf, or a fissure or something above high-water mark—it's a chance, at least."

"Try!" said the Remove master.

He held up the torch, gleaming on the rough face of the chalk rock. Harry Wharton grasped hold, and clambered up.

Twice, thrice, he slipped down the wet chalk, and splashed into the water that surged below. But again and again he made the attempt.

Mr. Quelch watched him anxiously, while the water rose higher and higher round him.

Active as a cat, the junior clambered on and up. He groped for handhold and foothold, and found them, and rose slowly, but surely, up the steep wall of the cave.

Suddenly he disappeared from the Form master's view. His voice came ringing down with a note of joy in it.

"There's a fissure here, sir—six or seven feet deep. If you can climb as far as this—"

"I shall try," said Mr. Quelch. "Remain where you are, Wharton. Keep in safety."

Wharton's face reappeared from the gap in the chalk wall that he had discovered. It was a mere slit in the rock, two or three feet wide, six or seven feet deep into the cliff. Whether it was above high-water mark, the junior did not know. He could only hope so. Whether it was or not, it was obviously the only chance they had.

"Throw up the torch, sir, and I will hold it for you," said Harry.

Mr. Quelch tossed up the torch, and Wharton caught it in his cap. Then, leaning from the gap, he held it to show the Remove master light to climb.

Mr. Quelch made the attempt. Again and again he slipped back, and the water was up to his neck. It was for life or death. And he tried again, and again. Harry Wharton, lying on his chest in the fissure above, reached down to him. He jammed the torch in a crevice of the chalk, and had both hands free to help the Remove master, if he came within reach of help.

Cramped on the rough chalk, Mr. Quelch exerted himself to the utmost. But every upward inch cost him great efforts. But he came within the junior's reach, and Wharton grasped one of his wrists, and pulled. With the drag from above, and a last desperate effort on his own part, the Remove master clambered into the gap in the chalk.

He sank down there almost exhausted. Wharton took the torch, and stuck it in the side of the fissure. It lighted

the little, confined space. Below, the water boomed and roared in the cave, rising and rising. Spray splashed into the fissure, but they could not get much wetter.

Mr. Quelch rose at last. There was plenty of room for the junior to stand, but Mr. Quelch's tall head tapped on the chalk above. He leaned against the side of the fissure, breathing hard and deep.

"We are safe for the present, sir," said Harry.

"Possibly the water will not rise so high as this," said Mr. Quelch. "We must hope that it does not, my boy."

"It's a chance, at least."

Wharton looked down at the flooded cave below. The sea was still rising, the tide thundering in through the outer cave. If it rose high enough to flood the gap in which they had taken refuge, it was the end. They could do no more to save themselves, and could only wait. Closer and closer the rising water was creeping.

"We shall know soon, sir," said Harry, in a low voice. "If—if we don't get through this, sir, I—I'd like you to know that—that I'm sorry—for a lot of things this term. And there's something else I want to tell you. You might not have believed me before, but you will believe me now."

"What is it, my boy?" asked the Remove master gently. "You may be sure that I shall believe whatever you may tell me now."

"I know I've been rather a fool, sir, and given a lot of trouble. But it was never so bad as you thought. You eaned me for smoking in my study, and did not believe me when I told you I had not done so. But it was the truth, sir."

"I believe you, Wharton."

"And—and that time I was found at the Three Fishers. I was flogged by the Head for pub-haunting. But—but it wasn't as it looked. I couldn't tell you then, but I can tell you now, sir. I went there for only one reason. It was to warn another fellow—a fellow who had done me a good turn. Only that, and nothing else, sir."

"I believe you," repeated Mr. Quelch.

"There was never anything of that sort, sir," said Wharton earnestly. "I've been a cheeky ass this term, and I know it. But that's all. I can see a lot of things now that I didn't realise before."

"I fear that I may have done you less than justice, Wharton," said the Remove master. "To-day you have risked your life for me. And if we should escape this peril, I trust that we shall be better friends. The past shall be forgotten, my boy, and a fresh start made, if we only escape this terrible peril."

There was a wash of water over the edge of the gap.

Slowly, surely, the rising tide flooded the fissure in which the Form master and the schoolboy had found their last refuge.

It rose higher and higher.

They were silent now, watching the rise of the water in the gleam of the electric torch. Like a creeping enemy it came. In silence they looked death in the face.

It was Wharton who broke the silence at last.

"I think it's stopped, sir."

"Heaven grant it!" breathed Mr. Quelch.

For long, long minutes there was doubt as the water washed and surged round them. But at last there could be no further doubt. The tide had ceased to rise. The floor of the gap in which they stood was only a foot below high-water mark. The tide was at full flood, and still they lived.



Mr. Quelch was up to his neck in water when Wharton, lying on his chest in the fissure above, reached down to assist him. Exerting himself to the utmost, the Remove master came within the junior's reach at last, and Wharton grasped one of his wrists and pulled!

The Thirteenth Chapter. The Clouds Clearing!

CLANG, clang, clang! Gosling was ringing the rising-bell, and it clanged out over Greyfriars School in the misty winter morning.

But some of the Remove fellows were already up, and came down from the dormitory while the bell was still clanging. Frank Nugent had slept little that night. He did not suspect, did not dream, of the peril of his estranged chum; but his thoughts were with the wayward junior who had fled from the school, and disappeared from all knowledge. Nugent's face was pale and troubled in the glimmer of the December sun as he came out of the House with Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and the nabob.

"There's the jolly old colonel," said Bob. "He must have stayed at the school over night."

Colonel Wharton was walking at that early hour in the quad. His bronzed face was dark and grim. He looked as if he had slept little, if at all. He did not observe the juniors. He was pacing to and fro in deep and troubled thought.

"Might as well ask him if there's any news," said Johnny Bull.

"The mightfulness is terrific," assented the Nabob of Bhanipur.

And the Co. proceeded to intercept

the old military gentleman, and capped him politely. Colonel Wharton glanced at them, and halted.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Bob cheerfully. "We'd like to know whether there's any news of Wharton?"

"Yes," said the colonel tersely.

"Has Mr. Quelch come back, sir?" asked Johnny Bull.

"He was brought in before dawn, and my nephew with him," answered Colonel Wharton.

"Brought in!" repeated Bob Cherry. "Has—has anything happened, sir?"

"Where is Harry?" exclaimed Nugent.

"In bed in the sanatorium," answered the colonel. "Mr. Quelch is in his room in the House, I believe. Both of them have had a very severe experience. But the doctor says there is no danger." "The doctor!" repeated Bob.

The juniors realised that there had been happenings during the night, while they had been asleep in the Remove dormitory.

"But—but what has happened?" exclaimed Nugent breathlessly.

"It seems that my nephew and Mr. Quelch were caught by the tide under the cliffs yesterday afternoon," answered Colonel Wharton curtly. "They were shut up in a cave called the Seagulls' Cave by the incoming tide."

"Good heavens!" breathed Nugent.

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"But that cave's below high-water mark, sir. It's death to be caught in the tide there."

"They seemed to have gained some refuge high up the cavern wall out of the reach of the tide," said the colonel. "But they were unable to leave the cave until the tide went down. They must have passed many terrible hours there. They reached Pegg in a state of exhaustion, and some of the fishermen brought them back to the school."

The colonel walked on, leaving the Co. staring at one another.

"So that's it," said Bob, in a low voice. "My hat! Shut up in the Seagulls' Cave most of the night!"

"And—and Wharton's back at Greyfriars," said Johnny Bull. "Laid up in sanny. No wonder, after that."

"Lucky to get through alive," said Hob.

"The luckfulness was terrific!"

"I suppose he will go home with his uncle now," said Nugent. "No chance of bolting again. I'm glad of that, at any rate."

The news was all over the school by breakfast-time. Harry Wharton was not gone, after all. He was in the school sanatorium. And Mr. Quelch was confined to bed in his room in the House. It was learned that the Remove master had a severe cold, and that he would not take his Form that day, and that it was not likely that he would take it again before the end of the term.

"Quelch is a tough old bird," remarked the Bounder. "But even Quelch must be knocked out by a night out like that. We shan't see the old bean again before we break up for Christmas."

"Yes, that's luck, ain't it?" said Billy Bunter. "I've got lines for Quelch, you know, and he can't ask for them now, can he? And even a beast like Quelch won't ask for them next term, I should think. What do you fellows think?"

Billy Bunter, at least, was looking on the bright side of the matter.

Fellows were sorry to hear that Quelch was on his beam-ends, as Skinner described it. Still, they did not exactly miss him in the Form-room. Wingate took the Remove in first and second lesson, which all the Form agreed was a great improvement on Quelch, and in third school they had French with Monsieur Charpentier, which was quite a nerve rest in comparison with Quelch. On the other hand, it was rumoured that there were to be extra maths with Mr. Lascelles in the afternoon, which rubbed some of the gilt off the gingerbread, so to speak. Billy Bunter, when he heard that, almost hoped that Quelch would get well enough to take his Form again. If there was going to be extra maths to fill up time, what was the good of Quelch being ill at all Bunter wanted to know?

While the Greyfriars fellows were in class that afternoon, and Billy Bunter's dread anticipations of extra maths were being realised, Colonel Wharton visited the Remove master in his room. He came away from Mr. Quelch's room with a grave and thoughtful brow, and walked across to the school sanatorium. Harry Wharton was in bed there, but he was sitting up and, except for the paleness of his face, looked little the worse for the terrible experience he had been through. His pale face flushed as the colonel came to his bedside and stood looking grimly down on him.

"How do you feel now, Harry?"

The colonel's voice was gentle, though his look was grim.

"I'm all right," answered Harry.

"Nothing to stay in bed for."

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"You feel well enough to travel?"

"Quite."

"I shall speak to the doctor. As only a few more days remain of the term it will be best for you to be at home in your aunt's care. I have been speaking to your Form master."

Wharton was silent.

"You are very well aware that I have been deeply displeased with your conduct this term," said the colonel. "But I was somewhat surprised, and very much gratified, to hear from Mr. Quelch that he has very much modified his bad opinion of you. He is of opinion that he has misjudged you in some respects, though I cannot help thinking that your own wilful and wayward temper was chiefly the cause. At all events, he forgives you fully and freely, and so far from desiring the Head to expel you from the school he desires that all offences shall be forgotten."

"He is very good," said Harry, in a low voice. "I know—now—that I've been a good deal to blame. But—not so much as you may think, or as Mr. Quelch thought. There was a fellow who made things look as bad as he could— But I don't want to say anything about him; he's told me he's sorry since, and that's all over."

"You will come home with me to day, Harry. Next term you will make a fresh start here, and all will go well, I hope. Mr. Quelch has the kindest feelings towards you. He has told me that you came back to the cave to warn him of his danger at the risk of your life, and it seems that it was you who found the refuge that saved you both from the tide. I understand also that you have satisfied him that certain charges made against you were unfounded, though it was your own recklessness that caused you to be doubted. If it is your intention, Harry, to make the best use of a fresh chance here, I shall say nothing more about what is past, only hoping that you have learned your lesson."

"I'm going to try my hardest," said Harry.

"That is good enough, my boy. If you try hard you will not fail," said the colonel, with a smile.

Harry Wharton lay back on the pillows, thinking, when his uncle had left him. Fortune had been his friend, after all—it was not the "sack!" He was going home, but he was coming back to the school next term—as the scapegrace of Greyfriars? That was over and done with. It had been Loder's plotting enmity that had caused most of the trouble, and that was ended now. But his own pride and temper had caused much of it, as he was now able to realise.

He had lost his friends—and was the blame on their side, as he had believed? In his cooler, calmer mood now, he knew that it was not. There had been faults on both sides, no doubt, as in all human quarrels; but the chief fault had lain with him, and he acknowledged it.

He was in the mood to acknowledge it to the Co. if he had seen them then. But the Co. were still in class when the car came round to take Harry Wharton away. He was well enough to make the journey, and, warmly wrapped up, he was helped down to the car. He would have liked to see Mr. Quelch before he left, if only to tell him once more that he was sorry and to promise better things for the new term. But at all events he could write from Wharton Lodge.

Dr. Locke came down to the car to shake hands with the scapegrace of Greyfriars before he started, and to give him a few kindly words. Sitting by his

uncle's side, Wharton drove away through the December afternoon.

He smiled faintly as he remembered what had been his intentions when he had bolted from Greyfriars the day before. Dick Trumper never knew how near he had been to leaving Harry Wharton as a companion in the coasting trip in the lugger! Then his thoughts turned to his friends—the fellows who had been his friends—left behind at Greyfriars. Would that breach ever be healed? Would the Co. ever be reunited? Would the Famous Five of Greyfriars be once more the happy and united comrades they had been? There was a pang of bitter regret in his heart as he wondered

The Fourteenth Chapter.

Bunter Means Business!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Hand me that cushion, Johnny!" said Bob Cherry.

Billy Bunter, blinking in at the doorway of Study No. 13 in the Remove, stood ready to dodge. He did not want the cushion.

"Look here, you fellows, about Christmas!"

"Where will you have it?" inquired Bob, taking the cushion from Johnny Bull and poised it for a throw.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Buzz off, you fat bluebottle!" said Frank Nugent.

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"The buzzfulness is the proper caper, my esteemed fat bluebottle," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

Billy Bunter did not buzz off. But he eyed the cushion very warily. It was the last day before break-up, and matters were getting urgent. If arrangements were going to be made for Christmas there was not much more time to lose. And Billy Bunter's Yuletide plans were still unsettled.

The Co. were infinitely uninterested in Bunter and his plans. They had been discussing Christmas, ruthlessly regardless of Bunter. Since Harry Wharton had gone home they had realised that they missed him, wide as the gulf had been between them and their former chum. The approach of Christmas—the season of goodwill, of peace on earth—brought the idea of a reconciliation more and more into their minds. Yet there seemed little hope of it.

They had learned, with deep satisfaction, that it was not the sack, after all, for the scapegrace of the Remove. They had learned, too, that what Skinner called Wharton's "juicy" reputation had been undeserved. Mr. Quelch had been satisfied on that subject, and he had made it known that Wharton's name was cleared, so far as that went—that there had been misunderstanding and misjudgment. And the fact that they, in common with the whole school, had thought badly of their old chum weighed on the minds of the Co.

He had been headstrong, wilful, stubborn, but he had been wronged and misjudged.

A word from him would have been enough—the Co. would gladly have washed out all offences, given and taken, and resumed the old friendly footing. But no word came from Wharton, and if his stubborn pride prevented him from making an advance, the Co. did not see that they could make any. Yet they hated the idea of Christmas-time passing and leaving them still estranged from their old comrade.

Bunter's assistance in the discussion was not needed. But Bunter was there (Continued on page 24.)

"The Owl of the Greyfriars Remove requests the honour of your company at a ball to be held at Cliff House." And it's absolutely on the level—at least, that is what Harry Wharton & Co. believe when they accept the invitation to—

BILLY BUNTER'S XMAS BALL!



WHY Billy Bunter, of all people, should have run a party was a mystery. But he did it! And was it a success? Well, when we tell you that every guest agreed that it was the greatest night of rollicking enjoyment and uproarious mirth ever known, you'll get a faint idea of the answer to that question!

The invitations came from Cliff House. They were tastefully printed on gilt-edged cards; Mr. Bunter ("by kind permission of Miss Primrose") requested the honour of our company at 7 p.m.

He got the honour all right! Fellows who had oft been invited to see the glories of Bunter Court, but somehow never reached that mythical domain, made up their minds to a man to see what was doing in this affair.

And it wasn't a "sell," as many had thought! It was a real, slap-up ball, with a tip-top band, refreshments ad lib.—and what refreshments!—and novelties and amusements that kept the company in roaring good spirits up to the very last moment!

The Bunter family have really come into their own at last! Whatever shortcomings we may have noticed about them in the past, you can take it from us that, as hosts at a Christmas ball, Billy and his sister Bessie stand supreme and unrivalled!

To begin with, we had a sit-down supper of such dimensions that some of us thought we should never stand up again! Bunter said he believed in starting well. So he did! He laid a good, solid foundation—and the good, solid foundation laid him out for nearly half an hour afterwards!

As soon as supper had been cleared away, a magnificent Father Christmas—who gave a clue to his identity by uttering a number of "Wot I says is this 'ere's"—rolled in and distributed presents from the huge Christmas-tree in the corner. What a cheer old Gossy got! We always said that a kind heart was hidden somewhere beneath that gruff exterior, and we were dead right!

After the present-giving, dancing started with a waltz, led off by the host and hostess. We don't pretend to know an awful lot about dancing, but an expert who was present described that dance by Billy and Bessie as a "graceful and exhilarating exhibition of rhythmic perfection," and you can't ask for more than that, can you?

It's true that half way down the room Billy slipped up and hit the floor a resounding thwack with his neck. We admit also that he accidentally tripped up his partner a little farther on and that they finished up by knocking over

a waitress carrying a trayload of glasses. But what, after all, are incidents like these to accomplished dancers like our hosts? Simply trifles that add zest to their Terpsichorean performance—that's all!

II.

BILLY and Bessie retired to the refreshment-room after the first dance. What the dancers lost in the way of Bunterian hospitality the sitters-out gained, for Billy and Bessie saw to it that all got everything they wanted—themselves included!

The fun was fast and furious in ball-room and refreshment-room alike. In the ball-room, first-class dancers like Wharton and the Bounder among the fellows and Marjorie Hazeldene and Barbara Redfern among the girls prevented the dance from degenerating into a riot. Meanwhile, in the refreshment-room, cheery tongue-waggers like Peter Todd and Clara Trevelyne kept the crowd in fits of laughter.

At nine o'clock the lights went out suddenly and the band stopped. A rattling of chains was heard at the end of the ball-room soon after and, amid shrieks from the girls and cheers from their cavaliers, a ghostly spectre stalked in.

It was one of the little diversions Bunter had arranged for us! We had them at intervals from then on—a stern-looking Quelch vigorously smiting a stuffed dummy with a cane, an awful old hag called Mrs. Grundy, a comic policeman, and other hilariously funny characters. Wibley acted them all, and acted them with the skill that only Wib. possesses.

By ten o'clock the din almost drowned the heroic efforts of the band, but the dancing went on without a break! By eleven the carnival spirit held complete sway. Confetti-battles were going on all over the place, and multi-coloured balloons and streamers floating about everywhere made the scene one of wild gaiety.

Nearing the midnight hour, when the ball had to end, Billy and Bessie emerged from the refreshment-room at last. They were looking shiny and contented, and they seemed to experience a little difficulty in walking.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" said Bunter, when the cheers had died down. "To finish up this little party, I suggest we

have a little community carol-singing. If you're all in favour—"

No need to ask that! We were just wound up for it. The band struck up "Good King Wenceslas" and we did our best to raise the roof with that well-worn musical yarn. One after the other they rolled out after that, till it seemed that we'd either burst our lungs or bring down the solid walls of Cliff House School!

And then, reluctantly, we had to prepare to go. Bunter called for a toast before the end and we gave it with an enthusiasm that would have done your hearts good.

The toast was "To all Magnetites, the wide world over—and may every one of 'em have a Merry Christmas!"

With the singing of "Auld Lang Syne" the party broke up at last. Bunter had eaten fully half a ton of solid tuck, Bob Cherry had danced till a waitress had mistaken his face for a lobster, and Skinner had surreptitiously smoked three cigarettes and was ill all night. In other words, we all had a real good time!

If anyone ever says a word against Bunter in future, it's certain now that he can use one phrase that will silence all criticism:

"BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS BALL!"

IMPRESSIONS OF BUNTER'S CHRISTMAS BALL.

HARRY WHARTON: The jolliest evening I've ever spent in my life, bar none!

FRANK NUGENT: Topping! I think Barbara Redfern's wonderful!

BARBARA REDFERN: Ripping! Frank Nugent's rather a nice boy, isn't he?

WILLIAM GOSLING: Wot I says is this 'ere: they may be young ribs, but they knows 'ow to enjoy themselves!

MISS PRIMROSE: It was pleasant to see them all enjoying themselves, but, really, the noise! Perhaps on similar occasions in the future a few decorous games like oranges-and-lemons or ring-o'-roses may have a restraining influence!

WILLIAM WIBLEY: It was a jolly fine evening, and the finest part about it was the remarkable character-acting of William Wibley!

BILLY AND BESSIE BUNTER: We hoop you all enjoyed our boundless hospitality. We can assure you we shall appreciate any invitations any of you care to eggstend in return!

LORD MAULEVERER: Yaas, it was a frightfully good evenin'. But what I fail to understand is that Bunter has been dodgin' me ever since, an' that all the jolly old bills for the show have been addressed to ME!

THE RUNAWAY REBEL!

(Continued from page 22.)

to assist, all the same. As a matter of fact, his fat ear had been very close to the study door for the last ten minutes.

"I say, you fellows, I've come here to advise you," said the fat Owl. "Don't you chuck that cushion at me, Bob Cherry, you beast—I mean, dear old chap—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fact is, I haven't settled about the hols yet," said Bunter. "I'm not going home with Mauly, after all—can't stand that ass Mauleverer—and I've turned Smithy down—Smithy's not really my class, you know. The fact is I'm sticking to my old pals. As you haven't heard from Wharton—"

"How do you know that, you fat frog?"

"Isn't there a keyhole to the door?" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull! Of course, I haven't listened to a word you fellows have been saying. If you think I've been outside this door for ten minutes it only shows what a rotten, suspicious lot you are. I say, I got Wharton on the phone. Lucky Quelch is laid up, isn't it? Any fellow can get at his phone now."

"That would console Quelch if he knew it!" said Bob sarcastically.

"Eh? Yes! Well, I've rung up old Wharton, at Wharton Lodge, you know, and told him I should be coming along to-morrow. He seemed shirty about something—he answered quite rudely—"

"Go hon!"

"I dare say his grumpy old uncle or his frumpy old aunt worry the chap, you know; a fellow can make allowances for a real pal," said Bunter. "I'm not going to take offence because he was shirty on the phone. I advise you men to follow my example. Kind hearts are more than coroners, you know, as the poet says—"

"Oh, my hat! Did the poet say coroners or coronets?"

"Well, something of the kind," said Bunter. "I'm a forgiving chap, and I'm going to be kind to Wharton—kind and friendly. I'm going straight to Wharton Lodge when we break up to-morrow. Now, I want you fellows to come."

"Isn't it kind of Bunter to invite us to Wharton Lodge, you men?" asked Bob Cherry.

The juniors chuckled.

"To tell you the truth," said Bunter, blinking at them, "I'd rather not go alone. Wharton seemed very shirty about something when I said I was coming. He made some joke about kicking a fellow out."

"Was it a joke?" grinned Bob.

"Probably the jokefulness was not terrific, my esteemed, idiotic Bunter!" chuckled Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

Evidently that was what was troubling William George Bunter. He had a lingering feeling that Wharton had made that remark on the telephone in deadly earnest.

"You see, you know what a rotten temper he's got," said Bunter. "He's been in hot water all through the term owing to his rotten temper—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"A fellow never knows how to take him," said Bunter. "But if we all go together, it will be all right—see? You fellows weigh in in a bunch, and tell him you've come for Christmas."

"Oh crikey! I can see us doing it!"

"Take my word for it, he'll be jolly

glad," said Bunter. "He'd be as glad to make it up as you chaps, only he's too jolly stiff-necked. Let's all go together, and say—Beast! If you chuck that cushion at me—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter dodged, but Bob did not hurl the cushion—yet. He kept it poised in the air, keeping the fat Owl on tenter-hooks. Every time he made a motion with it, Bunter jumped. Really, it was a rotten way to treat a fellow who had come to see his pals to do them a service.

"We go to him, and say: 'Harry, old chap, all is forgiven and forgotten! Let's be pals'—see?"

"Fathead!"

"Or we could say: 'Here's my hand, with my heart in it'—what?" said

sure the dear old chap has missed me—"

"Well, this dear old chap isn't going to miss you!" said Bob.

And he didn't!

The cushion flew at last, and Bob did not miss Bunter. He landed the cushion on the fat Owl's well-filled waistcoat.

"Whooop!" roared Bunter, as he sat down in the passage.

Johnny Bull closed the door.

"Beasts!" yelled Bunter through the keyhole; and he rolled away before the study door could open again.

In Study No. 13 the Co. resumed the discussion uninterrupted by Bunter. The fat Owl was dismissed from mind.

But William George Bunter, though dismissed from mind, was far from done with. William George had decided on Christmas at Wharton Lodge—it was a case of any port in a storm. Lord Mauleverer was not taking any; Vernon-Smith had declined the honour of his company, not politely; even Peter Todd did not want to take him home, though Bunter had told Peter that he was quite willing to rough it in Peter's humble home. Wharton, on the telephone, had not been encouraging; Bunter had a well-grounded apprehension that if he turned up on his own at Wharton Lodge a boot might be introduced into the affair. If the Co. would have joined up, it would have been all right. But, apparently, the Co. wouldn't. Billy Bunter had to think again.

He thought again—to some purpose! Finally, with a fat grin on his face, he rolled away to Mr. Quelch's study. Quelch was still confined to his room—which, as Bunter had said, was lucky for any fellow who wanted to use his telephone. The fat Owl shut the study door and sat down to Quelch's telephone, and the number he gave was a Greyfriars number!

The voice of Wingate of the Sixth came through from the prefects' room.

"Hallo!"

Bunter coughed.

"Hallo!" he answered in husky tones.

"Wharton speaking, Wingate—"

"Oh! How are you, kid!" said Wingate unsuspiciously.

"All right, thanks! Only a slight cold; you can hear it in my voice, I dare say," Bunter coughed again. "I say, can I speak to Cherry. It's rather important—about Christmas."

"Oh, all right! I'll send for him," said the Greyfriars captain. "Hang on, Wharton!"

Billy Bunter grinned, and hung on.

WANT A POCKET KNIFE FOR CHRISTMAS, CHUM?

Then send me an amusing storyette like Joe Mees, of 2, King William Street, Stourbridge, Worcs., has done.



A CHRISTMAS "CRACK"-ER!

"This," said the phrenologist, as he ran his light fingers over Timothy's head, "is the bump of inquisitiveness."

"I know," replied Timothy. "I was peering into a school friend's desk and the lid fell on my head!"

LET ME HAVE YOUR EFFORT TO-DAY!

Bunter. "That would be putting it rather neatly, don't you think?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see anything to cackle at! Or we could say—You rotter! Put that cushion down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We could say: 'We're still your dear old pals!' Something like that. If he cuts up rusty—well, we could jolly well wallop him before we left—"

"Oh crumbs!"

"But my belief is that he'll be jolly glad to see the whole party—especially me," said Bunter. "Is it a go?"

"The go-fulsness is not terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

"Have you finished?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"I think you fellows ought to play up. They have jolly good grub at Wharton Lodge at Christmas. Of course, it's hardly up to Bunter Court, but they do you quite well. I feel that I ought to stand by Wharton at Christmas—"

"At Christmas dinner, do you mean?"

"No, I don't!" roared Bunter. "I'm

The Fifteenth Chapter.

Working the Oracle!

"NOTHING doing!" said Bob Cherry at last.

"I suppose not!" said Frank Nugent, with a sigh.

Grunt! from Johnny Bull.

"If the chap wants to make it up, he can say so! Leave it at that."

The door of Study No. 13 was pitched open, and the chubby, checky face of Dicky Nugent of the Second Form looked in.

"Cherry here?" he asked. "Oh, here you are! You're wanted!"

"Oh, blow!" said Bob crossly.

"Wingate—"

"Bless Wingate!"

"He says Wharton is calling you on the phone in the prefects' room—"

"What?"

"And you can go and take the call."

"Oh!"

Richard Nugent departed, whistling

shrilly. Bob Cherry looked at his comrades, his ruddy face bright. Frank Nugent's face had lighted up, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh grinned a dusky grin, and even Johnny Bull gave a grunt expressive of satisfaction.

"I'll go—rather!" chuckled Bob. And he went. Only Wingate was in the prefects' room when Bob arrived there. He left the junior to take his call. Bob fairly jumped to the telephone.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he bawled into the transmitter. A husky voice came back. "That you, Bob, old fellow?" "Yes, rather! Got a cold, Harry?" "Not much to speak of—a bit husky, that's all. I'm speaking from—from Wharton Lodge, of course. I want you to come for Christmas, and bring the other fellows—and—and Bunter—"

"Oh!" said Bob. "We've had rows," went on the husky voice. "Well, let's wash it all out—what? What's the good of nursing grudges?"

"No good at all!" said Bob heartily. "I dare say there was blame on both sides. Wash it all out, anyhow. I say, I'm jolly glad to hear you speak like that, Wharton!"

Bob was rather surprised to hear a chuckle on the telephone in answer to that remark. But the next moment the husky voice went on:

"I've missed all of you! I want you all to back me up over Christmas! It won't be like Christmas without my old pals round me. Can I rely upon you to come along? You won't refuse, old chap?"

"My dear old top, we'll come. I can answer for the other chaps," said Bob. "The fact is, we've been talking about it, and I can tell you I'm jolly glad to have a word with you."

"That's right! Come straight here when you leave the school to-morrow—I shall be anxious till you come. If you don't turn up, I shall think you're still shirty—"

"We'll come all right."

"And don't forget Bunter."

"Bunter!" repeated Bob. "Sure you want Bunter?"

"Oh! Yes! Rather! Mind you bring Bunter!"

"Any old thing you like," said Bob cheerily. "We can stand Bunter somehow, I dare say. I'll tell the fat frump about—"

"Look here—"

"Eh?"

"I mean, all right! See you to-morrow, old fellow."

"Right as rain!"

"Good-bye!"

Bob Cherry's ruddy face resembled the sun at noonday as he walked out of the prefects' room. He really seemed to be walking on air. He went up the Remove staircase two or three at a time. Meeting Lord Mauliverer in the Remove passage, he seized his astonished lordship and waltzed him round the passage in the exuberance of his spirits.

"Oh gad!" gasped Mauly, as he staggered breathlessly against the banisters, while Bob sprinted up the passage to Study No. 13, where his chums were awaiting him.

"All serene, old beans!" roared Bob. "Look here! I think we might as well have said the first word! Anyhow, Wharton's got it off his chest! He wants us to go straight to Wharton Lodge when we break up to-morrow! We can arrange that—what?"

"Yes, rather!" said Frank.

"The ratherfulness is terrific!"

"He's really anxious that we should come," said Bob.

"Thank goodness he made up his mind to break the jolly old ice! I wish we'd done it, now! Anyhow, it's done! He wants us to take Bunter—goodness knows why! He was always a good-natured chap—"

"The goodfulness of his absurd nature is terrific!" said the Nabob of Bhanpur. "It will be an esteemed boonful blessing to behold his ridiculous countenance again, with the frownfulness of pugnacity abolished by the idiotic smile of friendship!"

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter! Good news, old fat bean!" roared Bob, as he grasped the fat Owl and waltzed him round the study.

"Oooogh! Leggo! Yarooogh!" yelled Bunter, as he barged into the table and sent it flying.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Waltz me round again, Billy!" chanted Bob.

"Wow! Leggo!" roared Bunter. "You silly ass! Whoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

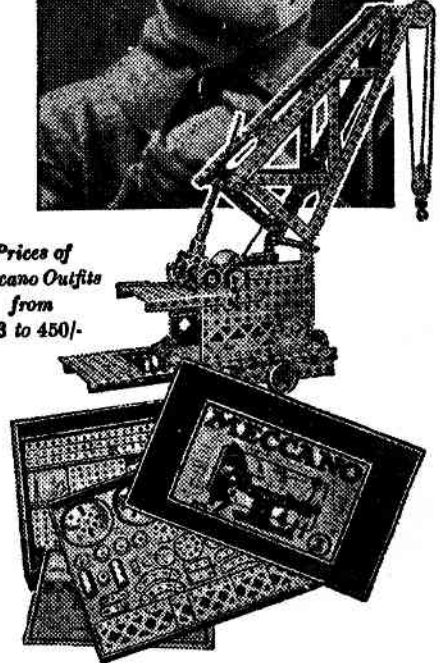
Billy Bunter, out of breath, jerked himself away,

(Continued on next page.)

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stumbled over somebody's foot, and sat down with a bump that shook the study.

"Whoooooop!" he roared.

"Good news, old fat bean——"

"Beast!"

"We're going to see Wharton to-morrow——"

"Wow!"

"And he's asked us to roll you along. He——"

"Ho, he, he!"

"What are you cackling at, you fat Owl?"

Billy Bunter picked himself up—chuckling. Apparently the fat Owl saw something amusing in Bob's statement that Wharton wanted his cunts to bring him along!

"That's the only fly in the ointment," remarked Johnny Bull. "Still, I suppose we can stand Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Hip-hip-hurrah!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Well, I'll come!" said Billy Bunter. "I'm not keen on it, but I'll come! If Wharton's made a point of it, I won't let him down—not at Christmas! Of course, I knew he wanted me! He would hardly enjoy Christmas without his best pal. I'll come!"

"I had a sort of feeling that you would!" agreed Bob

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of the study with a fat grin on his face. He left four bright and cheery juniors behind him, discussing the new aspect of affairs with happy satisfaction. They were relieved and pleased and satisfied; but Billy Bunter had a faint, lingering doubt. As Harry Wharton knew nothing of the party that were to arrive on the following day, the fat Owl could

not help having a faint misgiving as to what their reception might be like. Still, Bunter felt that he had done everything he could, and he had to leave it at that, and hope for the best!

The Sixteenth Chapter. Unexpected!

HARRY WHARTON bent his head to the keen December wind. With his cap pulled down and his coat-collar turned up he tramped through the lightly falling flakes, tossed to and fro by the wind like teathers.

There was snow ridged along the Wimford road, snow banked in the fields, the leafless branches along the road gleamed with frost; the distant roofs of Wharton Lodge, red in their natural state, were a sheet of white. Slowly, his hands driven deep in his coat pockets, his head bent, Wharton tramped along the road, coming back to his uncle's house after a long ramble. His brow was clouded with thought—not happy thought.

He had done plenty of thinking during the few days he had been home from school, and the more he thought after the last term at Greyfriars, the more he saw to regret in it. He had written to Mr. Quelch, and had received a kind reply from the Remove master. In that direction all was clear. And when the new term came, a fresh start would be made, with confidence on both sides. An act of courage and devotion had wiped out many offences, and all was forgiven and would be forgotten. That, at least, was a pleasant thought.

At home, too, the scapegrace found comfort. Dear old Aunt Amy had never

doubted her dear Harry, and the colonel had dismissed his displeasure, and was the kind and affectionate uncle that Wharton had always known.

But the thought of his old chums was ever in his mind. If only the breach in the Co. had been healed!

There had been disputes with many other fellows, but these had blown over easily enough. He had parted friends with Mark Linley. Squiff had written him a jolly letter. Lord Mauleverer had rung him up on the phone and given him cheery and friendly words.

But from the Co. he had heard nothing. Frank Nugent, his best and closest chum; Bob Cherry, ruddy and hearty; Hurree Singh, with his cheery, dusky smile; Johnny Bull, slow and stolid, but steadfast as a rock. What friends they had been, and what a fool he had been to let them go! But they were gone!

Again and again the thought was in his mind of making the first step towards a reconciliation. He wondered whether the same thought might be in the minds of his friends. Some lingering stubbornness, perhaps, prevented him—or, rather, a doubt how such an advance might be received. If they wanted him, they could say so—and perhaps all the time they were thinking that, if he wanted them, he could say so! What a fool he had been!

And now it was breaking-up day at Greyfriars School, and the fellows would be scattering to their homes. He had hesitated to break the ice—doubting whether it would be any use! Now it was too late! During his long ramble that wintry day he had been thinking of it all the time. He was thinking of it now, as he tramped back through the wind and feathery flakes to Wharton Lodge.

They would be gone now—long ago they had started from Greyfriars, heading for their respective homes. Hurree Singh, he supposed, would be going with Nugent or Bob Cherry. The nabob was used to spending his vacations at Wharton Lodge, but Harry Wharton's home was closed to him now.

Christmas was coming—the season of peace and good will to men—and it would pass without his seeing the faces of his friends—and he had his pride left, for what that was worth! The cloud deepened and darkened on his face. If only they had made a sign—how gladly he would have welcomed it, how joyfully he would have met them half-way! But they had made no sign—and he had made none.

A whirl of wheels on the snowy road, a honking of a horn, and a car rushed by him. He glanced at it idly when it was past, and gave a violent start. It was a car from Wimford, evidently bearing passengers from the station, and there were five fellows in it, and among them the first that caught his eye was a fat face with a large, glimmering pair of spectacles. The next instant he knew the other faces—Bob Cherry's, Frank Nugent's, Hurree Singh's, and Johnny Bull's. He stared blankly after the rushing car.

If they had noticed him by the roadside they had not recognised him—or, he reflected with sudden bitterness, had not chosen to recognise him. He stood and looked after the car.

It was the Co.—and Bunter! What were they doing in this part of the world?

None of their homes was in Surrey. None of them lived anywhere near Wharton Lodge, except Bunter. They could not be going home with Bunter. He tramped on again, wondering.

Wherever they were going they would



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"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry, grasping the fat Owl and waltzing him round the study. "Good news, old fat bean!" "Oooocogh! Leggo! Yaroooh!" yelled Bunter, as he barged into the table and sent it flying. "Good news, old fat man!" repeated Bob. "We're going to see Wharton to-morrow!"

pass the gates of Wharton Lodge, only a little distance ahead.

The car slowed down. It did not pass the gates; it turned into the open gateway. Harry Wharton gave a start as he saw it.

For a second he stared blankly. Then he broke into a run. The cloud had lifted from his face. A sudden lightness had come to his heart. He had doubted whether to make the first step, but they had not doubted. They had come. There was baggage piled on the car. Had they just dropped in for a kind word and a Christmas greeting on their way to somewhere else? If that was it, he would take jolly good care that they did not go on to that "somewhere else." He had been a fool, a proud, stubborn, obdurate fool. But they had given him a chance of setting things right, and he was not losing it. He raced after the car, his heart light, and his eyes dancing.

It had disappeared in at the gateway and was grinding up the drive, under the leafless old beeches, as he sighted it again. It was going slowly, and he rapidly overhauled it. From the packed car a squeaky voice was heard:

"I say, you fellows!"
 "Don't tell us you're hungry, Bunter. We know that!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a roar. "There's Wharton!"

All eyes in the car turned on the figure running behind. Billy Bunter blinked at it through his big spectacles. Nugent called to the chauffeur to stop.

"I say, you fellows, don't stop the car!" squeaked Bunter. "I don't want to get out—"

"Kick him!"
 "Wow!"

The car stopped, and four juniors jumped out. Billy Bunter did not alight. He squeaked to the driver to get on, and rolled on to the house. But nobody missed Bunter.

Harry Wharton came running up, red, and rather breathless. There was hand-shaking all round.

"You fellows!" gasped Harry.
 "Here we are, here we are, here we are again!" sang Bob Cherry.

"The herefulness is terrific, my esteemed and ridiculous Wharton!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I won't tell you fellows how glad I am to see you," said Harry. "I hope you'll be able to guess that."

"Speech taken as read," said Bob.
 "The gladfulness of our esteemed selves to behold your friendly and idiotic countenance is preposterous!" declared Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"The absurd clouds have rollfully passed by, and all is calmly brightful."

"Merry Christmas after all, what?" said Johnny Bull.

"The merriffulness will be—"
 "Terrific!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"Harry, old chap"—Frank Nugent gave his chum's arm a squeeze—"I—I came jolly near ringing you up half a dozen times. I wish I had—"

"I wish you had, too," said Harry. "I've been rather an ass. I might have known you fellows would play up. I could kick myself!"

"My dear man, I'll do that if you like," said Bob Cherry. "Where will you have it?"

Harry Wharton laughed.
 "Come on," he said. "My uncle and aunt will be jolly glad to see you. Aunt Amy thought all the time that you would be coming, and I—I've never told her different. Uncle's been jolly

kind, but he thinks it was my fault that—that there was a row—or, rather, he knows it was."

"Oh, no!" said Bob. "Faults on both sides—more or less, anyhow. We're not little tin angels, any of us."

"That's so," agreed Johnny Bull. "It was mostly Wharton's fault, of course."

"My esteemed and idiotic Johnny—"
 "Well, it was," said Johnny Bull calmly. "What's the good of spoofing?"

Harry Wharton looked rather fixedly at Johnny Bull for a moment. Then he laughed—a laugh that had a merry, cheery ring.

"Johnny's right," he said. "Leave it at that, old bean. No need to rub it in now we're friends again."

"The esteemed speechfulness is silvery, but the idiotic silence is gilt-edged, as the English proverb remarks," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Let us rejoice that the infuriated frown of disagreeableness has been replaced by the absurd smile of restored friendship."

"Don't he talk like a picture-book?" said Bob Cherry. "That old moonshee in Bhanipur who taught him English was some lad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Come on, old beans!" said Harry. "You fellows are staying, of course. By Jove, this is going to be a merry Christmas!"

It was a happy little crowd that walked on to the house after the car. Colonel Wharton and Aunt Amy were in the hall when they arrived, and both of them smiled to see how bright their nephew's face was as he came in with his friends. The sudden and un-announced arrival of the Co. had no doubt rather surprised them, but they were glad to see the cheery faces, and

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the colonel was more than glad to see that his nephew's friends were his friends once more. The old gentleman's greeting to the Co. was very cordial. It was a happy party that sat down round the dining table, and the brightest face of all was Billy Bunter's.

The Seventeenth Chapter.

Thanks to Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER grinned. Five other faces wore cheery smiles.

The hour was growing late. The Christmas party at Wharton Lodge had gathered in Harry Wharton's room after supper for a chat before going to bed.

Outside the wind roared and dashed snowflakes against the windows. Within, a log fire roared almost as loudly, and the firelight played and flickered on happy faces.

Bunter had thoughtfully brought a cake up with him. He sat and munched it and grinned, while the other fellows chatted cheerily.

The fat grin faded from his face as Bob Cherry made a remark:

"Got over your cold already?"

"My cold?" repeated Harry.

"Yes—you seem all right now."

"I haven't had a cold," answered Wharton, in astonishment. "I was a bit knocked up after that time in the Seagulls' Cave; but I haven't had a cold."

"I say, you fellows, hadn't you better be off to bed—"

"I thought you said you had—your voice sounded a bit husky on the phone," said Bob.

"On the phone!" repeated Wharton blankly. "Dreaming, old bean?"

"I mean, when you rang me up yesterday—"

Harry Wharton jumped.

"When I rang you up yesterday!" he ejaculated.

Bob stared at him. The other fellows stared. Unless Wharton was losing his memory, they did not understand this.

Bunter was not grinning now. He was looking worried.

"I say, you fellows," he exclaimed.

"I say—"

"Shut up, Bunter," said Bob.

"Look here, Wharton, are you pulling my leg, or what? You haven't forgotten phoning yesterday, and asking Wingate—"

"I haven't forgotten, certainly," said Harry, in blank amazement, "because I never did! What did I phone about, fathead?"

Bob gave him a rather queer look.

"You phoned to ask us here for Christmas," he answered. "You can't have forgotten; but if you've changed your mind—"

"I say, you fellows—" squeaked Billy Bunter anxiously. "I say, have some of this cake! It's good."

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Blessed if I make this out," said Harry Wharton. "I'm as pleased as Punch to have you fellows here—you can't imagine how glad I was to see you—and I could have kicked myself for not having taken the first step—"

"But you did!" said Bob. "Look here, what do you think we all landed here for, baggage and all, if you didn't ask us?"

Faces were grave now, and no longer smiling.

"My dear chap," answered Wharton quietly, "when I saw you here, I thought that you'd had more sense than I had—"

"Right on the wicket!" said Johnny Bull. "We had! But we shouldn't have come here if you hadn't asked us."

"Harry, old fellow—" said Nugent anxiously.

"My esteemed Wharton—"

"I say, you fellows, don't argue," said Billy Bunter. "What's the good of arguing? You'll be rowing again soon, at this rate."

"Shut up, you ass!" said Bob.

"Nobody's going to row; but I want to know what this means. You phoned me at Greyfriars yesterday, Wharton—that's why I asked you about your cold. Your voice was husky on the phone—too husky to recognise—"

"But I didn't phone!" gasped Wharton. "I wish I had, I was a fool not to; but I didn't."

"Then who did?" grunted Johnny Bull. "Somebody did. Bob came waltzing up to the study to tell us—"

"I say, you fellows," gasped Bunter, "it's time to go to cake—I mean, have some of this bed—I mean—"

"Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry, a sudden light breaking on his mind, "That fat villain! Spoofed!"

"What the thump—"

"Bunter!" Bob Cherry jumped up, and the fat Owl gave a squeak of alarm. "Pulling my leg—to get here for the hols! My only hat! He wanted us to come here and chance it—and land him here—and then—then there came that phone call—and—BUNTER!"

"My esteemed hat!" gasped Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Bunter!" said Wharton, almost dazedly.

"I—I say, you fellows!" gasped Bunter. "It wasn't me! I say, keep off, Bob Cherry, you beast! I did it entirely for you fellows' sakes—making friends all round, and all that—peace and goodwill and things, you know—besides, I never did it!"

"Well, my hat!" gasped Wharton.

"As if I'd do anything of the sort, you know! I've been crowded with invitations for Christmas—I've turned them all down to come here, as Wharton made a point of it. Besides, if I hadn't chipped in, you'd still be at loggerheads—the whole lot of you too fatheaded to make friends again, though you all wanted to. I think you might be grateful. Not that I did it, you know," added Bunter. "I know absolutely nothing about it."

"Diddled—by that fat porker!" said Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

Harry Wharton rose to his feet. He understood now. He came over to Billy Bunter, and the fat Owl gave an apprehensive howl.

"Look here, you beast, you keep off! It's too late to catch a train home now—and if you jolly well kick me, I'll—"

"Give me your fin, old fat bean," said Harry.

"Eh?"

Wharton shook hands with the astonished Owl. Then he glanced round at his friends, who were eyeing him rather blankly.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows," he said, "I've been a fool—and I thought you fellows had more sense than I had. It turns out that you hadn't. Bunter had more sense than the lot of us put together. Bunter's worked the oracle—and I think we ought to pass a vote of thanks to Bunter."

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific!"

Billy Bunter beamed.

"The fact is, you fellows, I did it for your sakes," he said. "I wasn't thinking of myself at all—you know I never do—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was my tact, you know—tact's my long suit. You fellows being such silly asses, it was up to me. Now we're all together, and we're going to have a jolly Christmas!"

And—thanks to Bunter—a jolly Christmas it was!

THE END.

(And so we come to the end of this splendid series featuring Harry Wharton, the Rebel of Greyfriars. But there's another series, even better, starting in next week's MAGNET. The first story is entitled "THE BOY FROM THE UNDERWORLD!" and it's the real goods, chums, you can take it from me.—ED.)

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THE RED FALCON!

By ARTHUR STEFFENS



The Return to Newgate!

THE party reached London Bridge and crossed it, drawing many a gaping stare as they went by. To St. Paul's, and past it down to the Old Bailey they went, and soon Martin Cosgrave was pulling at a bell at Newgate prison.

A wicket was opened; a word was passed. Then some gates were swung wide, and they rode into the high-walled yard.

Here the ropes were untied and the handcuffs removed, and Jerry and Hal eased their cramped limbs on the stone-paved yard.

Jerry's hands caressed Galloper's soft muzzle lovingly, while Hal fondled Bow Street Beauty, from whom he was about to be parted.

"I'm not sorry I stole him from you, Mr. Cosgrave," said the boy, "for he's given me the happiest time I've ever had!"

"It's good-bye, Galloper!" said Jerry. "Well, you're a grand horse, and I hope you'll find a master who's worthy of you!"

Only one or two of the Runners had entered the prison with

Cosgrave, and now that famous officer stepped apart and had a talk with some of the gaolers who had come out to take charge of the prisoners.

Presently he came back again. "Time to be moving!" he said gruffly.

Escorted by Cosgrave and the Runners Henshaw, Aymes, and Baker, and several warders of the prison, Jerry McLean and Hal Lovett were conducted along dark, bare, cold corridors and passages to a part of the prison with which they were unacquainted.

Late though the hour was, sounds of coarse revelry echoed through the gaol. Prisoners who must have paid highly for the privilege were evidently indulging in a drunken orgy.

Hal walked with a firm step and his handsome head uplifted. Come what might, he had lived a life since that fateful night of his arrest outside Drury Lane Theatre. He was not afraid of Newgate Prison now.

Suddenly he heard Jerry whisper "Hal!" and he looked at his friend.

Jerry's eyes were bright. He seemed surprised.

"We're heading for the governor's quarters, boy," said Jerry.

They were shown into a panelled room. There Martin Cosgrave gripped Hal by the coat, undoing the buttons. He undid the boy's waistcoat, and shirt as well, and bared his breast. Then his eyes lit greedily on the red falcon tattooed so plainly on Hal Lovett's white flesh.

"You can't get away from that!" he muttered. "It's a red falcon, whichever

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

Sent to the hulks on a false charge engineered by the Earl of Huntford, Hal Lovett and Jerry McLean escape and take to the open road. After a series of exciting adventures, they learn that their enemy is making for London with a quantity of gold. Riding hard for Blackheath, they hold up the coach. Before they can decamp with their prize, however, they are trapped by the Bow Street Runners, who escort them in the direction of Newgate Prison.

way you look at it! Wouldn't you say that's a red falcon, Jerry McLean?"

"Beyond a doubt, it is," answered Jerry gruffly.

Footsteps echoed along the passage outside. A door opened and shut. They could hear voices. Then into the room strode Isaac Quilt, followed by two turnkeys. Isaac's face was grim, but his chin was raised. He seemed completely at his ease as he took his stand on the opposite side of a table and looked at Hal piercingly. Quilt wore neither leg-irons nor handcuffs.

In the pause that followed, Martin Cosgrave took some snuff, and, after a moment's hesitation, offered the box to McLean.

Jerry was puzzled and wondering. There was something in the wind, beyond a doubt.

"There'll be an inquisition, boy," whispered Jerry in Hal's ear. "After which, I suppose, we'll be tried again and hanged!"

Again footsteps echoed in the stone-paved corridor, and this time a prisoner in irons was led unceremoniously into the room.

"Take him over there," said Cosgrave, pointing, "and guard him closely!"

With a gasp of astonishment, Hal saw that the man was Samuel Lovett, his supposed father—a more surprising thing even than the way in which Martin Cosgrave seemed to have taken charge of Newgate Prison.

Samuel Lovett's face was hangdog and ashen, and his eyes were dull with fear. One glance he gave Hal and Quilt, and then, biting his under lip, he lowered his head.

The governor then arrived—a hard-faced, powerfully built man, who stalked briskly into the room and set a chair for himself.

Darting a swift glance at the prisoners, he turned to the Bow Street Runner.

"You've been as good as your word, thanks to Colonel York!" he said, with a laugh. "So! These are the gaol-birds!"

Very roughly he bared Hal's breast and stared hard at the red falcon. Then he peered into the boy's eyes and studied his face.

"H'm! He's no gutter brat," he said. "No Lovett strain there—eh, Martin? And, hang me, you can see the likeness!"

There came more noises from the passage. Another prisoner had arrived. "Bring him in!" shouted the

governor. "And one of you snuff those smoking candles!"

He dropped, sprawling, into his chair again, and partook liberally of snuff.

The wondering adventurers turned their eyes expectantly towards the door.

"Colonel York, for a million!" said Jerry.

But the prisoner who was escorted into the panelled room was not the highwayman with whom Jerry and Hal expected to be confronted, but the Earl of Huntford. He was a prisoner, beyond a doubt, for he wore darbies on his laced wrists.

"Now I think we are ready!" said the governor, with a grim smile. "Shut that door and guard it! My lord, won't you take a chair?"

The Earl of Huntford threw his head proudly back.

"I prefer to stand!" he cried. "And, sir, I protest against my detention here! My arrest was an outrage! I shall take the matter to the House of Lords, to the King! I shall—"

"Silence!" thundered the governor. "I'll have no argument! I am master here! Now, supposing we get down to business!"

The bags of gold stolen from the earl were placed upon the table as evidence.

"I am all at sea here, boy," said Jerry. "The earl a prisoner! Why—"

He did not conclude his sentence, for just then the governor cried:

"Now, stand forward, Isaac Quilt!"

Quilt strode up to the table and faced the Governor of Newgate Prison.

"At your service!" he said, darting a malignant glance at the earl, and then smiling broadly at Hal.

The Secret of the Red Falcon!

"**W**HOM do you say that boy is?" asked the governor, pointing at Hal Lovett.

"Supposed to be the son of Samuel Lovett, the fence, but really he's the Earl of Huntford," answered Quilt.

Hal's gasp of amazement was drowned in a fierce cry from the earl.

"It's a lie!" he said. "Quilt says that because he's been trying to blackmail me. Nobody will ever believe his made-up story—"

"I believe it," said Martin Cosgrave gruffly. "I've been making inquiries ever since you had the boy wrongfully arrested outside Drury Lane Theatre, my lord." Cosgrave had a smile for Hal and Jerry now, and nodded encouragement in the friendliest possible way. "Quilt, tell your story."

"It's a simple enough story," said Quilt, eyeing the earl venomously. "I was once a servant to the late earl. But he caught me thieving, and discharged me. I swore revenge. A little while later the earl was thrown whilst hunting, and carried on hurdles to Huntford Hall, a dying man. But it was not an accident; it was deliberately attempted murder. The present earl, his brother, a bankrupt, crossed his horse and caused it to tumble at a jump, because he wanted the title and the estates."

"But there was a son," prompted Martin Cosgrave, busier than ever with snuff and handkerchief.

"Harry Burbidge, the heir," answered Quilt grimly. "A mere child. The babe was stolen from the Hall, carried to London, and given into the hands of Samuel Lovett, who brought the boy up as his own son."

"Stolen!" exclaimed the Governor of Newgate. "By whom?"

"By me," replied Quilt. "At Thomas Burbidge's instigation," and he pointed accusingly at the earl. "He gave me money and I entered the house and stole the babe from its cradle the night the earl died. (The house was in confusion and the task was easy.)"

"It's a lie!" repeated the earl. He was livid, and his lips were bloodless. "This man is a thief, a rascal, a villain, who—"

"Who was going to sup at your house to-night, and to whom you were going to pay hush-money," retorted Quilt, with a wicked leer. "The money you were bringing to London town. The money your nephew and the rightful earl stole from you on the king's highway."

"What did you get for stealing the babe?" asked Martin Cosgrave. "Tell us that, Quilt?"

"A thousand guineas, paid to me by instalments, the bulk after Thomas Burbidge was given the title on the presumption that the babe was dead."

"And the red falcon, now—that tattoo mark?" Cosgrave pursued.

"Was done by me. An act of revenge. I took the babe from its cradle one night and did the work in a hut in the Hall grounds. I am an expert at it, gentlemen. And, besides, having been approached by Thomas Burbidge and asked to steal the child, I thought it might serve as a mark of identification that would bring me more money to keep me in my declining years—when the time was ripe."

Jerry McLean shivered, while Hal looked at Quilt unbelievably.

"Quilt, you deserve a double hanging!" burst out Jerry.

"But I shall escape even a single one," grinned Quilt.

"Who is there to produce proof of this lying tale?" said the earl.

"Samuel Lovett can," returned Quilt, pointing at the fettered rascal.

"I married his sister, rest her soul, a good woman, not like him! He knew the secret of the red falcon from the first—knew who the child was."

Quilt pulled out a packet of letters tied with red tape and tossed them on to the table. "These letters from the bogus earl to Samuel Lovett and to me will provide further proof."

It was then Samuel Lovett burst into a torrent of whining confession.

"What Isaac says is true, every word of it," he whimpered. "I admit I took money from the earl to take care of the brat. It was ordered that we drown him in the Thames, but Isaac would not hear of it."

"Nor you, Samuel. Speak the truth! You wanted to use him as a blackmailing instrument when he grew up, and which you did."

"As I can bear witness to," said Martin Cosgrave. "Boy, you know how I came to haunt Sam Lovett's shop and to make up to you? I was on the track of your story then. The false accusation which led to your arrest confirmed suspicions, but I thought you'd be safer under lock and key than a free man. I wanted to save you from murder—"

"And is that why you let me escape when you seemed to bungle after you had run Jerry and me down?" asked Hal elatedly.

"That is why. And the authorities

haven't a thing against you, boy—not even highway robbery," answered Cosgrave, with a beaming smile. "The affairs of that tradesman and of the Mardstone coach, which Jack Pryce robbed, have been forgotten." Cosgrave picked up a bag of gold and chinked it. "This money you and Jerry took from the earl to-night, but I reckon you can't jug a man for taking what is really his own."

"That boy is the Earl of Huntford," interrupted Samuel Lovett, pointing at Hal. "The earl arranged for me to rob him of his diamond star as he came out of the theatre and to plant the bauble on the lad. I'll confess anything, sign anything, if only you'll give me a chance."

"The chance you'll get, Samuel," said the Governor of Newgate, "is a flogging, instead of a stretch, and transportation for life." He made a motion with his hand. "Take the rascal away and put him in a dark cell and double-iron him."

Cursing and pleading and begging Hal to intercede for him, Samuel Lovett was dragged away.

Then the earl turned to Hal. His pallor had gone. His handsome face was full of colour again, and his eyes aglow.

"Nephew," he said, "I may as well own up now, since the truth is out. These men know too much and can prove too much for me further to deny the facts. You are the earl. I stole the title. But—here he raised his manacled hands above his head—"as God is my judge, though I often thought of encompassing my brother's death—your father—I flinched at the act! I rode him close in that hunt, but I did not cross him. It was really and truly an accident. Your father and I both rode at a jump together. A startled rabbit tore right across my horse as it was about to rise, and it collided with and brought the other down. I ask you to believe me—"

Licking his dry lips, he took a pinch of snuff from the open box which stood upon the table, the handcuffs jangling as he raised his hands to sniff it.

"When I knew my brother was bound to die the temptation was too much for me. I was beggared; should have been taken to the Fleet Prison, disgraced. As Quilt says, I connived at your kidnapping, and usurped the title. Forgive me if you can; I shall suffer enough in the hell to which I am going!"

Hal Lovett looked at the man spellbound. The grey, wistful eyes were so full of intelligence, the face was so supremely handsome. Boy though he was, he could understand why the earl had snared him and sent him to the hulks. It was a last desperate chance.

"And you are my uncle?" he said, in wonderment.

"I am your unworthy Uncle Thomas, a thief, a rascal, a villain, but, withal— and here the Earl of Huntford took snuff again—"I trust I am a gentleman!"

"Mr. Cosgrave," said Hal Lovett, "am I to understand that Jerry and I are free to go?"

"Yes. We know the truth about the stealing of that diamond star. Isaac Quilt has been working in with me to help restore you your inheritance, and, rogue though he is, he is free to go, too."

(Continued on next page.)

"Then please remove my uncle's irons," begged Hal, "and let him go! I don't want to punish him. Let him go, please!"

The Governor of Newgate glowered at Hal Lovett.

"Boy," he said, "do you mean it? You want me to let your uncle go?"

"Of course I do," answered Hal.

"It is outside my policy to disoblige an earl," said the governor, with a smile, "but I shall hate losing so many of my prisoners! Usually I make them pay heavy toll; and mostly they hang." He turned to two of his men. "Take Thomas Burbidge away and strike off his irons," he said, and let him out by the little door."

The earl stalked off, with his chains clanking at every stride.

"Mr. Cosgrave," said Hal, "I shan't know how to thank you! I stole your horse, and I—"

"You and Jerry saved my life out at Epping," answered Martin Cosgrave, with a happy smile. "That's thanks enough; and as for Beauty, why, keep him, my lord, for he's a grand horse!"

"Cosgrave," said Jerry, "you know the truth about Hal. I suppose you knew that I, too, was innocent?"

"Of course I did," replied the stalwart Rumer; "but, lor' bless you,

sir, you were beggared, and might have turned highwayman in real earnest if you hadn't been juggled. Of course, you rather crabbed my plans when you escaped with his lordship from the hulks. I hadn't got enough proof together to uproot the false earl then."

The hour that followed was perhaps the happiest ever spent in that gloomy, panelled room. Into the small hours of the night they wine and dined and talked.

The grey of morning was breaking over the gloomy prison when the young Earl of Huntford and Jerry McLean mounted their horses and, with Martin Cosgrave, were let out of the prison yard.

As they clattered away to the bursting glory of the new risen sun the boy carried with him the vision of a distorted and malign face seen behind prison bars—the face of Colonel York, still half drunk from an overnight debauch.

"Curse you! Curse you!" York had howled after them as they went. "May the pair of you hang and rot!"

Which, however, was the dismal fate reserved for himself.

To the Bow Street station the three rode, and there Hal Lovett and Jerry McLean sat long, talking over the past,

the present, and the future, before they took their leave and sought West End apartments there to stay until the time came when Hal, as Earl of Huntford, the legal difficulties disposed of, should go to live in the home of his forefathers out in Kent.

Wine was brought and a bottle cracked. Cracknells were handed round with it.

Raising his goblet on high, Martin Cosgrave lowered his right eyelid in a prodigious wink.

"Earl and you, Mr. Jerry," he said—"a toast! Here's to the Red Falcon!"

The glasses were raised and chinked and the wine was tasted.

"Here," followed Jerry McLean, "is to the Red Falcon and his title and fortune, and may his good pal Jerry help the Earl of Huntford to spend it! Hal, my boy, good luck!"

THE END.

(Enjoyed this thrilling highwayman story, chums? Good! Well, now you can look forward to the opening instalment of a grand new footer and detective story entitled: "NOBBY, THE 'SHOOTING STAR'!" It's grand, it's great, and there's some KICK in it! Look out, then, for the opening instalment in next Saturday's MAGNET.)

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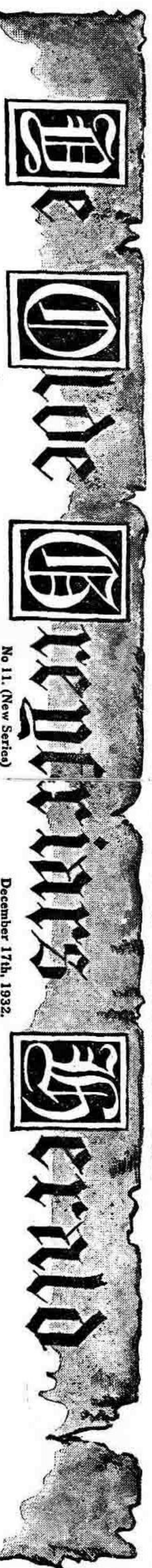
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No 11. (New Series)

December 17th, 1932.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM—THE EDITOR

Dear Chums,—I'm always aiming at originality, and this week, for our Special Christmas Number, I think I've struck a really original wheeze—a reproduction of the "Greyfriars Herald" Christmas Number of a hundred years ago!

The idea suffered from the slight difficulty that the "Greyfriars Herald" didn't exist in 1832, but it would be a poor newspaper staff that couldn't overcome a minor drawback like that. We've simply solved the problem by writing-up what we imagine would have gone into the "Herald" for Christmas, 1832, if it had existed at that time! All names are authentic and belong to people who were actually at Greyfriars at the time; but if you ask me to guarantee the authenticity of anything else, I'm going to answer with a very decided "NO!"

And now, chums, in closing, here's all the brightest and best for the good old Festive Season! May the only groan you hear this Christmas be the groaning of your table under the weight of the good things upon it!

Sincerely, YOUR EDITOR.

BIG FIGHT FIASCO

Triardale Fire-eaters' Feeble Farce

How much longer are the namby-pamby creatures we public going to tolerate the miserable apologies for fights that are served up by promoters in this Year of Grace, 1832? The feeble exhibition we saw in Friardale Fields just before Breaking-up, was enough to make angels weep and old-time fighters turn in their graves!

Forger Smith and William the Slaughterer were the principals in this wretched comedy. It was scheduled to last 200 rounds; but, as usual, one of the weak-kneed,

In honour of the occasion, the contributors to the "Herald" have allowed their imagination to picture life at Greyfriars as it might have been a hundred years ago!

Gipsy George, the famous scotch-sayer, dropped into Greyfriars the other day, and gave us a peep into the future. When asked what things would be like at Greyfriars in 1932, he gazed into his crystal, threw a trance, and told us all about it.

"I see a strange land with wide-shiny roads," he said. "Stage coaches rush down them at the speed of gunshot without horses to draw them!"

"Here, can it, old bean!" worenonstrated.

"All this is true, and more than this!" said Gipsy George. "In the air, winged stage coaches fly like eagles. In the school, voices are heard of men who are far away through the air unheard till they reach the ears of those who would hear."

"Great pip!"

"But greater than all these marvels is a strange monster that dwells in this future Greyfriars. It is like unto a pump-kim, yet it walks on legs, short though they be. It looks on the world through glass, and like the lion, seeks what it may devour. Deceit and dishonesty ooze from it. It is puffed out with pride, yet people refer to it as a fat worm or slug."

"Draw it mild, George!" woprotected. "If it's as bad as that, why don't they get rid of it?"

"Ah! Despite all its drawbacks, there is still something they cannot help laughing at and liking about it!" explained George. "Everybody dislikes it—yet, at the same time, it is the most popular thing in the country!"

"Then what the thump do they call it?" we asked, in amazement. George's answer only mystified us still more.

"The answer comes through a mist in the crystal, but it stands out quite clearly," he said. "They call this strange thing BUNTYER!"

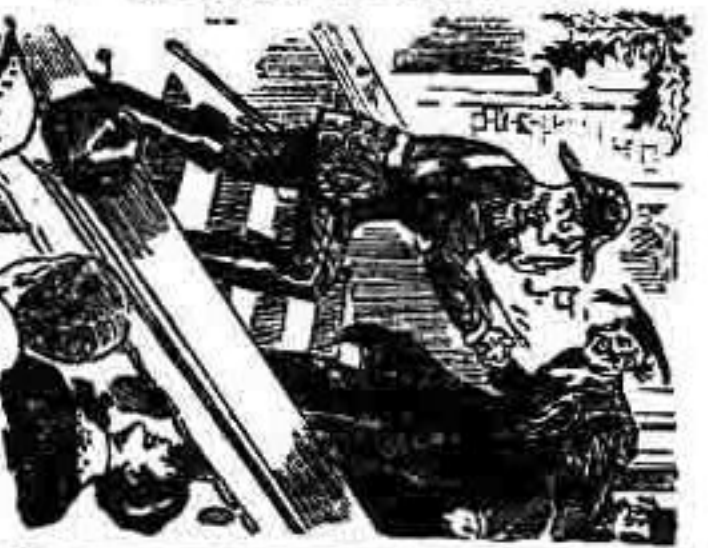
Blessed if we know what to make of it. We wish we could live a hundred years to find out what old George was talking about!

MAGIC CRYSTAL'S REVELATIONS

Visions of 100 Years Hence

WATERLOO WON ON LITTLE SIDE!

Greyfriars gave the Duke of Wellington a real glad hand when he turned up for Last Day of Term celebrations. Jones major and His Boys played hot rhythm as the Iron Duke's carriage appeared, and the cheering might have been heard at Courtfield, but for one of George Stephenson's locomotives exploding at the wrong time.



"They're the playing-fields of violently to hide his emotion. If anybody ever tells you now, that the Duke of Wellington said the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Greyfriars, He then marched into the House, blowing his nose!

GREYFRIARS GHOST WALKS

House Haunted by Weird Spectre

A spectral visitor in the shape of the celebrated Ghost of Greyfriars made the last week at school before Breaking-up unusually exciting.

had been creeping down a corridor on their way to a nocturnal raid on another dormitory, when the ghost suddenly appeared before them. The juniors, who were too frightened to be able to give a coherent description of the ghastly visitor, agreed, nevertheless, that he wore a monkish costume and clanked chains along with him as he walked.

On the following night the white figure of a monk was seen gliding through the Cloisters at midnight to the accompaniment of a sinister rattling of chains. The two servants, who were the only witnesses of the supernatural manifestation, fainted.

Mr. Lines, an assistant master. He states, quite definitely, that on the first stroke of midnight on the night before Breaking-up was when a series of terrified shrieks rang out in the middle hall, clanking its chains and uttering blood-curdling groans as three venturesome Third-Formers



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LATEST NEWS: COLUMBUS DISCOVERS AMERICA. GUNPWIDER PLOT. COROLATION OF WILLIAM IV.

The entire programme as set out above will be given through the medium of that astounding new invention, the Magic Lantern.

SPEED FANS BEWARE

Head Splice Beans on Rail Dangers Dr. Lashwood certainly said a mouthful in his final address to the School on Breaking-up Day. His solemn warning on the perils of the locomotive ought to make Master 1832 wary of this reckless new form of travel.

"Whatever you do, boys," he said, "don't trust yourselves to these new-fangled inventions known as railway trains! The almost incredible speeds attained by these monsters makes your chance of surviving a rail journey very remote. Just think! Some of them actually reach the colossal speed of 14 miles an hour! Take any tip and have nothing to do with them!"

We hope our colleagues will show how grateful they are to the Head for putting them wise by not venturing within a mile of these perilous contrivances.

DIONYSUS' LITTLE LETTERS

EDITORIAL NOTE: One of the scholars at Greyfriars in 1832, was Dionysus Todd, whom we understand to have been the present Alonzo Todd's great-grandfather. This is his contribution to the Christmas Number of the "Greyfriars Herald" at Christmas, 1832!

Dear Editor,—At this festival of conviviality, when our antonlar appendages are resorted by a jocular ecclesiastical timbulation and ancestral olfactory residences are redolent of olfactory manifestations pleasurable to the perceptive powers of the nasal organ; allow me, with-out indulging in dihybrant, to greet you with the in-tributably attenuated but assuredly sincere wish, A Merry Christmas, Yours Phibologically, DIONYSUS TODD.

FOUR HOURS ENOUGH SAYS School Doc.

"Don't Overeat," should be your motto this Christmas, according to Chas. Gargoyle, Esq., School Doctor.

"Most people in 1832 eat too much," said the learned physician, in the course of an interview given in the stage coach leaving Greyfriars for Courtfield. "This Christmas in most households, I suppose, dinner will start at five o'clock and end at ten. This imposes too great a strain on a boy's digestion. Four hours of solid eating should give him sufficient nourishment to carry him through till supper-time.

"The simpler the meal, the better. The customary programme of thirty courses could easily be cut down to fifteen without disadvantage.

"A few plates of soup and about half a cod should get the appetite warmed up. After a pound or so of steak and a dish of game-pie, with vegetables followed by roast pork and pease-pudding, the diner should have got into his stride and be ready for the more serious business of stuffed turkey and sausages. This should be the most sustaining part of the meal. But one should not, of course, neglect the Christmas pudding, mince pies, and fruit tarts that follow.

"To round off the meal, I suggest plenty of cheese and fruit. At this stage, the average boy should be able to last out till supper-time on nuts and fruit and confectionary.

"Moderation in all things. That is all one should remember."

Well, we'll do our best; but most of us will find it pretty hard to out-down our meals to such an alarming extent at Christmaside!



Anyone caught at the Gross Kays is liable to be instantly expelled. In spite of this, some of the "gay dogs" occasionally pay "no-account" for a "little snicker."

Oiver Kays spends much of his spare time with a six-valve wireless set which he constructed himself.

Bunter is not a robust fellow, but he is lumina. Through long practice, he has learned that comes through keyholes.

Feet you keeps a cry-out when in the study specially to rap Bunter's jaws when the "owl" attempts to snore the Hon's share at tea.

The most popular master at Greyfriars is Mr. "Larry" Lancelotti, Maths and Sports master.

Piet Delaney has "roughed it" on the South African field, and is one of the hardest fellows, physically, at Greyfriars.