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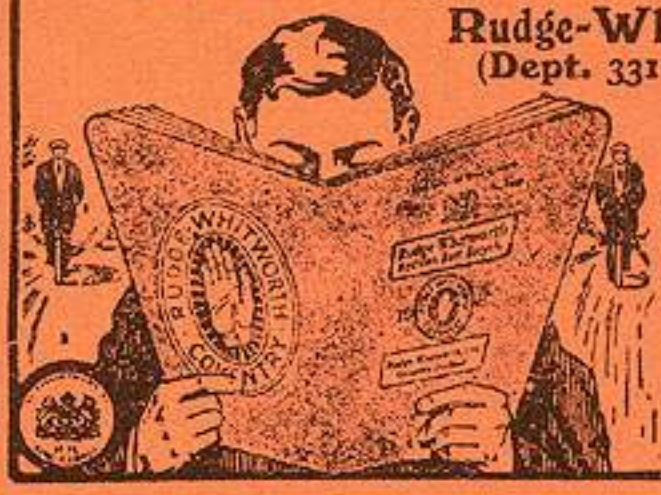


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# Wingate's Chum

## A Special, Long, Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.

— BY —

## FRANK RICHARDS.

### THE FIRST CHAPTER.
### Wingate Says "No."

"WINGATE——"

"Wingate, old man——"

"I say, Wingate——"

Wingate, of the Sixth, the big, stalwart captain of Greyfriars, turned round irritably. He was standing at his study window, looking out into the Close of Greyfriars, where the elm-trees were putting on their spring garb of green, and the pigeons were cooing merrily in the sunlight. It was a cheerful scene, but Wingate's face did not seem cheerful as he looked out upon it.

Three juniors had presented themselves at the door of the study—Harry Wharton, Frank Nugent, and Tom Brown, of the Remove. They had to speak several times before they aroused Wingate from his brown study, and then he turned round with an irritability in his manner that was surprising to them.

For Wingate was known all through Greyfriars for his pleasant and equable temper; and the juniors were much more at their ease with him than with any other senior—they knew they could always depend on old Wingate.

But the usual serenity of the Greyfriars captain was decidedly ruffled now. The juniors had apparently interrupted him in the midst of some troublesome reverie, and he was not pleased.

"What do you want?" he rapped out.

The chums of the Remove did not immediately reply. They had come to the captain's study, as a matter of fact, to ask a

  

favour. Wingate's manner was not promising, under the circumstances.

So they looked at him doubtfully instead of speaking, and that appeared to make the Greyfriars captain more irritable than before.

"Why don't you speak?" he exclaimed.

"You see——" began Wharton hesitatingly.

"Well?"

"We—you see——"

"What do you want?"

"We want a pass out of gates!" said Harry desperately, at last. "You see, Wingate——"

The senior made an irritable gesture.

"You're always wanting a pass!" he exclaimed.

"Well, you see——"

"It's only for a little run half-way to the village," said Tom Brown.

"Hardly outside the gates, in fact," said Frank Nugent. "Not a quarter of a mile, anyway."

"Oh, stuff!"

"We—we've come at the wrong time, I can see," said Wharton. "I'm sorry we've interrupted you, Wingate, if you're bothered about anything. But——"

Wingate seemed to make an effort.

"Oh, it's all right!" he exclaimed. "I—I was thinking, that's all, and you interrupted me. You want a pass out of gates?"

"Yes."

"For this evening?"

"Yes."

"How long?"

"Well, say up till nine o'clock."

"Nonsense! What can you want to stay out till nine o'clock for?" exclaimed Wingate brusquely.

"There's a circus——"

Wingate started.

"A what?"

"There's a circus come to Friardale," explained Wharton. "Signor Benson's Circus. We want to see it."

Wingate did not reply.

"Of course, we shall be all right," said Nugent. "We shall take care of—of each other, you know, Wingate. And you know we can be depended upon to keep out of—of mischief."

Tom Brown coughed slightly. He wondered whether Wingate would believe that. The captain of Greyfriars was still ominously silent.

"There are some of the other fellows who would like to go, too," Wharton ventured. "Bob Cherry, and Bull, and Todd, and Hazeldene, and Ogilvy, and Morgan, and Treluce, and Russell, and Fish, and Wun Lung, and——"

"And the whole Remove, I suppose?" suggested Wingate sarcastically.

"Well, yes."

"You can't go!"

"Eh?"

"You can't have a pass. That's all."

And Wingate made a gesture dismissing the juniors.

They did not stir. They were too surprised to do so for the moment. Wingate, of the Sixth, to their knowledge, had never adopted this autocratic manner before? What was the matter with old Wingate?

"Oh, I say——" began Tom Brown.

"That's enough, Brown!"

"But the circus may stay here only a few days," urged Harry Wharton. "It may be gone to-morrow for all we know. We three have simply nothing to keep us in—we've done our prep. early on purpose, and we've got no impots, and——"

"You can't go!"

"Why not?"

"Don't ask questions. Buzz off!"

"Blessed if I can make you out, Wingate. Look here, there's the Indian Juggler, and the Girl Equestrienne, and the Famous Bareback Rider, and——"

"That will do, Wharton. I've said you can't go!"

Wharton drew a sharp breath. As a rule, the juniors of Greyfriars were only too glad to obey Wingate. But they had never known Wingate like this before. To refuse them a harmless pleasure, without rhyme or reason—it was not like Wingate, and it was not the kind of thing they could be expected to take patiently.

"I suppose we can speak to our Form-master about it," said Wharton.

Wingate shook his head.

"No!"

"Look here, Wingate, we could have gone to Mr. Quelch first, only——"

Wingate came a step towards the juniors.

His face was very harsh.

"Look here, you kids!" he exclaimed. "You're not to go to the circus! You're not to ask any master for permission to go. There's a reason—but I'm not called upon to explain it to you youngsters. Now, get out!"

"But——"

"Get out, I say!"

There was no choice for the juniors. They got out, and Wingate closed the door after them. In the passage the three juniors looked at one another wrathfully.

"Of all the blessed cheek!" said Nugent.

"Can't understand Wingate!" Tom Brown remarked.

Wharton knitted his brows.

"Are we going to stand it?" he exclaimed.

Nugent grinned.

"What can we do? Wingate's word is law, you know."

"Not when he mounts the high horse like that!" said Harry Wharton resolutely. "Look here, I'm going!"

Nugent whistled, and Tom Brown stared.

"Better think over it, Harry."

"It's risky, old chap!"

Wharton's face was set hard. He could be very determined, and very obstinate; and what he regarded as the captain's injustice had roused all the obstinacy in his nature. Why should they not go to the circus? The village boys were all going, Wharton knew that—and he knew that some of the Greyfriars fellows had been. Wingate himself had been there, Wharton remembered, with several of the Sixth. What did he mean by prohibiting the Removites from going?

"I'm going!" Wharton repeated.

Frank shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, I'm game!" he said. "If you go, I come with you."

"Same here!" said Tom Brown cheerfully. "New Zealand isn't going to be left behind. But I think there'll be trouble."

"I don't care."

"Then it's settled."

The juniors walked away down the passage, Harry Wharton's face darkly clouded. He did not speak again for some minutes.

"Look here," he said, at last, "we'd better go by ourselves. If there's going to be trouble, we don't want to drag others into it."

"Right you are!"

"Then after tea——"

"We'll be ready."

"Good!"

And so it was settled.

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## THE SECOND CHAPTER.
### Todd Implores in Vain.

HARRY WHARTON came down after tea, and stood at the door of the House, looking out into the growing dusk of the Close. He was waiting till the time fixed for leaving the school to go to the circus. Wharton had come to the decision hastily, in his exasperation at the abrupt and apparently unreasonable refusal of the captain to give him a pass out of gates. There was no harm in what he intended to do—but it was a breach of the rules, and it meant a caning or a gating if he were discovered. As he stood looking into the Close, Wingate came out with his coat and cap on.

Wharton glanced at the captain of Greyfriars as he passed. Wingate paused for a moment, as if about to speak to the junior, but walked on instead and disappeared into the dusk of the Close, in the direction of the gates.

Wharton's eyes gleamed for a moment.

Wingate was going out, that was clear. Where was he going—to the circus? It was quite probable.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Tom Brown, as he came up with Nugent. "Ready, man?"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"I'm ready, Tom. Wingate has just gone out."

"Phew! We shall have to be careful not to drop on him."

"It's occurred to me that he might be going to the circus."

"My hat!"

"Oh, we can keep our eyes open," said Frank. "Come on!"

"My dear Wharton——"

"Hallo, Todd! Don't bother now!"

Alonzo Todd blinked at Harry Wharton. It was not much use telling him not to bother; Todd was born to bother people.

"My dear Wharton, I could not help catching what you said. You are going to break bounds for the purpose of visiting a circus——"

"Oh, cheese it; don't shout, you ass!"

"I did not intend to shout, my dear Wharton. But I beg of you, my dear Form fellows, to refrain from this act," said Todd solemnly. "I beg and implore of you, Wharton, not to break bounds in this surreptitious manner——"

"Hark!" exclaimed Tom Brown, as suddenly from the caravan there came a sharp exclamation, in a voice the juniors knew. "You hound!" It was the voice of Wingate, the Captain of Greyfriars. (See page 7.)

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"My dear Wharton, my Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me that——"

"I wish your Uncle Benjamin had drowned you when you were young!" growled Wharton. "Do run away and play, for goodness' sake!"

"But, my dear——"

The three juniors walked away, leaving Alonzo Todd still talking. A fat junior in big glasses scudded out of the house after them, and laid a detaining hand upon Harry Wharton's arm.

"I—I say, you fellows——"

Wharton uttered an exclamation of wrath. It seemed as if he never was to get away. Billy Bunter held him tight, and blinked at him through his big spectacles.

"Oh, buzz off, Bunter!" he exclaimed

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Don't bother now."

"I say, you fellows, I'll come to the circus with you if you like."

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"We're going to get over the school wall!" growled Wharton. "We couldn't hoist you over—you weigh too much. Buzz off!"

The three juniors tramped off. Billy Bunter rolled after them. It was easier to get rid of a leech than of Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up!" roared the juniors.

"But I say, I'll come, you know. I haven't any money to pay for admission, but you fellows can pay, and I'll settle out of a postal-order I'm expecting this evening."

"Rats!"

The juniors reached the school wall. It was not easy to climb, but the active chums clambered up the bricks. Billy Bunter caught Wharton by the arm again.

"I'm coming with you, Wharton."

Wharton uttered an impatient ejaculation.

"Look here, Bunter——"

"Gimme a bunk up, and——"

"Oh, very well!"

Harry made up his mind to it. He knew that Bunter would be a continual worry and trouble, as he always was, but Bunter had his way. Bunter generally got his way, by sheer persistence

Wharton grasped the fat junior, and bunked him up the wall. Billy Bunter sprawled blindly against the brickwork.

"Ow! Yow!" he roared. "I've knocked my nose! Yah!"

"Quiet, you ass!"

"Yow!"

"Hold on! You're too heavy for me!" gasped Wharton.

"Yow! Oh!"

"I—I can't stand! My hat!"

Wharton staggered under Bunter's tremendous weight, and fell. The fat junior slid scraping down the wall, and tumbled over on Wharton. Harry gave a gasp of anguish as all the breath was driven out of his body by the shock.

"Oh! Groo!"

"Yow!" roared Billy Bunter. "I'm hurt! Oh!"

"Quiet, you chump!" whispered Nugent, from the top of the wall. "You'll have the prefects down on us!"

"Ow! Yow!"

Wharton staggered to his feet.

"Get up, Bunter."

"Yow! I'm hurt! Oh!"

"Do you want me to help you over the wall?" asked Harry, with all the patience he could muster.

"Yow! I'm injured!" groaned Bunter. "C-carry me into the house, and——"

"Fathead!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Do you want to come?"

"I—I'm too injured! I—I'll go and get some refreshment at the tuckshop," said Bunter, sitting up. "I—I don't feel equal to getting over the wall."

"All right. Good-bye!"

And Wharton slung himself up the wall. Billy Bunter yelled.

"Hold on, Wharton! I'm stony, you know. I've been disappointed about a postal-order this afternoon. Look here, if you lend me five bob——"

"Shut up!" said Tom Brown fiercely. "Everybody will hear you!"

"I don't care! I'm hurt! Yah! Oh!"

It appeared to be Bunter's object to make everybody hear him. Harry Wharton, gritting his teeth, felt in his pocket for money.

"Here's a bob for you, Bunter."

"Yow! Make it two! Oh! Yah!"

Wharton dropped two shillings upon the fat junior. They clinked on the ground.

"Now shut up!" he said savagely

The three juniors dropped outside the school wall. Billy Bunter, suddenly recovering from his terrible injuries, got upon his hands and knees, and groped in the darkness for the two coins Wharton had dropped.

A dim figure loomed up out of the dusk. The howling of the fat junior had guided Alonzo Todd to the spot. The Duffer of Greyfriars made his still, small voice heard.

"My dear Wharton! My dear fellows! Reflect before you take this step! I beg and implore you to——Yarooh!"

Todd stumbled over Bunter, whom he did not see in the darkness. He came down with a bump upon the fat junior, squashing him to the earth.

"Yow!" roared Bunter.

"Oh!" gasped Todd. "My dear Bunter——"

"Yarooh!"

"Oh!"

Bunter scrambled up into a sitting posture with a deadly gleam behind his spectacles. He groped for Todd's head, and let out with a fat fist.

"There, you ass——"

"Ow! My dear Bunter——"

Biff!

Bunter's fat fist caught Todd under the chin this time. Todd rolled over on the earth, seeing more stars than are generally seen in the Milky Way on a clear night. By the time he had recovered, Bunter had found his two shillings and departed.

"Dear me!" gasped Alonzo. "It is very, very painful to be treated thus when one is trying to do good! Oh, dear, my nose pains me very much! But I shall stick to the good work—I shall never cease to beg and implore my dear Form fellows to share the advantages I have gained from the instructions of my Uncle Benjamin."

And Todd tottered away, holding his nose in his handkerchief.

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## THE THIRD CHAPTER.
### An Amazing Meeting.

"CAVE!"

Harry Wharton whispered the word suddenly in the lane. The three juniors were tramping along in the dusk towards Friardale. The moon was rising slowly over the summit of the Black Pike, and the soft light was stealing over the fields. A footstep behind him had caught Wharton's keen ear.

The three juniors stopped instantly.

"Somebody's following us," said Tom Brown.

"It can't be Bunter."

"No; it may be nobody we know," said Wharton hurriedly, "but we'd better be careful. Get in cover here."

The juniors had reached the cross roads. In the centre where the lanes crossed, was a bunch of trees, quite thick enough to afford cover after dark, though perhaps not in the daytime. In a moment the juniors were in the trees.

"It mayn't be anybody from Greyfriars at all," Harry Wharton remarked. "But he'll be gone in a few minutes, anyway."

"Hallo! There's somebody coming from the village, too!"

Footsteps could be heard further up the lane, towards Friardale. Somebody was coming from each direction. But it was the pedestrian from the school that interested the juniors. They watched from the trees as the sound came nearer. A patch of moonlight fell upon the open lane close by the clump of trees, and the approaching pedestrian had to cross it to pass on.

Wharton uttered a suppressed ejaculation.

"The Head!"

"Phew!"

"My hat!"

It was the Head of Greyfriars!

The juniors well knew the form in the overcoat and the silk hat. It was Dr. Locke, the Head-master of Greyfriars! It was well that the juniors had taken cover!

"Quiet!" murmured Wharton.

"What-ho!"

The Head came abreast of the trees. He was evidently going down to Friardale, and had no idea that the clump of trees in the middle of the crossing concealed anyone.

Just as he stepped into the patch of moonlight, the figure of a man in a slouch hat loomed up from the direction of Friardale. It was the man whose footsteps the juniors had heard.

He was a man of powerful build, with leggings and boots, and a velveteen jacket. His slouched hat shaded his eyes, and under it glowed the red end of a cigar.

He stopped as he came face to face with the Head of Greyfriars.

The Head uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Lasalle!"

The man in the slouched hat started back, and the startled juniors caught the moonlight on his face—a dark, swarthy face of a foreign cast, with a pointed black moustache, and keen, glittering black eyes.

He stared at Dr. Locke.

"You!" he exclaimed. "Ma foi!"

The Head started forward, and grasped the man by the shoulder.

"So it is you, Lasalle! After all these years?"

The Frenchman laughed.

"As you see," he replied.

"Lasalle! You scoundrel!"

The man laughed again.

"If you have not more polite words for me, monsieur, the sooner we part, the better," he said "I never expected to meet you here."

"Doubtless. But——"

"It is an unexpected pleasure," said Lasalle, blowing out a cloud of smoke. "Although you do not seem pleased——"

"Lasalle! Where is she?"

"She! Whom?"

"You know whom I refer to," said the Head, in an agitated voice, still keeping his grip on the Frenchman's shoulder. "Felix Lasalle, if you tell me where she is, I will say nothing more of the past—not a word! All shall be passed over, but——"

"You talk in riddles," said Lasalle, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"You know what I mean."

"Ma foi! I know nothing of the sort!"

The Head seemed to pant for breath. The juniors in the trees looked on in alarm and amazement.

What to do they did not know. To remain where they were, and listen to this—that was not right. But to show themselves at such a moment——

They remained inactive, astounded, wondering. What did it all mean? What could the Head of Greyfriars have to do with this swaggering foreign ruffian?

"Bon soir, monsieur," said Lasalle mockingly.

The Head's grip tightened.

"Stop, Lasalle! You know whom I was speaking of—my little Rosie!"

"Oh!" said Lasalle, flicking the ash from his cigar. "Oh! Dead!"

"What!"

"Years ago," said Lasalle, with a smile.

"It is false," said the doctor thickly. "It is false—you were always a liar! Tell me where she is now, or, old as I am, I will thrash you like a dog!"

His cane rang in the air.

The Frenchman changed colour for a moment.

"Old fool!" he said contemptuously. "If that cane touches me, you lie in the road the next moment! What are you beside me?"

Indeed, the doctor looked old and frail enough beside the powerfully-built man. But he did not falter.

"I will keep my word, you scoundrel!" he said.

The cane descended, lashing.

The Frenchman gave a sharp cry. The cigar dropped into the road, and the man closed with the doctor, and the old man reeled back in his fierce grip.

"Now——" hissed Lasalle.

"Rescue!" roared Harry Wharton.

The three juniors leaped from the thicket, and ran at the Frenchman. They closed upon him, and dragged him fiercely away from the doctor, and flung him bodily into the road.

Lasalle went down with a crash, and the juniors piled upon him, keeping him down. He struggled fiercely under their weight.

"Oh!" gasped the Head. "Boys! Wharton! Thank you!"

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## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
### At the Circus.

THE Head was staggering, as if overcome by the excitement and the exertion of the sudden struggle. Wharton ran to lend him aid, while Nugent and Tom Brown kept the ruffian pinned down. Lasalle was struggling furiously, spitting out maledictions in his own tongue.

Dr. Locke leaned heavily upon Wharton's shoulder for a few moments, his breath coming in short quick gasps.

"Thank you, Wharton!" he panted at last.

"I'm jolly glad we were here, sir!"

"Look out!" shouted Tom Brown.

The Frenchman was breaking loose. He seemed to possess the strength of a horse. He hurled the two juniors aside, and made a leap to escape. He dashed through a gap in the hedge, and disappeared into the darkness.

The juniors were rushing after him, when the Head called them back.

"Stop—stop, my boys!"

They turned reluctantly back.

"Let him go!" said the Head. Dr. Locke seemed to have recovered now, though his breathing was still a little irregular. He looked at the Removites with a searching glance. "What are you doing out of gates now?" he asked.

The juniors coloured.

"We—we were going to the circus, sir," said Wharton awkwardly.

"The circus!"

"Benson's Circus, sir."

"Oh! Have you a pass out of the gates?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

The Head's brow grew stern.

"But you have no right to be out without one!" he exclaimed. "Have I discovered you in the act of breaking bounds, Wharton?"

Wharton hung his head.

"I—I'm sorry, sir!" he said. "We—we wanted to go to the circus, and Wingate wouldn't give us a pass for some reason, so we—we——"

"So you broke bounds?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

The three juniors stood awaiting their fate. They had obeyed a natural impulse in rushing to the rescue of the Head when they saw him in the grasp of the Frenchman; but it seemed likely to cost them dear. They would miss seeing the circus, at all events, if they were not gated as well.

Dr. Locke paused before he spoke again.

"This is very wrong, Wharton!" he said.

"I'm sorry, sir!"

"But, under the circumstances, I cannot very well complain of you for being here, as you have lent me such necessary aid," said the Head. "You may go to the circus, Wharton and Nugent and Brown. You need not have let me see you, and so I shall excuse you, as you have been very brave and very useful to me. You may go."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

The Head smiled, and passed on, and vanished in the dusk towards the village. The juniors looked at each other with considerable satisfaction.

"It's all serene!" said Tom Brown.

"Yes, rather!"

"I'm jolly glad we were here!" said Wharton. "Blessed if I know what that scene could mean—looks as if the Head used to know that French chap. Queer sort of acquaintance for the Head."

"Yes, rather! Let's get on; we shall be late!"

The juniors tramped on, and reached the point where a branch lane led to the field occupied by Benson's Circus.

They were in a puzzled frame of mind.

The Head had not uttered a word of explanation concerning the strange scene they had witnessed. Did he know that they had heard anything? At all events, he must know that they had seen all that had passed. He had said nothing.

"Better keep mum about it," said Harry, breaking a long silence. "No good talking about it, you know."

"Quite right; mum's the word! And here's the circus!" said Tom Brown cheerfully.

The blare of a cornet and a drum and a glare of lights sufficiently guided the juniors towards the circus tent.





People belonging to Friardale were taking the same route in twos and threes, the crowd converging upon the tent.

Outside, in the glare of the naphtha lamps, a clown stood upon a cart, addressing the crowd, and cracking a series of old, familiar wheezes, intermingled with invitations to "Walk up."

"Walk up, gents! Walk up! 'Ere's Benson's famous circus! Mademoiselle Rosina, the child equestrienne! Monsieur Felix, the bareback rider! Chowder Chutnee, the Indian juggler! All the wonders of the world! Walk up!"

The juniors walked up with the rest, paid their sixpence each, and passed into the tent.

It was a large tent, and rapidly filling. Evidently the posters and handbills of Signor Benson had done good work, and the natives of Friardale and the neighbourhood had taken the bait. They were turning up in great numbers.

Harry Wharton and his comrades obtained front seats, skipping over the benches instead of walking round; and as they were early comers, they had few before them.

Seated together in the front row, with only a rope dividing them from the arena, they sat at their ease, and surveyed the place.

Among the country smock-frocks and the Friardale coats they distinguished more than one Eton jacket. There were other fellows from Greyfriars who had taken French leave to visit the circus.

And Harry recognised Ponsonby and Gadsby and several other fellows from Highcliffe School, as well as Trumper and Solly Lazarus and Grahame, from Courtfield County Council School—all of them old acquaintances of Harry Wharton & Co.

The juniors waited cheerfully for the circus to begin.

Several heavy horses were turned into the arena to gallop round, by way of starting the entertainment—a sort of preliminary canter, as Nugent put it.

Then came a fat and fair lady rider, who jumped through hoops, and leaped from one horse to another, with wonderful agility, considering the amount of flesh she carried.

"This can't be Rosina, the child equestrienne!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Well, she's not more than forty," said Nugent. "I dare say they're called children up to forty in the profession. I've heard of Infant Prodigies of thirty."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wharton!"

"My hat! It's Wingate!"

Wingate was standing up in the row behind. His face was dark with anger as he looked at the three juniors.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"Come to see the circus, Wingate."

"I ordered you——"

"Head's permission!"

"What!"

"We have the Head's special permission—honest injun!" said Harry.

"You asked him—after what I said?"

"Well, you see, we didn't exactly ask him—he gave us permission of his own accord."

Wingate looked dubious.

He knew that Wharton would not lie; but he knew, too, that the circumstances of the case must have been very peculiar, if the Head had given the juniors leave out of the gates without their having first specially requested it.

"Very well," he said quietly.

The juniors sat down again. Various voices behind were requesting them to do so in far from gentle tones. Wingate had evidently decided to let the matter drop.

The juniors turned their attention to the ring again. A fat gentleman in evening-dress, apparently Signor Benson himself, had made some announcement in a fat, oily voice.

There was a rattle of hoofs at the ring entrance, and a handsome black horse came in, with a man standing upright on his back.

Wharton uttered an exclamation.

"My hat! You know that chap, kids?"

"Phew!"

Well did the juniors know the dark face and black moustache and unpleasantly glittering eyes, although they had seen that swarthy face but once before.

It was the Frenchman of the lane.

The man they had seized and torn from his savage grasp upon the doctor, and who had fled across the dark fields to escape them.

"Lasalle!" muttered Nugent.

"It's the same chap!"

Lasalle, the Head's strange enemy, was Monsieur Felix, the bareback rider of Benson's Circus. And the chums of the Remove watched him with a new interest as they realised it.

Wharton happened to glance round as the French rider careered round the ring, and his glance fell upon Wingate.

The captain of Greyfriars did not see him.

His eyes were fixed upon the careering form of the circus rider, and they were gleaming with an expression in them that Wharton had never seen there before. The boy gazed at the Sixth-Former in wonder. Did Wingate know the man, too? Was he some enemy of the captain of Greyfriars, as well as of the Head?

Wharton felt strangely troubled and perplexed. His attention was called back to the ring by a burst of cheering, and he gazed with admiration at the girlish form that had entered the arena.

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### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

#### Nugent Knows.

MADEMOISELLE ROSINA—for it was evidently the girl equestrienne at last—was clad in white, with a scarlet sash, and her long dark locks were bound with a ribbon. She looked, as the circus posters stated it, a child equestrienne, but her age was probably sixteen. She rode wonderfully well, standing up on the horse's back with the light agility of a fairy.

"By Jove! What a ripping rider!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Splendid!"

The girl seemed to have no eyes for the audience.

She made the circuit of the ring, and then the clown and Signor Benson held up paper hoops for her to jump through.

She passed through the "balloons" with ease and grace, alighting surely on the back of the galloping horse.

"Well, she's a ripper!" said Nugent. "A mere kid, too!"

"First-rate!"

"That ugly chap can't be her father," said Wharton, looking puzzled. "But the bills say Monsieur Felix and his daughter, Mademoiselle Rosina."

"A grape from a thorn!" grinned Tom Brown.

"By Jove—yes!"

The chums watched the circus girl with great interest. There was one thing they observed—which was observed by a good many more in the audience. The girl seemed to shrink involuntarily when she came near the French rider. He might be her father, but there was no love lost between them.

"The beast doesn't treat that kid well," he remarked.

Nugent nodded.

"Yes. I wish we'd bumped him a bit harder, now."

Harry Wharton looked round at Wingate, as the performance ended; why, he could hardly have told. The captain of Greyfriars did not meet his glance. He seemed to have forgotten the presence of the juniors. He was rising from his seat, and he left the spot without looking in the direction of the chums.

"Something up with Wingate," said Frank. "He hasn't been himself all day, or yesterday, either, for that matter. Linley told me he was kicking wild at footer practice yesterday."

"Wingate was?"

"Yes."

"Then he must be ill. I wonder——"

Wharton did not finish. He wondered whether the unusual manner of the Greyfriars captain was in any way connected with Monsieur Felix. What had meant the hard, fierce glance that Wingate had bestowed upon the French rider?

The audience cheered the performers loudly as they retired; but the greater part of the applause was for mademoiselle.

That, Harry believed, was not wholly pleasant to Monsieur Felix, for he saw the rider give the girl a very dark look, as she paused to bow her acknowledgement to the cheering.

"Come!" he exclaimed, roughly seizing her rein.

And they moved out of the arena.

"Rotter!" said Wharton.

"What-ho!" said Frank. "I don't like that chap's looks. Hallo, here's the giddy juggler!"

And the juniors were soon interested in the new turn.

A little later Monsieur Felix reappeared, but without mademoiselle.

He was in a new turn this time, doing acrobatic feats on the trapeze, feats which he performed passably well; and which were, at all events, good enough to satisfy an unexacting country audience.

He was the last turn.

When it was over the audience filed out, and the Greyfriars juniors managed to meet the Courtfield fellows in the crowd.

When the juniors of the rival schools met, there were frequently rows, but on this occasion all, as the poet says, was calm and bright.

"Hallo!" said Trumper, with a grin. "Ripping rider that mademoiselle is, isn't she?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Fanthy meeting you," said Solly Lazarus. "I thay, that young lady is thimply thtunning, you know. Do you chaps know her?"

Wharton looked at him in astonishment.

"Know her!" he exclaimed. "How should we know her? Never heard of her before this evening, Lazarus."

Solly chuckled.

"Thumbody at Greyfriars knows her," he replied.

"Oh! Who's that?"

"You don't know?"

"Not a bit."

"Your thkipper," said Lazarus.

"Wingate!" exclaimed Harry.

"Yeth, rather!"

Wharton looked greatly puzzled.

"Blessed if I know how, then," he said. "I suppose you're pulling my leg, Lazarus. Of course, it's no bizney of mine if he does know her; but I don't see how he could."

Solly grinned.

"I've theen them," he explained.

"Seen them?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Yeth, rather!"

"Where, Solly?"

"Walking on the thands," said Solly. "Yethterday they were walking by the thee, and talking. Yeth, rather!"

"Walking by the sea and talking!" said Wharton, in amazement.

"Yeth; quite like old friendth, you know."

"Blessed if I can make it out!"

Nugent burst into a sudden yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

His chums stared at him.

"What's the matter, Frank?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You ass——"

"Oh, he's off his thilly rocker!" said Lazarus. "Come on, you bounderth; we shall be late home if we don't thpeed up!"

"Good-night, you Greyfriars chumps!"

"Good-night, you Courtfield duffers!"

And with those polite valedictions, they parted. Frank Nugent was still laughing. Harry Wharton and Tom Brown stared at him.

"What on earth's biting you?" Tom demanded.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You howling ass——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The two juniors seized Frank by the shoulders, and ran him out of the tent, and jammed him against a caravan. They pinned him there by main force.

"Now explain, you silly ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton wrathfully. "What are you cackling about?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent.

"Oh, bump him!"

Bump!

Frank was bumped against the waggon. One bump was enough; he yelled in a different way.

"Yow! Stop it!"

"Will you explain?" demanded Wharton.

"Yow! Yes!"

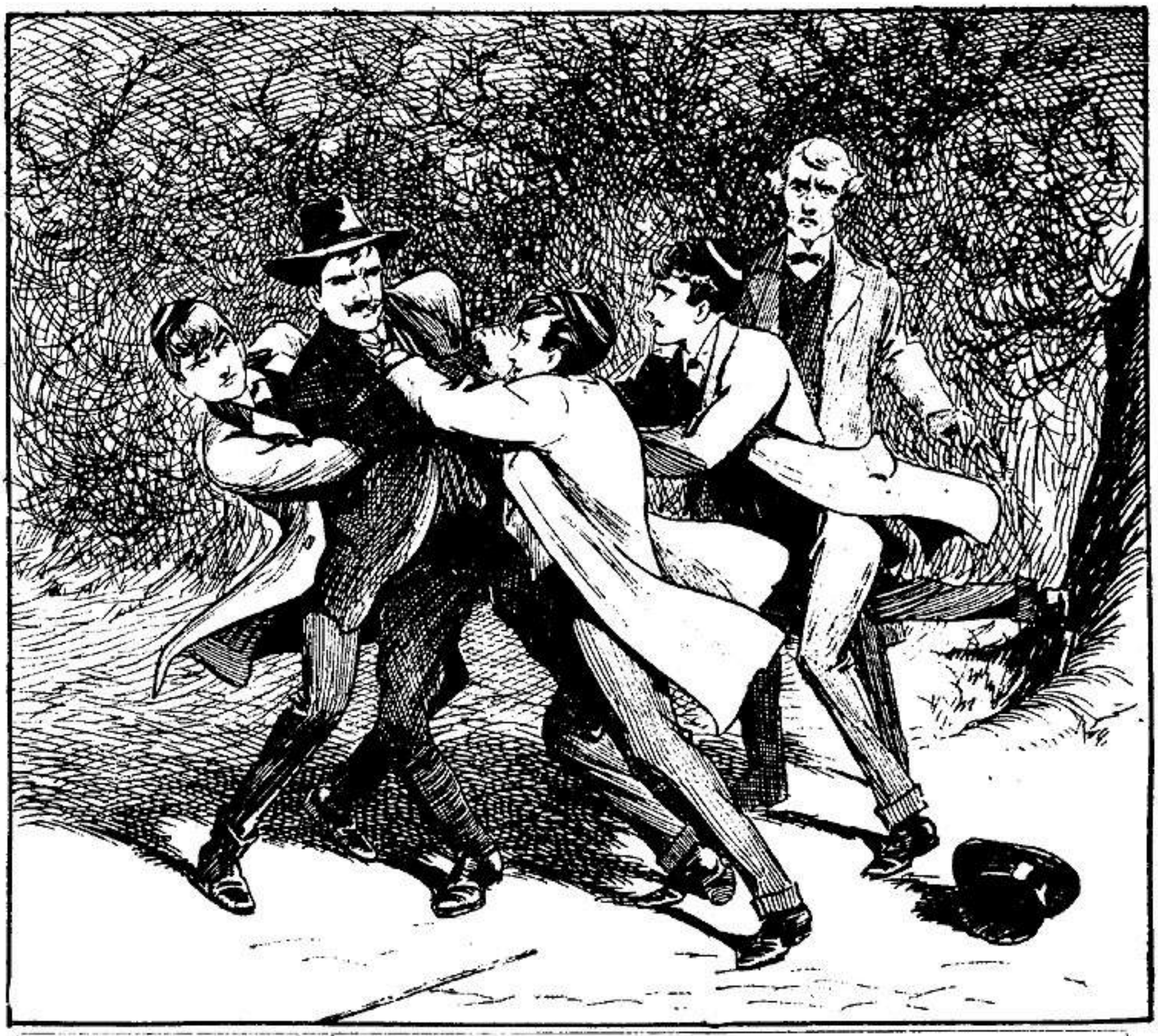
"Then get on, you silly chump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, he's beginning again!" exclaimed Tom Brown indignantly. "Collar him, and we'll——"

"Hold on!" gasped Nugent. "I'll explain."

"Go ahead—quick!"



"Rescue!" shouted Harry Wharton. The three juniors leaped from the thicket and ran at the Frenchman. They closed upon him and dragged him away from Dr. Locke. (*See page 5.*)

"It's about Wingate! He knows mademoiselle—ha, ha, ha! That's why he has been mucking up footer lately—that's why he's been bad-tempered to nice, civil, obliging juniors in the Remove—ha, ha, ha!"

"Why?" howled Wharton and Brown together.

"Because he's spoons."

"What!"

"Hey!"

"Spoons!" roared Frank. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rot!" exclaimed Wharton. "As if Wingate would be such an ass!"

"But he is—ha, ha, ha! Didn't you see the killing looks he was giving old Felix—I expect Felix has been doing the heavy father bizney, and warning him off."

"You ass!"

"Wingate's turned seventeen," said Frank, grinning. "He's old enough to make an ass of himself; lots of chaps do at seventeen."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it's the giddy springtime, you know. In the spring the young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of——"

"Rot!"

"Exactly. The poet said 'love'—but it means the same."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Look here, you ass, Wingate's got far too much sense to be spoons on anybody, at his age," he said; "and that girl looked awfully nice—not at all a spoony sort. What you want is a jolly good bumping, Frank Nugent."

"You see if I'm not right," grinned Frank. "You mark my words, as they say in the newspaper serials."

"But look here——"

"That's why Wingate didn't want us to come to the circus. He thought we should spot it. Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton started a little. There certainly did seem to be something in that view of the case. But he shook his head.

"I don't believe it, Frank."

"Rats! I do."

"You're an ass!"

"Thanks! Same to you, and many of them."

"I tell you——"

"Hark!" exclaimed Tom Brown.

The juniors had stayed behind the crowd, and the ground was pretty well clear. Most of the naphtha lamps were out, excepting near the supper-tent, where the circus company had gathered to refresh themselves with bread and cheese and beer after their labours.

Suddenly, from the direction of a caravan a short distance away, there came a sharp exclamation—in a voice they knew.

"You hound!"

The juniors simply jumped.

It was Wingate's voice—Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars!

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### Chums!

WINGATE, captain of Greyfriars, had left the circus-tent with a dark and moody brow. The performance was still in full swing when he quitted the lighted tent and emerged into the gloom of the common.

The captain of Greyfriars paused for a few moments outside the tent.

Then, instead of passing down the lane towards the school, he moved round the tent, among the caravans belonging to the circus company.

He stopped beside the canvas stables, under the shadow of a large caravan, and waited there, peering into the gloom towards the tent.

There was a footstep in the dusk a little later.

Wingate started forward.

"Rosina!"

It was the slim, graceful figure of the girl-rider that appeared through the dusk. She was leading her horse by the bridle.

The girl gave a little start.

"Oh, it is you!" she said.

"Yes, Rosina."

"I am so glad to see you," said the girl quietly. "But let me put my horse away."

"Can I help you?"

Rosina laughed.

"Oh, no, thank you! I shall not be a minute."

She disappeared.

Wingate waited. There was a strange expression upon Wingate's face. Whether the suggestion that occurred to Frank Nugent was correct or not, it was certain that George Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, had a very strong regard for the circus girl.

Rosina came back in a few moments.

"Now," she said.

She gave Wingate her hand.

"I had to see you again," said Wingate. "It's rotten that you're leaving Friardale so soon, Rosina. When is it?"

"The day after to-morrow," said the girl.

"I wish——" Wingate paused.

"My father is urging Signor Benson to leave to-morrow instead, for some reason," said Rosina. "He was out this evening, before the performance, and he came back in a very bad temper. There was mud on his clothes, and I think, perhaps, he had got into one of his usual quarrels. Yet this time he had not been drinking—as usual. But for some reason he has changed his mind about staying here. After yesterday's business he said the pitch was a good one, and advised the signor to stay here a week at least. Now he wishes to go to-morrow. I don't know why."

"You don't wish to go?"

"Oh, no!"

"It was such a lucky chance that the circus came so near the school," said Wingate. "When I saw the bills up that Benson's Circus was here, I cou.d hardly believe my eyes. It seemed such good luck."

Rosina laughed softly.

"Were you so glad to see me again?" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said Wingate quietly, "I was. It seems ages since the vacation when I met you before, Rosina; and we became friendly very quickly, didn't we?"

"I was grateful to you," said the girl. "You interfered when he—I will not call him my father—was beating me, and—and——"

"And I'm afraid he made you suffer for it afterwards," said Wingate ruefully.

Rosina was silent

"It's too rotten, Rosina, that you should remain with such a man," said Wingate, with a wrinkled brow. "Does he ill-use you now?"

"Sometimes, when he has been drinking."

"The brute!"

"But it is not so bad now," said Rosina. "The signor interferes. You see, I am growing to be more valuable to the circus, and the signor does not want to risk my running away. And I have told him that I will run away if I am ill-used any more."

"And that man is your father?"

"Sometimes, when he has been drinking, and does not know what he is saying, he has called me a beggar, whom he picked up in the gutter," said Rosina. "I hope it is true. I would rather it were true."

"Oh," exclaimed Wingate, "if I could take you away——"

"But you cannot," said Rosina softly, "and—and I tell you it is not so bad now—not so bad as the time when you interfered. But he must not see you."

"No?"

"He hates you, and still speaks sometimes of the time when you knocked him down, George. If he saw us together, I am sure he would make a quarrel."

"The rotter!" muttered Wingate.

"But I am very glad to see you," went on the girl. "You are the best friend I ever had—or, rather, the only real friend. Perhaps we shall meet again."

"We shall," said Wingate; "there is no perhaps about it. We shall meet again, Rosina. I am helpless now—only a schoolboy; but when I am a man——"

"You will not have forgotten me?"

"You know I shall not, Rosina. When I am a man I shall find you out, and take you away from this somehow," said Wingate sturdily. "I don't know how yet, but I shall manage it somehow."

The girl bent her head as if to listen.

"Are you afraid he will come?" asked Wingate.

"Yes. He is doing an extra turn to close the entertainment, and then——"

Wingate looked towards the circus tent.

"It is over!" he said.

Rosina looked uneasy.

"You—you must go!" she said.

"But——"

"You must not meet him," said Rosina hurriedly. "He—he would be furious. You do not know what he said when he knew that I had met you before."

"What did he say?" said Wingate, between his teeth.

"Never mind. Good-night, George!"

He pressed her hand.

"But I shall see you again."

"Yes, yes! But go; he is coming."

Wingate hesitated for a moment. He was little inclined to retreat in this way before a man whom he disliked and despised.

But it was for Rosina's sake. The anger of Felix Lasalle would alway: fall upon her, and she was powerless.

Wingate glided away behind the caravan.

But he did not go further. From the unsteady steps of the man who was approaching, Wingate knew that he had been drinking. He knew that mademoiselle might need protection, and he delayed.

"The rotter!" he muttered. "The rotter! If he were not her father—— But I don't believe he is her father! He is a Frenchman, and she does not look in the least French. The cad! How I would like——"

The thick, muttering voice of the Frenchman stopped his reflections. It came clearly to Wingate's ears.

"Ma foi! And what are you doing here, mademoiselle? Why are you not gone to bed? You have been meeting your schoolboy friend again? Is it not so?"

Rosina did not reply. Her silence seemed to irritate the ruffian.

"Do you hear me?"

There was a litt'e faint cry.

"Let go my wrist!"

Wingate breathed hard. He heard a harsh, unmusical laugh.

"But answer me, then! I will twist your wrist, my dear. You comprehend me? I——"

The faint cry again.

Wingate could stand no more. He ran round the caravan, his fists clenched, his blood boiling, his eyes ablaze.

"You hound!" he shouted.

The Frenchman let go the girl's wrist, and turned towards Wingate. He put up his hands instinctively, but they did not save him. Straight and hard, Wingate's fist came crashing into his face, and he rolled in the grass.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Harry Wharton Takes a Hand.

HARRY WHARTON and his chums stood in doubt as they heard the voice of Wingate through the gloom. It was followed by the sounds of a struggle, and that decided them. They hurried to the spot.

The Frenchman was upon his feet again, and he had closed with the captain of Greyfriars. Wingate, skilful boxer that he was, would probably have made short work of the circus rider at arm's length. But the man had closed with him, and was exerting all his strength, and he was much older and more bulky than the Sixth-Former of Greyfriars.

But Wingate did not feel the slightest tremor of fear.

His only thought was to protect mademoiselle, and to inflict punishment upon the brutal ruffian who called himself her father.

The two reeled to and fro in a savage struggle.

Mademoiselle stood by, her hands clasped, her face white with fear She feared for Wingate, and perhaps for the Frenchman. Wingate, with his blood up as it was, was likely to do the man some injury.

The sound of the struggle had brought others to the spot as well as the chums of the Greyfriars Remove. Fat and oily Signor Benson came rolling out of the supper tent, and the clown came up with a naphtha lamp in his hand to show light. Two or three more of the circus hands came up, but without any apparent intention of interfering. They regarded the matter as a fight that was interesting to watch, that was all.

"Oh, stop them!" panted Rosina.

To and fro, to and fro went the reeling combatants.

"Oh, stop, stop!" cried the girl.

Wharton looked dubiously at his comrades.

"Shall we interfere?" he murmured.

Tom Brown shook his head decidedly.

"No. That's the same brute who was slanging the Head. Let Wingate give him a hiding. He jolly well deserves it."

"But he's her father."

"Can't be helped. We can't interfere, anyway. Wingate would give us a jolly good licking if we meddled."

"What-ho!" said Frank Nugent.

Wharton was silent. But the time came for interference. Wingate stumbled over a rope in the grass, and went reeling backwards. The Frenchman was quick to take advantage of the stumble.

He threw his whole weight upon the Greyfriars captain, and Wingate went heavily to the earth, with the circus rider on top of him.

Wingate's grasp relaxed as he fell. Lasalle was kneeling over him now, his eyes blazing with fury, and his clenched fists beat into the schoolboy's face.

"You coward!" shouted Harry Wharton.

He sprang forward and grasped the Frenchman by the shoulders, and dragged him backwards off Wingate.

"You won't hit a chap when he's down, you dirty coward!" he exclaimed.

The Frenchman snarled, and turned upon him.

Wingate was upon his feet in a moment. The cowardly blows had somewhat dazed him, but he was quite fit to go on.

"This way, you hound!" he exclaimed. "Let that lad alone!"

Signor Benson pushed between them.

"'Old on!" he said. "There's enough of this! We shall 'ave the perlice about us afore we know where we are."

Benson had seen that Lasalle did not wish to go on. The man's drunken fury was spent, and he was secretly afraid of the handsome, sturdy captain of Greyfriars. He was glad enough now to keep behind the portly figure of the circus proprietor.

Wingate dropped his hands at once.

"I would like to wipe up the ground with the brute" he said, "but I'm willing to chuck it. I didn't come here for a row."

He looked at Rosina.

"Oh, go, go!" murmured the girl.

Wingate hesitated.

"Look here, Mr. Benson, if that is your name," he exclaimed, "I interfered to stop that hound from ill-using Mademoiselle Rosina. It's your duty to see that he doesn't do it; and I warn you that if he does there will be trouble. If I can't protect her, the law can, and I will see what informing the police will do."

The signor's fat, red face became a trifle less red.

Signor Benson had ample reasons for not wishing to come into too close a contact with the law. The law to Signor Benson was a troublesome thing it was always very advisable to avoid. It was a thing that interfered most exasperatingly to prevent a boy from working fourteen hours a day, or a child from being exposed to the dangers of a risky mid-air act. The less Signor Benson saw of the law, the better he liked it.

"It's all right, young gentleman," said Signor Benson quite eagerly. "He's been at the drink; that's wot it is. I'll look arter him. He won't play them games no more, I assure you, or he'll get the boot from this circus."

Wingate nodded shortly, and, raising his cap to Rosina, he turned away.

The juniors followed him.

Benson turned angrily to Felix Lasalle when they had gone. His fat face was very angry.

"You drunken fool!" he exclaimed. "That young fellow might have brought dozens of his schoolfellows to see the show, and you must quarrel with him."

Lasalle muttered an oath.

"He attacked me!" he snarled.

"Yes, because you were being a brute again. And haven't I told you you're not to touch mademoiselle?" shouted the signor.

"I'll do as I like."

"You won't! You won't lay a finger on her again!" said the signor. "Mademoiselle is more use in the show than you are, if you want to know the truth; and if I have too much of your cheek, I'll fire you, my man, and keep her here."

And the signor strode away puffing and blowing with anger.

Lasalle gave the girl a deadly look; but he did not speak to her again, nor did he approach her. Rosina went quietly into her van. Meanwhile, the Greyfriars fellows had reached the lane, and were tramping towards the school. Wingate was very silent and moody, and the juniors did not care to speak.

Greyfriars was looming up before them in the gloom, when Wingate spoke at last.

"Thank you for interfering as you did, Wharton," he said abruptly.

"That's all right, Wingate."

"Look here, I don't want you kids to jaw about this in the school," said Wingate, pausing, and looking at them directly. "The fellows will make a lot of jaw about it if you do. You know, I suppose, now that I'm acquainted with Mademoiselle Rosina?"

"Yes."

"I met her a long time ago," said Wingate. "It was in the summer vac. last year. I happened to go to the circus—it was down in Devonshire then—and afterwards I interfered on an occasion something like the one to-night. The Frenchman is a brute, and—— But you understand. I knocked him down. That was how I came to know mademoiselle. I'm explaining this so that you won't be curious about it. We are just good friends. But if the fellows got hold of it they would say it was a case of spoons, or some rot of that sort. And I don't care to have mademoiselle's name talked about in that way. You understand?"

"Yes, Wingate."

"Then keep your mouths shut about what happened after the performance."

"We'll do it," said Tom Brown.

"Honour bright!" added Harry.

"Thank you!"

And they entered the school. The juniors had over-stayed their time, but returning in company with the captain made that all right. Gosling, the porter, gave them a grim look as he opened the gate. They were very late, and he could not report them—which was a great disappointment for Gosling.

Wingate left them at the door of the School House, and the juniors joined their Form, who were going up to bed.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Snoop Knows Something.

"WHERE have you bounders been?" demanded John Bull, as soon as the Remove were in their dormitory.

"Circus," said Harry Wharton.

"You didn't have leave?" asked Hazeldene.

"No."

"You broke bounds?" exclaimed Bulstrode.

"We did."

"But you came in with Wingate," said Bob Cherry, in surprise. "And you haven't been licked. What do you mean by it?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"We met the Head out, and he gave us permission to go," he said.

"Well, I guess that was real decent of him," remarked Fisher T. Fish, the American junior. "What was the circus like?"

"Oh, ripping!"

"Did you see the Famous Bareback Rider and Mademoiselle Rosina, the Child Equestrienne?" asked Skinner.

"Yes. They're good—especially mademoiselle."

"He, he, he!" sniggered Snoop.

Harry Wharton looked at the sneak of the Remove. Snoop seemed to be very much amused about something. Billy Bunter was grinning, too.

"What's the joke?" demanded Wharton abruptly.

"You're not the only chap at Greyfriars who thinks that Mademoiselle Rosina is especially nice!" chuckled Snoop.

"Not half!" said Billy Bunter.

Wharton's eyes glinted.

"I don't know what you mean, Snoop."

"I know what I mean," said Snoop. "So does Bunter! He, he, he!"

"He, he, he!" echoed Bunter.

"Look here, you'd better explain what you mean, then," said Harry Wharton sharply—"if you're not talking out of your hat!"

"I've seen Wingate with her, that's all!"

"Oh!"

"I saw them talking on the shore, near Pegg," said Snoop,

with great relish. "Wingate is spoons on the circus girl. He, he, he!"

"He, he, he!" giggled Bunter, like an echo.

Wharton knitted his brows, and Nugent turned very red. Frank Nugent had made the same suggestion before, but in a jesting spirit, with none of the ill-nature that Snoop infused into it. But he felt ashamed of it now. It was a disgrace to have ever thought in the same way with Snoop of the Remove.

"You rotter!" said Frank.

"Well, I like that—from you!" murmured Tom Brown. "Why, you——"

"Oh, shut up!" said Frank irritably.

"But——"

"Cheese it, you ass! I——"

"Well, it's a fact," said Snoop. "I saw them, and so did Bunter! It was only this afternoon. I didn't know who she was then—she wasn't dressed like a circus girl! But when I saw her in the ring——"

"Oh, you've been to the circus, have you?" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

Snoop nodded.

"You're not the only chap who can break bounds, I suppose?" he said. "I suppose you don't keep that to yourself as a privilege because you're Form captain?"

"My dear Snoop," exclaimed Alonzo Todd, "Wharton, as Form captain, is called upon to set the Form a good example! He should endeavour to be a shining light to us."

Wharton coloured angrily.

As a matter of fact, he felt that there was some truth in what Todd said, and he was not quite satisfied with what he had done.

"Oh, ring off, Todd!" he exclaimed.

"My dear Wharton, I hope to induce you to return to better ways," said Todd, in the best manner of his Uncle Benjamin. "I assure you, Wharton——"

"Shut up, ass!"

"I assure you that you will do better to return to the right path, Wharton. Breaking bounds is only the opening. Beware of the openings, my Uncle Benjamin always says ——"

"I don't know," said Nugent. "The end games are just as bad."

"Eh?" said Todd, who did not play chess. "My dear Nugent, pray do not interrupt me with frivolous remarks. Beware of the openings, my dear Wharton. I beg and implore you, my dear Wharton——"

"Oh, shut up!" growled Wharton.

"But I beg——"

Biff!

A pillow hurled by Nugent caught the Duffer of Greyfriars under the chin and bowled him over. Alonzo sat down with quite a shock, and gasped.

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear fellows, I——"

The juniors roared.

Alonzo Todd picked himself up, but he did not beg and implore Wharton any more. He undressed and went to bed. Perhaps, under the circumstances, he considered that further exhortations would be better postponed until the morning.

Wharton was looking annoyed—not so much with the absurd Todd as with Bunter and Snoop. The two most talkative and ill-natured fellows in the Remove knew about Wingate's chum! They would talk about it, too. And if it came to Wingate's ears—as was very likely—he would imagine that the chums had talked of what they had learned at the circus.

Snoop watched the face of the Form captain, grinning. He was always glad of a chance of scoring off Wharton. He saw that he was scoring now, though he did not quite understand why, and he pursued the subject.

"Blessed if I blame Wingate!" he said. "I dare say he finds it amusing. I don't blame him for a little fun."

"Hold your tongue!" said Harry.

"Well, he's making hay while the sun shines, you know. Only I never thought it was in old Wingate, that's all."

"He was always such a quiet chap, and never seemed to care for girls," said Skinner. "I expect you're lying, Snoop."

"Of course he is!" said Bull. "Does he ever do anything else?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snoop gave the sturdy junior an unpleasant look.

"I'm telling the truth now, anyway," he said. "I saw Wingate on the sands with the circus girl this afternoon."

"So did I," said Bunter.

"Oh, you're as blind as a bat!" said Ogilvy. "You wouldn't know mademoiselle from Captain Stump at six yards!"

"Oh, really, Ogilvy——"

"Do you think there's anything in it, Wharton?" asked Hazeldene.

Wharton knitted his brows.

"I prefer not to talk about it," he said. "It's no business of ours, anyway, and the best thing Snoop and Bunter can do is to shut up. It won't be good for them if Wingate hears them chattering about him."

"Oh, rats!" said Snoop. "Why shouldn't we talk if we like? Wingate wouldn't chum up with circus girls if he didn't want us to know it."

"I know jolly well now why he wouldn't give the fellows passes out to go to the circus!" said Billy Bunter. "He was afraid of their spotting him with Mademoiselle Rosina."

"That's it!" said Snoop.

"It's rotten!" said Bunter, with an air of virtuous indignation. "I really think that a chap belonging to Greyfriars ought to draw the line somewhere. I do really, you know. He oughtn't to let Greyfriars down in this way."

"Just what I think," agreed Snoop, with a corner of his eye on Harry Wharton, whose face was growing crimson with anger. "It's a disgrace to the school. I expect the girl is an artful baggage, and——"

"Hold your tongue, you rotten cad!" burst out Wharton, unable to control his temper any longer.

"Sha'n't!" said Snoop. "I can say what I like, I suppose. The girl isn't any friend of yours, is she? What do you want to stand up for her for, I'd like to know?"

"I should think any decent chap would stand up for any girl when she's being talked about by a rotten low cad!" said Wharton.

"Oh, draw it mild——"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Hold your tongues, both of you!" exclaimed Harry savagely. "You're not fit to speak to any girl, either of you! You rotters!"

"I don't see——"

"Look here——"

"Shut up, I tell you!"

"Sha'n't!"

"Oh, really——"

"Then I'll jolly soon make you!" said Harry Wharton. And he strode towards the two juniors, with knitted brows.

Before they could dodge him he had grasped them by the back of their collars—Snoop in his strong right hand, Bunter in his left. He brought their heads together with a bang.

Crack!

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## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### News for Loder.

CRACK!

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

Billy Bunter and Snoop wriggled furiously in Harry Wharton's grasp. But they could not escape from it.

"Yow!" roared Bunter. "Oh, really! Stop—ow! I say, you fellows, make him let go! Beasts! Yow! Yaroop!"

"Leggo!" gurgled Snoop. "Oh! Ow!"

"Will you shut up, then?" said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Yow! Leggo!"

"Groo!"

"Look out!" muttered Frank Nugent.

The dormitory door opened, and Loder, the prefect, came in. He had come to see lights out.

He stopped and stared at the juniors.

"What on earth——" he began.

Wharton released the two juniors. Billy Bunter rolled, gasping, to his bed, where he collapsed in a breathless state Snoop rubbed his head furiously.

"Bullying, Wharton eh?" said Loder, in a very unpleasant tone.

Wharton turned crimson. The accusation was very unjust, for Harry was anything but a bully. Loder, the prefect, was greatly addicted to that peculiar form of amusement himself, and it was the fact that Harry Wharton would not stand it that made the prefect detest him bitterly.

"No!" exclaimed Wharton angrily.

"Well, it looks like it. What were you handling those kids for?" demanded Loder, in his most aggressive and disagreeable tone.

"I—I——"

"You can't explain—eh?"

"I don't choose to, then!" said Harry Wharton fiercely.

"Hear, hear!" sang out Bob Cherry.

Loder scowled.

The two juniors seized Frank Nugent by the shoulders and jammed him against the caravan. "Now explain, you silly ass!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What are you cackling about?" (See page 6.)

"What was Wharton pitching into you for, Bunter?" he asked.

"Groo-ooh!"

"Explain this to me, Snoop?"

Snoop gasped for breath.

"It was only a j-j-joke about Wingate and the circus girl," he gasped.

"Hold your tongue!" muttered Wharton savagely.

Snoop did not appear to hear him. He knew perfectly well that Loder, the prefect, was Wingate's rival in the Sixth, and on the worst possible terms with the captain of Greyfriars. Loder was only too glad to hear anything against Wingate, and Snoop was quite aware of it.

"What's that about Wingate?" exclaimed the prefect.

"The—the circus girl——"

"What circus girl?"

"The—the girl at Benson's circus," stammered Snoop. "Look here, Wharton, it's no good your clenching your fist at me. I'm bound to answer a prefect's questions, ain't I? If you lick me afterwards, I'll tell Loder."

Loder gave Wharton a fierce look.

"Let Snoop alone!" he exclaimed. "If you touch him after I've gone, I'll report you to the Head for bullying. Now, Snoop, go on with what you were saying. You can rely on protection from any bully."

"I—I don't want to say any more——"

"You'll do as your prefect orders you, or you'll get into trouble, Snoop," said Loder angrily. "Go on, I tell you."

"Well, I happened to see Wingate and the circus girl, Mademoiselle Rosina, talking on the shore this afternoon, down by Pegg," said Snoop. "I just mentioned it, and Wharton went for me, though I don't see what business it is of his."

"Neither do I," said Loder, with a vicious look at Wharton. "You've no right to talk about your seniors, but it's no business of another junior to interfere. Besides, Wingate, I suppose, isn't ashamed of what he does, and doesn't want a kid in the Lower Fourth to stand up for him."

"Of course not," said Snoop.

"But I expect you're lying, or mistaken," said Loder, in a bullying tone. "I don't really believe you saw anything of the sort."

"Bunter saw them, too!" exclaimed Snoop eagerly.

"Did you, Bunter?"

"I—I did see them," said Bunter, blinking nervously at Harry Wharton. "I—I can't help telling Loder, Wharton, you know. I'm jolly well not going to be licked by a rotten prefect to please you. I—I mean a prefect—a nice prefect——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Removites.

Even Loder could not help grinning.

"So you saw them, Bunter?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Loder. They were—were talking. There wasn't any spooning, you know. She's quite a jolly girl, and ——"

"Don't tell lies, Bunter!"

"Eh!"

"It's no business of yours how they were amusing themselves," said Loder, in a terrifying tone. "What does it matter to you?"

"Oh! I--I— know. Yes. I—— Of course, they were spooning——"

"Hold your tongue, Bunter!" said Wharton.

"Wharton, let him alone!" rapped out Loder.

"I won't!" said Harry fiercely. "You're trying to frighten him into telling lies, and I won't have it!"

Loder scowled fiercely.

He made a step towards the captain of the Remove. Wharton clenched his hands, and Bob Cherry, and Frank Nugent, and John Bull, and Mark Linley drew nearer to him.

If Loder had touched Wharton, there would have been a "row," which would have got the juniors into trouble, but which would certainly have done the prefect no good. Loder stopped.

"That's enough of this tattle!" he exclaimed. "Tumble into bed."

"Oh, really, Loder——"

"Get to bed, you fat duffer!"

Bunter blinked at the prefect, and turned in. Loder extinguished the light in the Remove dormitory, and went out. Billy Bunter's voice was heard in the darkness.

"I say, Wharton——"

"Oh, shut up, and go to sleep!" growled Harry.

"Yes; but, I say, it wasn't my fault. I was bound to answer Loder——"

"Shut up!"

"Under the circumstances, my dear Bunter," said Alonzo Todd, "you would have acted more wisely in maintaining a judicious silence. My Uncle Benjamin would have counselled that plan of procedure, under the peculiar circumstances of the case."

"Oh, ring off, Todd!"

Meanwhile, Loder had gone down, with a dawning grin on his face. He passed Wingate in the passage, and gave him a peculiar look, but did not speak. Wingate glanced after him, wondering what was the matter with Loder. Many a time Wingate had interfered to stop Loder's bullying, and there was no love lost between them. Wingate had a will of iron, and, as he was head prefect and captain of the school, Loder had always had to give way. But it seemed to Loder that his turn was coming now.

He went into Ionides' study. Ionides, the Greek, had asked Loder and Carne into his study to a game of cards—quite unknown to the masters of Greyfriars, it is needless to say. Carne was there, talking to Ionides, when Loder entered, and closed the door behind him.

Ionides and Carne looked curiously at Loder, struck by the peculiar glint in his eyes and the smile upon his lips.

"What's up?" asked Carne.

"You have had some good luck?" asked the Greek curiously. "Your horse has won in a big race, perhaps?"

Loder shook his head.

"Better than that," he said.

"Go ahead, then. What is it?"

"There's a chap in our Form," said Loder, in a low voice—"a chap who has always put on goody-goody airs, and held himself above us—a chap who doesn't smoke, and doesn't drink, and doesn't play cards, and doesn't do anything that we bad fellows do—a chap, in fact, who is either too good for this world, or else is a rotten humbug!"

Carne and Ionides stared at him. Ionides lighted a fresh cigarette.

"Whom are you talking about?" exclaimed Carne. "It wouldn't be Courtney or North. It's Wingate, I suppose?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I have always said," remarked the Greek, "that our good friend Wingate was what you call spoofing us. I do not believe that any fellow at Greyfriars is any better than I am, and Wingate least of all. We are all tarred with the same brush, as the proverb says; but some of us are more hypocritical than others."

"Well, I must say I always believed in old Wingate," said Carne, in surprise. "If he's a humbug, he's imposed on me. He's not my sort; but as he is, I've always believed him genuine."

Loder sneered.

"I may have believed in him," he said.

"But you don't now?"

"No fear!"

"You've found something out?" asked the Greek.

"Yes. He——"

Loder broke off suddenly. There was a knock at the door, and it opened, and Wingate, the fellow they were talking about, stepped into the study.



## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### The Plot Against Wingate.

THE sudden appearance of Wingate had a startling effect upon the three seniors. Ionides jerked the cigarette from his mouth, and threw it into the grate. Carne skilfully put his hand behind him, holding the cigarette in it, which he happened to have just taken from his lips. Loder, confused by the entrance of the fellow whose name was on his lips, stared blankly at Wingate with a reddening face.

The captain of Greyfriars gave a sniff.

The scent of tobacco smoke was strong in the study, even if he had not seen the cigarette Ionides had flung away.

"W-wingate!" muttered Carne.

The Greek smiled uneasily.

"Welcome!" he said. "You have come to join our little party?"

Wingate looked at him directly.

"No," he said.

The Greek sneered.

"You are not what we call polite," he said. "Your manners are—English! But go on. You have something to say to me."

"I hope my manners and my customs are English!" said Wingate scornfully. "I should be very sorry to have them like yours, Ionides."

Ionides shrugged his shoulders.

"But I haven't come here to bandy words with you," said Wingate. "I've come to say something straight and plain."

"I am listening, my polite friend."

"Bunter minor, of the Second Form, was caught to-day smuggling cigarettes into the school," said Wingate.

"That is of no particular interest to me," Ionides said. "I am not a prefect, and the doings of Bunter minor, of the Second Form, do not interest me in the least. But, perhaps you came here to mention the matter to Loder."

"I came here to mention it to you," said Wingate. "As I am head prefect, I should have no occasion to mention it to Loder."

"Yes. I had really forgotten that you were a prefect, Wingate."

"You had not!" said the Greyfriars captain coldly.

Ionides turned red. Wingate, of the Sixth, had a way of hitting out straight from the shoulder that was disconcerting, to say the least of it.

"It was Courtney who caught the young rascal," said Wingate, "and he referred the matter to me. I have interviewed Bunter minor."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and I offered him the alternative of telling me who sent him for the cigarettes and of taking a licking."

"Really! I should imagine that he bought the cigarettes for himself," drawled Ionides. "I believe some of the juniors are addicted to smoking in their studies."

"I believe so," assented Wingate. "But if they are, they had an example in the Sixth to lead them into such rotten habits."

"How unfortunate!"

Wingate set his teeth. The cool, mocking, insulting manner of the Greek was very hard to bear, and Wingate had a quick temper, but he kept it well in hand.

"Bunter minor confessed," he went on. "He gave me the name. I was half expecting it to be that of Vernon-Smith, of the Remove, but it was not. The name he gave me was yours, Ionides."

"Wretched little liar!"

"You deny it?"

The Greek shrugged his shoulders again.

"I shall certainly not enter into a controversy with a fag in the Second Form," he replied. "If you choose to believe Bunter minor, you may do so."

"I believe him."

"Then I have no more to say," replied the Greek carelessly.

"I believed him," said Wingate. "But I intended to hear what you had to say before making up my mind. Have you anything to say?"

Loder made a sign to Ionides, and the Greek understood it. It was useless to defy the captain of Greyfriars too far. Wingate was quite capable of marching even a Sixth-Former before the Head to answer for his conduct.

"I say the brat lied," said Ionides.

"You deny that you sent him for the cigarettes?"

"Certainly!"

"You say that he was accusing you falsely, then?"

"Quite so!" drawled Ionides.

Wingate's eyes flashed.

"But you are smoking now!" he exclaimed. "There is smoke in this study. Carne has a cigarette in his hand."

Carne flushed, and brought his hand round from behind his back.

"Look here, Wingate," exclaimed Loder angrily, "I'm a prefect, and when I'm in a study, you can leave that study to me. You can keep the juniors in order as much as you like, but you can't dictate to the Sixth."

"Hear, hear!" said Carne.

"That is my view," remarked Ionides. "I do not wish to quarrel with Wingate. But I must not be interfered with as if I were a fag."

Wingate looked at them steadily.

"You know what the rules are," he said. "You know how stern the Head is on the subject of secret smoking, as much among the Sixth as among the fags."

"Oh, hang the Head!"

"If you speak like that of Dr. Locke again, Ionides, I'll knock the words back down your throat!" said Wingate, clenching his hands.

The Greek laughed uneasily, involuntarily taking a step backward.

"Oh, keep your temper!" he exclaimed. "In a word, what have you come here for?"

"To tell you plainly that this has got to stop!" said Wingate icily. "I have left it to Loder long enough—and Loder backs you up in your rascality——"

"What!" exclaimed the three seniors together.

"In your rascality," repeated Wingate coolly, "instead of stopping you. I have caned Bunter minor, and given him an impot., for fetching cigarettes. What a rotter I should be to punish the fag and let off the senior who sent him!"

Ionides showed his teeth.

"So you are going to punish me?"

"Yes."

"In what way?"

"I'm going to stop smoking in this study," said Wingate grimly. "You'll hand me all your smokes, and I shall put them in the fire. And if there is any more of it, I shall report you to the Head, as in duty bound."

"What!"

"You heard what I said?"

Loder was pale with rage.

"You come here—and say this—this to me, a prefect!" he exclaimed, almost stuttering in his fury.

"Yes," said Wingate calmly.

The three seniors looked at one another. Wingate waited a few moments.

"Well," he said, at last, "what are you going to do? You'll hand your cigarettes out to me, or you'll hand them out to the Head. Take your choice."

"You do not mean that!" muttered Ionides.

"I mean every word I say."

Ionides, with a muttered curse, flung a cigarette-case upon the table. Wingate opened it, and took out the half-dozen smokes it contained. He gave Ionides a look of bitter scorn.

"They are of the same brand as those that were taken from Bunter minor," he said. "He told me the truth."

Ionides did not reply. Wingate calmly pitched the cigarettes into the fire, and watched them burn up. Then he turned to the other two seniors.

"I'm waiting for you," he said.

Carne and Loder, white with rage, laid their cigarettes on the table. Wingate threw them after the rest.

"That's settled," he said. "I want you fellows to bear in mind what I've said. I'm in no mood at present to be bothered by you, and if you trouble me too much, you'll be sorry for it. That's all."

And he strode from the study, and closed the door behind him. There was silence for a few minutes in Ionides' room. The three black sheep of the Sixth were too enraged to speak.

It was Heracles Ionides who broke the silence.

"The hound!" he muttered. "This is how he dares to dictate to us—and we are helpless. If we defy him, he will take the matter before the Head."

Loder burst into a harsh and bitter laugh.

"Of course, he was acting," he said.

Carne shook his head.

"He wasn't acting," he replied. "It's no good, Loder. Wingate isn't that sort of chap. You can't dislike him more than I do—but he's in earnest."

"In earnest or not, we cannot allow this," said the Greek.

"Not if we can help it—but how can we?"

Loder gritted his teeth.

"I tell you he was acting; he does this sort of thing to keep up his reputation as a saint!" he said savagely. "I tell you I've found him out."

"That's all very well——"

"What have you found out, Loder?" asked Ionides, his white teeth showing like the teeth of a wild animal as he asked the question. "Anything that will give us a hold upon our good and highly moral friend, Wingate?"

"Yes."

"Go ahead!" said Carne. "I'm up against the hound, of course, and if we could get a hold on him——"





"It's only talk so far," said Loder, "but I believe it. Wingate has taken up with some low circus-rider from the show at Friardale."

"Impossible!"

"Two kids in the Remove saw them together."

"Phew!"

"That's how Wingate amuses himself in his spare time," said Loder savagely. "That's our good Wingate's little weakness. We smoke a little, and play cards a little; but we don't hang round with circus-girls."

"My hat!"

"But are you sure, Carne?"

"Snoop and Bunter both saw them."

"Snoop and Bunter! They're the biggest liars in the school," said Carne distrustfully.

Loder nodded impatiently.

"I know they are!" he said. "But they were telling the truth this time. They can't have imagined such a thing. What should put it into their heads?"

"That's true enough."

"I fancy, too, that Wharton knows something of it," said Loder. "He was trying to keep Bunter and Snoop from talking about it, the interfering young hound! But I got the story out of them!"

Ionides' eyes glittered.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "If this is true——"

"It is true!"

"Well, then, it gives us a great chance," said the Greek, showing his teeth. "We will bring our virtuous friend Wingate to terms. Why did you not tell him at this moment what you knew, when he was swanking over us here?"

Loder grinned unpleasantly.

"Because it's only talk so far," he said. "I've no proof. I believe it—but I've nothing I can lay before the Head."

Ionides and Carne both started.

"Before the Head, Loder?"

"Certainly!" said the prefect coolly. "We've either got to change our ways—which I for one don't intend to do—or else draw Wingate's teeth. If we can disgrace him with the Head, he loses his position as head prefect and captain, even if he doesn't have to leave Greyfriars."

"My hat!"

"I'm going to look into the matter," went on Loder. "You fellows can help. You can come down to the circus with me, and we'll look out things there. The girl, according to the circus-bills I've seen, is the daughter of a French circus-rider—and we can find out all we want from him, by standing him a few drinks, I expect. And when we've got our proof against Wingate——"

"You'll give him away to the Head?" asked Ionides.

"I shall be bound by my duty and conscience as a prefect to report a matter to the Head, which if it goes on may become a public disgrace to Greyfriars!" said Loder coolly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wingate is very strong on his duty as captain," said Loder viciously. "I can be equally strong on mine as a prefect. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. I'll make the hound sit up for dictating to me!"

"But—but I can hardly believe it," said Carne slowly. "Wingate's not that sort. Suppose the girl is nice, and it's a harmless friendship, and no spoony bizney at all?"

Loder laughed scoffingly.

"What would that matter? We could still make out the same case to the Head—he won't see the girl, and Wingate couldn't deny the friendship."

"Quite right."

"We have our good Wingate in the hollow of our hand," said Ionides. "We will crush him. And now lock the door, Loder; we will have a quiet smoke. I have some more cigarettes which I did not hand to our excellent Wingate."

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Wingate is Worried.

WINGATE, of the Sixth, was not quite himself all through the following day. There was a worry on his mind; and the healthy, cheerful captain of Greyfriars was not accustomed to worrying. It had an effect upon his spirits and his nerves, and it made him irritable, and his temper almost snappish. The other fellows in his Form, who knew Wingate as the cheeriest and best-tempered fellow in the Upper School, wondered at his new humour. Even his special chum, Courtney, found that he could not keep quite right with Wingate that day, and had to be careful how he talked to him. Although when Wingate had spoken hastily or unjustly, he would always admit the fault afterwards, and show that he was sorry. And then would come that strange irritability again.

Wingate was deeply troubled about the circus-girl.

On the morrow Benson's circus was to leave Friardale, and

Mademoiselle Rosina would pass out of his life again. Often and often Wingate had thought of the circus-girl, since their first meeting a year ago. He had wondered what her life was like—among rough and coarse companions, and under the tyranny of a father who was a ruffian and a drunkard.

Now that he had met her again, matters seemed worse than ever. It seemed terrible to leave Rosina to her life at the circus: yet the utter impossibility of a schoolboy interfering in the matter struck Wingate at once. He had a raging sense of helplessness, and it reacted upon his temper.

His friendship for Rosina was deep and sincere—and there was nothing else in it. Nugent's little joke, and Snoop's ill-natured gibes, had no foundation in fact. Wingate was anxious and concerned about Rosina, whom he liked very much—that was all. But what was he to do? What could he do? Nothing!

After morning school that day Wingate left the Sixth-Form room, with a clouded brow. He had been very absent all the morning, and had made replies that astonished Dr. Locke, who was taking the Sixth. But the Head forebore to remark upon it. Wingate was evidently not quite himself, and the Head let it pass.

Wingate, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, strode away without speaking to anyone. Courtney walked with him a few paces.

"Look here, Wingate," he exclaimed, "is there anything wrong?"

"No!" snapped Wingate.

"Then why are you going about like a bear with a sore head?" demanded Courtney.

"Oh, rats!"

"You've been taking lessons in politeness, perhaps?" asked Courtney.

Wingate frowned, and then grinned slightly.

"Sorry, old chap," he said. "I'm worried, and that's what it is. I'm in a beastly fix—or, rather, somebody else is in a fix, and that's worse."

"Somebody you know, of course?"

"Yes."

"Greyfriars chap?"

"Greyfriars chap?" repeated Wingate, in wonder. "No, of course not, you ass! It's not a chap at all. I—I mean—hang it! I don't want to talk about it, Courtney. You'll excuse me, won't you?"

And Wingate strode on, leaving Courtney standing, and staring after him in blank amazement.

"Well, my only hat!" ejaculated Courtney aloud. "Not a chap at all! What the dickens does he mean? He can't be bothering his silly head about a girl, I suppose?"

"Why not?" asked an unpleasant voice.

Courtney turned his head and looked at Loder.

"Why not?" he repeated. "Because he isn't such an ass!"

"Perhaps not."

Courtney stared at him.

"Do you know anything about this, Loder?" he asked.

"About what?"

"About what's worrying Wingate."

"Perhaps I do."

"Oh, hang your silly perhapses!" exclaimed Courtney angrily. "What is it? What's the matter? What's the blessed mystery about?"

"You'll know soon, I expect," said Loder, and he turned away.

Meanwhile, Wingate had walked on, looking neither to right nor left, his brows corrugated in a dark frown. He strode into the Head's garden, and there, in the path through the thick shrubbery, he tramped to and fro, thinking. He expected to be alone there; but the sound of a footstep interrupted his gloomy thoughts, and made him look up with an angry gleam in his eyes.

But the anger died out of his face at once. The footstep was a child's. It was Molly, the Head's little daughter, who was looking at him with wonder in her innocent blue eyes.

"Oh, Molly!" said Wingate awkwardly.

Molly laughed.

"You are in a bad temper," she said, in her frank way, holding up a chubby finger and wagging it at Wingate.

The Greyfriars captain coloured.

"Not a bad temper, Molly," he said.

"You are frowning like papa," said Molly.

"I am sure papa doesn't frown at you, Molly," he said.

"Oh, no!" said Molly. "I was thinking of when Todd brought the goose, and papa—it was so funny! Papa frowned like—like thunder. Isn't Todd an odd boy?"

"I believe he is," said Wingate, who had quite forgotten Todd's existence.

"But what are you in a bad temper about?" asked Molly, returning to the subject.

"I—I wasn't, Molly."

"Then what were you frowning for?"

"I—I was thinking."

"How funny!" said Molly. "Do you always frown when you think?"

"N-n-not always," said Wingate, somewhat perplexed by this catechism. "In fact, I—I—I was a little worried, Molly, that's all."

"Over your lessons?" asked Molly sympathetically.

"Oh, no! Not over my lessons."

"I suppose it is fractions," said Molly, without heeding Wingate's denial. "I know what they are—horrid."

"No, it isn't fractions," said Wingate, and he could not help laughing. The fractions that were the terror of Molly's young life were not likely to cause much mental strain to the head of the Sixth Form.

"Something worse than fractions?" asked Molly.

"Ye-es."

"Worse than toothache?" asked Molly, specifying the only thing she knew that was worse than fractions.

"Yes."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!"

"But it's all right," said Wingate.

"How can it be all right if it's worse than fractions?" said Molly, puzzled. "I say, suppose you tell papa?"

Wingate smiled. He could fancy the frown that would mount upon the doctor's brow if he were asked for advice upon the subject of his head prefect's friendship with a circus rider.

"Papa is very clever," said Molly. "He can do decimals."

"I—I suppose he can," said Wingate. "But—but—— By Jove! I shall be late for dinner. You had better run in, Molly."

"Oh, dear!" said Molly.

And she clutched her doll and ran in alarm up the garden path. Wingate walked away towards the Close, his brows puzzled and moody.

Molly's words had brought a new thought into his mind. Instinctively he had known that it would not do to allow his friendship with Mlle. Rosina to become known at Greyfriars; but he had only thought of misunderstanding and chipping on the part of the fellows. Now it occurred to him what the Head would think if he heard of it. That he would disapprove of such a connection was certain—that he would be very angry was hardly less sure.

"Oh, hang!" said Wingate, in a worried tone. "Poor little Molly! Fancy her suggesting consulting the Head! And yet—though the Head wouldn't understand—Rosina is as nice a girl as little Molly herself. By Jove, they're not unlike to look at, too, only Rosina is so much older! I remember now her blue eyes reminded me of little Molly's when I first saw her. Oh, hang! What can I do? And the circus leaves to-morrow! Well, I shall see Rosina again to-day, at all events."



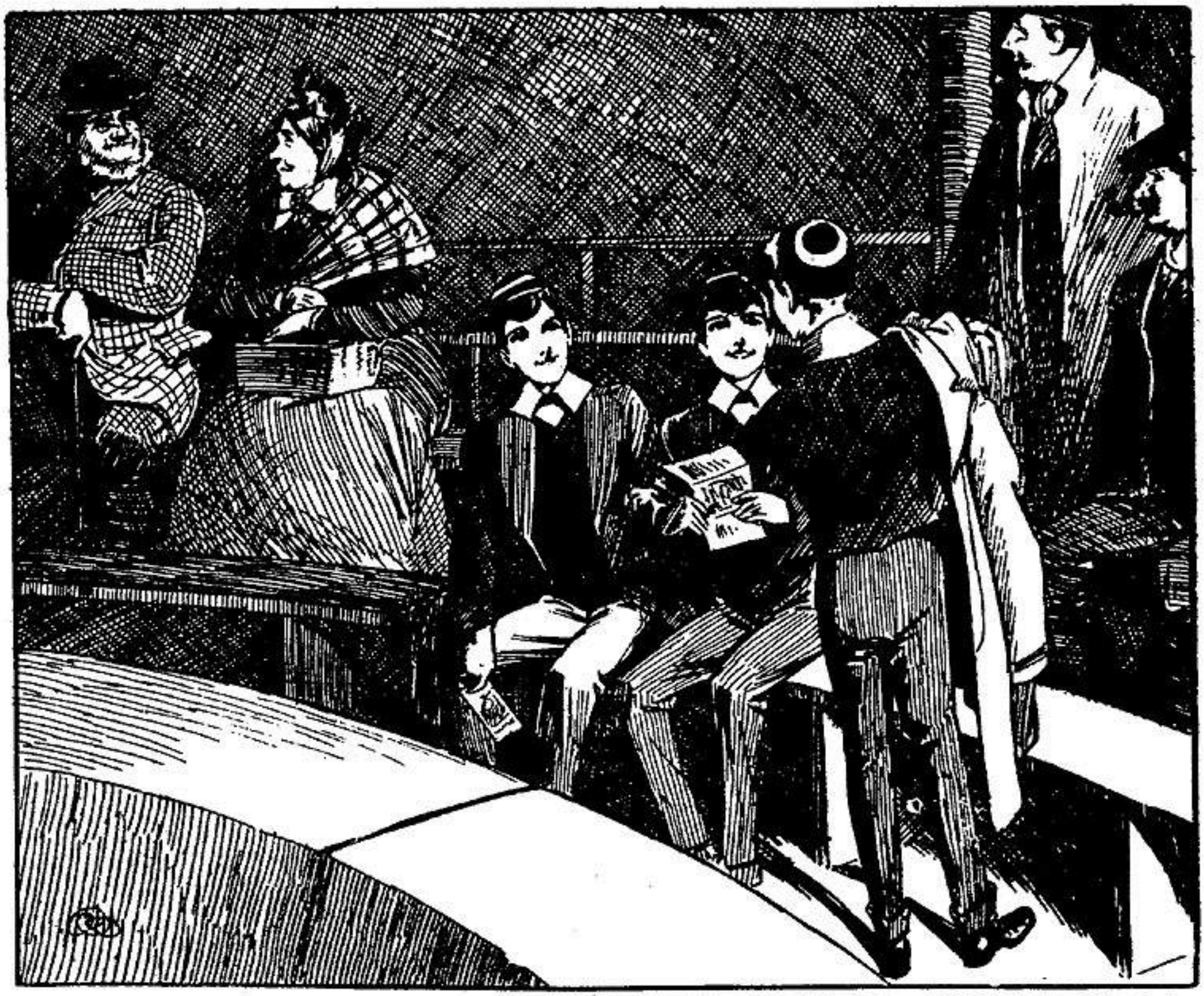
## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### Todd's Duty.

"IT'S up to Todd!" said Bulstrode.

"That's what I say," Snoop remarked.

Todd was always willing to do his duty, or anybody else's duty for that matter. Todd was the best-natured and most obliging of fellows—qualities which, as he often explained, he owed to the care and training he had received from his Uncle Benjamin.



The large circus-tent was rapidly filling, but Harry Wharton & Co. obtained front seats, where they sat at their ease, and surveyed the place. (*See Page 5.*)

These qualities, added to his extreme simplicity, made Todd the frequent victim of the practical jokers of the Remove; but never had Bulstrode & Co. ventured upon a more risky practical joke than the one they were now planning.

That there was any joke in the matter, Todd had not the slightest idea. He was entering into it very seriously—from a sense of duty.

"Oh, yes, it's up to Todd!" said Skinner.

"My dear fellows——" said Todd.

"You see, this is how it stands, Todd. There's no doubt that Wingate has got himself into an awful fix."

"No doubt at all," said Snoop.

"It's terrible to think of," said Skinner, with a shake in his voice. "When I think of it, I could c-c-cry."

"My dear Skinner," said Todd, very much troubled, "pray do not cry. It will attract attention, my dear Skinner. Brace yourself."

"I—I will try," faltered Skinner. "But—but I'm so touched about Wingate. You see, he's such an awfully decent chap, that it's a howling pity to see him going to the dogs in this manner."

"Yes, I can quite understand that. And if a few words in season would save him——" Todd remarked thoughtfully.

"That's just it," said Bulstrode blandly. "A word in season is what Wingate wants. If you put it to him in your splendid way——"

"You see, Todd, you're really the only chap fit to do it," Skinner explained. "You are aware that you have introduced a much higher moral tone into the Remove since you've been at Greyfriars."

"I was not aware of it, my dear Skinner, but I am very pleased to hear it," said Alonzo Todd. "My Uncle Benjamin always impressed upon me to maintain a high moral tone on all occasions. I trust——"

"Just so," said Bulstrode. "You see that you're the man to put it to Wingate, don't you? We're only common chaps—on a much lower plane."

"Quite so," assented Todd innocently. "I agree with you there, Bulstrode, and I consider it very frank and manly of you to admit it so candidly."

Alonzo Todd was very near at that moment to receiving a terrific punch; but Bulstrode controlled his desire to wipe up the floor with the Duffer of Greyfriars.

"E-e-exactly!" he stammered. "I—I try to be candid, Todd. But all the Remove knows what an effect you've had on the Form."

"Yes, rather."

"My dear Bulstrode, this is most kind of you. But—but is it certain that Wingate is in need of any remonstrance from me?"

"Pretty certain, I think," said Bulstrode. "He's after that circus girl, and I'm sure your Uncle Benjamin would be shocked if he knew."

"He would certainly be shocked—nay, disgusted," said Alonzo. "I am very much surprised at Wingate myself. But perhaps the circus girl is a really nice girl, and——"

"Well, Snoop's seen her," said Bulstrode, with an expressive shrug of the shoulders. "He can tell you what she's like."

"Awful!" said Snoop.

"My dear Snoop——"

"About fifty years old," said the veracious Snoop, "nearly six feet high, and drinks like a—like a fish."

"Goodness gracious!"

"She has a voice like a syren," said Snoop—"a steamer's syren, I mean. And you should see her fists!"

"But—but how is it that Wingate is attracted by such a dreadful creature?" gasped the amazed Alonzo.

Bulstrode kicked Snoop, as a sign that he was overdoing it. He did not want Todd to suspect that it was a jape.

"Well, perhaps she's not quite so bad as that," said Snoop, with an air of deep thought. "She may have her good points. Only I haven't noticed 'em."

"Oh, it's a common enough thing for chaps of Wingate's age to be drawn into flirtations with old women," said Bulstrode, with a judicial air. "I've read of that sort of thing in novels."

"So have I, in the newspapers," said Skinner.

"My Uncle Benjamin does not approve of my reading novels and newspapers," said Todd. "He is very strict on that point, and will only allow me to read school stories."

"Quite right, too," said Bulstrode. "But speaking about Wingate——"

"Indeed, if Wingate is in such a terrible position, it is the duty of his school-mates to speak to him, and to beg and implore him to resist the temptation, and to tell Satan to get behind him," said Todd. "He might be led into drink, or into gambling, or into using swear-words, by these dreadful associations. I saw one of the circus men the other day, and he certainly looked to me as if he would not be at all shocked to hear a swear-word."

"Oh, they're simply awful," said Bulstrode. "The question is, are you going to remonstrate with Wingate, and point out the errors of his ways to him?"

"A word in season——" urged Skinner.

"It might save him from—from going to prison or something, in the long run," Snoop suggested, rather vaguely.

"If you fellows really think it is my duty——"

"Oh, no doubt about that!"

"Certainly, Todd—most certainly."

"In that case," said Alonzo, "I shall most assuredly put the matter plainly to Wingate, and beg and implore him to drop his evil acquaintances."

"Good old Todd!"

"That's the way to pitch it to him."

"Pile in."

"If you fellows know where Wingate is now——"

"He's in his study."

"I will proceed there at once."

The three humorous Removites looked after Alonzo Todd as he walked away in the direction of Wingate's study.

"My only hat!" gasped Snoop. "Is he really going to do it?"

"Yes rather!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wingate will squash him!"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Bulstrode coolly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### A Word in Season.

ALONZO TODD tapped firmly at Wingate's study door. Many fellows might have felt nervous at going on such an errand. Not so Alonzo Todd. He was buoyed up by the consciousness that he was doing his duty, and that his Uncle Benjamin, could he have known, would have fully approved of his conduct. With the approval of his conscience and his Uncle Benjamin, why should Alonzo hesitate?

"Come in!" rapped out Wingate's voice.

It was much less genial than usual. But Todd was not to be discouraged. Fools rush in where angels fear to tread; and Alonzo Todd was not called the Duffer of Greyfriars for nothing.

Wingate was sitting at his table. He was not working—neither reading nor writing. He did not appear pleased at being disturbed, however. He fixed a far from encouraging look upon Alonzo Todd.

"I'm so sorry to interrupt you, Wingate," began Todd apologetically.

"Never mind that," said the Greyfriars captain brusquely. "What do you want?"

"I? Oh, nothing!"

Wingate stared at him.

"You want nothing?"

"Nothing at all, thank you, Wingate."

"Then what do you come bothering me for? Get out?" exclaimed the Sixth-Former, pointing to the door.

"I have something to say."

"Well, say it another time," said Wingate impatiently. "I'm not in a humour to be bothered by a silly duffer. Get out!"

"I am afraid that another time will not do, Wingate," said the Duffer of Greyfriars, gently and firmly. "It is a most important matter—a matter of the most terrible moment, my dear Wingate."

Wingate half-started up. The dreadfully earnest manner of the Duffer of Greyfriars impressed him for the moment.

"What is it?" he exclaimed. "Is the house on fire?"

"House on fire? Oh, no!"

"An accident?"

"I do not think so, my dear Wingate. There may, of course, have been an accident," said Todd, who was almost painfully accurate in his statements, "but if so, I have not yet received the news of it."

Wingate murmured something below his breath. He was greatly inclined to hurl his inkpot at the Remove junior, but he refrained.

"Well, what is the matter, then?" he asked.

"It concerns you, my dear Wingate."

"Me? I?"

"Yes, you! You are in danger."

Wingate jumped.

"I? In danger? What are you drivelling about, you silly young duffer?"

"My dear Wingate——"

"Come to the point," said Wingate, rising to his feet. "Quick—explain yourself, before I throw you out of the study!"

Alonzo backed away, and stood ready to dodge round the table if Wingate should make a rush at him. He did not intend to leave the study, whatever happened, until his errand was accomplished.

"This is how the case stands, my dear Wingate. You have entered into an association which can only have the most detrimental effects——"

"I?" said Wingate dazedly.

"Yes," said Todd. "Pause, my dear Wingate." He wagged a bony and solemn forefinger at the Greyfriars captain. "Pause! Reflect!"

"Are you mad, Todd?"

"Certainly not. Pause! Pause and reflect! Wingate, I beg and implore you to pause and reflect!"

Wingate stared hard at the junior. For the moment the suspicion came into his mind that Todd was really wandering. He had often noticed that the Duffer of Greyfriars was a little odd.

But Todd looked sane enough. He blinked at Wingate with intense earnestness.

"Pause!" he repeated. "I beg and implore——"

"What are you talking about, Todd?" asked Wingate, in a dangerously quiet tone.

"The dreadful associations you have entered into at the circus near Friardale," said Alonzo Todd solemnly.

Wingate gave a start.

"My friends at the circus—my friend, rather! What do you know about it?"

"Only what I have heard, Wingate. It is the talk of the Remove."

Wingate ground his teeth. Of Snoop's and Bunter's spying and tattling he knew nothing. He had believed that Wharton, Nugent, and Brown were the only juniors who knew of his acquaintance with Mademoiselle Rosina.

His teeth came hard together. This was what came of trusting the juniors. He clenched his hands hard.

"You—you say it is the talk of the Remove, Todd?"

"Yes."

"About me, and—and——"

"And the circus girl?" said Todd. "Yes, my dear Wingate. I need not say how horrified, how amazed I was when I heard it."

"What!" roared Wingate.

"My Uncle Benjamin would have been shocked—nay, disgusted," said Todd. "My dear Wingate, what good can come of such an acquaintance?"

"What!" stammered Wingate.

He was too dazed to do anything else. That a junior in the Lower Fourth should have the unparalleled nerve to come to his study and lecture him, simply took his breath away. He could only gaze at Alonzo Todd as if fascinated.

His silence encouraged the Duffer of Greyfriars. Todd felt that his exhortations were beginning to tell upon the captain of the school.

Already inwardly, he felt the glow of satisfaction that follows good work well done. He realised clearly that he had plucked Wingate, as it were, like a brand from the burning. How pleased his Uncle Benjamin would be when he heard of it!

"Yes, Wingate. I felt it my duty, and others regarded it as my duty, to come here and remonstrate with you, to

point out the evil effects which must inevitably follow such a wretched acquaintanceship, and to beg and implore you to turn back into the right path, my dear Wingate."

"I—I—I——"

Wingate could only stammer. His rage was too great for words.

"Wingate, will you not pause, will you not reflect?" said Todd solemnly. "Will you not lay your hand upon your heart, and say—'I abandon this sinful course?' Will you not say—— Oh! Yarooh!"

Todd dodged Wingate just as the captain made a rush. He escaped with a clump on the head, instead of being swept off his feet. He dodged round the table, and stood panting and looking at Wingate across it.

"Oh!" gasped Todd. "Oh! Ah! Ugh!"

He rubbed his head.

"You cheeky young hound!" roared Wingate. "Who has put you up to this?"

"My dear Wingate——"

"Come here!"

"Under the circumstances, Wingate, I decline to come there," said Todd warily. "I cannot but suspect that you intend to act in a violent manner—oh!"

Wingate rushed round the table.

"Todd! I—I—I——"

"Pray calm yourself, my dear Wingate! I'm so sorry if anything I have said may have wounded your feelings. But consider the terrible importance of the matter, Wingate. Your whole future is at stake—and a word in season may save you. My dear Wingate, once more let me beg and implore—— Ow! Ow! Oh!"

Wingate made another rush, and this time the Duffer of Greyfriars was too late in dodging.

The powerful grasp of the Greyfriars captain was upon him, and he was swung off his feet. He roared in anticipation, but he soon had ample reason to roar.

For Wingate flung him face downwards across the table, and caught up a cane, and the dust was soon rising in clouds from Todd's trousers.

The Duffer of Greyfriars yelled, and squirmed, and wriggled frantically.

"Yow! Ow! My dear Wingate! Oh! I say! Yarooh! Look here! I beg—I—— Stop it, you beast! My Uncle Benjamin always told me to remonstrate with a chap on the downward path. Ow! Yow!"

"Your Uncle Benjamin seems to have forgotten to tell you not to cheek your elders, you young sweep!" panted Wingate. "Take that, and that, and that!"

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

"Yow! Yow! Yow!"

"If I didn't think somebody had put you up to this, I'd make you sore for a week," said Wingate, slinging the junior to the door. "Get out!"

"My dear Wingate——"

"Outside!" roared Wingate.

"I beg and implore you——"

"What!"

"To give up your evil courses——"

Wingate made a rush, and Todd slammed the door and dashed out of the study. He did not pause until he reached the end of the passage. There he stopped, panting, and rubbing his injuries.

"Ow!" he groaned. "Yow! I am hurt! Groo! I only spoke a word in season, and—— Yow! What would my Uncle Benjamin say? Ow!"

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## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### A Warning to Wingate.

HARRY WHARTON started.

Wingate had just passed him in the Close, and the captain of Greyfriars, instead of giving him the usual cheery nod, had turned on him a momentary glance as cold and hard as steel, and then averted his eyes.

Wharton stared after the stalwart figure of George Wingate, in amazement.

He had not the least idea of what he had done to offend the captain of the school, and if it was some infraction of the rules, he would have expected Wingate to punish it by a caning, not by treating him in this way.

What did it mean?

Wingate was striding towards the gates. Harry Wharton, after a few moments' hesitation, ran after him. He overtook the Greyfriars captain just as he quitted the school, and strode out into Friardale Lane.

"Wingate! I say, Wingate!"

Wingate turned his head.

"What do you want?" he asked harshly.

Wharton faced him dauntlessly.

"I want to know what's the matter," he exclaimed hotly. "Why did you pass me like that? What have I done?"

Wingate had halted. He looked steadily at the junior, his lip curling in bitter scorn.

"What have you done?" he repeated.





"Yes."

"You don't know?"

"Certainly I don't."

"You've broken your word."

"What!"

"You've proved yourself a liar," said Wingate; "that's all. Is it enough?"

Harry Wharton's face turned crimson.

"If a chap in my own Form said that to me, I'd know how to answer," he said, clenching his fists. "I suppose you can insult me if you like?"

Wingate gave him a bitter look.

"It isn't true?" he exclaimed.

"No; it isn't!"

"You haven't talked about what you saw at the circus, after promising me not to say a word?" the Greyfriars captain exclaimed sternly.

"Oh!"

"Ah! You see, I know about it!"

Wharton met his glance steadily.

"I have not talked about it," he said. "I haven't told even Bob Cherry or John Bull—my own chums."

Wingate made a gesture of unbelief.

"I know it's the talk of the Remove," he said. "I've had that from Todd."

"I'm certain Todd did not say I had told him anything."

"He mentioned no names."

"No; if he had mentioned a name, it would not have been mine."

"You put it down to Nugent or Brown? I don't care which it was—you were all three in it! I suppose I could expect nothing else, and it was only natural for you to chatter. But I've no time to speak of it now—and I don't want to."

Wingate turned away.

"Stop!" exclaimed Wharton angrily.

Wingate paused, in spite of himself.

"What do you mean, Wharton?"

"I mean that you've made a mistake. It is known in the lower Forms—about you and Mademoiselle Rosina. But I did not say a word—neither did Nugent nor Brown. You don't seem to think that the other fellows have eyes and ears. You have met Miss Rosina several times, and the other fellows have seen you. It was jawed over in the dormitory—two fellows had seen you with Mademoiselle, and I tried to shut them up, but it was no use. There was Lazarus, too, of Courtfield School—he saw you."

Wingate's face relaxed.

He had been so wrapped up in his own thoughts and worries of late, that it had not occurred to him, as Wharton put it, that other fellows at Greyfriars had ears and eyes.

"Oh! Then you said nothing, Wharton?"

"Nothing."

"And the fellows you speak of——"

"They saw you with mademoiselle by the shore," said Harry. "They told the whole Form about it."

Wingate bit his lips.

"I suppose it was likely enough to happen, though I never thought of it," he admitted. "I—I'm sorry I accused you, Wharton. But—but I've been horribly worried lately, in a way you can't understand, and—and I was annoyed at finding the juniors jawing over my affairs. I'm sorry, lad."

"It's all right, Wingate," said Harry, touched deeply by what was really an apology from the captain of the school. "I'm glad it's cleared up. But while we're on the subject, Wingate, I want to tell you something—to warn you."

"Warn me!" said Wingate, in surprise.

"Yes. Loder was in the dorm. when they were talking about you, and he made the—the fellow—I needn't give his name—Loder made him explain all about it."

"Loder!" said Wingate, with darkening brows.

"Yes. He extracted the whole story, and I could see by the expression of his face that—that he put a bad construction on it," said Wharton, colouring. "I suppose he hasn't seen Miss Rosina, and doesn't know what a ripping girl she is! I—I don't know whether you know it, Wingate, but we know it, that——"

"That what?"

"That Loder and his set are up against you," said Wharton, somewhat uneasily, for it was no light matter for a junior to discuss Sixth Formers with the head of the Sixth. "I couldn't help being afraid, Wingate, that Loder meant to make some use of this—to use it against you in some way, I mean."

Wingate shook his head.

"I think not, Wharton. How could he use it against me? I think you've got wide of the mark; but thank you, all the same. And I'm sorry I distrusted you."

And Wingate strode away.

Harry Wharton stood in the gateway, looking after the stalwart figure as it vanished into the dusk. Wharton felt, more by instinct than anything else, that his suspicion was correct—that Loder intended, in some unseen manner, to turn the information he had gained to the injury of the captain of the school. But it was evidently useless to tell Wingate so; he could not understand the baseness of the black sheep of the Sixth.

Wharton was turning away from the gate, when two seniors came down, with their coats on, and their caps pulled low down over their foreheads.

The Removite recognised Loder and Carne.

They were going out.

Loder and Carne did not even glance at the junior standing in the dusk of the gate. They passed out into Friardale Lane, and strode away towards the village.

Wharton gazed after them dubiously.

Were they following Wingate?

It was only too probable. But the junior could not be sure, and in any case the Greyfriars captain was too far away now to be warned.

Gosling came out of his lodge to lock up, and Wharton had to go in.

But the Remove captain was feeling very uneasy in his mind. He was troubled about Wingate; he felt by some instinct that there was deep trouble brooding over the captain of Greyfriars.

Alonzo Todd met the captain of the Remove as he entered the School House. There was a smell of embrocation about Alonzo Todd, and his face was very long.

"My dear Wharton," he exclaimed, "I want you to advise me! Wingate has just gone out. I fear that he has gone to the circus."

"No business of yours if he has!" growled Wharton.

Todd blinked at him reproachfully.

"Under normal circumstances, Wharton, your remark would be perfectly correct, and I trust I should never display an undue curiosity with regard to the private affairs of another individual. At the same time, my dear Wharton, I cannot obliterate from my mind the fact that Wingate is following the downward path, and that he is in great danger of succumbing to various temptations. I have already spoken a word in season to Wingate, warning him to quit his bad acquaintances at the circus——"

"What!" shouted Wharton.

"Bulstrode and Snoop advised me to do so, showing in this an amount of good and proper feeling which really surprises me in them. I did not suspect them of possessing such delicacy, my dear Wharton. But Wingate would not listen to me—in fact, he proceeded to personal violence, and I was obliged to take a hurried departure."

"You ass!"

"Ahem! I want you to advise me, my dear Wharton. Ought I to request a pass out of gates from Mr. Quelch, and follow Wingate?"

"Eh?"

"Follow him, and again remonstrate with him, and beg and implore of him to return to the path of rectitude?" said Alonzo Todd.

"You unutterable ass!" shouted Wharton.

"My dear Wharton——"

"You frabjous chump!"

"My dear——"

"You unspeakable dummy!"

"Really——"

"If you say another word to Wingate I'll squash you!" said Harry. "You ass! Can't you see that Bulstrode was pulling your leg, as usual?"

"Goodness gracious!"

"Miss Rosina is a nice girl—as nice as little Molly—and you are a silly chump!" said Harry Wharton. "You've put your silly foot in it!"

"Oh dear!"

"The best thing you can do is to shut up—and keep shut up! If you could get a gag at a reasonable price, you ought to get it, and never keep it out of your mouth!"

"My dear Wharton——"

But dear Wharton strode on, and Todd was left blinking.

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.
### Loder is Quite Sure.

FELIX LASALLE removed the cigar from his mouth and spat. Signor Benson, who was sitting upon the sloping shaft of a caravan, pulled at his pipe, and grunted. The Frenchman had been speaking earnestly; Benson listened with a dogged look of dissent upon his fat, red face.

"Better move on," said Lasalle. "After all, what is this place to us? What are a day's takings in a village?"

"We're doing good business," said Signor Benson—"better business here than we've done for some time."

"It's not of much consequence."

"Isn't it? I have to make the ghost walk!" said the signor irritably. "We're doing well here, owing to being so near the school. The boys come again and again. It's a good pitch, and I don't mean to leave it."

"Look here! I'm a pretty good attraction at the show, I believe."

"Oh, yes!"

"And Mademoiselle Rosina——"

"She's a better attraction."

Lasalle gritted his teeth for a moment.

"Very well, grant that," he said. "Both together, we form a big part of the show. If you should lose us, you lose more than you lose by changing the pitch."

The signor laughed contemptuously.

"You can't take mademoiselle away," he replied. "I've got you bound fast enough by contracts."

"I may be able to help her going."

Benson stared at him.

"What do you mean? You think she'll bolt because you ill-use her?"

Lasalle bit his lip.

"No; it is not that."

"I've warned you about that often enough," said the signor warmly, "and I've promised the girl that you shall never touch her again. If you do, you'll have to reckon with me! I won't have my show busted to please your beastly temper."

"It is not that, I tell you. She will not run away."

"Then what can happen?"

"She might be taken."

"Taken away?"

"Yes."

"Oh, you're dotty! I suppose you don't think she's old enough to think of eloping with that schoolboy?" said Benson, with a broad grin.

Lasalle made an irritable gesture.

"No; I was not thinking of him."

"Of whom, then?"

"Never mind of whom!" replied the Frenchman evasively. "But if you remain in this district, and she is seen by—by somebody, we may lose her, both of us!"

"I don't catch on. You're her father, ain't you?"

"Oui, oui!" said Lasalle uneasily.

"Then there's no law in England that can take her from you. Is her mother still alive?" asked the signor curiously.

"Yes," said Lasalle.

"I've never heard of her."

"She is alive—and she has power to take Rosina from me," said Lasalle, in a low voice. "There is another danger, too—and, look you, it comes upon us if we stay in this neighbourhood."

The signor drew a deep breath.

"You mean that Rosina's mother lives about here?"

"Yes."

"And she has a legal right to take away Rosina?"

"Yes."

"Oh, that alters the case! You should have told me that before," said the signor uneasily.

"I've told you now," said Felix Lasalle.

The signor rose with a grunt

"I can see it's serious, now," he remarked. "I suppose Rosina's mother doesn't want her after all these years—and we do want her. Look here! Couldn't you make it up with her, Felix?"

"Eh! With whom?"

"With your girl's mother, of course!"

The Frenchman gave a peculiar laugh.

"You do not understand," he said. "It's impossible! But one thing's certain—if we remain in the neighbourhood we're in great danger of losing Rosina. When we came here I did not know. I did not know that he—I mean she—was at Greyfriars School. It was not so in the other days, and——"

"You mean to say that Rosina's mother is at the school?"

"I—I mean to say nothing."

"Housekeeper, or something, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Lasalle, with a grin.

"Oh! Well, we move on to-morrow," said the signor, with a grunt. "We must look after ourselves first, I suppose, and we can't afford to lose Rosina. It's rotten, though. We're doing good business here."

And the fat showman rolled away.

The Frenchman stood biting his cigar without smoking it, an unpleasant expression upon his dark face.

He moved away, too, and strode towards his caravan, and suddenly, when he had nearly reached it in the dusk, he halted, a black look on his brow.

He heard the sound of voices.

"That boy again!" he muttered. "Oh, I know this will

lead to mischief! Any connection is dangerous, and this——"

Rosina was standing in the shadow of the caravan talking to Wingate. The captain of Greyfriars turned his head as Lasalle came up.

The Frenchman gave him a bitter look.

"So you are here again?" he exclaimed.

Wingate regarded him steadily.

"Why should I not see Miss Rosina?" he asked quietly. "What harm is there in my friendship for her?"

"I am her father, and I do not care for you to come here," said the Frenchman. "Is not that enough for you?"

"Father!"

"Go!" said Lasalle, raising his hand to Rosina.

"But——"

"Go, I tell you!"

The girl went quietly.

Wingate clenched his hands hard. He would gladly have thrown himself upon the Frenchman, and beaten him to the earth.

But the thought of Rosina restrained him.

Lasalle looked at him with a sneer.

"You may go!" he said. "You will not see Rosina again. We leave Friardale to-morrow. You will never see her again, you young cub!"

"Take care what you say to me," said Wingate thickly. "I can hardly keep my hands off you as it is."

The Frenchman laughed mockingly.

"If you do not go I will call the circus-hands to throw you out," he said. "Here, Bill—Sam!"

Two stable-hands came up.

They were ruffianly-looking fellows, and looked as if nothing would please them better than to roughly handle the captain of Greyfriars.

Wingate looked at them calmly.

"Don't come near me," he said. "I shall hit out."

"You'd better go, you young cub!" said Lasalle. "Throw him out! Kick him off the fields, lads, and then come and have a drink with me."

"Right you are, guv'nor!"

The two roughs advanced upon Wingate. There was a cry, and Rosina ran between them. The girl, fearful for Wingate, had not gone far away.

"Stop!" she cried.

Lasalle dragged her aside.

"Go!" he exclaimed.

Wingate made a step forward. The two stablemen stepped in his way, and in a moment the captain of Greyfriars was struggling with them.

One of them went heavily down, with Wingate's fist crashing upon his jaw, grunting with pain as he touched the ground.

Wingate struggled furiously with the other, while Lasalle held the girl aside with a grip of iron on her wrist.

The struggle lasted only a few seconds.

The rough went down heavily beside the other, and lay gasping on the ground. At the same moment two forms loomed up in the dusk.

Loder and Carne had appeared on the scene. They stared at Wingate in affected amazement.

"Wingate!" exclaimed Loder.

The Greyfriars captain gave him a fierce look.

"What are you spying here for?" he exclaimed.

"I was not spying——"

"Well, go!"

"We'll go," said Loder spitefully; "and I shall have to consider whether, as a prefect, it is not my duty to report your disgraceful conduct at Greyfriars."

Wingate uttered an exclamation of rage, and advanced towards the Greyfriars prefect with blazing eyes and clenched fists.

"Come on, Loder!" said Carne hurriedly.

And the two seniors walked quickly away.

Wingate turned back.

"Do you want any more, you cads?" he asked, looking at the two roughs, who had risen, and were muttering sullenly together.

They evidently did not, for they slouched away, still muttering. Rosina gave Wingate a last look, and went to her caravan. Lasalle shook his fist at the captain of Greyfriars.

"Go!" he said. "Don't come here again! Go!"

Wingate strode away without replying. He could not go there again—he felt that. Had he seen Rosina for the last time?

## THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.
### Loder Speaks.

DR. LOCKE was seated in his study. There was a pen in the doctor's hand, and a sheet of paper before him on his desk. The Head was not writing, however. Even his favourite work—the new edition of Æschylus, which was to astonish the scholastic world some day—failed to interest him.



Dr. Locke was thinking.

In spite of himself, his thoughts would go back to that meeting with Felix Lasalle in the Friardale Lane.

The face of Lasalle called back to him memories of years long past—memories that he had long tried to stifle in vain.

In the heart of the good old doctor there was a sorrow that was seldom shown, but which was seldom or never forgotten.

Calm and quiet and kind as the old doctor was, never failing in his kindness, he was a man whom Fate had stricken hard.

He bore it bravely, and gave few or no signs of it outwardly, but it was there; and the only one who knew, the only one who shared his grief, was his wife, but the subject was seldom mentioned between them.

It was a sealed book, yet each knew that the other had never forgotten—could never forget.

The door of the study opened, and Mrs. Locke came in. There was a shade of anxiety on the face of the Head's wife.

Dr. Locke rose at once.

"What is it, my dear?" he asked.

"Am I disturbing you?"

The Head smiled faintly.

"I have written nothing," he said.

"You are ill."

He shook his head.

"For some time," said his wife anxiously, "you have been worried and uneasy. What is it—what has happened? I know there is something."

Dr. Locke hesitated.

Mrs. Locke came closer to him, and laid a trembling hand upon his arm.

"It is not—not—— There is no news?" she asked breathlessly.

"No; no news."

"But—but something has happened in connection with that?"

He nodded.

"Tell me."

"I have seen Felix Lasalle."

"Ah!"

"I met him," said the Head quietly. "I asked him about her."

"And he said?"

"The worst."

"Dead?"

"He said so."

Mrs. Locke pressed her hand to her heart.

"I have always feared that," she said; "and it is better than what might have been. But is it true?"

"The man is false to the very heart," said Dr. Locke musingly. "I cannot tell. I have been thinking of calling in the aid of a detective."

"Yes."

"We can prove nothing against this man, especially after all these years, but now that I have seen him I may be able to discover something—something from which we may learn the truth."

"It is possible. Do you know where he is?"

"No: I met him by chance. But I shall think it over—— My dear, you look overcome!"

Mrs. Locke sat silent for a few moments.

"I shall never lose hope till I know for certain," she said.

She quitted the study. Dr. Locke sat in his chair, thinking. How long he sat there he did not know. Time was not counted while dark and moody thoughts thronged in his brain.

A tap at the door interrupted him.

He started up and switched on the electric light, and seated himself at his desk again. He was once more the calm, self-contained Head of Greyfriars.

"Come in!" he said, in his usual tones.

Loder entered.

The Head looked at him inquiringly.

"I am sorry to trouble you, sir," said Loder, "but——"

"You need not apologise if you have something to report to me," said the Head. "I am not occupied. What is it?"

"A very serious matter, sir."

"Go on."

"It is about Wingate, sir."

"Wingate!"

"Yes, sir."

Dr. Locke raised his hand.

"One moment, Loder. I suppose you have no complaint to make about your head prefect to me? I hope not. I trust Wingate completely."

"Certain facts have come to my knowledge, sir. I have thought over the matter carefully, and come to the conclu-

sion that it is my duty to acquaint you with them," said Loder, with an air of great sincerity. "If I am wrong, I hope you will forgive me, but as a prefect enjoying your confidence I feel that I am bound to speak to you on the matter."

"You may go on, Loder."

"Some of the fellows have noticed, sir, lately, that Wingate seems to have some sort of trouble on his mind, and my attention was drawn to it."

The Head started a little.

"I may have noticed that myself," he said. "But go on."

"I learned, sir, that it was common talk in the lower Forms that Wingate had formed a disgraceful connection——"

"What!"

"That he had formed a disgraceful connection, sir, with some low riffraff at a circus, and that he was following a woman who performs at Benson's circus near the village."

"Loder."

"I could hardly believe it, sir. It seemed so utterly unlike Wingate. But I found that even one of the juniors had gone so far as to remonstrate with Wingate, and point out to him that he was disgracing Greyfriars. Wingate treated him violently."

"It was impertinent of him to speak in such a manner to his school captain!" the Head exclaimed severely.

"Yes, sir; but I think matters must have been pretty bad when a junior ventured to do such a thing."

"Perhaps! Continue, please."

"As a prefect, sir, I considered it my duty to look into the matter. I did so, with a firm belief that there was some horrible mistake, and that I should be able to clear Wingate's character, and silence the scandalous tongues in the lower Forms."

"Quite right, Loder."

"But, sir——"

"Well?"

"I took the course, sir, of following Wingate when he left the school this evening, and I took a witness with me in case one should be needed."

The Head's brow clouded a little.

"Well, Loder, and what then?"

"I found Wingate at the circus. He was having a violent quarrel with two ruffians, associates of the woman he has been following. I could see that it was a drunken quarrel, sir, concerning this woman—and I spoke to Wingate. He threatened me with violence if I did not leave at once."

The Head stared blankly at Loder.

"Impossible!" he gasped.

"It is true, sir."

"You had a witness, you say?"

"Yes, sir; Carne, of my Form."

"He will bear out what you say?"

"Every word, sir."

"Wingate must be questioned first," said the Head, in some agitation. "I cannot understand this at all. It seems impossible; exactly the contrary of Wingate's character, as I have always understood it."

"You were no more surprised than I was, sir. I was amazed when I saw Wingate on familiar terms with this woman, old enough to be his mother, although she is called Mademoiselle Rosina."

"A Frenchwoman?"

"Yes, sir—an unscrupulous adventuress, if appearances are anything to go by. Wingate must be under some evil influence. That is the only way I can account for it."

"Is Wingate in the school?"

"I do not know, sir."

"Leave me, Loder. I will send word for Wingate to come to me the moment he arrives. You have done quite right to acquaint me with this—quite right. It is terrible! But it is better for me to know. But leave me now."

"Yes, sir."

Loder, with an expression of respectful regret upon his face, quitted the study.

That expression changed when he was in the corridor. He grinned maliciously, and hurried along to the corner of the passage, where Carne and Ionides were waiting for him.

"Well?" said Carne eagerly.

"It's all right."

"You've reported?" asked the Greek.

"Yes."

Ionides grinned till every tooth in his head was gleaming.

"Good—good! And Wingate——"

"He's to see the Head as soon as he comes in."

"Good!"

And the three black sheep of the Sixth chuckled and walked away to Ionides's study, where they discussed their scheme and smoked cigarettes in security.

## THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Accused!

WINGATE came in a little later, with a moody brow. He passed Harry Wharton as he came into the School House, and nodded to him. He paused to speak after a moment.

"I think you were right, Wharton," he remarked, with a bitter smile. "Loder followed me this evening. But I don't see how he can make mischief."

Wharton looked anxious.

"Would it hurt you if he reported it to the Head?" he asked, in a low voice.

Wingate started.

"He would not do that!" he exclaimed.

"I don't know. I saw him come in with Carne," said Harry. "He went almost directly to the Head's study. I thought I'd mention that, in case——"

"Master Wingate."

It was Trotter, the page. The Greyfriars captain turned towards him.

"What is it, Trotter?"

"'Ead wants to see you in his study, Master Wingate, immediate," said Trotter. "I was to tell you immediate you come in, sir."

"Very well," said Wingate quietly; and Trotter departed.

The Greyfriars captain gave Wharton a glance.

"Thank you, lad," he said. "I suppose you were right; you seem to see more into Loder than I do. But I don't see how he can hurt me, even if he has sneaked about me. But thank you, lad."

He strode away towards the Head's study. Nugent and Tom Brown joined Wharton, who was looking clouded and anxious.

"Wingate's in deep waters just now," Tom Brown remarked. "I wonder whether those rotters will be able to do him any harm. It was awfully reckless of him to get mixed up with the circus people as he has done."

Wharton nodded.

"But Wingate's as good as gold, and true blue!" he exclaimed. "I wish we could help him. I wonder if we could!"

And the three juniors put their heads together, to discuss the matter and think it over.

How could they help Wingate, the idol of all the juniors at Greyfriars? That he was in trouble, growing worse, was no secret to them. But what could they do?

Wingate strode to the Head's study without a pause. If Loder had made any accusation against him, the Greyfriars captain did not mean to be slow in meeting it. He tapped at the Head's door, and Dr. Locke bade him enter.

Wingate entered, and closed the door behind him. Then, with a firm and steady glance, he met the troubled gaze of the Head.

"You wished me to come, sir, I understand," he said.

"Yes, Wingate."

"Well, sir, I am here."

The Head looked long and hard at Wingate. There was a sad shadow on his kind old face.

It seemed impossible that the accusation brought against this brave-looking, frank, open-hearted lad could be true. Yet even now in Wingate's face, as the Head looked at it, were plainly to be seen signs of the mental struggle he had gone through—signs that his life was not following its usual calm and peaceful course.

"Wingate, I have to speak to you upon a serious matter—a most serious matter," said the Head slowly.

"Yes, sir."

"I will send for Loder."

The Head touched the bell, and Trotter was despatched to fetch the prefect.

A bitter smile curled Wingate's lip.

It was Loder, then. Harry Wharton had been right in his warning.

"So Loder has brought an accusation against me, sir?" he asked.

"He has informed me of something, Wingate."

"Very well! I have no doubt I can answer it."

"I hope so, Wingate—I sincerely hope so," said the Head earnestly. "I have always had faith in you, and it would be a terrible shock to discover that I had misplaced my trust."

Wingate met his eyes firmly.

"That will never be the case, sir."

Loder entered.

He avoided Wingate's glance, keeping his eyes towards the Head. He was accompanied by Carne; party to bear witness for him, party to support him by backing him up through what was likely to be something of an ordeal. It was not easy to face Wingate's scornful eyes, and lie.

"Loder, Wingate is here. I wish you to repeat what you have told me, and we will hear whether Wingate has any explanation to give."

"Very well, sir. I hope," said Loder, "that Wingate understands that I have spoken only from my sense of duty as a prefect, and not in the least from any personal feeling towards himself."

"That is quite understood," said the Head. "I am sure Wingate gives you credit for the best motives."

Wingate's lip curled.

"I give Loder credit for his true motives, at all events!" he exclaimed. "But let him come to the point."

The Head raised his hand.

"I will question you, Loder. You learned that Wingate was worried by some trouble that he kept secret from the other boys."

"Yes, sir."

"You found that an attachment he had formed with a woman in a circus was the subject for jests among the juniors?"

"Precisely."

"You looked into the matter with the view of clearing Wingate in the eyes of his schoolfellows?"

"Quite so, sir."

"My motive also, sir," said Carne.

"Yes! And both of you saw Wingate at the circus, on friendly terms with people of disreputable appearance. You saw that he had really formed a friendship with an adventuress, much older than himself, and that he was engaged in a quarrel with drunken ruffians on her account."

"Yes, sir."

Wingate's face blazed with rage. He made a step towards Loder and Carne, his fists clenched.

"You liars!" he shouted.

The doctor rose to his feet.

"Wingate!"

"They are lying, sir. Mademoiselle Rosina is not older than I am—she is younger. She is a lady, sir—a really splendid girl. And——"

"Nonsense, Wingate!"

"And these lying cads know it, sir!"

"Wingate!"

"You ought not to have believed them, sir, you ought not to have listened to them in such a story!" shouted Wingate, quite beside himself now, and reckless of what he said.

The Head turned pale.

In all his career he had never been spoken to like that before, and it was no wonder that even his kind temper failed.

Loder and Carne exchanged a look. Wingate was playing their game as if he wished it to succeed as much as they did.

"Wingate, how dare you!" gasped the Head.

"I mean it, sir—I tell you——"

"Enough!"

"I tell you, sir——"

Dr. Locke waved his hand.

"Silence, Wingate! You must, indeed, have changed, when you dare to treat your head-master in this manner—else I have always been deceived in you. Wingate, I am disgusted! Your violence leaves me only one conclusion to draw—that you are guilty; that you have really fallen into low associations, and——"

"It is not true, sir! I——"

"Silence! Wingate, if it were any lad I had respected less, I should expel him immediately from Greyfriars. With you, I hardly know what course to take. But, in the first place, you must promise me never, under any circumstances, to see this woman again—never to speak to this adventuress."

"She is not an adventuress."

"Will you give me the promise required, Wingate?"

"I cannot, sir."

"What!"

"It is impossible, sir."

"You refuse?" said the Head, in a terrible voice.

"Yes, sir."

"Go to your room at once, Wingate! Go to your room, and pack your box to-night. You shall not remain in this school another day! You are expelled from Greyfriars!"

Wingate gave the Head one look, and then strode from the study. He was too angry to feel, for the moment, the full force of the blow that had fallen upon him.

"Leave me now," said the Head briefly to the two seniors.

"Yes, sir."

Loder and Carne quitted the study. In the passage they almost gasped. Their triumph, their complete scoring, had almost taken their breath away. They had been far from expecting so complete and so swift a victory.

"My hat!" said Loder. "He's done!"

Carne chuckled.

"Quite done."

"Expelled!" said Loder. "I hardly hoped for that. Carne, old man, you or I must get in as captain in the next election."

"What-ho!"

"Let's go to Ionides' study, and toss up which shall be candidate."

"Done!"

The two rascals went their way rejoicing. Wingate had gone to his study. As the anger and excitement faded away in his breath, the full significance of the Head's words came more clearly home to him. Expelled from the school!

Expelled from Greyfriars!



## THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Wharton Knows What to Do.

HARRY WHARTON had been waiting anxiously for Wingate to come out of the Head's study, but when the captain of Greyfriars appeared, the look upon his face prevented Harry from speaking to him. He realised at once that Wingate was not in a mood for speech just then.

The juniors saw him go into his study.

Wharton waited some time, in painful reflection. That the cads of the Sixth had scored over the captain of the school was only too clear Wharton had seen them, too, going their way with triumphant faces.

What had happened?

What was Wingate's fate? What had the Head said to him? It was not curiosity that actuated Wharton now. It was a deep, friendly regard for Wingate, who, he knew, was never cunning enough to cope with such enemies as Loder and Carne.

So long as a fight was in the open, and only courage was required, Wingate was the man; but for Machiavellian plotting, he had no head—no chance at all against fellows of Loder's kidney.

Harry Wharton made up his mind at last. He tapped at the door of the captain's study. There was no reply, and he tapped again. Still no reply. Wondering whether Wingate might have gone out without his seeing him, Wharton opened the door of the study.

Wingate was there.

He was seated at the table, with his elbows resting upon it, and his head in his hands, his face hidden from sight.

His attitude was one of the deepest despondency and dejection. Wharton felt a painful throb at the heart as he saw him.

"Wingate!" he said softly.

The Greyfriars captain started and looked up. He did not look angry now, only intensely dejected.

"Wharton!" he exclaimed. "What do you want?"

"I want to speak to you, Wingate. Don't think I'm inquisitive," said Harry earnestly. "It is not that, really."

Wingate smiled faintly.

"I'm sure it isn't, Wharton. But what is it you want to ask me?"

"Has Loder done as I suspected?"

"Yes."

"And—and the Head——"

"I am expelled," said Wingate drearily.

Wharton almost staggered.

"Expelled?"

"Yes."

"Impossible, Wingate! You expelled?"

The captain nodded.

Harry Wharton stared at him blankly. Wingate expelled! It seemed to Wharton as if the room were turning round him.

Wingate expelled! He could not imagine Greyfriars without Wingate. What would the fellows say? It was incredible!

"Expelled?" gasped Wharton again.

"Yes."

"But—but why?"

"Loder has lied about me—and about Rosina," said Wingate quietly and bitterly. "He has made the Head believe her an adventuress—a woman older than I, who has been exercising a bad influence over me. You've seen her, Wharton. You know what she is like."

"Oh, the cad!"

"You know what a really ripping girl she is," said Wingate miserably. "But Loder had the first pull, you see, and he's poisoned the Head's mind on the subject. I suppose I lost my temper then, and I—I was disrespectful to the Head."

"Oh, Wingate!"

"Well, it's all up now."

Wingate made a restless movement.

"Are you going?"

"Yes."

"But when?"

"To-night."

"To-night?" exclaimed Harry, in dismay. "So soon? Oh, you can't—you sha'n't! Look here, Wingate, something can be done."

The Greyfriars captain shook his head.

"It's all over," he said. "I don't want her to know, that's all."

"But——"

"Don't talk about it in the school, Wharton. I don't want anything said on the subject—till I'm gone, at all events," said Wingate.

"I won't speak. But——"

"Leave me now, lad. I'm feeling rotten!"

"I wish I could help you, Wingate," said Harry wistfully.

"I know you do, kid; but you can't."

Wharton left the study.

He left Wingate restlessly pacing the room.

Harry's face was dark with dismay as he retired. Wingate expelled! It seemed like a bad dream.

The junior avoided meeting his chums. He could not very well see them without giving some explanation, and Wingate had asked him to say nothing.

He strode out into the Close in the dusk, and, with his hands in his pockets, walked up and down there, trying to think it out.

What could he do?

How could he help Wingate? How could he prevent Greyfriars from losing its captain—one of the best fellows that ever breathed?

To go to the Head—that thought occurred to him, but he had to dismiss it. Was the Head likely to listen to a junior in the Remove—to take his word against that of a prefect, backed up by another Sixth Former?

It was impossible even to hope that the Head would allow him to enter upon the subject at all.

But what could be done?

Wingate could not, should not, be expelled. The Head's mind had been poisoned against him. What could Wharton do? How could he make Dr. Locke understand that he had been deceived—that Loder's story was a tissue of cunning misrepresentations?

It was a difficult task, impossible to a junior in the Lower Fourth; and Wharton was even prevented now from consulting his chums about it.

What was to be done?

Suddenly the junior uttered an exclamation. An idea, like a ray of light, had flashed into his brain.

"Mademoiselle Rosina!"

The junior turned almost pale with excitement. Of course! Why had he not thought of that before?

"Mademoiselle Rosina!"

She could save Wingate. It was a daring step to take—to call upon the circus girl to see the Head of Greyfriars. Wharton's heart almost failed him at his own temerity.

Would she come?

Would she dare to come? Did she care enough for Wingate to run the risk of scorn and contumely at Greyfriars? What would Wingate say? He had said already that he did not want Mademoiselle Rosina to know.

But if she could save him——

Wharton tried to think out the pros and the cons. But for and against, all good reasons, crowded thickly into his mind. He decided upon impulse; succeed or fail, he would do something to save Wingate. He put on his cap, and, without even waiting for his coat, he ran down to the gates.

They were closed.

Wharton clambered over the gates, and there was a shout from Gosling's window.

"I see yer! I'll report yer! Wot I says is this 'ere. You kim back, or I'll report yer!"

Harry Wharton dropped into the road and ran.

## THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

### Rosina to the Rescue.

ROSINA was dressed for the performance. The circus was doing good business, and a large crowd was already waiting for admission. Good business promised to be done if the show remained at Friardale. But the order had gone forth that they were to move on the morrow. It was the last performance at Friardale, and the posted-up announcements to that effect had brought a larger crowd than usual.

Mademoiselle Rosina was looking pale and thoughtful now. She stepped from her caravan, and walked to the canvas stables where her horse was kept. A rough circus hand touched his cap to her. There was a half-crown in his other hand—a tip from the lad in Etons, who was following at his heels.

"If you please, miss, this kid wants to speak to you."

Rosina looked at Harry Wharton.

She recognised him, and gave him a somewhat tremulous smile.

"What is it?" she asked quickly. "A message?"

Wharton raised his cap.

"I asked this chap to let me see you," he said, as the stableman moved off. "It's very important, Miss Rosina. It's about Wingate."

"Not a message?"

"No."

"Is he in trouble of any kind?" breathed the girl.

"Yes."

"Oh!" Rosina pressed her hand to her heart. "Oh, come, tell me what it is!"

She drew Harry Wharton into the shadow of her van. Harry was panting for breath, and red in the cheeks; he had run all the way from the school without a pause.

"What is it?" breathed the girl. "Quick! If my father sees you there will be trouble. He hates George. He—— But never mind! He is dressing now for his part, but he may come out of his van in a few minutes. What is it?"

"Wingate's in trouble. A fellow at Greyfriars has made an accusation against him," said Wharton rapidly. "You can help him."

"I!" said Rosina.

"Yes, you."

"Is it something about me?" panted the girl.

"Yes," said Wharton.

"I do not understand. What is it?"

"They have accused him of—of falling into bad associations," said Wharton desperately. "Forgive me, I must speak plainly, but—but if the Head saw you he would know that it was a lie."

Even in her agitation the girl could hardly help smiling. It was a naive compliment to her, though Wharton was thinking of anything but compliments then.

"You see," said Wharton, "the Head, he's a splendid old boy, but he doesn't know anything about anything but schools and colleges, you see. He doesn't understand that a circus girl can be as nice as any other girl. They've been telling him that Wingate has got into the hands of a deep old woman, you see, who's making a fool of him. It's all rot, and he'd know it was a lie the instant he saw you."

"How wicked!"

"They hate Wingate. They're a set of cads, you see, and he's always down on caddishness of any sort," Wharton explained.

"Did George send you?"

"No; he doesn't know. He wanted to keep it dark from you that he had got into trouble on your account."

"Ah!"

"But—but I couldn't let him be expelled from Greyfriars while there was a chance," said Harry eagerly. "You see, those rotters—they're deep rotters, and old Wingate is as simple as a child in some things. I don't mean he's a duffer, you know, but—but he can't see when a chap is a cad and a plotting beast. He never sees meanness in anybody, till he simply has to. You understand?"

"I think I do," said the girl softly.

"He's no match for them. Now he's down, he's only thinking of not letting you know that he's in trouble through knowing you. I dare say he'll lick me for coming and telling you," said Wharton. "I don't care so long as you save him."

"You thought of this yourself?"

"Quite by myself."

"And you think it would help him if I came?"

"I know it would. As soon as the Head sees you he'll know that Loder and Carne have been lying."

The girl was silent, her heart beating hard.

"I will come," she said, in a low voice. "I will come. I would do anything to help him. He has been a kind friend to me. Oh, it is terrible that he should be in trouble on my account, when he is all kindness and goodness."

"You know him well," said Harry. "He's the best chap in Greyfriars."

The girl glanced towards the circus tent.

"They will need me soon," she said; "but it cannot be helped. Whatever happens, I must speak for George, if it will do him any good."

"I'm certain it will."

"What is your head-master like—a hard, stern man, perhaps?" asked the girl nervously. "I shall be afraid of him."

"He is stern sometimes," said Harry, "but he's as good as gold—a real old sport. He's got a little daughter, you know, and he's as fond of her as anything. You'd like the Head if you knew him."

"I will come. You will show me the way?"

"What-ho!"

"Wait a moment."

The girl ran into her van, and came out with a heavy

cloak thrown about her, and a lace shawl upon her head. Her sweet little face looked more than ever fascinating under the glimmering shawl.

"I am ready!" she exclaimed.

There was a voice from the gloom.

"Rosina! Where are you?"

Rosina trembled.

"It's my father!" she whispered. "Come!"

She grasped Wharton's hand, and led him quietly away across the common towards Friardale Lane.

There was a shout behind. The fat, oily tones of the signor were heard, too

"Mademoiselle!"

"Rosina!"

"Where's the girl?"

Then the voice of the Frenchman was heard, cursing in his own language Rosina ran on, and Harry Wharton ran with her. There was a footstep in the darkness, and the Frenchman came bounding towards them, just as they ran into the lane.

"Rosina!" he shouted. "Stop!"

The girl paused, panting.

Wharton clenched his fists. The French ruffian should not stop the girl now, of that he was assured in his mind. So long as he could hit out, Felix Lasalle should not lay a finger on Mademoiselle Rosina.

"I cannot stop," said Rosina

"What!"

He strode savagely towards her, his eyes gleaming. His hand was clenched as if to strike her, but the presence of Wharton restrained him so far.

"So you are bolting at last!" he hissed.

"No, no; I am not running away."

"Where are you going, then?"

"To the school."

Lasalle almost staggered.

"The school!" he said hoarsely. "Greyfriars?"

"Yes."

"You are mad! Come back!"

"I cannot come back. You—you must let me go. Wingate is in trouble," said the girl breathlessly. "He—he is in trouble through me, father, and I must go and speak for him. Let me go, and I will return."

The Frenchman burst into a scoffing laugh.

"Ma foi! It is likely, with the performance just commencing!"

"Signor Benson can make some excuse to the people."

"Oh, you are mad! Come back!"

"I cannot!" cried Rosina. "I tell you I cannot! I must go!"

"Fool!"

He grasped her by the shoulder. Wharton sprang forward, with clenched fists and gleaming eyes.

"Let her alone, you coward!" he cried.

"Young puppy, go, before you are hurt. Come, Rosina!"

"I will not—I cannot!"

"Bah!"

He dragged her away. That was too much for Harry Wharton. He sprang straight at the circus rider, and grasped him fiercely, and tore him from the girl.

Lasalle turned on him like a tiger.

In a moment the boy was in the grasp of the powerful ruffian, and swept to and fro in a deadly grip.

Rosina shrieked in terror. She knew the evil temper of the Frenchman when it was roused, and she feared for the lad.

But Wharton was quite able to take care of himself. He was no match for the powerful ruffian as far as strength went, though he was strong. But he had other resources, and he put into practice a wrestling trick he had learned from Treluce, the Cornish lad in the Remove. Lasalle went flying backwards heavily, with Wharton's weight upon him. He staggered on the edge of the deep ditch. Wharton tore himself away just in time. The circus rider fell back heavily into the water.

Splash!

"Come on!" shouted Wharton.

He took Rosina's hand, and they ran.

Lasalle, with many a fierce curse, struggled in deep water and mud, and it was some minutes before he gained the bank, and then he was on the inner side of the ditch. In a black fury he gave chase to the two; but it was too late. They were already at the gates of Greyfriars, and Wharton was ringing loud peals at the bell.

## THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

### The Head's Daughter.

DR. LOCKE started out of a deep reverie as a knock came at his door. The good old doctor's face was deeply clouded. There were troubles enough heavy upon his heart at that moment, and the affair of Wingate had troubled him more. Wingate had always been his favourite—his ideal schoolboy. The Head had never had a son, but he had felt a great deal of a father's affection for Wingate.





Now all was shattered; the character of the Greyfriars captain was blackened, and he was to go forth from the old school in deep disgrace.

It was a heavy blow to the Head.

"Come in!" said the doctor, glad, perhaps, of an interruption to his gloomy thoughts.

He imagined that it was one of the masters or prefects who wished to speak to him on some matter of business. But as the door opened, he started to his feet in surprise. For it was a girl who stood there—a girl of sixteen or seventeen, in a cloak with a lace shawl over her head, and her oval face flushed, and her dark brown eyes full of fear, and at the same time of resolve.

It was Rosina, pale and trembling.

Younger, slighter than ever the girl looked, in her deep nervousness of the stern old gentleman, the Head of Greyfriars.

Wharton was by her side. He pressed her hand encouragingly.

"What—what——" the Head exclaimed, in amazement.

Wharton led the girl into the study.

"If you please, sir——"

The Head frowned.

"Wharton, Gosling has reported to me that you have broken bounds—that you actually climbed over the gate while he was watching you."

"It is true, sir."

"Then what——"

"I went to fetch this lady, sir."

"I don't understand you, Wharton. Who is this lady? Sit down, my child," said the Head, handing Rosina to a seat with his old-fashioned courtesy. "I cannot quite understand this."

"Oh, sir," gasped the girl, "I—I——"

"This lady has come to clear Wingate, sir," said Wharton steadily, as poor Rosina's voice failed her.

The Head looked astounded.

"To clear Wingate?"

"Yes, sir. I know what he is accused of, and I thought of fetching her," said Harry. "I don't mind being licked for breaking bounds, sir. This is Mademoiselle Rosina."

"What!"

"Mademoiselle Rosina, of the circus, sir."

The Head stared.

"There must be some mistake," he exclaimed. "The—the person Wingate was acquainted with at the circus was a woman much older than himself—nothing at all like this child."

"Loder told you so, sir?"

"Assuredly!"

"He was not speaking the truth, sir."

"Wharton!"

"Well, at all events, he was mistaken, sir," said Wharton. "This is Mademoiselle Rosina; this is Wingate's chum."

"Dear me! This is—is extraordinary!"

"It's just as I say, sir."

"Did—did Wingate wish this young lady to come here——"

"He doesn't know anything about it, sir," said Wharton, with a grin. "He wanted me to keep it dark that he had been expelled because he knew her. But I thought of bringing her here, sir, so that you could see it was all lies."

"Bless my soul!"

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Rosina, her eyes wet with tears, "if you knew how kind Wingate has been to me, and what a difference his friendship made to me, I am sure you would not be hard upon him! And what harm did it do him to know me?"

"My dear, dear child," said the Head kindly, "I have been misled. If you are really Mademoiselle Rosina——"

"Indeed I am!"

"Then there has been a great mistake. I think I am sufficiently a judge of character," said the Head, "to be able to tell at a glance that you are a good and noble young lady. I have not the slightest doubt upon that point. Loder made some absurd mistake, and led me to believe that Wingate's friend was a very different sort of person. Yet all is not clear. You are an English girl, and the girl in question is a Mademoiselle Rosina—the daughter, I understand, of a French circus rider."

"I am Felix Lasalle's daughter, sir," said Rosina simply. "I have been told many times that I look like an English girl, and not at all French; but indeed I am Mademoiselle Rosina."

The Head started back.

"Felix Lasalle's daughter?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"Who was your mother?"

"I never knew her, sir."

"Oh, heavens!" murmured the Head, pressing his hand to his head. "Can it be possible? Is this a miracle which is happening to me?"

He stared at Rosina so intently and earnestly that the girl was frightened.

Wharton was amazed.

"This is Mademoiselle Rosina, sir!" he exclaimed. "There is no doubt about it. I saw her in the performance. Besides, Felix Lasalle is following us, and he will soon be here to prove it. He was furious at Rosina coming here. He is the same chap, sir, who attacked you in the lane when we downed him, sir."

"His daughter?"

"Yes, sir," said Rosina, in wonder.

The Head came closer to her.

"My child," he exclaimed, "I know I must astonish you, but listen! Has any doubt ever crossed your mind that you are really the daughter of this Frenchman? Has he ever said anything leading you to suppose that you might not truly be his daughter?"

The girl looked at him wonderingly.

"Yes, sir—often."

"Ah!"

"Many times, sir, when he has been drinking, he has said that I am not his child; that he found me in the gutter, sir," said Rosina falteringly. "Oh, if it were only true! It is wicked to dislike one's father; but I cannot like him—he is hateful and cruel! If it were only true! I would rather be any beggar's child!"

"Child," said the Head, "you cannot be his daughter—you are English, and he is French."

"I hope it is true that he is not my father, sir!" Rosina clasped her hands. "If it were only possible to know!"

The Head gazed at her fixedly.

"Your name is Rosina?" he asked.

"My circus name, sir. My own name is Rose."

"Rose! Oh, it must be true! Even the name is the same! Oh, my child! Listen to me!" said the Head, in a trembling voice. He seemed to have forgotten Wharton's presence. The junior was dumb with amazement. "Listen to me, child! Many years ago, when you must have been a tiny child, that man Lasalle knew me. He had committed a crime; and I gave evidence that sent him to prison. After he was released he revenged himself by taking away my child—my little Rosie."

The girl listened, pale, with set lips.

"He disappeared," said the Head. "I never saw him again until this week. I met him near here. I did not know he was with a circus; I did not know he had a young girl with him whom he called his daughter. No trace was ever found of him. I had no actual proof that he had taken my child; but I was sure of it—my wife was sure of it! I was not Head of Greyfriars then; it happened far from here. When I met him lately he said that the child was dead. I felt that he lied—he was always false to the core! Child, you are the age she would be. Your name is the same. And you cannot be the daughter of Felix Lasalle—he is French, and you are English."

Rosina trembled.

"Heaven has been kind to me," said the Head solemnly. "Through this strange affair I have found my child!"

"Oh!" murmured Rosina.

"My dear little Rosie!"

There was a wild trampling of feet in the passage; the voice of Trotter, the page, raised in alarm.

"I tell yer——"

"Which is the room?"

It was the voice of Felix Lasalle!

The next moment the door of the Head's study was flung open, and the Frenchman appeared, red with rage. He had his grip upon the collar of the unfortunate Trotter. It was evident that he had forced his way into the house and had compelled Trotter to guide him to the Head's study.

He flung the page reeling back as he caught sight of Rosina. The terrified Trotter took to his heels.

Lasalle strode into the study.

"So you are here!" he cried. "Come! Do you hear me? Come!"

The Head stepped between Rosina and the furious Frenchman.

"You will not take away my child a second time, Felix Lasalle!" he said steadily.

## THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

### Exit Felix Lasalle!

FELIX LASALLE staggered back.

This was what he had feared, this was what had scared him—that, with Rosina at Greyfriars, some recognition might come about.

And it had come!

But the circus rider was not beaten yet.

"Mu foi!" he exclaimed, with a great effort to recover his coolness. "What is that? Are you raving, man?"

"You know I am not."

Lasalle pointed to the trembling Rosina.

"That girl is my daughter!" he exclaimed. "She has come here without my permission, and I defy you to keep her from me. The law gives her into my charge till she is of age, and I shall take her back with me."

Rosina gave a little cry.

"I am not your daughter! You have said it yourself!"

"Ah, when I have been drinking I have said many things!" said Lasalle, with a grin. "That is all nothing. Come!"

The girl shrank back.

Dr. Locke fixed his eyes upon her.

"My child," he said, "before Heaven I believe that you are my little girl, whom that scoundrel stole from me. You yourself do not believe that he is your father. Will you make your choice to remain here?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried the girl breathlessly. "Do not let him take me!"

"You would choose to remain?"

"Yes, yes! Oh, yes!"

The Head fixed a bitter and scornful gaze upon the Frenchman.

"You hear that, Lasalle?"

The Frenchman ground his teeth.

"I hear it!" he said.

"It is your answer. Go!"

Lasalle shrugged his shoulders. His coolness was returning now. He realised that he would need it all, in the strait things had come to.

"I go not without Rosina," he said.

"You will not take her."

"She goes with me, I say. Come, Rosina!"

The man's voice was loud, threatening.

The girl trembled. It seemed to her that she must obey this man, as she had always obeyed him.

But Harry Wharton caught her hand and held it fast. The stately figure of the Head of Greyfriars stood before her in protection.

"No, no!" cried Rosina. "I will not come! You are not my father! I will not come!"

"Obey me!"

"Never again!" cried Rosina, with rising courage. "You have always been cruel, you have always hated me; I know that I am not your daughter! Go without me! I shall never see you again!"

The Frenchman muttered a curse. His eyes burned with rage as he turned them upon the Head of Greyfriars.

"If I go alone," he said, "I return with the police. There is a law in this country to save a child from being taken away from its parents. She will be restored to me by the law, Dr. Locke."

The Head smiled scornfully.

"You may make the attempt," he replied.

"Fool!" shouted Lasalle. "Can you prove, then, that she is your daughter, that you defy your own laws?"

"Perhaps not. But we have a saying in this country that possession is nine points of the law," said the Head coldly. "She is here—she remains here. If you claim her, it is for you to prove that she is your daughter."

"What?" he exclaimed.

"You are a Frenchman. Prove how it is that an English girl is your daughter—prove it to the satisfaction of the law, and you may claim her."

"Her mother was English—she is like her mother," muttered Lasalle.

"Very good! In that case, produce the marriage certificate of her mother, and her own birth certificate," said the Head. "If she is your child you can obtain both—or copies of both. Nothing could be more easy."

Wharton grinned. He had not thought of that, and he had hardly expected Dr. Locke to be so keen.

The Frenchman was staggered.

"What if she was born abroad?" he muttered.

"Nevertheless, the certificates exist, and can be produced—if she is your daughter," said the Head scornfully. "And she remains here, under my wife's charge, until your claim is proved so conclusively that my lawyers cannot pick a fault in it."

Lasalle clenched his hands.

"Ah, you, with your money, and position, and lawyers, you will easily beat a poor circus rider in the law courts!" he exclaimed.

"Yes—with justice, too, upon my side."

"I tell you——"

The Head pointed to the door.

"There is your way," he said. "Come to me with a claim that can be legally enforced and I will listen to you. Until then keep clear of this place. Show yourself at Greyfriars again, and I will have you beaten away from my doors like a dog!"

Lasalle's eyes glittered.

"I go—but I take my child!" he exclaimed. "Old man, stand between us at your peril!"

And, with clenched fists, the Frenchman strode forward.

Dr. Locke did not move.

Old man as he was, and no match physically for the powerful ruffian, he did not stir an inch.

Harry Wharton sprang between them.

"You will tackle me first, you cur!" he exclaimed.

"Boy," said the Frenchman hoarsely, "stand aside!"

"Rats!"

The Frenchman sprang upon him.

Wharton closed with the ruffian. Dr. Locke rang the bell, and then came to Wharton's aid.

But his aid was not needed.

A stalwart form came in at the doorway—it was George Wingate's. The captain of Greyfriars had heard the news that was buzzing all through the school—that Mademoiselle Rosina, of the circus, had come.

The moment he heard it, Wingate had guessed her object in coming—to clear him in the doctor's eyes. He had hurried to the Head's study—in time to see the circus rider make his desperate attempt to recapture Rosina.

It was indeed a desperate attempt on Lasalle's part, with so many within hearing to rush to the doctor's aid. But it was the man's last card, and he played it recklessly.

As he struggled with Wharton, Wingate dashed in, and his grasp was laid upon the shoulders of the circus rider.

One powerful wrench, and the man was torn away from Harry Wharton, and with a swing of Wingate's strong arms, he was tossed through the open doorway into the passage.

"Thank you, Wingate!" said the Head quietly.

Wingate panted.

"Rosina! I am sorry, as he is your father——"





"He is not Rosina's father," said the Head. "Wingate, this dear child came here to speak up for you, and it has led to an amazing discovery. Rosina is not that man's daughter—she is my child!"

"Dr. Locke!"

"It is true, Wingate! You knew, I believe, that little Molly had a sister, though she never saw her—a sister who was stolen before she was Molly's age. This is the child—I am convinced of it. That wretch is the thief who stole her from me!"

Lasalle staggered to his feet.

Wingate's face was ablaze with exultation. He clasped Rosina's hand.

"Rosina! Rosie dear! I'm so glad—so jolly glad! Then you won't go back with that man again?"

"Never—never!"

"Oh, it's splendid!"

"He is not my father! I shall never see him again!"

The Frenchman was looking in at the door, his face black with rage. But he dared not throw himself upon Wingate.

The Greyfriars captain looked at him with gleaming eyes.

"You had better go!" he exclaimed. "You are nothing to Rosina—nothing to any of us! I'm longing to hammer you for the way you've treated her! Go while you've a chance!"

"I shall not go without her!"

Wingate glanced at the Head.

"Shall I throw the rascal out, sir?" he said.

"Yes, Wingate. Call some of the prefects, and see him off the school grounds!" said Dr. Locke.

"And I'll jolly well call some of the Remove, too!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"Help, Remove!" roared Wharton.

"Prefects!" called out Wingate.

There was a rush of feet and a roar of voices. Lasalle, struggling desperately in the midst of a crowd, was rushed out into the Close.

## THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER.

### "Miss Rosie!"

DR. LOCKE remained alone with Rosina. The Frenchman passed from his mind as soon as he passed from his sight—the Head was thinking only of the child he had recovered. He had sent Trotter with a message to Mrs. Locke; he was waiting now for his wife's coming.

Rosina sat with a wildly-fluttering heart.

It was an amazing change to the circus girl—she could not realise it yet! She was not Felix Lasalle's daughter—she was the child of this severe and yet kind-looking old gentleman, whose mere look awed her.

Was it possible? Could it be true?

Mrs. Locke entered the study, with Molly. The child looked in surprise at the girl whose open cloak showed the fantastic circus garb.

Mrs. Locke looked amazed.

"What is it?" she asked. "Why did you send for me?"

"Look, my dear!"

"Yes?"

The Head placed the two young girls side by side. Then, as the light fell upon their faces, the likeness between them was striking.

Mrs. Locke gave a sharp cry.

"It is! Can it be Rosie?"

"I believe it is in my heart and soul," said the Head. "She was found with Felix Lasalle—was called Rosina. She is not his child, that is clear. Margaret, I believe she is the child that was stolen from us. The Frenchman will not tell the truth, but I feel it in my heart. At all events, she stays with us!"

"I can prove it. I feel that it is true; but I can prove it!" cried Mrs. Locke.

"Prove it?"

"Yes, yes!"

"How?"

"You have forgotten the mark!"

"Ah! My dear, I had forgotten it! Look, then!"

"Give me your hand, my child!"

Rosina tremblingly obeyed.

Mrs. Locke glanced at the soft, round arm, bare for the circus riding. Under the elbow was a little mark in the form of a white crescent.

She gave a cry.

The Head was watching her with anxious eyes. His glance sought her eyes as she looked round.

"The mark—is it there?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Thank Heaven!"

Mrs. Locke took little Molly's arm, and turned back the sleeve of the wondering child.

She showed a mark to Rosina on the arm—a mark that was exactly similar to the little mark on the circus girl's fair skin.

"Your sister, Molly," said Mrs. Locke softly—"your sister, my child, come home at last!"

"Oh, mamma!"

"My child—my little Rosie!"

The circus girl, with a sob, ran into the motherly arms that were stretched out to her. She was crying now, and her mother was crying. But the tears were tears of happiness.

There was an uproar in the Close, but the happy occupants of the Head's study did not hear it or heed it.

In the dusk of the Close, a crowd of Greyfriars fellows were escorting Felix Lasalle to the school gates.

The story had spread over Greyfriars like wildfire.

The Head's lost daughter—of whom some of the fellows had heard—had been recovered, and this was the man who had stolen her long years ago, and now wished to take her away again!

That was quite enough for the Greyfriars fellows. They crowded from far and near to lend a hand in kicking Felix Lasalle out of the gates of Greyfriars.

The Remove rallied round nobly to Wharton's yell. The seniors really had little chance—Felix was in possession of the Remove nearly all the time. They rolled and bustled and hustled him across the Close towards the gates.

"Go for him!" roared Bob Cherry. "Kick him out!"

"Roll him out!"

"Bump him!"

"The kickfulness is terrific!"

"Out he goes!"

"Hurray!"

Lasalle struggled furiously at first. But he was soon bumped into a breathless state—too breathless even to run. Then the fellows caught him up, and frogs'-marched him down to the gates.

Amid a roar of yelling and cheering, the ruffian was rushed through the gates into the road.

Gosling had been routed out of his lodge to open the gates in time. Lasalle, with his collar torn off, his hair like a mop, his clothes buttonless and in tatters, was flung into the road.

There he lay, gasping, and the Greyfriars fellows crammed the gateway, yelling and hooting as he lay panting.

"You'd better buzz off!" said Wingate, as he turned away. "If ever you show yourself near here again, you'll get hurt!"

"What-ho!"

"The hurtfulness will be terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate strode away towards the School House. But most of the fellows remained in the gateway, in case the Frenchman should think of returning.

But Felix Lasalle was thinking of anything but that. He had had a rougher handling than he had ever received in his life before, and he did not want any more of it.

He staggered to his feet, and casting one glance of furious hate at the hooting crowd, he reeled away down the road.

The juniors yelled after him till he was out of sight, and then they retired, feeling very well satisfied with themselves.

The affair was, as is needless to mention, the talk of the studies and the common-rooms for a long time. The amazing recovery of the Head's lost child was a topic that was not likely to be soon exhausted.

In the Head's study there were four happy hearts—five, when Wingate joined them. The captain of Greyfriars knocked, and the Head's kindly voice bade him enter. Dr. Locke gave him a genial smile as he grasped his hand.

"Bless you, Wingate!" he exclaimed. 'I owe this happiness to you—it is through you that I have found my child—my little Rosie!"

"Bless you!" said Mrs. Locke.

Wingate coloured.

"Then you know the truth now, sir, and you have rescinded your sentence?" he said, looking at the Head.

Dr. Locke gave a start.

In the excitement of what had happened, in the flood of emotions that had thronged in upon his heart, he had forgotten.

"Wingate! Of course!"

"I am not expelled, then?" said Wingate, with a smile. He could smile now.

The doctor grasped his hand again.

"Of course not, Wingate! Loder was mistaken—I sincerely hope it was nothing worse, but I shall speak to him severely. I think more of you than ever I did—I owe you more than I can ever think of repaying!"

"It's all right, sir! I—I beg pardon, too, for what I said here, when you were questioning me. I had no right to speak as I did. I'm sorry, sir."

"We will forget all about it, Wingate," said the Head cheerily. "I can only remember now that you have brought a great happiness into my life. I shall never forget that—and Rosie will never forget it."

And Rosina gave Wingate a happy smile. It was pretty certain that she would never forget Wingate's friendship, or what it had effected for her.

* * * * * * * * *

When the Head's daughter—"Miss Rosie," as the fellows called her—first appeared in public with Mrs. Locke there was great curiosity to see her. All Greyfriars agreed that Miss Rosie was a charming girl—and, as a matter of fact, they envied Wingate his friend.

For the change in Rosie's life had made no difference to her friendship with the captain of Greyfriars. That was the same as ever, and the Head was glad to see it. There was not likely to be any change in it, either, now that "Mademoiselle Rosina," once the star of the circus, was "Miss Rosie," the Head's daughter, and an inmate of Greyfriars College.

"It's ripping!" Harry Wharton remarked, to an approving circle of Removites. "It's jolly ripping, you know!"

"I say, you fellows," said Billy Bunter, "on an occasion like this, the best thing we could possibly do would be to stand a feed to celebrate the event."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But for once Bunter's suggestion was not frowned upon. The Remove felt that such an occasion required celebrating, and they celebrated it, with a feed that made a record in the history of the Remove. And in harmless lemonade and ginger-pop, the health was drunk again and again of Mademoiselle Rosina—now Miss Rosie—Wingate's chum!

THE END.

*(Another splendid tale of Greyfriars next week. See notice below.)*

[Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Serial Story are purely imaginary, and it contains no reference or allusion to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.]

## GRAND NEW ADVENTURE SERIAL JUST STARTED!

# Wolves of the Deep.

### The Story of a Great Conspiracy, introducing Ferrers Lord and Ching-Lung.

## By SIDNEY DREW.

### READ THIS FIRST.

**Ferrers Lord is the possessor of a wonderful submarine, called "The Lord of the Deep." One night the model is stolen from him by Michael Scaroff, a Russian. Ferrers Lord, accompanied by his friend, Rupert Thurston, sets out on the track of the Russian. They reach the French shore, but are compelled to return to England. They then take train for Scarborough. Arrived there, Ferrers Lord takes his diver, a man named Horton, down to where his submarine is being finished. Meanwhile Thurston has been left in the smoking room at Ferrers Grange. He sees an evil face peer from behind a curtain, but he is unable to attack the man, for his arm is broken. He paces up and down the room keeping an eye on the curtain.**

***(Now go on with the story.)***

### Caught!

What was to be done? Thurston went slowly towards the bell.

Click!

A bronzed hand shot swiftly out, and switched off the light. Rupert felt two powerful arms thrown round his body from behind, and uttered a cry.

A knee was thrust into his back, something damp was pressed over his mouth and nostrils, and his head swam.

Hurrying footsteps sounded, and the door crashed open.

"Hallo! What's this?" cried a deep voice.

It was Ferrers Lord, with Horton and a dozen scared servants behind him.

He turned on the light, and saw Thurston lying stretched upon the floor.

A trail of muddy footsteps led across the carpet to the open window.

"Look after him, some of you!" said the millionaire hoarsely. "Follow me, Horton!"

The little revolver was shining in his hand as he dashed to the window, and sprang out.

It was a black, starless night, and the distant moan of the surf came drifting across the park.

A shadowy figure moved swiftly over the grass, and vanished like a ghost into a clump of shrubs.

Ferrers Lord did not see it, for the darkness was profound. Biting his lips, he turned back.

"We might as well look for a needle in a bundle of hay," he said. "A thousand men might hide in the park to-night."

He went back, closing the window. The servants had lifted Thurston upon a couch, and were chafing his hands. The millionaire bent over him.

"Chloroformed!" he said quietly. "I expected it."

He put his hand to his head quickly, as if a sudden thought had struck him.

"Come, Horton," he went on roughly, "I want you! Get Mr. Thurston to bed at once!"

The diver followed him as he went into the billiard-room; then he stopped.

"I suppose you know what happened to me on my way to France?" he said.

"Yes, sir. Everybody is talking about it."

"And what do you think about it yourself?"

Ned Horton stroked his beard.

"I hardly know, sir," he answered bluntly; "but I've got the same kind of opinion as other people. Somebody wanted to stop you getting to France, and he didn't care if he had to kill you to do it. That's my opinion, sir; and I only wish I'd got the man here. I'd murder him!"

"You are not far from the mark," said the millionaire. "As you are in my service now, it is only right that you should know. I have a foe—a man who stole the model of my submarine boat. He knows that as long as I live, his own life is in danger—that I will haunt him and dog him until I have him face to face. He has his spies all round me; and what has happened to-night makes me fear that some attempt will be made to destroy the boat. Do you know how to handle a rifle?"

"Yes, sir."

The diver was perfectly calm and collected. When they reached the wine-cellar, the millionaire took a couple of rifles from a chest and filled his pockets with cartridges.

Nothing seemed to astonish Ned Horton. He swung the rifle over his shoulder and tramped into the tunnel.

The work was still going on in the glare of the arc-lamps as busily as ever.

Ferrers Lord made a gesture with his hand, and a ladder was laid against the rock.

The millionaire ascended, and as his hand pressed a hidden lever, the rock opened before him.

He passed through, and the diver joined him. The door closed behind them.

The tide was rising, filling the cavern with the lash of waves. It was terribly dark after the glare of the inner cave, but little by little their eyes became accustomed to the gloom. They could see the increasing water far below them shining glassily.

"How high does the water rise, sir?" asked the diver.

"High above the door we came through. There are several other openings below, through which the sea enters the other cave. It will be high tide in an hour. Be careful, and keep close to me. The rocks are slippery."

A steep, winding path led to the mouth of the cavern. Ferrers Lord hurried along it like a man who knew his ground thoroughly, and Horton lumbered after him.

"I thought so," said the millionaire hoarsely. "Look there!"

He crouched behind a jutting rock, and pointed seawards. A boat, pulled by a single pair of oars, was moving towards the cave. It passed below them, and a lantern flashed out. There were two men in the boat, and Horton's eyes nearly bulged from his head.

The oars were shipped, and an anchor splashed over the stern. A second lantern was lighted, and they saw that one of the men had on a diving-dress.

His companion screwed on the brazen helmet, adjusted the air-tubes, and caught the handle of the pump.

The diver seized a heavy drill, clambered over the side, and disappeared below the dark waters.

"Christopher," said Horton, in a whisper, "this is becoming interesting! What does a diver want down there at this hour of the night?"

"To drill a hole, most likely," answered the millionaire calmly.

Horton started.

"Christopher! That's it, sir! I see it all! They must have found out that there is a cave behind where we are fitting up the boat. A few holes, a few dynamite cartridges, an electric machine fired outside, and down goes enough roof to knock the boat to pulp." He ran his eye along the barrel of the rifle, and grinned. "I should like to bore a few holes in that rascal there!"

"Have patience, Horton. Don't shoot unless I shout to you!"

Ferrers Lord laid down his rifle, and was taking off his coat. Before Horton could speak, his boots were off also, and he was clambering like a rat towards the water.

He threw his hands above his head, and took the dive. The roar of the surf drowned the noise of the plunge, but

Horton strained his eyes in vain for any sign of the plucky swimmer.

As the moments passed, his heart sank. It was more than half tide now, and the spray was dashing over him. Fascinated, he watched the twinkling lights of the boat and the shadowy figure toiling at the pump. But where was Ferrers Lord? The suspense made his pulses throb violently, and he began to retrace his steps slowly and to draw nearer to the boat.

The light had roused the seabirds, who nested in the cave, and they shrieked wildly and flapped heavily in the gloom.

The boat was directly below him now, and he opened the breechlock of the rifle, and slipped in a cartridge.

A human head rose above the water, and a white hand caught the gunwale of the boat.

Loud above the thrash of waves and the screaming of the terrified birds a cry rang through the cavern:

"Assassin!"

The man released the pump, and, turning with a dropping jaw, stared round him in horror.

The word had been shouted almost in his ear, and the echoes of the cavern repeated it with a hundred tongues. But no one was near.

Again the weird voice thundered through the cave:

"Murderer!"

This time the cry seemed to come from under his very feet. He whipped up the lantern, and his blood froze.

A human hand rose above the black water, and pointed at him with outstretched finger.

Then the water closed over it, but his staring eyes remained riveted to the spot.

A burst of wild laughter rang through the cavern, and then silence fell, broken only by the restless dashing of the sea.

A fierce tugging at the line roused the terrified man, as the diver signalled for more air. At first Horton had been startled by the strange cry; but he was grinning broadly, for he had recognised the millionaire's voice.

"What'll the fellow do?" he thought. "He's frightened almost out of his wits."

He had not long to wait. The diver's head appeared above the water as his comrade feverishly pulled up the line. The first man unscrewed the helmet.

"Come, come!" he almost shrieked, in Russian. "Come, Ivan; let us go! This place is haunted by ten thousand fiends!"

Another peal of mocking, unearthly laughter came ringing through the darkness.

One cut of a knife severed the anchor-rope, and the oars dipped into the water. The boat's head went round.

"Hold!"

The hidden door in the rock opened, and a brilliant beam of light shot through the gloom.

The frightened miscreants looked, and saw the burly figure of Ned Horton standing above them with levelled rifle.

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### The Prisoners.

Rupert Thurston did not rise until late on the following morning, for the after-effects of the drug made him feel sick and giddy.

He had seen the millionaire, and told his story. At eleven o'clock a valet aided him to dress, and he crept downstairs.

It was a glorious May morning, and as he stood looking out of the open window drinking in the perfumed air of the park, a footman came to him.

"The master would like to see you, sir. He is in the conservatory, sir"

Rupert followed the footman. Ferrers Lord, dressed in flannels, was lounging in a chair.

Horton, the driver, sat near him, smoking an enormous meerschaum pipe.

"Good-morning, Rupert!" said the millionaire pleasantly. "You look better. I think a glass of good champagne would do you finely, and I know Horton is thirsty. Take a chair, my friend. I think I have got your assailant safe and sound."

He rose, and, opening the door among the ferns, shouted:

"Bring up the prisoners, Field!"

A clatter of footsteps was heard, and then a gruff, angry voice said:

"Get up with you, you foreign thieves, before I'm tempted to kick the lives out of you!"

The dejected prisoners appeared, handcuffed and sullen, followed by the towering figure of their gaoler, the millionaire's head gamekeeper.

Horton took the pipe from his lips with a gasp of admiration, and stared at the gamekeeper in awe.

He was at least six feet six in height, had a chest like an ox, and a hand like a leg of mutton.

Beside him his prisoners looked like a couple of children, though both of them were fair-sized men.

"Christopher," muttered the diver, "he ought to be in Barnum's! Why, he could break Sandow up into little bits!"

Thurston sat forward eagerly, and pointed to one of the prisoners.

"That's the face I saw in the mirror, Lord!" he said. "I swear to it!"

"There is no necessity to do that, my friend," answered the millionaire, "for they have already confessed everything to me. Open the champagne, Horton. One of them has a slight smattering of English, but the other can speak nothing but Russian. They are in the pay of Scaroff, and have been watching the cave for weeks, camping out among the cliffs. Ten thousand pounds was to be the price paid for destroying the Lord of the Deep. They might have carried out the plot if that fool had not been tempted to enter the house by the sight of an open window. In a way, Rupert, you see, you have been the means of saving the boat. Horton went down to-day, and found three holes ready for cartridges, and they had all the machinery for blasting the rock in the boat. The question is, what am I to do with them? What can you suggest?"

He took a sip out of the glass, but Thurston was silent.

"Why not hand them over to the police, sir?" asked the diver.

"Bah!" answered Ferrers Lord, shrugging his shoulders impatiently. "You know I cannot do that. Take off your coat, Field."

The gamekeeper obeyed, and pulled up his shirt-sleeves, revealing an arm whose steel muscles showed through the flesh like the roots of a gnarled oak.

He put his hand behind him, and a cry of fear broke from the terrified prisoners.

What the giant held in his hand was no stranger to them. It was Russia's most horrible weapon of torture—the knout.

Quietly the millionaire sipped his wine as the gamekeeper drew his fingers through the spiked lashes of the whip.

The faces of Scaroff's hirelings blanched sickenly with fear.

"To hand these men over to the police," said Ferrers Lord, "is impossible: and it is equally impossible to let such a hideous thing go unpunished. Had we not found out this in time, fifty lives might have been sacrificed. I am going to take the law into my own hands. Stand forward, Ivan Marovski!" he went on, in Russian.

The trembling man obeyed, and Ferrers Lord rose from his chair, his face stern and remorseless.

*(Another grand, long instalment of this thrilling serial story next week. Order your copy of THE MAGNET LIBRARY in advance.*


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