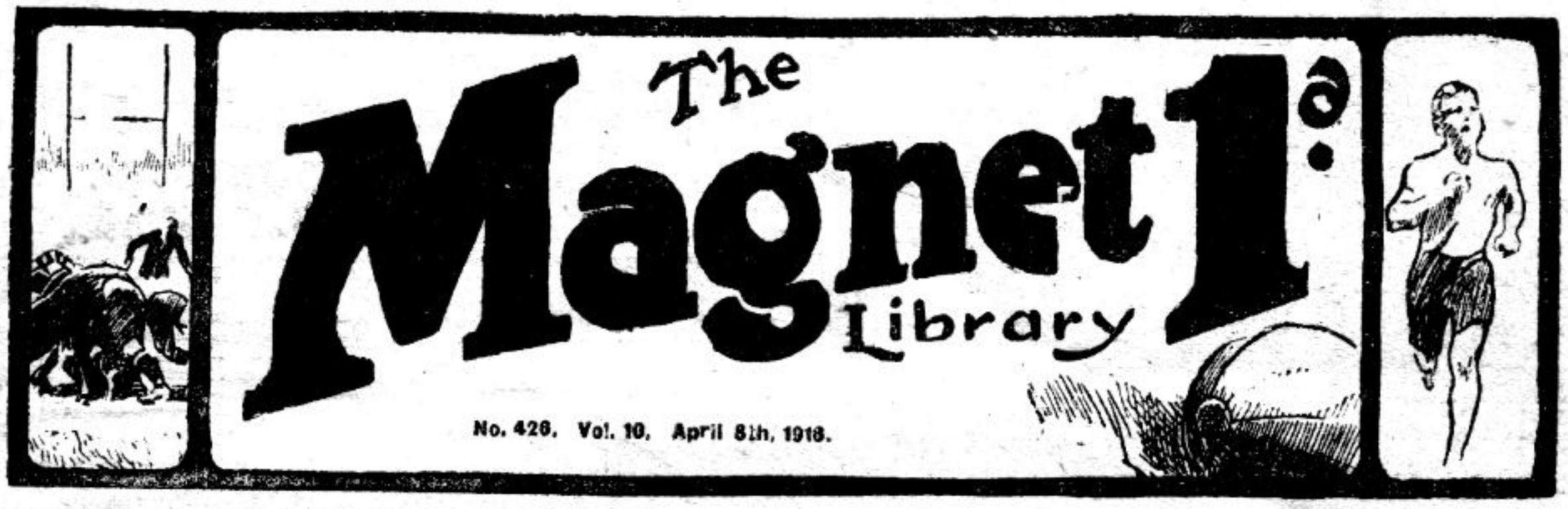
THE TERRIBLE TWO!

A Grand Long Complete School Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.



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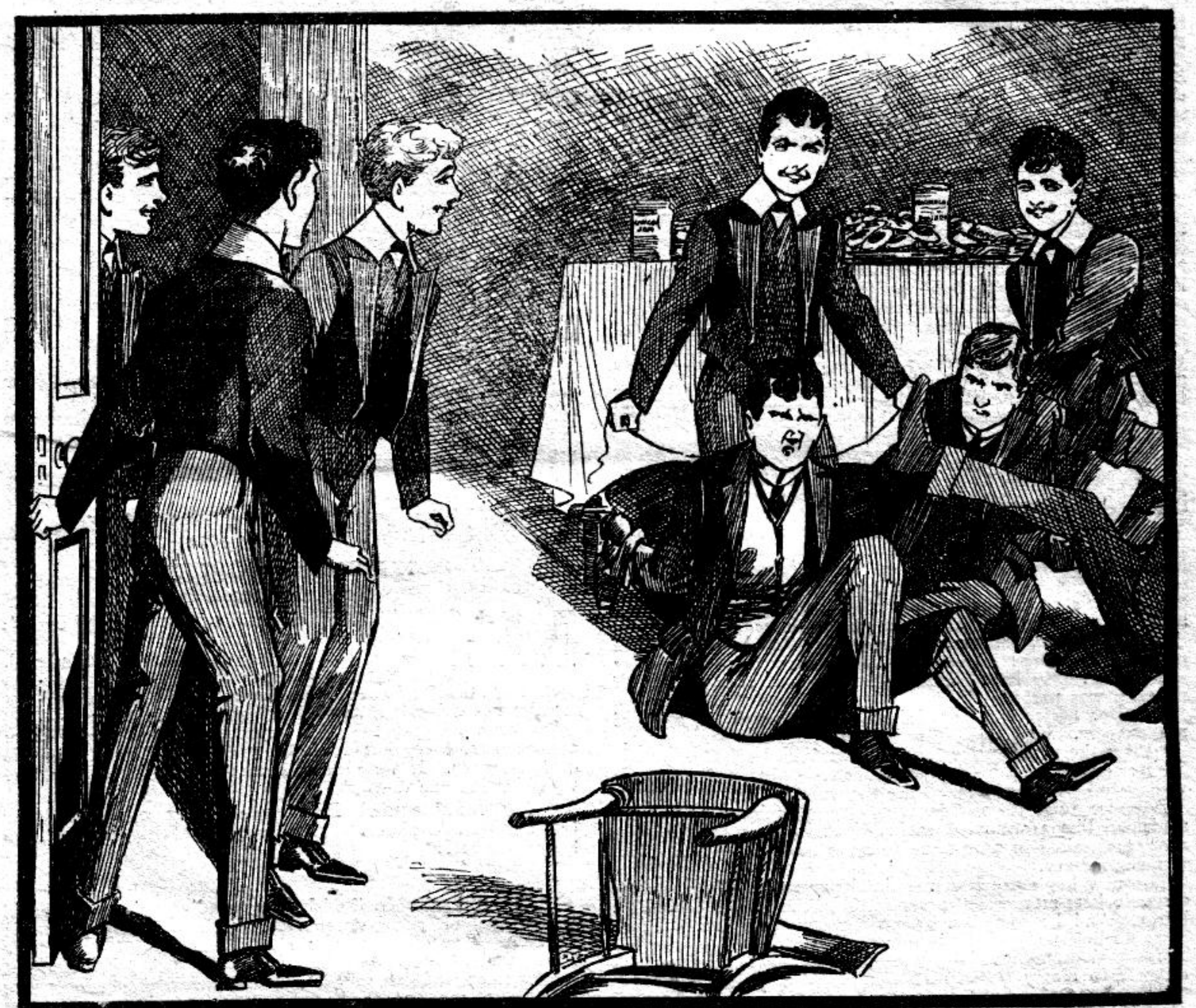
THE TERRIBLE TWO!

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

By FRANK RICHARDS.



"Do you mean to say you captured these three fellows all on your own?" gasped Wharton. "We do—we does!" grinned Curly Williams. "Not a bad achievement—what? I think you'll stand aside after this, and let my brother rule the roost in the Remove." (*See Chapter* 3.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Amazing!

"LET that kid alone! Let him alone, you cad, or you'll jolly well pay the piper!"

The voice rang out clear and determined in the old Close at Greyfriars, and Bolsover major, of the Remove, who was at that moment engaged in wrenching the arm of Tubb of the Third, spun round in astonishment.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" he exclaimed.

Standing side by side were two sturdy-looking youths in rather ill-fitting Etons, whom Bolsover had never seen before in his life. That they were new boys was obvious, for they had been carrying between them a huge trunk, which was now deposited on the flagstones.

"Who the merry dickens," demanded Bolsover, "d'you think you're talking to? And who are you, anyway?"

"My name," said the fellow who had spoken first, "is Bob

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Williams. This is my brother Jack, otherwise known as Curly. If you want any further information, you beefy lump of bullying blubber, I might tell you that we're coming into the Remove here, that we're hard hitters, and rattling good sportsmen."

"You seem to be pretty good at blowing your own trumpet, too!" sneered Bolsover. "I'm not going to be interfered with when dealing with a cheeky fag!"

"We'll jolly soon see about that, you Prussian beast!" said Bob Williams. "I give you ten seconds in which to let that kid's arms drop. If you dare to defy me, look out for squalls!"

And the speaker took out his watch with a businesslike air.

"Bravo!" murmured Tubb approvingly. "It's awfully good of you chaps to chip in like this, but you don't know Bolsover! He'll pummel you to a jelly!"

Bob Williams laughed—a ringing, confident laugh.

"Time's up!" he said promptly. "Put up your fists, you fad!"

"Two to one ain't fair!" snarled Bolsover.

"You needn't worry on that score," said Bob. "Curly will take a seat in the dress-circle while I wipe up the ground with you. Come on!"

With a snarl like an angry bull Bolsover disengaged himself from Tubb, and rushed upon the fellow who had so boldly challenged him.

The bully of the Remove anticipated little difficulty in smashing the impudent intruder. Very few and far between were the new boys who dared come to grips with one of the toughest fighting-men in the Form; and those who did so usually finished up on the ground, blinking at whole solar systems. Tubb of the Third, who stood watching the proceedings with an interested eye, could not help thinking that the impulsive Bob Williams would share a similar fate.

But—wonder of wonders!—nothing of the sort seemed likely to occur once the fight was fairly in progress. The new boy fought fiercely, but without losing his head; and breaking through Bolsover's guard, he dealt a swift, savage right-hander, which felled his man like an ox.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a cheery voice, as Bob Cherry galloped on the scene with his chums, fresh from a valiant tussle against the Fourth on the footer-ground. "What's all the giddy rumpus about? My hat! Bolsover's floored, you fellows—floored by a raw, untamed new kid!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were astonished, as well they might be. It was not often that even one of their number could gain the upper hand of the redoubtable Bolsover. Bob Cherry, Peter Todd, Dick Russell, Harry Wharton, and Vernon-Smith — probably the five best boxers among the Greyfriars juniors—invariably found Bolsover major a hot handful, and they never licked him without a gruelling struggle. Yet here was a new boy, fresh, apparently, from his mother's apron-strings, dealing a knock-out blow at the bully of the Remove. It was amazing—incredible!

"Hold me up, someone!" implored Bob Cherry. "I—I must be dreaming! Bolsover getting whacked out of time by a new kid! My hat! What fathead was it said the age of miracles was past?"

Bolsover major was not defeated yet, though, in spite of appearances. He struggled to his feet with a mighty effort.

"I'll make you pay for this!" he muttered thickly.

"Bow-wow!" retorted Bob Williams gaily. "I'm always willing to give an encore. Take that one!"

Bolsover took it—on his somewhat prominent nose, and squirmed like a wounded snake. But he kept his feet this time, and sailed in once more to meet the lashing fists of his virile adversary.

The new boy's prowess was simply amazing. What struck the onlookers most was the wonderful power he got behind his blows. And he scored a bullseye every time, too. There were no flukes about the business.

Curly Williams stood by with a bright smile, and nodded cheerily to Harry Wharton & Co.

"We come of a fighting family," he explained, with a nod at his warlike brother.

"I should just think you did!" exclaimed Frank Nugent admiringly. "I'm blessed if I ever saw Bolsover put through the mill like this before! Great Scott! He's down again!"

Bob Williams, his clothes and hair unruffled, and his face unmarked, had leapt at his opponent with the spring of a tiger. His left came crashing into Bolsover's face, and the bully of the Remove, with a wild yell, toppled backwards, and came to earth with a thud which shook every bone in his body.

"Licked!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, in tones of awe. "Licked by a blessed new kid! Wonders will never cease!"

Tubb of the Third, amazed and delighted, scuttled away to inform his fellow-fags of the glorious event. As for the fallen victim, he lay quite motionless, groaning as if his last hour had come.

"Serves you jolly well right!" growled Bob Williams, in tones of contempt. "I'm not going to tolerate bullying, at any price!"

"Excuse me," said Harry Wharton, stepping forward, "I quite agree with you in slanging Bolsover, of course; but it's not usual for new kids to assume such an air of authority. In case you don't know it, I happen to be skipper of the Remove."

"You won't be for long."

"What!"

"Curly and I haven't come to Greyfriars for the benefit of our health," explained Bob Williams. "We're going to make the fur fly while we're here. I'm Curly's senior in age, and he's quite willing for me to help myself to the captaincy of the Form. He will, of course, be my right-hand man."

Harry Wharton was simply flabbergasted. He had had many rivals for the leadership in his time. Bulstrode, Vernon-Smith, even Skinner, had, in the dim and distant past, attempted to undermine his authority and wrest the position from him. But for a new boy to try that game on his first day at Greyfriars seemed altogether unheard-of!

"Great Scott!" gasped Harry, at length. "You've got nerve enough for fifty. When you settle down and begin to cotton on to things a bit, you'll soon find yourselves up against it both of you! The chaps who want to conquer the world, like Napoleon and the Kaiser, invariably come a cropper."

"Yes, rather!" said Johnny Bull.

"The cropperfulness is terrific!" agreed Hurree Singh. "We would never dream of submitfully knuckling under to a couple of impudent and ludicrous new kids!"

"No fear!" chimed in Nugent.

Bob Williams smiled.

"Time will show," he said quietly.

Bolsover major struggled into a sitting posture.

"Why don't you chaps squash the beast?" he groaned.

"We've no desire to squash him, or his brother either, if they choose to clamber down from riding the high horse," said Wharton. "As for you, Bolsover, you've got what you badly needed for a long time. The sooner you mend your bullying ways, the better!"

"Hear, hear!" said Bob Cherry heartily. Then he broke off, as a familiar figure was sighted striding across the Close.

"Quelchy!" he gasped.

"Oh, my aunt!"

"Now for the giddy fireworks!" muttered Nugent.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Direct Defiance!

MR. QUELCH, the storm-clouds gathering on his brow, rustled swiftly on the scene.

"What is the meaning of this?" he thundered. "Bolsover, how dare you grovel on the ground in that undignified fashion, sir?"

"I'm not doing it from choice," growled Bolsover

"Take a hundred lines for impertinence! To judge from appearances, there has evidently been an affray of fisticuffs quite recently. If my surmise is correct, as I believe, tell me who knocked you down."

"That cad!" panted Bolsover, shooting out his finger towards Bob Williams. "He fought unfairly, sir; hit me below the belt!"

"Shame!"

"Sneak!"

"Silence!" said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice. "I forbid the usage of such opprobrious epithets in my presence! Williams—I presume your name is Williams?"

"Yes, sir?" said Bob demurely.

"You appear to be curiously wild and headstrong for a new boy, and I must at once request you to curb your hooligan tendencies. I do not want free-fights going on within full view of the school!"

"I don't care what you want," said Bob Williams coolly. "All I know is, that if I find this brute Bolsover bullying again I'll wade in and slaughter him. Master or no master, you're not going to stop me! I shall see fair play at all hazards."

The juniors gasped at this calm avowal. Mr. Quelch gasped, too. He swung round sharply, with his piercing eyes, generally compared to gimlets, fastened upon the presumptuous new boy.

"How dare you address me in that ill-mannered and insolent way?" demanded the Remove-master. "But for the fact that you have only just arrived, and know nothing of

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Harry Wharton gave an involuntary gasp of pain, and reeled backwards. Then his opponent's right shot out in a decisive uppercut. The captain of the Remove went to the ground with a crash. "Hurray!" roared Skinner excitedly. "Williams wins!" *(See Chapter 7.)*

the rules and regulations which obtain at Greyfriars, I should give you a severe thrashing!"

"Rats!"

"W-w-what!"

"I don't care a tuppenny rap for your rotten lickings!" said Bob Williams disdainfully. "If you think you can come the tyrant over me, and terrorise me, like a beastly Hun, then you're jolly well mistaken!"

Mr. Quelch almost foamed at the mouth.

"For those words," he said, in a terrible voice, "you will be flogged instantly! One of you juniors fetch me a cane from my study!"

"Rather, sir!" said Skinner promptly.

And the cad of the Remove sprinted off on his mission. Skinner was one of those fellows who delighted to witness public thrashings—always provided he himself was not the hapless victim.

By the time the cane came along, the crowd had put on flesh, so to speak. Coker & Co. of the Fifth had strolled up, with Temple and his Fourth-Form followers behind them. 'All viewed the extraordinary drama in amazement.

"Now—boy—Williams, hold out your hand!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Bob Williams eyed the cane coolly.

"What if I refuse to be whacked," he said, "and snap the blessed cane into half a dozen pieces?"

"I should at once request Dr. Locke to remove you from the school!"

"In that case, Mr. Squelch, I won't risk it."

And the new boy calmly extended his hand.

Swish!

Mr. Quelch dealt out the first stroke with terrific vim. His anger at that moment was equivalent to the wrath of Jove of old; and he made no effort to moderate the strength of his right arm.

The onlookers expected to see Bob Williams curl up before that awful swipe, and even to whine out an apology for his rudeness to Mr. Quelch. So far from curling up, however, the new boy gave no outward and visible sign that he was hurt. Instead, he smiled sweetly.

That smile was like the proverbial red rag to a bull, in Mr. Quelch's case. The furious Form-master got to work in grim earnest, and the cane rose and fell four times on the junior's outstretched palm. The castigator was almost perspiring, and found it necessary to pump in breath.

"Now the other hand, sir?" inquired Bob Williams sweetly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Harry Wharton & Co. roared. They simply couldn't help it. There was something irrepressibly comical about the scene that tickled them immensely.

"Boy!" rumbled Mr. Quelch, his eyes glinting. "I have

NEXT MONDAY— "FALSE EVIDENCE!" A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

reason to believe that you have made use of some resinous substance in order to harden your hands! Let me examine them at once!"

Bob Cherry gave a low whistle.

"What a downy bird!" he murmured. "He's hit the right nail on the head, I believe. Nobody could stand a wigging like that without yelling the housetops down."

But Mr. Quelch when he came to examine the new boy's hands was plainly puzzled. There was certainly no sign that resin or a similar property had been used, and red weals were already gathering where the cane had fallen.

"No luck?" inquired Bob Williams innocently.

Mr. Quelch, in order to make sure that the impudent new boy should not escape, grasped him by the collar and renewed his caning—on the back and shoulders this time. Bob Williams still took his gruel with stoical fortitude, and not a murmur left his lips.

"Well, I'm hanged!" gasped Squiff. "The chap's a fair corker! He takes a whacking with no more concern than if he was being asked what he would like for brekker! It beats me altogether!"

Mr. Quelch desisted at last. He was not a brutal man, and knew where to draw the line; but the way in which Bob Williams had faced the lashing cane amazed the Remove-master, accustomed as he was to seeing juniors squirm under his castigations.

"There!" he panted. "I trust that will be a lesson to you, Williams!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Bob, without a tremor.

Curly Williams stepped forward, smiling.

"My turn now," he said offhandedly.

"What do you mean, boy?"

"I mean that I go shares with my brother in everything," said Curly. "Whether it's sugar-candy or a stiff licking, our motto's share and share alike. Please pile in and wallop me!"

"Bless my soul!"

Mr. Quelch stared blankly at Williams minor.

"Do I understand," he gasped, "that you are asking for a thrashing?"

"That's it, sir!"

"Then—then I can only come to the conclusion that you are insane! Tell me, are you subject to fits?"

"Only to fits of energy, sir, when I see a chap bullying somebody weaker than himself. I'm like Bob in that respect, as in many others. We're sticklers for fair play."

"Do you insist upon having a severe caning?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. I shall be happy to meet your requirements," said Mr. Quelch, compressing his lips.

And he proceeded to thrash the imperturbable Curly with scant mercy.

Like his amazing brother, Williams minor took the thrashing without turning a hair. His face was very white when the ordeal was over, but otherwise he gave no indication whatever that he was hurt.

"It is seldom I have occasion to flog new boys on the day of their arrival," said Mr. Quelch, his anger abating somewhat. "I trust that you two boys will give me no more trouble of this unpleasant nature. You seem to me to be altogether out of your element at a place like Greyfriars. An industrial school would be a more fitting training-ground for you both. What is your father?"

Bob Williams flushed slightly.

"He's a—a retired stockbroker, sir," he said. "He's just taken a house on the outskirts of Friardale."

"He requested Dr. Locke to accept you as pupils?"

"Exactly, sir!"

"Ahem! You will occupy Study No. 17, which is at present untenanted. Your superior weight and build do not render it advisable for me to place you in a study with other boys. As for you, Bolsover, you will kindly refrain from molesting smaller boys in future, or I shall visit your offences with the cane!"

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Bolsover.

"Very well, Wharton. I shall desire you to keep order in my Form to the best of your ability."

"Rely on me, sir!" said Harry.

But the captain of the Remove could not help thinking, as Mr. Quelch rustled away, that his task would be by no means an easy one, with two such Tartars as the brothers Williams in the Form. He was bound to find them a stiff handful, especially if they rebelled against his authority; and it certainly looked as if there were breakers ahead.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We live in stirring times, and no mistake! Those new chaps are demons. I can't quite make up my mind yet whether I like 'em, or whether I don't. There's something about 'em a chap can't help admiring, and yet——"

"You think they'll make themselves objectionable later on. Is that it?" asked Wharton.

"Precisely! If there aren't some free fights and things disturbing the face of the earth before we're many days older, then I'm a Dutchman!"

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Rough on Coker!

"ROTTEN!"

Frank Nugent uttered that exclamation in a dismal tone, an hour after the stormy scene in the Close. The Famous Five were seated in Study No. 1, where they had formed a committee of ways and means, with the not unusual object of raising the wind.

The Cliff House charmers were expected over to tea, and Harry Wharton & Co. hadn't raised sufficient cash to purchase the skinny end of a peardrop, as Bob Cherry dolorously put it. Like the seed in the parable, they had fallen upon stony places, and how they were to acquire the funds for their purpose was a mystery.

"We might have tapped Mauly," said Johnny Bull, "but the silly ass has gone over to Highcliffe to have tea with Courtenay and the Caterpillar. Vernon-Smith's biked to Wapshot to see the military footer match, so we're stumped that way. What on earth can be done?"

"Give it up!" said Wharton glumly.

The position was indeed critical. When Marjorie Hazeldene, Clara Trevelyn, and Phyllis Howell, the popular Cliff House trio, arrived on the scene, they would naturally expect to find the fatted calf slain in their honour. It would be a tremendous insult to offer the young ladies dry bread and stale sardines, and even more so to offer them nothing at all.

"The Australian mail comes in to-morrow," said Johnny Bull. "I shall get a remittance from my uncle then."

"Fathead!" said Wharton witheringly. "What's the good of that? We want the tin at once, or we're done!"

"Done brownfully!" groaned Hurree Singh.

"Might try the two new kids," suggested Bob Cherry hopefully. "They ought to be rolling in filthy lucre."

"Good egg!"

And the Famous Five quitted the study, and marched round to No. 17.

Bob and Curly Williams were there, setting their house in order. Sporting pictures were stuck up in prominent array on the walls, and it seemed, at a glance, that the new boys knew more about the respective Derby winners than they did about such celebrities as Virgil and Horace.

It was obvious, too, that their tastes were by no means juvenile, for a couple of safety-razors lay upon the table, and a huge meerschaum pipe.

"Hallo, my merry jokers!" exclaimed Bob Williams. "Come to lend a hand?"

"Ahem!" coughed Wharton. "We came along to—to——"

"Speak up, my little man!" said Curly. "Don't be shy!"

"Oh, hang it all! Can you lend us five bob?" asked Wharton bluntly.

The two brothers looked genuinely apologetic.

"Can't be did!" said Curly. "We're broke to the wide ourselves!"

The Famous Five felt, and looked, deeply disappointed.

"That's rotten!" said Bob Cherry dolefully. "I should have thought, if your pater was a retired stockbroker, he'd have stumped up like a shot, and sent you to Greyfriars with a quidlet each. He must be pretty tight-fisted."

"He is," said Bob Williams, with a forced sort of laugh. "Look here. What do you want the tin for?"

"Three girl friends from Cliff House are coming over to tea," explained Harry Wharton, "and the cupboard is bare, or next door to it."

Bob's eyes sparkled.

"Then it's grub you want?" he inquired.

"That's it! But how——"

"Leave it to me!" said Williams major confidently. "I'll guarantee to get you sufficient grub for a dozen within a quarter of an hour."

"You've brought a tuck hamper to the school with you?" asked Nugent, thinking he understood.

Bob Williams shook his head.

"No; we haven't got a morsel ourselves. But I saw one of the Fifth Form fellows—Poker, or Crocker, or something, his name is—bringing in whacking supplies just now."

"But that's for a big spread they're having in Coker's study!" said Johnny Bull. "It ain't get-at-able!"

"Isn't it, though? Curly and I can manage it all right. I suppose they've raided grub belonging to you in the past?"

"That's so," said Wharton. "Matter of fact, they collared a two-pound cherry-cake only last week. But——"

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"Now, don't start putting any obstacles in the way, and telling us that we'll be smashed to a pulp!" said Curly. "We're willing to face the risk."

"Let's come along with you," suggested Nugent.

"You needn't trouble. We can do it off our own bat, thanks!"

And major and minor left the study.

"My only aunt!" gasped Bob Cherry. "What a queer pair of coves those fellows are! You never know what they'll do next!"

"What the merry dickens do they want with safety-razors and pipes?" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Surely they don't have to shave!"

"Shouldn't be surprised," said Johnny Bull. "I've known fellows of fifteen and sixteen to grow a stubbly sort of moustache, and have to carve it off from time to time."

"Even so, what price the pipe?"

"I suppose they're blades, like Skinner and his set," said Bob Cherry. "It's a rummy business altogether."

"We'd better buzz along and give 'em a hand," said Nugent. "They'll need it, I'm thinking!"

The Famous Five made tracks for Coker's study in the Fifth Form passage. The door was ajar, and a startling scene met their gaze.

Coker and Potter and Greene were struggling fiercely in the grip of the two new boys, who seemed to be enjoying themselves immensely. The table was laid for tea, and good things galore graced the festive board.

The marvel of the whole thing was that in the struggle the brothers were uppermost. Even as Harry Wharton & Co. arrived, Bob Williams was deftly trussing the great Coker up like a fowl by means of a length of stout cord

"Now for the other two!" he said cheerfully.

"Hands off!" roared Potter.

"Gerraway!" yelled Greene.

But the raiders were not to be denied. Potter and Greene had their last kick, and then shared a similar fate to Horace Coker. The cord bound them fast, and they were deposited in a huddled heap against the wall, breathing threatenings and slaughter.

The Famous Five could scarcely believe the evidence of their own eyes. They were growing accustomed to surprises, but this latest exploit of the weird and wonderful new boys caused all previous incidents to go by the board.

"Do you mean to say you captured these three fellows all on your own?" gasped Wharton.

"We do—we does!" grinned Curly Williams. "Not a bad achievement—what? I think you'll stand aside after this, and let Bob rule the roost in the Remove."

"Rats! But—but I say, you chaps are simply stunning! It would have taken half a dozen of us to do what you've done!"

"Yes, rather!"

"No need to make a song about it," said Bob Williams. "There's the grub. Cart it away and set it out before the girls come. And you needn't worry about Poker and his set. They're fixtures here for an hour or so."

"You cheeky young cub!" roared Coker. "You and your precious minor shall suffer for this!"

"Fiddlesticks! You raided the grub belonging to these fellows last week, and now we've taken out reprisals. What have you got to grumble at?"

Coker subsided with a growl. He had had the surprise of his life on being attacked and defeated by a couple of new boys, and he resolved to make things exceedingly warm for the brothers before many days were over.

"You must come along to the banquet, you two, as you were responsible for collaring the provender," said Harry Wharton.

"Only too pleased," responded Curly Williams. "Lead on, Macduff!"

In No. 1 Study the table was speedily laid and the kettle placed on the hob. Coker had bought a grand supply of Mrs. Mimble's choicest dainties. A liberal tip from his doting Aunt Judy had enabled him to be lavish; and now the Famous Five, their girl chums, and the two amazing brothers were to reap a rich harvest.

The atmosphere was very cheery and inviting when the three girls arrived. They looked very pretty and charming and demure, in their new spring dresses, and the new boys—who had come to be known among their schoolfellows as the Trojans—were obviously fascinated, especially by the vivacious Miss Phyllis.

Harry Wharton performed the necessary introductions, and the meal proceeded merrily. As for Coker & Co., they were left prisoners in their own study, furious and fuming. Bob Williams had very thoughtfully locked the door on the outside, so that they could not be liberated from their uncomfortable position until the juniors so ordained. It was a humiliating defeat, and the enraged victims, as they writhed beneath their bonds, occupied the next hour or so in roundly abusing each other and vowing dire vengeance upon the terrible Trojans.

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THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Playing It Low!

"BOB!"

Phyllis Howell called the name softly in the gathering gloom. The Removites were seeing their girl chums off at the gates.

"You want me, Miss Howell?" asked Bob Williams, stepping forward.

"No, no! Bob Cherry."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said that cheery youth.

Miss Phyllis drew the junior aside.

"Will you walk over to Cliff House with us?" she murmured.

"Oh, certainly!" said Bob Cherry, enraptured at the prospect. Then he broke off, noting the unusually serious expression on Miss Howell's face.

"Is—is anything the matter?" he muttered.

"Yes. I'll tell you all about it presently."

The rest of the fellows were clearly disappointed that they had been left out in the cold and that Bob Cherry was to be the sole escort of the Cliff House girls on their return. But, though stung a little by the arrows of jealousy, they were much too sportsmanlike to thrust themselves in where they were not wanted. Raising their caps by way of a final farewell, they went back into the building.

"I wanted to speak to you, Bob," said Phyllis Howell, "about those two new boys."

"Awful louts!" said Miss Clara, with emphasis.

"Oh, Clara!" said Marjorie, in shocked tones. "How can you say that? I thought they were very nice boys—very nice indeed."

"You would!" said Phyllis Howell, with a laugh. "You're as guileless and innocent as Miss Primrose's pet poodle. But seriously, I can't help thinking that those two boys are at Greyfriars with some ulterior motive."

Bob Cherry gave a jump.

"I—I say! That's a bit steep, isn't it?" he exclaimed.

"I believe it's true, all the same," persisted Phyllis. "There's something radically wrong somewhere. I don't like the way those two brothers behave. They don't look one straight in the face."

"That's because they're shy," laughed Bob.

"Fiddlesticks! If you take my advice, Bob, you won't trust them farther than you can see them. Have they given any hints that they mean to make things hot while they're in the Remove?"

"Rather! Bob Williams is out to wrest the giddy captaincy from Wharton, and, like the kid and the soap, he won't be happy till he gets it."

Miss Howell's dark, lustrous eyes gleamed.

"I thought as much," she exclaimed. "The Trojans, as you call them, are traitors!"

"What!"

"They mean to win a high position in the Remove and then bring shame and disgrace upon the Form and upon the school," said Phyllis.

"But why?" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Somebody's put them up to it, I dare say. Anyway, I'd rather you gave them the cold shoulder, Bob. We girls are pretty good judges of character, you know, and the Trojans haven't impressed us at all favourably."

"Rather not!" said Miss Clara emphatically.

"This is an eye-opener to me!" said Bob Cherry. "I didn't altogether take to the Trojans from the start; but I didn't think there was anything fishy going on. Thanks awfully for the tip, Phyllis. I'll keep my weather eye open in future."

The Removite took his leave of his girl chums and strolled back to Greyfriars in a thoughtful mood.

He could not bring himself to believe that Phyllis had been romancing. Phyllis Howell was a straight-spoken young lady, who seldom committed an error of judgment. Some months before, in the great sports meeting held by the rival schools, the Cliff House heroine had bowled out Harold Skinner & Co. in a particularly vile plot, and Bob Cherry couldn't help thinking that her present theory was not far wide of the mark.

As he swung into the old gateway, Bob was startled to hear the familiar drawl of Ponsonby, the "nut" of Highcliffe. Pon, together with four of his cronies, was clamouring for admission to the school, and Harry Wharton & Co., on the other side of the gates, were intent upon keeping them out.

"Go back to your kennels!" growled Johnny Bull, flourishing his big fists with a warlike air.

"Rats!" retorted Ponsonby. "Open this gate! We've come to see our old pals Williams major and minor."

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"What the merry thunder do you want with the new chaps?" demanded Wharton.

"We knew 'em in the good old days," replied Pon. "Buck up an' let's come into your musty old convent! You'll have to open the gates, in any case, to let this freak Cherry in."

"Why, you rotter——" began Bob wrathfully. "I'll jolly well wipe up the ground with you!"

"Not on this side of the gate," chuckled Pon. "You'll find five of us too big a handful, my pippin."

"Absolutely!" grinned Vavasour.

"Better open the gate for Bob," said Nugent. "We can easily keep those rotters at arm's length."

But just as the gates were swung open a strange and startling thing happened. Bob and Curly Williams came striding across the Close, with Skinner, Bolsover major, and several more in their wake.

"What's all the giddy rumpus?" demanded Bob Williams. "Aren't you going to let my pal Pon in?"

"Certainly not!" said Wharton heatedly. "We can't trust a cad of Ponsonby's calibre. How do we know he wouldn't sling a bomb in our study, or something of that sort? He's an out-and-out Prussian!"

"You wrong our friend greatly," said Curly. "I'm afraid we don't quite see eye to eye with you in the matter. Come on in, you fellows! We'll back you up."

"Rather!" growled Bolsover major.

Ponsonby & Co. happened to be aware that the brothers Williams were tremendous fighting-men, and at their chief's command they hurled themselves through the open gateway, which Bob Cherry had entered a few seconds before.

"Turn 'em out!" shouted Wharton. "Shoulder to shoulder, my sons!"

The next moment a wild and whirling battle was in progress. The numbers of the sides were about equal, and Bob and Curly Williams amply atoned for the defects of such weaklings as Snoop and Stott.

Ponsonby and his precious pals fought like tigers, and Harry Wharton & Co. responded with fierce frenzy. Seldom had the old gateway of Greyfriars been the scene of such a gigantic and devastating battle.

Bob Cherry singled out Curly Williams for execution, so to speak. But he found in Curly a stiff stumbling-block. The new boy hit out again and again, until Bob Cherry reeled from the effects of the heavy blows, and was so completely thrown off his balance that he could do little in return.

On another part of the front, however, there was a different story to be told. Harry Wharton was pounding away at Ponsonby for all he was worth; and the cad of Highcliffe eventually finished up on his back, blinking at whole solar systems.

"Polish 'em off, boys!" exclaimed Johnny Bull, who had got busy with Vavasour. "Show these rank outsiders that the Famous Five are foemen worthy of their giddy steel!"

"Yaroooop!" yelled Gadsby, as Frank Nugent's tightly-clenched fist came crashing through his guard, causing him to roll over and over on the flagstones.

"There's plenty more where that came from!" said Nugent generously. "Get up and face the music, you cad!"

But Gadsby preferred to retire for a time from active service. He lay groaning on the ground, and made no effort whatever to renew the combat.

Meanwhile, Bob and Curly Williams were fighting furiously. Fellows fell to the right and to the left of them, but still they kept on, with a courage which was well-nigh indomitable. Curly Williams had already wrought great havoc with Bob Cherry, and his muscular, forceful brother had caused Hurree Singh to gaze upon a total eclipse of the sun. It was warfare of the fastest and fiercest kind.

But the juniors could hardly have hoped to continue the combat without interruption. There was a sudden rustle of a gown, and Mr. Quelch, his face crimson with fury, stalked upon the scene.

"Boys!" he shouted. "Revolting reprobates! Cease that unseemly tavern-brawl conduct at once! Wharton! Cherry! Williams! You hear me?"

The fellows in question heard, but were too preoccupied to heed. They fought on, and Harry Wharton, who had now turned his attention to Skinner, landed on the latter's chest with a delightful drive. Skinner swayed for one giddy, breathless instant, and then toppled backwards with a crash, coming into violent contact with Mr. Quelch as he did so.

The Form-master was furious. He danced about like a dervish for some moments, and then, reaching out his hand, he forcibly dragged Bob Cherry and Curly Williams apart.

"How dare you!" he stormed. "How dare you set me at defiance in this unwarrantable manner! Do you realise the enormity of your offence? You are holding an assault-at-arms in the open gateway, in full view of passers-by! It is monstrous! Every boy in my Form concerned in this outrage will transcribe two thousand lines from Pliny's history!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"As for you Highcliffe boys, I have a good mind to lay a report of your conduct before Dr. Voysey! However, as you do not appear to have been to blame in the first instance, I shall do nothing."

"Thank you, sir!" said Ponsonby meekly. "We came here with quite a peaceful intention, sir. We wished to see Bob and Curly Williams, and to have a friendly chat with them in their study."

"And Wharton and his confederates refused to grant you admittance?"

"That's it, sir!"

"Oh, you cad!" muttered Harry Wharton.

"Silence, Wharton! I am both surprised and pained at the hostile and unfriendly spirit you have displayed towards these Highcliffe boys! They are quite at liberty to do as they wish."

Grinning broadly, Ponsonby & Co. strolled away with the brothers Williams.

As for Harry Wharton & Co., they felt that the world was upside-down. It was the worst rebuff they had experienced for a dog's age, as Bob Cherry expressed it; and their thoughts were very black and bitter as they limped dejectedly away to No. 1 Study.

And they were forced to admit, in their hearts, that the honours of the first round rested with Bob and Curly Williams.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.
Fun in the Form-Room!

"WHERE are the new kids?"

Everybody asked that question of everybody else in the Remove Form-room next morning. The bell had sounded for first lesson, and every junior was in his place, save two. Those two were the irrepressible Trojans.

"Quelchy will be here in a minute," said Wharton anxiously. "I've got no affection for the new bounders, but I shouldn't like to see 'em get it in the neck for being late."

Billy Bunter suddenly lifted up his voice and spoke. He had not been able to do so before, by reason of the fact that he had been sucking a huge bullseye—so large that it resembled a miniature football.

"I say, you fellows," exclaimed Bunter, "I happen to know where those fellows are. They're in their study, having brekker."

"What!"

"Brekker in the study!" gasped Johnny Bull. "You must be romancing, as usual, you fat porpoise!"

"I'm not!" said Bunter. "It's an absolute fact—honour bright! To begin with, the Trojans didn't turn out till half an hour after rising-bell, and they deliberately cut chapel. Then, finding there wasn't any brekker for 'em in Hall, they laid in a store of provisions from Mrs. Mimble, and buzzed off to have a big feed in their study. And I wasn't even invited!" concluded the Owl of the Remove, in pained tones.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, they've got nerve enough for fifty!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Quelchy will come down like a thousand of bricks if he finds out!"

"Shush! Here he is!"

Mr. Quelch swept into the Form-room in a decidedly bad temper. It was difficult to say whether he had got out of bed the wrong way, or whether a frivolous breakfast-crumb had disported itself down his windpipe. Anyway, he was emphatically on the war-path.

"Good-morning, sir!" ventured Bob Cherry politely. "Spring seems to have opened the innings well, sir!"

"Silence, Cherry! The Form-room is not a medium for chatty conversation concerning the weather!"

Mr. Quelch seated himself at his desk, and his eyes, which the Removites compared to gimlets on account of their penetrating powers, swept round the class.

"Where are Williams major and minor?" he rapped out.

Billy Bunter jumped to his feet at once. His little round eyes were sparkling with anticipation.

"They're having breakfast in their study, sir!" he said piously. "Shall I go and rout them out, sir?"

"Breakfast! In their study!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "It is unheard-of!"

"It's quite true, sir!"

"Then go to them at once, and bring them here—by force, if necessary!" said Mr. Quelch.

The juniors giggled. The idea of the fat, flabby Owl of the Remove striding along to the Form-room with a Williams tucked under each arm struck them as being decidedly ludicrous.

But Billy Bunter didn't mind his commission in the least. The prospect of finishing the feed which the new boys would

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Ponsonby squirmed and roared as the heavy stump descended upon him again and again. The dust rose in a cloud from his tightly-fitting trousers, and he gave ample proof that he was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. "Ow-ow-ow! Chuck it, you idiot!" *(See Chapter* **13.)**

be compelled to abandon filled Bunter's soul with rapturous delight, and his plump face beamed like a full moon as he waddled away towards No. 17 Study.

The class waited breathlessly for Bunter's return. Mr. Quelch was looking unusually dangerous, and had already taken a tight and businesslike grip of his cane.

Billy Bunter rolled into the Form-room at last, breathless and indignant. He was alone.

"They refuse to come, sir!" he exclaimed.

"What!"

"It's a fact, sir! Bob Williams is pitching into ham-and-eggs, and his brother's making an inroad into a small bun-shop!"

"Did you give them my message?" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

"What did they say?"

"That you could go and eat coke, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was an irrepressible roar of laughter from the class, which died away as Mr. Quelch brandished his cane in the air.

"Silence!" he rapped out. "Is this one of your prevarications, Bunter, or are you departing from your usual custom and telling the truth?"

"Oh, really, sir! I wouldn't tell a whopper for worlds!"

"Good old Georgie Washington!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Mr. Quelch gave one short, swift glance at Bunter, then, cane in hand, he strode from the Form-room.

"My hat!" exclaimed Wharton. "There's thunder in the air, you fellows! What champion asses those chaps are, to defy Quelchy like that! They'll get a fearful whopping!"

"And take it smiling, I expect," said Nugent. "They seem as hard as nails, and don't care a tuppenny rap for anybody."

"Bob Williams would make a ripping Form captain," said Skinner. "I'm backing him up all along the line."

"Same here!" chuckled Bolsover and Snoop and Stott together.

Bolsover major was particularly emphatic. He recognised, after the fearful thrashing he had received, that Bob Williams was his master, and that it would pay to keep on good terms with such a mighty Trojan. Besides, Bolsover would rather see anybody captain than Harry Wharton, whom he hated with all his heart.

Mr. Quelch reappeared at length, looking angrier, if possible, than before. Behind him, meek and demure as Mary's little lamb, trotted Bob Williams; and then, to the amazement of the class, Curly ambled in, still nibbling at a currant-bun with as much ease and unconcern as if he were in the tuckshop.

The Form-master spun round, and his face went livid with rage when he saw what was happening.

"Williams minor! You reckless, unprincipled boy! How dare you cram indigestible compounds into your mouth when you are in the Form-room?"

Curly Williams took a bigger bite than ever.

"It's my brekker, sir," he mumbled. "You wouldn't let me finish it in the study, so I'm having a sort of second

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innings here, so to speak. Will you have a bun, sir? They are most nourishing and pleasing to the palate."

Mr. Quelch did not take a bun. Instead, he leapt at Curly Williams like a cyclone, and the long, cruel-looking cane rose and fell with relentless vigour.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

Curly received a terrific castigation, and bore it, as his schoolfellows had anticipated, without a tremor. Then, whilst the class sat spellbound, Bob Williams leaned up against Mr. Quelch's desk, and abstracted a Nestor cigarette from his case and lit up.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "I—I must be dreaming, I suppose! Smoking—and in the Form-room! What a nerve!"

Mr. Quelch was too busy with his castigation of Curly to notice what was going on a few yards away. Bob Williams blew out a cloud of smoke, with profound contentment.

"I always like a whiff after a meal," he confided to the class at large. "It's most soothing."

"The chap must be mad!" muttered Wharton.

When Mr. Quelch desisted from favouring Curly Williams with his attentions, he looked round for fresh worlds to conquer. On seeing Bob Williams gazing up at his smoke-rings with a nonchalant air, he almost fell down. For some moments he was utterly and completely incapable of coherent speech.

"G-g-good heavens! Why—what—bless my soul——"

Bob Williams had nearly finished his Nestor by this time, and he threw the end of it into the empty fireplace, and pulled out a pipe—the same which had astounded Harry Wharton & Co. the previous day.

"I always prefer pipe-smoking myself," he exclaimed. "Matter of fancy, I suppose. One man's shag is another man's death-warrant. Lemme see! I've got some baccy somewhere. It's ripping stuff! 'Glorious in a pipe—mellow, rich, and ripe,' as Lord Byron says. Will you try some, sir?"

Mr. Quelch made a savage pass through the air with his cane. Bob Williams leaned forward, and the weapon descended with a crash and a clatter on the desk, sending the inkpot flying, and jarring Mr. Quelch's arm tremendously.

"I—I," panted the irate Form-master—"I fear I am not in a position to deal with such an incorrigible rascal as yourself! Come with me at once to Dr. Locke!"

"Certainly!" was the reply. "Anything to oblige! Nice, amiable sort of gentleman is Locke. I love him as I would my own pater. Lead on, Macduff!"

Amid the smothered giggles of the entire class, Bob Williams, puffing away merrily at his huge meerschaum, followed Mr. Quelch from the Form-room.

Dr. Locke was in his study, busily occupied with some examination-papers. He looked up patiently as Mr. Quelch entered.

"What is it, Quelch?" he inquired "Why, great goodness! Williams, how dare you contaminate my study with the foul fumes of tobacco-smoke, sir? How dare you, I repeat?"

Bob Williams looked pained.

"Don't begrudge me one of life's few comforts, sir," he said reproachfully. "I've been smoking now for close on seven years."

"What!"

Bob Williams suddenly checked himself, and flushed crimson.

"That is to say—er—I've been smoking for two years," he corrected.

The Head looked grim.

"You will oblige me by throwing that pipe away at the first opportunity!" he said, with asperity.

"And if I refuse?"

"Your name will be struck off the school register, and you will be expelled at once."

"That settles it, then!" said Bob Williams. "I shouldn't like to be expelled. It gives you a nasty, creepy sort of feeling down the spine. Here goes!"

And Bob Williams hurled his meerschaum into the fireplace, and proceeded to batter it to pieces with the poker.

"Not only has this boy polluted the atmosphere with his evil-smelling tobacco," said Mr. Quelch, "but he failed to put in an appearance in the Form-room this morning on the plea that he had not finished his breakfast. He also subjected me to gross impertinence."

"Then I shall administer a sound flogging!" said Dr. Locke, rising to his feet. "Leave the boy in my custody, Mr. Quelch. I assure you he will be heartily sorry for himself by the time I have finished."

Somewhat mollified, the Remove-master rustled out of the study. But he was by no means satisfied in his mind yet. He foresaw further skirmishes with the amazing new boys, and the prospect was not entrancing.

Bob Williams took his gruel from the Head with Spartan fortitude, and appeared in the Form-room a few minutes later. He and his brother gave no more trouble, and the remainder of morning lessons passed without incident. But the fellows knew that the truce was only temporary. Bob and Curly Williams were altogether beyond the management of the masters, whom they would defy at their pleasure.

How was it all going to end?

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
A Dangerous Rival!

"IT'S up to us!"

Thus Bob Cherry, as the Famous Five, after a strenuous game of footer, sat at tea. In Study No. 1 all was gay and cheerful, and the continual clash of knife and fork made merry music.

Bob Cherry had been thinking deeply for some moments—quite an unusual occupation for a fellow who usually acted first and thought afterwards.

"What's up to us?" mumbled Johnny Bull, executing a sausage at one blow.

"Why, to bring these new bounders down from their high estate," said Bob. "At present it looks as though they're going to try and rule the roost in the Remove, and we're not standing that!"

"No jolly fear!" said Nugent.

"Bob Williams says he's going to be skipper of the Form, or know the reason why," said Wharton. "He seems to be a fellow who means what he says, too."

"That's where you come in," said Bob Cherry. "You must put a spoke in his giddy wheel before he gets too big for his boots."

"But how?"

"You'll have to challenge him to a fight."

Harry Wharton looked serious.

"Look here, Bob!" he said. "I'm not a funk, as you all know, but I can't help thinking it wouldn't be a bit of good for me to tackle Williams. To put it bluntly, I should be beaten to a frazzle!"

"The lickfulness would indeed be terrific!" said Hurree Singh, with a sage shake of his dusky head.

"Rats!" said Bob Cherry. "You're one of the best fighting-men in the Remove, Harry, and it's the only way to make the cheeky bounder come down from his perch."

"But, hang it all, look how he pasted Bolsover!" said Wharton. "He gave him the biggest thrashing I've ever seen one chap give another! And I'm only a shade better than Bolsover as a boxer—in fact, I may not be quite so good."

Bob Cherry shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, it's a case of fight or fall!" he said. "If you don't strike while the iron's hot, Bob Williams will be skipper of the Remove in next to no time. You're tons better than Bolsover major, in my opinion, and ought to give Williams a good run for his money, if you don't beat him outright. We know you're not a funk, Harry, old chap, but there's no knowing what some of the other fellows might think. Some ugly rumours might get about the school."

Harry Wharton sprang to his feet.

"You're right, Bob!" he exclaimed. "I'll challenge Williams at once! It's no use putting off the evil day!"

"Bravo!" chorused the rest of the Famous Five.

"Come along to No. 17, and throw down the giddy gauntlet!" said Nugent. "My hat, it ought to be a great scrap! You'll have to go for him baldheaded, Harry!"

The juniors found the new boys in their study. Curly Williams was sucking meditatively at a cheroot, but Bob was giving smoking the go-by. He had special reasons of his own for not wishing to be summarily expelled from Greyfriars.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed as the invaders streamed in. "Come for a little chummy conversazione—what? Well, make yourselves at home, my children. There's not a monopoly of chairs, but the window-sill and coal-scuttle are at your service."

"Look here," said Wharton abruptly, "this is no time for tomfoolery. I've come to speak to you straight from the shoulder on an important matter. You remember what you said yesterday afternoon about having a shot for the captaincy of the Remove?"

"I do."

"Are you still sticking to that?"

"Most emphatically!"

"Then I want to tell you that you'll have to meet me, with or without gloves, before the question can be considered settled. If you lick me, all well and good. You'll be the acknowledged leader of the Remove. If I lick you, then you'll have to take a back seat. Are you agreed?"

Bob Williams laughed lightly.

"Look here, my little man," he said gently, "don't you

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think you're biting off rather more than you can chew in challenging me to a fight? Why, I should simply make shavings of you!"

"That remains to be seen."

"Come, don't be obstinate!" said Bob Williams. "You're rather a nice sort of kid in your way, and I shouldn't like to hurt you! You saw how I dealt with Bolsover major?"

"You'll find I've got a bit more spirit than Bolsover!" said Harry Wharton. "I sha'n't give in whilst I've got a leg to stand on!"

Bob Williams sighed.

"Oh, well," he said, "if you must have it, you must. But you'll excuse me for saying that you're a silly young ass!"

"Thank you!"

"When and where is the gory conflict to take place?" asked Curly Williams, sending up a cloud of pungent smoke from his cheroot. "These things aren't usually settled under the eyes of the beaks, I suppose?"

"No fear!" said Bob Cherry. "They'd better have it out behind the chapel now, while the light holds good."

"And what are the conditions of the contest?"

"Twenty rounds with gloves, or a dozen without, seems fair enough!" Curly Williams gasped.

"Twenty rounds! Why, if Wharton lasted out all that time he'd have to be taken away on an ambulance!"

"Rats! Harry's got a jolly sight more pluck than you give him credit for."

"Come on!" exclaimed Bob Williams impatiently. "Let's get along to the slaughter! I give you one more chance to back out, Wharton! You'll be a fool if you don't take it!"

"Then I'll be a fool," said Harry quietly.

The little party of juniors made tracks for the historic fighting-ground behind the chapel; and Micky Desmond, whom they met in the passage, went off for two pairs of boxing-gloves.

News of the fight spread as swiftly as a fire through gorse. So much so that within a few minutes fellows rolled up from all directions. Coker & Co., of the Fifth; Temple & Co., of the Fourth; and hosts of Removites appeared on the scene, and the fags were present to a man. Altogether the Wharton-Williams affray looked like being the most sensational scrap of modern times.

The two participants peeled off their coats amid terrific excitement. Blundell, of the Fifth, was referee, and he took out his massive gold hunter with an air of elaborate impressiveness.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

Wharton and Williams nodded.

"Full steam ahead, then! Time!"

And the next instant the two Removites rushed at each other hammer-and-tongs.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
The Fight for the Captaincy!

HARRY WHARTON was every inch a boxer. Probably there were only three fellows in the Remove who were his equal, and they were Bob Cherry, Dick Russell, and Peter Todd. This, of course, was prior to the arrival of the Trojans. But everyone agreed that on this occasion Wharton had more than met his match.

Bob Williams was a fellow of wonderful proportions. His biceps were astounding, and his chest was far and away the broadest ever seen in the Greyfriars Remove. Superior to Wharton in height, weight, and reach, it seemed incredible that he could suffer defeat.

The first round was fast and furious. Harry Wharton seemed to be trying to force the issue, for he let himself go without reserve. His right and left thudded in quick succession on his opponent's ribs, and then, stepping clear, he delivered a swinging blow with his left, which Williams only partly parried.

"Hooray!" roared the loyal army of Whartonians looking on. "Stick to it, Harry!"

Wharton went into his man again and again, but Bob Williams seemed strangely unperturbed. Most of the blows merely glanced off him like water off a duck's back.

The opening round finished in Harry Wharton's favour. He had boxed his level best, and meant to keep it up; though no one knew better than he how nerve-racking and trying it would be to keep going for so long a period as twenty rounds.

"Give the bounder socks!" urged Bob Cherry, who was acting as Wharton's second. "The more knocking about he gets now, the less he'll want later on. There doesn't seem to be a weak spot in his armour, but if you keep hammering away at his ribs he's bound to have bellows to mend in the long run. Go in and win, old scout!"

Harry Wharton got off the mark wonderfully well in the second round. He rushed in with lowered head, and his right shot upwards, crashing through his opponent's guard,

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and crashing against his chest with a vigour that would have floored many a less sturdy fellow than Bob Williams.

Again and again Wharton sailed in with the same purposeful intent. Williams took his punishment quietly, and without getting the least bit flustered. He was telling himself that Wharton would speedily tire of such a spirited offensive, and then he (Bob Williams) would sail in and wipe up the ground with his adversary.

When Blundell called "Time!" the scales were still heavily in favour of the captain of the Remove. So far he had done practically all the fighting, and his chums looked on with sparkling eyes. Their champion was shaping splendidly, and if only he kept on in the way he had begun, everything in the garden would be lovely.

Round three was a repetition of its predecessors. When it was over, and the principals retired for their two-minute interval, the onlookers began to wonder whether Bob Williams was really such a muscular marvel as they had first imagined.

Three rounds had passed by, and yet he had not landed half a dozen blows which could possibly be described as telling.

The next three rounds saw Wharton weaken. His attack seemed to lose its sting, and his blows were delivered with less frequency. But possibly Bob Williams had strengthened his guard.

"Don't slack off, old man, for goodness' sake!" said Bob Cherry, as he sent Wharton up for the seventh round. "You've got a long way to go yet before you get him down and out."

Wharton nodded ruefully.

"It's as I thought at the beginning," he said. "He's much too strong for me!"

"That's all bosh! You've stood up to him rippingly so far; and if it was only a ten-round contest, you'd get the verdict all serene. It's only a question of lasting out now."

Wharton did not reply. He wanted all his breath for the strenuous ordeal ahead. Bracing himself up, he sailed in to the attack.

But he was met by the same rocklike defence as before.

Then of a sudden, just as the spectators were beginning to vote the affair a bit tame, Bob Williams seemed to spring into life. His sledge-hammer fists shot out in swift succession, and Wharton, taken completely by surprise, retreated a couple of paces.

His opponent followed up, and, shooting out his right with relentless vigour, felled the captain of the Remove like an ox.

Skinner & Co., who had been silent hitherto, let themselves go at this fine display of fistic prowess. They cheered Bob Williams to the echo, and looked on with breathless excitement as Blundell began to count.

But the referee need not have proceeded to that extent, for Wharton was on his feet again in an instant, and fighting like a tiger.

The odds were heavily against him, however. Bob Williams had awakened, as it were, from a long lethargy. Where before he had been slow and stodgy, he now became active and virile.

Wharton experienced such a gruelling time of it that he could ill conceal his relief when the round ended, and he was able to rest once more on Bob Cherry's knee.

"Feeling groggy, old man?" asked Bob sympathetically.

"To tell the truth, yes. You never know where he's going to catch you next."

"Never mind! Stand up to him all you know, and p'r'aps he'll leave a loophole before long, and you'll be able to wade in and slaughter him."

"I hope so," said Harry. "It's good-bye to the captaincy of the Form if I don't!"

"Time!"

Bob Williams continued his offensive tactics. Wharton was forced to recede round and round the ring, and heavy blows thudded upon all parts of his person. But he gritted his teeth, and, with resolute defiance, held grimly on.

There comes a time in boxing when a fellow secures his second wind, and thereafter proceeds to fight mechanically. This was what happened to Harry Wharton. He survived six more rounds of that stirring contest in quite inexplicable fashion.

The excitement was at fever-heat when the fourteenth round commenced. There was something in the atmosphere which seemed to suggest that things were going to wake up pretty considerably.

And they did!

Harry Wharton staked everything on a last desperate rally. If it failed, then he failed, too. If it came off, there was hope for him after all!

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Biff! Thud! Biff! Thud!

Harry Wharton was fairly peppering his opponent with blows. He landed a straight drive on the nose that caused the claret to flow freely; then his left came with a jarring report on Bob Williams' jaw. But Bob, though he was in a shocking state by this time, still fought as tenaciously and courageously as ever.

"I've got him in a cleft stick now," he confided to Curly when the round was over.

The truth of his statement was borne out a few minutes later. Wharton tottered, rather than walked, into the ring for the fifteenth venture. He had completely exhausted himself by this time, though he would not have admitted it for worlds. He had staked everything upon the cast, and now he had to stand the hazard of the die.

"Time!"

With a grin of anticipative triumph, which made his face look distorted and hideous, like an ogre's, Bob Williams sailed in for the last time. Gathering all his strength for one mighty, all-powerful blow, he hit out straight from the shoulder with terrible effect.

Harry Wharton gave an involuntary gasp of pain, and reeled backwards. Then his opponent's right shot out in a decisive upper-cut. The captain of the Remove went to the ground with a crash.

"Hurray!" roared Skinner. "Williams wins! Hip, hip, hip——"

"Hurray!" roared Bolsover and Snoop and Stott together.

Blundell bent over the fallen boxer, and began to count.

"One—two—three——"

"Buck up, Harry!" came Bob Cherry's agitated voice.

"Four—five—six——"

Harry Wharton sat up, blinking painfully in the fading daylight.

"Seven—eight——" went on Blundell relentlessly.

The realisation of his desperate plight was brought home to Wharton like a flash as he lay there. There was still a spark of hope. Williams might be just as exhausted as himself. Anyway, there was still time to make some sort of a fight for it.

Harry Wharton lurched unsteadily to his feet, and Bob Williams dropped his hands to his side, and looked his rival squarely in the face.

"You can't go on," he said. "You're not fit!"

"Let me alone!" muttered Wharton thickly. "I'm not beaten yet."

And he sawed the air wildly with his gloved fists.

"Chuck it!" exclaimed Temple of the Fourth. "Wharton's not fit to carry on. It's not fair to him to fight when he's in that ghastly state. Play the game, Blundell!"

"The conditions were twenty rounds," replied Blundell. "If Wharton's determined to go on, there's no stopping him."

Harry landed out with all the little strength remaining to him. He was feeling decidedly groggy now. His knees were giving way, and when that happens, a boxer is invariably hors de combat.

So it was with Wharton. His puny blow landed upon his rival's shoulder, and then, weary and weakened to a degree, Harry Wharton suddenly reeled and fell like a log. This time he went down and stayed down.

Blundell counted the vanquished Removite out amid wild whoops of delight from the fellows who supported Bob Williams. Henceforth, Wharton was to take a back seat, and hand over the reins of office to his redoubtable rival. Like Lucifer, Son of the Morning, he had fallen from his high estate; and how the Greyfriars Remove would fare under the genial sway of the burly Bob Williams remained to be seen.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.
Williams on the Warpath!

ON the first evening of Bob Williams' captaincy the following announcement appeared on the notice-board in the Hall:

"FRIARS v. SAINTS.

"This highly important match will take place to-morrow on Little Side, and the following eleven will line up for the occasion:

"Goal, Bulstrode; Backs, Bob and Curly Williams; Half-backs, Cherry, Peter Todd, and Linley; Forwards. Hurree Singh, Nugent, Wharton, Penfold, and Vernon-Smith.

"Every fellow is expected to work his hardest for the sake of the side. In the event of a victory for the home team, a magnificent spread will be held in Study No. 17 after the match. (Signed) BOB WILLIAMS.

"Captain of the Remove."

"The fellow's not so bad, after all," said Bob Cherry. "He might have made many a worse selection. Except for the two backs, the team's as usual!"

"Except for the backs!" hooted Johnny Bull. "Why the merry dickens has he left Browney and myself out, and put his own name alongside that of his freak of a brother? It's scandalous!"

"Don't get excited, Johnny!" said Wharton. "After all, the fellow's skipper, and it would have been a jolly sight worse if he'd put in Skinner & Co., or something like that. Besides, the two new chaps are stunning full-backs. I've seen 'em at practice."

Johnny Bull grunted.

"I still think it's a shame!" he said. "The Remove won't stand a dog's chance without Browney and me!"

"We shall see what we shall see," said Bob Cherry sagely.

The day of the match dawned crisp and clear—simply ideal for footer. The encounter with Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's was the last of the season with that famous school, and the Friars were desperately anxious to win. Victory for them would be a great feather in their cap for the remainder of the term.

Shortly after dinner the Saints arrived, looking remarkably fit in their red-and-white striped jerseys and white knickers.

"What cheer, Wharton, old fellow!" said Jack Blake lustily. "Let's hope we give you a good game!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"You'd better express your hope to the skipper," he said.

"But you're bossing the show, aren't you?" gasped Blake, in bewilderment.

"No. A new chap named Bob Williams has been appointed captain of the Remove. He and his brother, the Trojans, are playing back for us this afternoon."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "How vewy extwaordinawy, deah boy! You don't mean to say he gave you a feahful thwashin' in ordah to succeed to the captaincy?"

Harry nodded glumly.

"He was above my weight," he confessed. "Still, I've got sense enough not to whine. It's the sort of thing a chap has to take smiling."

"Quite so, deah boy! Pway intwoduce me to these Twojans as you call them!"

Wharton introduced Tom Merry & Co. to the two new boys, who kept strangely quiet. They seemed a trifle preoccupied and ill at ease.

Wingate of the Sixth was referee, and, buttoning up the collar of his mackintosh, he blew the whistle for the teams to line up.

The touch-line was thronged with fellows, standing three and four deep. All were keenly excited about the match, for a good deal depended upon the issue.

Greyfriars and St. Jim's were rivals of long standing, and their records in football were about equal. Therefore, the Friars were desperately keen that the scales should turn in favour of their heroes.

Then, again, the fellows wanted to see what sort of a show the Trojans would put up. The fame of the brothers Williams had spread on every side. Their fine fistic prowess, and their daring defiance of authority, had won for them no light reputation.

Harry Wharton kicked off, and the Friars went away with a kick and a rush. They cut through the opposing defence like a knife through butter, and amidst tremendous excitement Harry Wharton smashed the leather into the net.

"Goal!"

The Friars were leading—leading in the first minute!

"Oh, well played, Harry!" roared Bob Cherry. "That was simply topping! Do it again, and half my kingdom is thine!"

But Harry Wharton did not do it again. It was one of those surprise first-minute goals which so often occur in the grand winter game, but which are so difficult to add to.

Harry Wharton & Co. came on again and again, but Fatty Wynn, who kept the Saints' citadel, was proof against the very fiercest of attacks.

"Hallo!" said Frank Nugent suddenly. "Ponsonby and his set are over here, watching the match. Why's that, I wonder?"

"There's something fishy going on, if you ask me," said Peter Todd. "Those Highcliffe bounders wouldn't come over here for pleasure. We'd better keep our weather-optics open."

The game proceeded strongly, with Greyfriars in the ascendant. Thanks largely to Fatty Wynn, however, they did not penetrate the loophole again.

Then, half an hour from the start, St. Jim's got into their stride. The forwards played sparkling football, and Tom Merry, Talbot, and Jack Blake were the pick of the bunch, though D'Arcy and Noble also did great things.

Time and again the St. Jim's forwards hurled themselves

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against the opposing defence; but that defence was founded as upon a rock. Bob and Curly Williams kept their lines intact, with a skill which was almost uncanny. Their tackling was clean and confident, and the way they volleyed the ball up the field was a sight to see and wonder at.

The crowd on the touch-line cheered their magnificent display to the echo.

Tom Merry & Co. kept up a steady and sustained pressure till the interval. But so indomitable were the Trojans that not a solitary goal resulted.

"Not so dusty," said Bob Cherry, in the pavilion. "That goal of yours in the first minute, Harry, old scout, is our salvation. As for the Trojans, they've turned out real trumps, and no mistake! Give us your fists, you two!"

With a rather awkward grace, the Trojans complied.

"You think we shall pull it off?" asked Harry Wharton.

"I—I don't know," said Bob Williams, with an uneasy note in his voice.

"Well, we're a goal to the good," said Penfold, "so we ought to be jolly well pulverised if we don't. Come on, you fellows! The whistle's gone for the second half."

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Black Treachery!

"PLAY up, Friars!"

"Rally round, ye cripples!"

"On the ball, Wharton!"

The second half opened in vigorous and thrilling fashion. As in the first minute of the game, Harry Wharton raced through and crashed the leather past Fatty Wynn in hurricane style.

"Hurray!"

"Two up!" chortled Bob Cherry.

Tom Merry & Co. looked grim. They had not reckoned on being a couple of goals to the bad at any stage of the game; and, to do them strict justice, they scarcely deserved to be in arrears. But for the heroic display of the Trojans at full-back, they would at least have been level.

"Bai Jove! This is awf'ly wotten, deah boys!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It looks as if we shall be sent back to St. Jim's with our tails between our legs."

"Not if I know it!" said Tom Merry. "We're going to make up the leeway, my sons, or die in the attempt!"

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Talbot. "Shoulder to shoulder, you fellows!"

And the Saints' forward line concentrated in one sweeping movement on the Greyfriars citadel, where Bulstrode, thanks to the pair of stalwarts in front of him, had been having quite a holiday.

Suddenly Ponsonby & Co., on the touch-line, let themselves go with the full force of their lungs.

"St. Jim's! St. Jim's! Play up, St. Jim's!"

"Looks as if they've come over to howl us down," said Harry Wharton. "If that's the case, we don't mind a little bit. It won't affect the result, anyway."

But Tom Merry & Co., to everybody's unbounded astonishment, met with no opposition this time. Bob and Curly Williams seemed to slack off completely. Their defence, at one time impenetrable, had now broken down entirely. They made no effort to checkmate the opposing forwards, and the result may well be imagined. Jack Blake sent across a glorious pass from the wing, and Tom Merry, meeting with no resistance, smashed the leather home with a spanking first-time shot.

"Goal!"

"Bravo, St. Jim's!" yelled the Highcliffe fellows, executing a triumphant war-dance on the touch-line.

But Tom Merry's goal was only the beginning of a big series of successes. The Saints came on again and again, and a glaring miss-kick on the part of Bob Williams enabled Talbot to race through and score.

"This is putrid!" groaned Wharton.

"What ever's come over those chaps? They played like giddy heroes in the first half, and now they've fallen away shockingly."

Bob Cherry's eyes gleamed. He called to mind the memorable conversation he had had with Phyllis Howell, and how that young lady had warned him to beware of the brothers Williams.

"Look here, Harry," said Bob excitedly, "can it be possible that those chaps are trying to deliberately sell the match?"

Wharton whistled.

"That's a bit thick, isn't it?" he said. "I shouldn't like to think so, unless we get further evidence."

Further evidence was speedily forthcoming. The Trojans played wretchedly, and the Friars would have received just as much benefit if the backs had been Billy Bunter and Alonzo Todd.

Bulstrode kept goal splendidly. He seemed to be a mass of arms and hands and legs, and held the fort in champion style; but with the backs putting up such a poor show, he was practically helpless. The best of goalkeepers fail again and

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again when they receive insufficient support from the fellows in front of them.

St. Jim's, hugely delighted with the turn events had taken, piled on the agony. Amid a dirge of deep groans from the Greyfriars contingent on the touch-line, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dodged round Curly Williams with easy-going assurance, and netted a grand goal, thus putting his side ahead to the tune of 3—2.

Bob Cherry's usually sunny face had grown quite savage. He strode sharply up to the Trojans.

"What sort of a game d'you think you're playing?" he demanded fiercely. "You've let them score three times in twenty minutes, and it's my belief that you did it deliberately."

"Bow-wow!" said Bob Williams cheerfully.

"You don't deny it?"

"Why should I?"

Bob Cherry clenched his big fists involuntarily, but he remembered himself in time. It would be rank bad form to resort to fisticuffs in the presence of the St. Jim's fellows.

"Stick to it, Saints!" roared Gadsby. "Give 'em socks! Make the cads sit up! Yoooooop!"

The Highcliffian finished up with a fearful yell as Johnny Bull's heavy, unsparing hand smote him on the cheek. Johnny was in a royal rage. He realised that if Tom Brown and he were playing in their accustomed position the Saints would already be drinking the dregs of defeat.

"Keep your mouth shut, you beastly cad!" he muttered. "Another word, and I'll wade in and slaughter you!"

Meanwhile the game proceeded at a rapid and exciting pace. The Friars were completely disorganised, owing to the woeful weakness of their defence; but occasionally their forwards made an incursion into their opponents' territory, and such rushes always spelt danger to St. Jim's.

Figgins and Kerr were a pair of ready and resourceful backs, and for a time Harry Wharton & Co. failed to penetrate the barrier. Then Vernon-Smith, with a fine solo effort, burst through and scored.

"Level!" panted Nugent. "That's tons better! If only that precious pair of traitors don't perpetrate any more blunders, we shall at least draw."

Ten minutes to go, and honours easy! The Friars had high hopes, and meant to make a great bid for victory.

Harry Wharton secured the ball, and passed to Nugent, who promptly cannoned into Figgins and went ahead, a gleam of anticipative triumph in his eye.

"Shoot!" howled the clamorous, heaving, trampling throng on the touch-line.

And Frank Nugent shot, with wonderful accuracy and precision. His effort would certainly have baffled any ordinary goalkeeper.

But Fatty Wynn was not an ordinary goalie. He was a wizard in human form, and got down to Frank Nugent's shot in a flash. The ball whizzed out again, on to the field of play.

There was a scramble to gain possession, and presently Kerr emerged from a sort of Rugby scrum, with the ball at his toes. But the Friars were desperate, and Mark Linley, dashing up from the half-back line, charged the St. Jim's back flying, and scored with a lightning drive which gave Fatty Wynn no chance whatever.

"Leading, by Jove!" panted Vernon-Smith. "That's glorious! We must try and hold out to the finish now, and join in the stunning spread which Bob Williams promised!"

Bob Cherry looked grim.

"If you ask me," he said, "there won't be so much as a currant-bun eaten in celebration of our victory."

"Why not?"

"Because we sha'n't win."

Before Vernon-Smith could reply to this extraordinary assertion the tussle was being renewed with tremendous vigour. With only six or seven minutes to go, St. Jim's piled in for all they were worth. Their forwards were responsible for a fierce, determined raid on Bulstrode's goal, and all eyes were turned anxiously upon the Trojans. Would they play the game, or bemean themselves by a continuance of their treacherous tactics?

Tom Merry had the ball, and Peter Todd fell back in order to ward him off; but at the crucial moment Tom passed to Talbot, who went well away, with only the backs and goalie to beat.

Bob Williams rushed up, and, under pretence of charging Talbot, reeled and fell. Curly had not even budged from his position, and Talbot had a clear field. He drove the leather into the corner of the net farthest away from Bulstrode, and there was a sepulchral groan from the Remove supporters, intermingled with wild shouts of delight from the cads of Highcliffe.

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But the worst was yet to come. In the very last minute of the game, just as Harry Wharton & Co. were congratulating themselves that they had at least drawn, Bob Williams deliberately and flagrantly miss-kicked. There was no pretence this time. The ball rolled towards him at a funeral pace, and, instead of sending it back up the field with a fine volley, Bob Williams allowed it to roll past him.

Tom Merry was upon it with the spring of a tiger the next moment, and although Bulstrode made an heroic effort to avert the catastrophe, the sphere crashed past him with a velocity which nearly broke the net.

Simultaneously Wingate's whistle rang out, announcing the close of play.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy breathlessly. "What a vewy extwaordinawy victowy, deah boys!"

The Greyfriars fellows felt sick at heart. Those on the touchline were mad with indignation, and a loud hiss arose as Harry Wharton & Co. left the field.

The fellows were not hissing Wharton. He had done his best, and so had his chums. They were hissing Bob and Curly Williams, and the sound grew ominously fierce and vindictive.

"My word!" said Curly Williams. "We don't seem to be exactly popular, Bob!"

"I should think not!" raved Johnny Bull. "You've sold the match, you rotten traitors! It was the most important game of the season, and our fellows would have won hands down if it hadn't been for you! My hat! I seldom get my rag out, but it's out now with a vengeance! Take that one!"

And before Curly Williams could master his astonishment Johnny Bull's heavy fist came with a sickening crash straight between his eyes.

"There, you cad!" panted Johnny. "That's something to be going on with! And if you want any more, don't be afraid to say so! We're quite ready to give you and your beast of a brother the biggest hiding you've ever had in your lives!"

THE TENTH CHAPTER.
Phyllis Howell, Peacemaker!

CURLY WILLIAMS, although momentarily thrown off his balance, squared up to the warlike Johnny Bull at once. He was not the sort of fellow to turn the other cheek, and anybody who was venturesome enough to smite him could rest assured that he would be smitten with interest by return.

"I don't stand that sort of thing from anybody, least of all from a beefy great lubber like you!" said Curly. "Where will you have it?"

Johnny Bull snorted like a war-horse eager for the fray, and rushed upon Curly like a cyclone. The next instant they were at close quarters, pummelling each other furiously.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "This is where we come into the picture, my sons! I don't like scrapping with the St. Jim's fellows here, but needs must when the devil drives. Besides, those Trojan bounders want a thundering good hiding for their disgusting display! Line up, ye cripples!"

The next moment a fast and furious struggle was in progress. Ponsonby & Co. took a hand, of course. They were not there as ornaments. A scene of this kind had been anticipated, and they were fully prepared for it.

The football-field presented a wildly animated scene. The thudding of hard body blows resounded on every side, and the St. Jim's juniors—who were, of course, non-combatants—looked on at the scene with interested eyes.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, adjusting his monocle. "It stwikes me that the Twojans will get a feahful thwashin'!"

"They deserve it, too," said Tom Merry. "Of all the rotten, treacherous tricks I've ever seen, this latest affair takes the biscuit!"

"Those chaps know how to defend themselves, though!" said Jack Blake. "My hat! Just look at 'em!"

The Trojans were standing shoulder to shoulder, their faces pale and set, their blows doughty and determined. They were backed up by Ponsonby & Co. and Skinner & Co., therefore the numbers were about equal.

Wingate strode towards the combatants with a clouded brow, and bawled to them to stop; but he might just as well have shouted at a brick wall, for all the notice that was taken of his command.

"Wharton! Williams! Do you hear me?" thundered the captain of Greyfriars.

The fellows addressed made no response. Instead, they pounded away at each other as though their very existence depended upon it.

"So you think you can defy me—what!" roared Wingate. "My hat! I'll jolly soon disillusion you!"

And the senior strode away, presumably to summon his fellow-prefects to secure ashplants and finish the fight by force.

Tom Merry & Co., feeling that it was no business of theirs, clambered into their brake. They were in great spirits, though each of them would only too willingly have admitted that but for the inglorious display of the Trojans the Friars would have won hands down.

The brake rolled away, and the battle on Little Side continued to rage with unabated fury. Probably Wingate was unsuccessful in his quest of the prefects.

To the infinite delight of his comrades, Johnny Bull was beginning to get the better of the redoubtable Curly Williams, who received a series of swift, sharp thuds in the ribs that made him gasp with pain. Curly was scarcely up to the weight of his brother Bob, and after a few moments Johnny Bull, hitting out with all his strength, sent the Trojan spinning to the ground.

"Hooray!"

"Well played, Johnny!" panted Harry Wharton breathlessly. "That was ripping!"

Then Harry resumed his attack upon Bob Williams, who remained a fixture, firm and indomitable as a rock.

Elsewhere, however, the Trojan supporters had fallen upon evil times.

Ponsonby & Co. had been engaged in close and vigorous conflict with a party of footballers; and the latter, indignation lending zest to their blows, sailed in to the attack in hurricane fashion, and pummelled the Highcliffians so unmercifully that the latter were reduced to a state of complete subjection. They lay in all directions on the turf, their howls of anguish awaking the echoes.

"Rally round, there!" roared Bob Williams anxiously. "Pick yourself up, Pon, you skulking slacker! Stop kissing the ground, Curly, and get on with the washing!"

Then, just as things were looking desperate for the Trojans, a startling interruption came about, in the person of popular Phyllis Howell. She was walking along the touch-line, a fascinating figure in her fresh spring costume.

Many a girl might have been excused for bolting on seeing such a gory combat; but Phyllis Howell didn't bolt. The colour faded from her cheeks for a moment, but she walked on, straight towards the combatants.

Bob Cherry was the first to notice her presence. He had just delivered a telling straight left, which had crashed full into Harold Skinner's face, and felled him to the ground.

"Oh, Bob!"

The soft, reproachful tone of his girl chum caused Bob Cherry to flush to the roots of his hair. He stood, shuffling awkwardly, before the fair Phyllis, but his eyes could not meet those of his accuser.

"I—I've just given this cad a fearful thrashing!" he stammered.

"So I observe," said Phyllis drily.

"You—you're not angry with me, Phyllis?"

"I am—very angry indeed! You have floored the very last boy I should want to see thrashed!"

Bob Cherry gave a jump.

"But Skinner's the biggest cad who ever breathed!" he gasped.

"So you think!" scoffed Phyllis. "I have reason to believe otherwise. You had no right to attack him in that brutal manner. He is not as strong as a horse, like you!"

"He was backing up the Trojans!" said Bob defiantly.

"Then he was doing his duty, and acting up to my instructions."

Bob Cherry almost fell down. He wondered vaguely for a moment whether Phyllis Howell was in her right mind.

"Let me explain," said the Cliff House girl, noting his bewilderment. "You remember the conversation I had with you the other day, when I told you I mistrusted these Trojans?"

Bob nodded.

"Well, I was determined to thresh the matter to the bottom, so I commissioned Skinner to find out all he could about them, and to give me information from time to time. In order to do this, it was necessary for Skinner to make himself chummy with the new boys."

"Oh!"

"Skinner's championship of them," continued Phyllis, "was only a pretence. He hates their treacherous conduct as much as you do, Bob."

"Oh, crumbs! I—I say, I'm awfully sorry!" blurted out Bob Cherry, helping the fallen junior to his feet.

"It's all right," said Skinner, with a rueful grin. "You weren't to know. Shush now! The others are coming!"

Phyllis Howell's appearance on the scene had put an end

"I—I've just given this cad a fearful thrashing!" stammered Bob Cherry. "You're not angry with me, Phyllis?" "I am—very angry indeed! You have floored the very last boy I should want to see thrashed!" Bob Cherry gave a jump. *(See Chapter* 10.)

to the pitched battle. The fellows respected Phyllis too much to scrap in her presence; and they had desisted at once when they saw her in conversation with Bob Cherry.

Skinner stepped closely up to the Cliff House girl, and whispered in her ear.

"The chain of evidence isn't complete yet," he said. "I've got a few more discoveries to make, but you can take it from me that the blessed Trojans will be bowled out before they're many days older!"

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.
The Midnight Avengers!

THE majority of the Removites felt very stiff and sore in the dormitory that evening. Some were suffering from casualties sustained in the football-match with St. Jim's; others bore obvious traces of the recent battle royal.

The Trojans found themselves in very bad odour. It was useless for them to deny having thrown the match away. The finger of scorn was levelled at them from all directions; and but for the fact that the fellows were fed-up with fighting, there would probably have been another upheaval.

"I say, you chaps," said Frank Nugent, "can you tell me if my nose is still in the same place? It seems to have got round behind my right ear."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And my jaw," groaned Peter Todd. "It's awful! I sha'n't be able to wolf any grub for days, thanks to that cad Ponsonby! I don't feel up to slogging anybody, at the moment, but I'd give a small fortune to be able to get my own back on those Highcliffe bounders!"

"Same here!" growled Johnny Bull.

While most of the fellows were nursing their injuries, Bob Williams spoke.

"Who's game for a raid on Highcliffe?" he asked.

"What!"

The juniors were astounded. They had been given ample

proof that the Trojans were as thick as thieves with Ponsonby & Co.; and yet here was Bob Williams calmly suggesting a nocturnal raid on Highcliffe.

"You—you don't mean that?" gasped Wharton.

"Every bit!"

"But you're on the best of terms with Ponsonby—love him like a brother, in fact. And yet you want to go over and slay him?"

"Precisely!" said Bob Williams. "I'm fed-up with Ponsonby! The sooner he's taught the error of his ways, the better it'll be for society in general. Who's going to enlist under my banner, and join me in a gigantic crusade against Highcliffe?"

"I am!" said Bolsover major emphatically.

"Same here," said Snoop and Stott and Trevor.

"Count me in," observed Peter Todd, after a moment's deliberation.

That settled it. If a shrewd, discerning fellow like Peter Todd considered the game worth the candle, the Famous Five and their friends had no compunctions in joining in.

"I'm blessed if I can understand why you've veered round so suddenly," said Harry Wharton. "Still, that's your bizney. How many of us are going over to do the dreadful deed?"

"Better limit the number," said Bob Williams. "We sha'n't need Bolsover & Co. in this act. My brother and myself, the Famous Five, and Peter Todd. That's eight. We ought to give a pretty good account of ourselves."

"Where do I come in?" asked Vernon-Smith.

"You can share in the slaughter, if you like."

"All serene!"

The juniors who were commissioned for the undertaking turned into bed fully dressed. Courtney of the Sixth saw lights out a few minutes later, and he did not suspect anything to be amiss.

"Good-night, kids!" he said genially.

"Good-night, Courtney!"

The Sixth-Former would have been vastly surprised had he looked into the Remove dormitory ten minutes after his departure. Candle-ends were speedily lighted, and the would-be invaders tumbled out, feeling quite fit for the task in hand, despite their injuries of a few hours previously.

"Good luck, you fellows!" called Tom Brown. "Bring back the scalps of Ponsonby & Co., and we'll love you for ever and a day!"

"Faith, an' Browney's right, intirely!" said Micky Desmond. "Smash the silly spalpeens to smithereens, bedad!"

"We shall waylay them while they're asleep," chuckled Bob Cherry. "In the stillness of the night, when they're snoring in the arms of Morpheus, we'll treat 'em to a fearful bombardment, and then bunk! It'll be a gorgeous feather in our cap!"

"If it comes off!" said Skinner, from his bed.

But Bob Cherry was too preoccupied to catch the note of warning in Skinner's voice. He forgot, too, at the moment, the recent conversation with Phyllis Howell.

"Shut up, Skinney!" he said. "You'd funk coming over, in any case. Come on, you fellows!"

Cautiously the juniors made their way down the stairs and along the corridor. They paused at the box-room window, and commenced to clamber through.

It was a moonless night, and the old elms in the Close swayed and creaked ominously in the heavy gale which had arisen from the sea. There seemed to be no possible fear of detection.

"Lead on, Macduff!" said Nugent. "If the Trojans make amends for the rotten show they put up this afternoon, I'm quite willing to take 'em to my bosom."

"What-ho!" said Peter Todd.

Bob Williams scaled the school wall, and the others followed. The Trojans tramped on ahead, lighting up the lonely country lane with the powerful rays of an electric torch. They spoke no word throughout the journey; but Harry Wharton & Co. were engaged in deep and earnest conversation the whole time. They were desperately eager to work off a tremendous jape on the insufferable Ponsonby and his cronies; and their hearts beat high with hope as they tramped along in the wake of Bob and Curly Williams.

Back at Greyfriars, in the Remove dormitory, Harold Skinner moved restlessly on a sleepless bed.

"The fools!" he muttered to himself, over and over again. "The mad fools! They little dream what they've let themselves in for! There's going to be foul play of some sort to-night, or I'm a Dutchman!"

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Last Straw!

"HERE we are!"

The raiders halted by the old school wall of Highcliffe. Overhead, the storm-clouds loomed black and ominous, but the Removites cared not a rap. They would willingly have walked back to Greyfriars in a blizzard so long as they had amply avenged themselves upon the bold, bad blades of Highcliffe.

"Over you go!" said Bob Cherry. "And mind you tread warily, my sons! It would be too foul to get laid by the heels now we've got to our giddy destination. We shouldn't leave Highcliffe alive!"

One by one the juniors clambered over the wall, and crept cautiously across the quadrangle.

Not a single light was visible at any of the windows. Boys and masters had long since retired for the night.

The party paused in the old archway, and Bob Williams broke his long silence.

"Listen, you chaps!" he muttered. "This is my plan of campaign. We'll arm ourselves with cricket-stumps and things from the box-room, and march up to the Fourth Form dormitory. Then we'll wade in and slaughter Ponsonby and his set, and make ourselves scarce before the rotters realise what's happening."

"Good egg!" said Johnny Bull. "They'll think it's an extra special Zepp raid, or something of the sort! What a stunning surprise-packet!"

The raiders proceeded at once to the box-room and armed themselves with weapons. Some of them were chuckling incessantly as they thought of the rude awakening which the hated Highcliffians would receive.

"All ready?" inquired Bob Williams.

"Quite!"

"Full steam ahead, old sport!"

Keeping closely in line, the Greyfriars juniors made their way along the darkened passage and up the stairs. The Trojans had fallen behind, and Harry Wharton temporarily took the lead.

The dormitory door was slightly ajar, and no sound came from within. This was not surprising, for the captain of Highcliffe had seen lights out nearly two hours since.

"Now then," came Bob Williams' voice from the rear, "when I give the order, rush into the dorm all together and take the bounders by storm!"

"Hadn't we better take our boots off?" whispered Peter Todd. "Some of them may wake up at once if they hear nine pairs of hoofs clumping about."

"That's so," said Bob Williams.

The invaders unlaced their boots, and left them outside, with the intention of taking them up again when they came out and rushing with them to some place of security. Then they braced themselves up for the attack.

"Charge!" exclaimed Bob Williams.

With one accord, Harry Wharton & Co. dashed into the dormitory. The Trojans remained outside, but in the excitement of the moment nobody noticed that they lingered.

"Sock it into 'em!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Rather!"

"Greyfriars for ever!"

Biff! Bang! Thud!

The cricket-stumps rose and fell on apparently sleeping forms; but, to the blank amazement of the wielders, not a single yell of pain was heard. They brought their weapons down with greater gusto than ever, but with the same result.

The situation was most uncanny. What had happened? Was it possible that the occupants of the dormitory were so deep in slumber that they did not feel the blows?

Then suddenly there came a sharp, grating sound from without.

Vernon-Smith was the first to interpret its meaning.

"We're locked in!" he said dramatically.

"What!"

"My hat!"

The juniors paused, utterly spellbound. The whole affair seemed to be part of some strange dream.

"Whatever can have happened?" came Johnny Bull's voice in the darkness.

"Listen!" said Wharton.

The unmistakable sound of chuckling could be heard quite distinctly. Then the incisive, jeering tones of Ponsonby exclaimed:

"What price Highcliffe now? Ever been had?"

ANSWERS

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MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FOR READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1D. OUT TO-DAY.

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Harry Wharton almost gnashed his teeth with rage. He drew out a box of matches and struck one. Then a howl of utter incredulity left his lips.

"There's not a soul in the dormitory!"

"Good heavens!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Why—what——"

"It's a trick!" shouted Nugent.

"The trickfulness is truly terrific!" chimed in Hurree Singh. "The ludicrous Trojans have lurefully led us into the esteemed trapfulness!"

There could be no doubt about it now. Once again the brothers Williams had played their schoolfellows false.

"It must have been a prearranged plot with Ponsonby," said Nugent savagely. "The Highcliffe cads haven't been to bed at all. They simply stowed themselves away somewhere, and caught us napping! My hat! Wait till I can put my hands on those Trojan traitors! They'll be made to sit up for this!"

"Hear, hear!"

Harry Wharton tried the handle of the dormitory door, but it was locked on the outside. The Famous Five, with Vernon-Smith and Peter Todd, were prisoners in an alien dormitory!

Wharton rapped viciously on the door with his clenched fist.

"Hallo!" came Ponsonby's cool voice.

"Let us out at once, you rotter!"

"Not this evenin'!" was the affable retort. "Some other evenin'!"

"If you don't unlock this door we sha'n't be responsible for our actions afterwards!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Play the game, Pon!" said Vernon-Smith. "It's an awfully rotten trick to keep us locked in like this! Besides, your own fellows will want to come here presently."

"Not a bit of it," said Ponsonby. "We're diggin' in the Third and Fifth Form dormitories, as there's several beds vacant. Look here, if you fellows will agree to accept a jolly good lammin', an' admit that Highcliffe's top dog, we'll let you out!"

"We'll never sink to such a depth as that!" said Wharton at once.

"Then you can stay where you are till the mornin'. Mr. Mobbs will come in an' find you, an' then you'll catch it hot and strong!"

"Oh, you cad!"

"Take your choice," said Ponsonby, unmoved. "Are you comin' out or stayin' in?"

"We'll stay!" was Wharton's reply. "But if we get called over the coals for what's happened to-night, we'll exact such a revenge that you'll find life's not worth living! Got that?"

"Very well!" said Ponsonby. "You've made your own bed, and now you must lie on it! Good-night!"

And there was a sound of retreating footsteps without.

"Here's a pretty go!" growled Johnny Bull. "We're caught in a trap ratfully, as Inky puts it. The worst of it is there's no possible way out. The door's a lot too strong to burst open, apart from the row we should make. Then, again, we should be outnumbered when we got outside."

"And the windows are much too high from the ground for us to descend," said Vernon-Smith. "Besides, the rotters have taken the sheets away, so we shouldn't be able to make a rope, in any case. Where's Courtenay and the Caterpillar? I shouldn't have thought they'd be parties to a mean trick of this sort!"

"They're both away at the Caterpillar's place," said Wharton. "Now I come to think of it, Smithson and Shelley have gone, too. One of De Courcy's relatives has won the D.S.O., and there's a celebration under way."

"Those Trojans will have a good deal to answer for when we get out!" said Vernon-Smith. "Meanwhile, I'm going to make the best of a bad job, and get to sleep."

And Vernon-Smith suited the action to the word. Fully dressed, he flung himself down upon one of the beds, and a few minutes later was breathing deeply.

Worn out by their recent exertions, the other members of the ill-fated expedition followed their comrade's example.

Midnight boomed solemnly out from the old clock-tower, and the fellows who had hoped to evolve the biggest jape of the season lay fast asleep in the dormitory of their hated foes.

After what manner would be their awakening?

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.
"Well Played, Skinner!"

IN the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars, Harold Skinner awoke with a start. He had fallen into a light doze, of what duration he knew not.

Skinner's thoughts turned instinctively to the juniors who had set out on the expedition to Highcliffe. What had happened? Had they returned, bearing their blushing honours thick upon them, or was his surmise correct—namely, that there had been foul play?

Skinner slipped silently from his bed. The April night was chilly, but the junior did not hesitate. He fumbled about in his jacket-pocket, and brought to light his watch. Then, striking a match, he blinked at the timepiece with sleepy eyes.

Two o'clock!

Even as he looked, the school clock solemnly chimed the hour. Still holding the lighted match, Skinner glanced round the dormitory, and his worst fears were confirmed. Several of the beds were still unoccupied.

The raiders should have been back long before this, Skinner reflected. Then his lips came together grimly. He doubted no longer that Harry Wharton & Co. had been lured into a trap at Highcliffe by the Trojans.

"I warned 'em," he muttered, "but they took no notice. It would serve 'em jolly well right if I went off to sleep and left 'em to face the music in the morning. But I can't do that—especially after what I promised Phyllis. It's up to me to get 'em out of their sorry plight. Here goes!"

And Skinner gave a sudden shout which awoke everyone in the dormitory save Billy Bunter, who would have slept like a top if a cannon were discharged close to his ear.

"Wharrer marrer?" came in sleepy tones from Bolsover's bed.

"It's past two o'clock," replied Skinner, "and Wharton and his pals haven't come back."

"Blow Wharton, and blow his pals!"

"But it's jolly serious!" persisted Skinner. "They've fallen into the hands of the Amalekites with a vengeance! You can bet your boots Ponsonby's kidnapped 'em!"

"What!" exclaimed a score of wondering voices.

Skinner lighted a candle and looked around.

"Look here, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "It's my firm belief that the Trojans have led Wharton & Co. into a snare. They must have fixed it all up with Ponsonby beforehand. I'm pretty certain they're being kept prisoners over at Highcliffe, or they would have been back long before this. It's up to us to go and rescue them."

"Great Scott!"

"Sounds like a giddy romance," murmured Bulstrode drowsily. "How could they possibly have kidnapped 'em, Skinney?"

"I don't quite know yet, but they must have lured them into a trap somehow. They left here hours ago, and would have been back long before this in the ordinary way.

"That's so," said Tom Brown. "The more you think about it, the more fishy it seems. What do you suggest we do, Skinney?"

"Go over to Highcliffe in force and get 'em out of their fix," said Skinner. "They're probably under lock and key in the Fourth Form dormitory. That's the most likely place. And if the Highcliffe authorities find them there in the morning, there'll be such a fearful row that it doesn't bear thinking of. Wharton & Co. would be reported to Dr. Locke, and it's quite on the cards that they'd be expelled."

"I should think that would suit you down to the ground, Skinney!" said Ogilvy.

"Rats! I'm not so black as I'm painted. But it's no use wasting time in jawing. If nobody else is coming with me, I'll jolly well go by myself!"

"Faith, an' I'm with ye, Skinney darlint!" exclaimed Micky Desmond. "I'm not stayin' out afther that, bedad!"

"Nor I!" added several voices.

"Up you get, then!" said Skinner. "We'll have a great fight in freedom's cause!"

It was a most unusual thing for Harold Skinner to assume the leadership of the Form. But no one disputed his position, and a moment later everybody tumbled out of bed—or nearly everybody. Billy Bunter and Lord Mauleverer—slackers both—wouldn't have vacated their downy couches in the night for worlds.

"Wouldn't it be wise to get help from Coker & Co?" said Mark Linley, buttoning his waistcoat.

"Rats! We're thirty strong, and if we can't take the Highcliffe bounders by surprise and pulverise 'em, we ought to be flayed alive! Buck up, you fellows!"

It was a risky proceeding for nearly the whole of the Form to break bounds in such a daring fashion; but there was safety in numbers, and the thought of Harry Wharton & Co. chafing in confinement at Highcliffe acted as a splendid stimulant to the Removites. They made their exit via the box-room window, and moved in a solid phalanx to the school wall, which was scaled without difficulty.

Not a soul was encountered on the journey to Highcliffe. Even P.-c. Tozer, who might have been expected to be patrolling his beat, was conspicuous by his absence.

"Fortune favours the brave!" chuckled Bulstrode. "Go ahead, Skinney!"

To scale the Highcliffe wall and make their way into the building was only the work of a few moments; and then,

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at Skinner's command, the party ascended the stairs to the Fourth Form dormitory.

There was nobody in sight. Both stairs and landing were deserted, and a silence as of the grave brooded over the building.

Skinner softly tried the handle of the dormitory door, and gave a sudden exclamation.

"I thought as much!" he said. "The door's locked!"

"And Wharton and his chums are inside?" asked Tom Brown.

"Undoubtedly."

"Then where are Ponsonby and his set?"

"Goodness knows! They may be in there with them. But I'm inclined to think they're dossing in some other dormitory to-night. Anyway, prepare for action, you chaps! I'm going to try and make somebody hear."

And Skinner knocked loudly on the panels.

There was no reply for a moment.

Rap! Rap! Rap!

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a familiar voice from inside the dormitory. "That you, Pon, you scraggy-faced rotter?"

"No; it's me—Skinner!" was the reply. "I've come to relieve the giddy garrison! And I've brought about thirty fellows along to back me up."

"Hurrah!"

Bob Cherry was heard to rouse his comrades and impart to them the glad news.

"It seems too good to be true!" said Harry Wharton. "Are you there, Skinney?"

"Yes."

"How did you know we were here?"

"I guessed this was what would happen all along. You ignored the warning I gave you when you started out. Have you any idea where the key of this door is?"

"In Ponsonby's pocket."

"Then we shall have to take it from him by force. Which dormitory is he sleeping in?"

"The Fifth Form, I believe," said Wharton. "Are you going to beard the rotter in his den?"

"What-ho!"

"Hurrah! You're a brick, Skinney, old chap! Good luck to you!"

And, leaving unbounded joy and delight in the hearts of the captives, the vast army of Removites made tracks for the Fifth Form dormitory.

Though they tried to make their approach as noiseless as possible, they were heard by the time they had gained the landing, and Ponsonby, leaping from his bed, shouted to his warriors to rally round.

The next moment the candle-light gleamed on a most wild and enthralling scene. Taking the inmates of the dormitory completely by surprise, the Greyfriars juniors sailed in to the attack.

The Highcliffe Fifth-Formers were awake, but they took no active interest in the proceedings. It was no business of theirs, and they left Ponsonby & Co. to fight their own battles.

For a full five minutes the fierce conflict raged, and every second saw the Greyfriars fellows coming out on top. Micky Desmond was tackling Ponsonby, and when the valiant son of the Emerald Isle dealt Pon a terrific knock-out blow there was a delighted shout of applause.

"Wrest the giddy key from him!" exclaimed Skinner. "Look sharp!"

In a flash half a dozen juniors pounced upon the prostrate form of Ponsonby. They went through his pockets—for he had not undressed—and Dick Penfold triumphantly produced the key after a brief search.

Meanwhile, the rest of Ponsonby's followers had been thoroughly and completely conquered. They lay groaning on the floor of the dormitory, recognising that they had more than met their match. The whole thing was so totally unexpected that they had been put out of action almost before they realised the gravity of the situation.

"Now for the Trojans!" said Bulstrode grimly. "We'll give 'em the biggest gruelling they've ever had in their natural! Where shall we find the beasts, Ponsonby?"

"I'm hanged if I'll tell you!" snarled Pon savagely.

"Then we'll try a little gentle persuasion. Hand me that cricket-stump, Pen!"

"What-ho!" chuckled Penfold.

Whack, whack, whack!

Ponsonby squirmed and roared as the heavy stump descended upon him again and again. The dust rose in a cloud from his tightly-fitting trousers, and he gave ample proof that he was not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

"Ow-ow-ow! Chuck it, you idiot!"

"Tell us where we shall find the Trojans, then!" said Bulstrode. "And mind it's the truth, or you'll get another dose when we come back!"

"They're in the Third-Form dormitory!" whined Ponsonby.

"Good! This way, you fellows! We'll set the captives free, and they can share in the execution!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were released from their prison, their faces radiant with delight. They put on their boots, and accompanied the rescuers to the Third-Form dormitory.

A staggering surprise awaited them. The room was full of slumbering forms, but there was no trace of the Trojans!

In vain the Greyfriars fellows questioned the occupants of the dormitory. They denied ever having seen Bob and Curly Williams, and Harry Wharton & Co. failed to get a spark of satisfaction from the cross-examination.

"They've bunked!" said Bob Cherry. "Bunked back to Greyfriars! We'll have another search for 'em here, to make sure; but it's my belief that we shall find 'em at Greyfriars."

"Same here!" said Skinner.

And they were right. The rival school was ransacked as thoroughly as circumstances allowed, but the Trojans had disappeared as suddenly and completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed them up.

"Better get back!" said Nugent. "We'll rout the rotters out quick enough, and then, my sons, the fireworks will begin!"

And the Greyfriars juniors made their way from the premises, and trudged back to Greyfriars. A terrific storm was raging, and driving sheets of rain beat into their faces as they went along. But they heeded not these discomforts. All they thought of at that moment was their forthcoming meeting with the Trojans, and what they would do with that amiable couple when they succeeded in tracking them down to their lair.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

True Blue!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry uttered that sudden exclamation as the gates of Greyfriars came in sight. The rain and wind had abated somewhat by this time, and a lurid glare lit up the sky as Bob Cherry uttered the words.

"Looks like a fire," was Harry Wharton's comment. "My hat! Can it be possible——"

The speaker broke off suddenly. There could be no mistake about it this time. A dense cloud of smoke was wafted towards them as they crossed the Close, and it was proceeding from the Remove dormitory.

"Great Scott!" gasped Nugent, white to the lips. "This—this is awful!"

"Ghastly!" said Johnny Bull. "Talk about a conflagration!"

Quivering tongues of flame leaped and darted from the dormitory windows like lightning-flashes. The huge party of juniors in the Close looked on, spellbound.

Then the alarm sounded forth on the chilly night air, and the Close rapidly filled with seniors and juniors and masters.

Presently a couple of breathless figures dashed up, gazing excitedly at the appalling scene. They were the Trojans!

In normal circumstances Harry Wharton & Co. would have hurled themselves upon the brothers Williams, and smitten them hip and thigh. But the present situation was far too serious and critical for anything of that sort.

"Where have you bounders been?" was all Wharton said.

"The Cross Keys," said Curly. "Not much good hiding the truth now. We went there directly we left Highcliffe, and played cards with Cobb and Banks."

"You've been gambling at this time of night?"

"Yes."

"Then you're a bigger pair of outsiders than we've taken you for!"

"That's right, pile it on!" said Bob Williams bitterly. "I say, what an awful blaze! I s'pose all the chaps are well out of harm's way?"

"I hope so, and chance it," said Harry Wharton. "All the Remove fellows have been over to Highcliffe."

"Except two!" said Skinner suddenly.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," went on Skinner excitedly, "that Bunter and Mauly are up there in the dorm!"

The Removites looked aghast.

"Impossible!" said Harry Wharton. "They've come down with the rest, of course! Hang it all, though, there's no sign of them!"

"My boys," broke in Mr. Quelch, in agitated tones, "what

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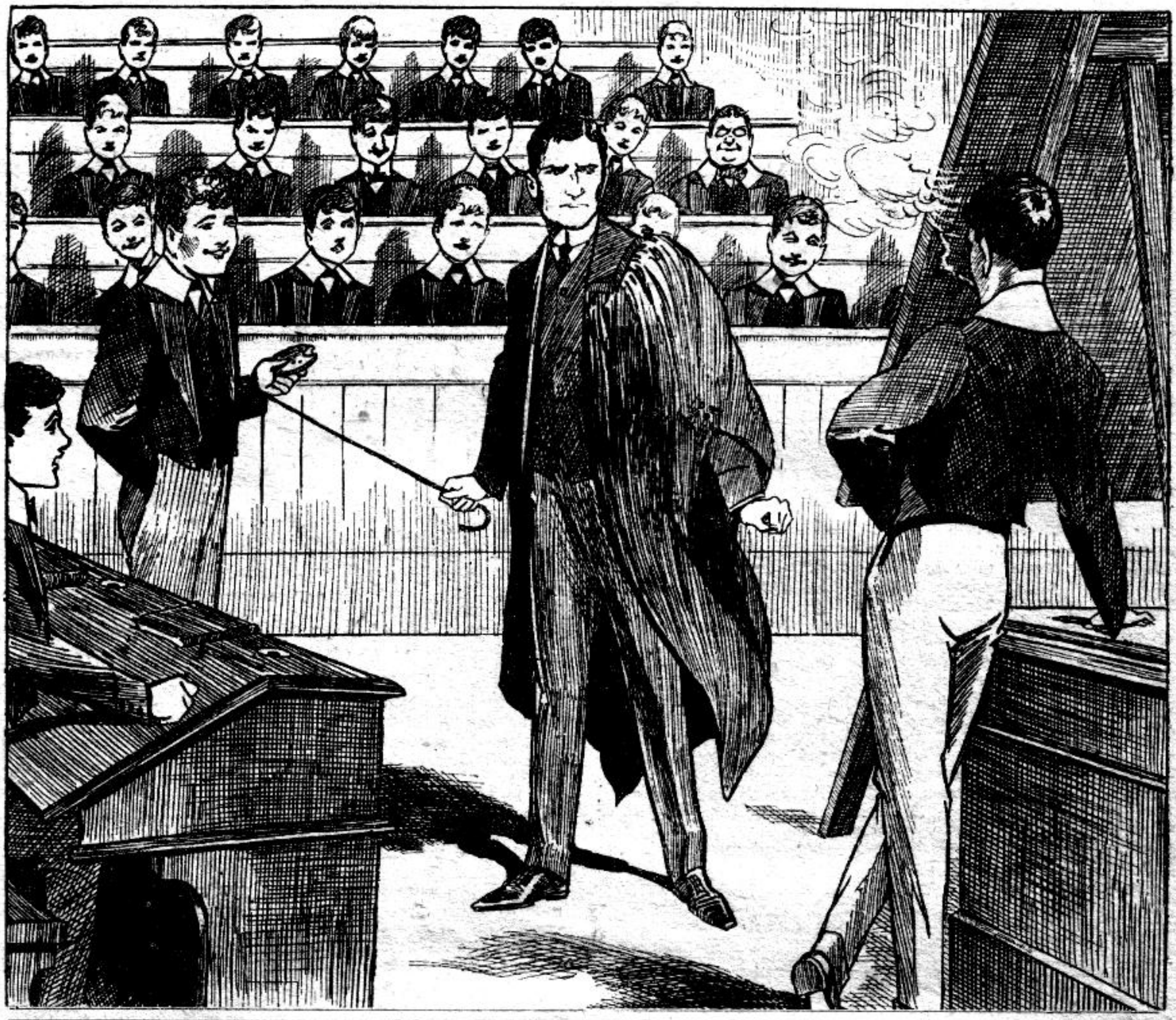

Mr. Quelch was too busy with his castigation of Curly to notice what was going on a few yards away. Bob Williams blew out a cloud of smoke with profound contentment. "The chap must be mad!" muttered Wharton. And then suddenly Mr. Quelch wheeled round. (*See Chapter* 5.)

is the matter? Surely none of the boys are captive in the burning dormitory?"

"I fear so, sir," said Wharton. "There's no sign of Bunter and Mauleverer in the Close. They're sound sleepers, and probably didn't awaken to the danger."

"But why did you not rouse them?"

"Ahem! We—we've been out, sir!" said Wharton desperately.

"What? Practically the whole of my Form have absented themselves from the school in the night?" gasped Mr. Quelch. "This is astounding! But I must deal with you later. Meanwhile, those unfortunate boys must be liberated."

A dozen juniors promptly dashed into the building and up the stairs. A moment later they returned, white-faced and crestfallen.

"The landing's impassable!" explained Johnny Bull. "Nothing but smoke and flame! If those two chaps are in the dorm, there's not a vestige of hope!"

Coker & Co. of the Fifth were busy with the hydrant; but for a time the flames showed no sign of abatement.

"Curly," said Bob Williams, clutching his brother by the arm, "we must fetch those fellows out of it!"

"But how?"

"There's such things as ladders. Give me a hand at once!"

Curly Williams needed no second bidding. He raced off with his brother to Gosling's quarters, and they returned at length with a long ladder, which they promptly reared up against the outer wall.

Then the Trojans dashed their handkerchiefs into the nearest fire-bucket, bound them about their mouths and nostrils, and commenced the ascent.

"Come down!" called Mr. Quelch hastily. "It is madness—sheer madness—to make the attempt! You can do nothing now!"

But the Trojans didn't seem to think so. They went on with their precarious task, and were soon lost to sight in the thick haze of smoke overhead.

Whole moments passed—moments of tense, thrilling anxiety for the watchers below. What had happened to the Trojans? Had they been unable to resist the overpowering fierceness of the fumes? Or had they managed to locate the two Removites, and convey them to safety?

Then, of a sudden, came a shout from above. It was the voice of Curly Williams, feeble and faint—the voice of one who was face to face with deadly danger, even death itself!

"I'm coming!" called Curly.

And he descended the ladder slowly—oh, so slowly—to the assembled throng beneath! Over his shoulder was a limp and unconscious form—that of Lord Mauleverer.

Step by step, Curly Williams descended It was seen, when he neared the ground, that his clothes were scorched and his face pallid.

Willing hands relieved him of his burden when he was only three rungs from the earth, and then the plucky rescuer sank down upon the flagstones, overcome by his strenuous exertions in that hour of peril.

Meanwhile, what of Bob Williams? That cheerful youth

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had been confronted with the difficult—the terribly difficult—task of bearing Billy Bunter to safety. Bunter's weight was prodigious, and strong and sturdy though he was, Bob Williams knew in his heart that it would be a human impossibility to descend with the fat junior in the same manner as Curly had done.

The fire had waxed its fiercest now, and the effect of the hose had begun to make itself felt. But to remain in the dormitory with the unconscious Owl of the Remove would be madness, and Bob Williams knew it.

Half-suffocated though he was, the Trojan hastily prepared an improvised rope of sheets. Then he attached the helpless Bunter securely to one end, and with a great deal of difficulty heaved him up to the window.

The smoke-clouds had cleared somewhat, and the onlookers distinguished Bunter's fat form, and sent up a loud cheer. The sound stirred all that was heroic and courageous in Bob Williams, and with set teeth he went about his work.

The sheets were tightly knotted, and Bunter's peril was slight. Everything depended on the fellow who was engaged in lowering him; and that fellow had nerves of steel.

Bunter's arrival to safety was hailed with a shout from below, and then Bob Williams, swinging himself through the window, swarmed down the ladder. He was made of sterner stuff than Curly, and showed but slight traces of the terrible ordeal from which he had just emerged.

The air rang again and again with cheering. Bunter and Lord Mauleverer were safe; but what might have happened to them but for the plucky Trojans nobody dared to speculate.

The fire, the origin of which was never discovered, was soon mastered, and, to the great relief of the authorities, very little material damage was found to have been done. The walls and ceilings of the Remove dormitory would require renovating; also the balustrade on the landing. Beyond this the fire had wrought little havoc.

The Removites were ordered to spend the remainder of the night in their studies, and Bob and Curly Williams were taken with Bunter and Lord Mauleverer to the sanatorium. No one was seriously burned, but there were several injuries of a minor nature which would need to be attended to.

Very few of the fellows got to sleep again on that eventful night. Their minds were full of the recent happening, and a long, long time was likely to elapse ere they forgot the memorable scene of the fire.

"As for the Trojans," said Bob Cherry, "they've turned up real trumps, after all. I could forgive them anything after this!"

And Bob's warm-hearted statement found an echo in the hearts of every member of the Greyfriars Remove.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.
After Darkness, Light!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were not surprised when, after breakfast next morning, they were summoned to the Head's study. Bob and Curly Williams, none the worse for their adventure, were also required to attend.

"My boys," said Dr. Locke, when they entered, "in face of the heroism of Williams major and minor, I scarcely like to be severe with you; but you will understand that there are certain facts to which I cannot, in my capacity of headmaster, close my eyes. It appears that practically the whole of the Remove Form ran rampant last evening, and broke bounds."

"That's so, sir," said Harry Wharton quietly.

"Where did you go?"

"To Highcliffe, sir."

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head. "Do you seriously mean to tell me, Wharton, that the entire Form went to Highcliffe for the purpose of putting into effect a practical joke?"

"Not exactly, sir. Nine of us went over at first, and we were caught and detained by the Highcliffe fellows, so the rest of the chaps wondered where we had got to, and came after us."

Wharton was sportsman enough not to mention the treachery of the Trojans. He felt that their heroism of the night before wiped all their shortcomings off the slate.

Dr. Locke reflected for some moments. When he spoke, his tone was kindly.

"I am willing to be lenient with you on this occasion," he said. "Every boy concerned in this affair will write me two hundred lines, and bring them to this study by the end of the week. As for you, Williams major and minor, I think you are two of the bravest boys it has ever been my pleasure to know, and I congratulate you most heartily upon your great gallantry in saving the lives of two of your schoolfellows!"

Bob Williams stepped forward. His face was pale, and a curious light gleamed in his eyes.

"I don't think you'll be so ready to praise us, sir," he said, "when you know the blunt truth."

"Dear me!" murmured the Head. "Pray explain yourself, Williams!"

"I might as well make a clean breast of everything," said Bob. "We shall get no mercy, I suppose, and we want none. We're both the biggest pair of outsiders that ever breathed!"

"My hat!" muttered Bob Cherry. "We're on the verge of an explosion now!"

"Curly and I," continued Bob Williams, addressing the Head, "have no right to be here at all."

"What!"

"We worked a deception on you, sir, in order to get to Greyfriars. The letter you received, which was supposed to have come from our pater, was faked."

"Williams!"

"It's quite true, sir. And you had no suspicions, so we were admitted as new boys in the ordinary way. There's a touch of humour about it all, too. You will be surprised to learn, sir, that we're each nearly nineteen years of age."

"Great goodness!"

The Head gasped, and so did Harry Wharton & Co. They had expected some astounding revelations, but nothing quite so astounding as this!

"But why—what——" gasped Dr. Locke, utterly flabbergasted. "What was your object in coming to Greyfriars? Was it to commit a burglary?"

"Nothing so bad as that, though I must confess it was pretty bad," said Bob Williams. "We came here because we were bribed to do so."

"By whom were you bribed?"

"Will you promise not to get the chap into trouble if we tell you his name, sir?" asked Bob.

"Certainly!" said the Head; and the juniors in the study waited breathlessly.

"It was Ponsonby."

"The Highcliffe boy, do you mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"But why should he want to induce you to come to Greyfriars under false pretences?"

"It was a plot against the Remove, sir," said Curly. "Ponsonby hates Harry Wharton & Co. like poison, and he wanted them taken down several pegs. He knew we were pretty hefty sort of fellows, and could worm our way into the footer team and all that sort of thing; and he wanted us to let the side down every time we played."

The Head understood at last.

"Did you need money very badly, that you should sink so low?" he asked.

"Well, we were fairly stony, sir," confessed Curly. "Next month we're going into the Officers' Training Corps, and we wanted some cash so that we could have a fling when we were in the Army. That seemed to be an easy way of getting it; though I must say we feel jolly well ashamed of ourselves now. Can you forgive us, sir?"

"Freely, my boys!" said the kindly old Head. "Your confession has done much to alleviate the enormity of your conduct. I trust you will strive for more honourable ends in future."

"Thank you, sir! We shall!" said Bob Williams resolutely. "As for Ponsonby's money, we wouldn't touch it with a barge-pole, after what's happened. Do you fellows forgive us as well?"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry Wharton. "Give us your fists, you two. You're true blue, in spite of everything!"

The eyes of the Trojans were glistening as they gripped hands all round. Their miserable deception was over now, and in any case they would soon have been bowled out, with two such cute people as Phyllis Howell and Harold Skinner on their track. By their prompt confession they had saved themselves from deeper degradation.

"You fellows are real sports!" said Bob Williams. "And you're a brick, too, sir! We'll leave Greyfriars to-night, and Wharton can resume his old position as skipper of the Remove, and long may he reign."

"Hear, hear!" added Curly heartily.

And the Trojans turned and left the study, slowly followed by Harry Wharton & Co.

. . . . . .

That evening there was a unique celebration in No. 1 Study, and the guests of honour were Bob and Curly Williams. Skinner was invited to the feast, as was only fitting; and Phyllis Howell was also warmly welcomed. And when the little party finally broke up, scores and scores of Greyfriars fellows streamed out into the dusky quadrangle to bid good luck and God-speed to the Terrible Two!

THE END.

(Do not miss "FALSE EVIDENCE!" next Monday's Grand Story of the Chums of Greyfriars, by FRANK RICHARDS.)

MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FOR READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1D. OUT TO-DAY.

..THE.. GOLDEN KEY!

A Long Instalment of our Magnificent New Adventure Serial Story.

- - By - -

T. C. BRIDGES.

Dick whirled to meet the coming danger. He was just too late. A rope came hissing through the air, and the noose at the end settled over his head.

(*See page* 21.)

The First Instalments Told How:

DICK DAUNT and DUDLEY DREW, two chums, discover a letter in a bottle which they have extracted from the body of a shark.

They are informed by its contents that a certain MATTHEW SNELL is marooned on an unnamed island in the Keys, and he offers a substantial reward to any persons effecting his rescue.

On going to the island, however, they are unable to find Mr. Snell.

EZRA CRAY, a moonshiner, and his scoundrelly colleagues then visit the island, and, finding that it contains gold, attempt to kill the two chums.

Having previously hidden their boat, Dick and Dudley seek refuge in a cave.

Leaving the cave to replenish their food supplies, they are captured by the gang. Cray then orders Rufe, a negro, to fix leg-irons on them.

"All right, boss; I'll fix them!" he answers.

(Now go on with the story.)

Cray's Threat.

Dick's lips tightened. He realised now what was afoot. He glanced at Dudley. Dudley's face was white, but with anger, not fear, and his eyes sparkled dangerously. Dick knew that if his chum's bands were loose for an instant, Cray's life was not worth one minute's purchase. He made him a quick sign to control himself, for he knew that what Cray was longing for above everything else was to break down the cool contempt with which his prisoners regarded him, and wring from them some sign of emotion.

In a minute or so the huge nigger was back with the irons, which, at Cray's command, he proceeded to rivet on the ankles first of Dick, then of Dudley. They were regular prison irons—the sort that are put on runaway or refractory convicts. They were connected by a long and heavy chain which was looped up and fastened to a belt around the wearer's waist.

When all was finished Cray surveyed them with an evil leer.

"Now, I guess you won't run a great way!" he snarled. "But yew'll work, my young friends. Yes, yew'll work like niggers—like black niggers, only a dern sight harder!"

He cackled again like an angry jackdaw, and the sound filled Dick with a sudden and intense longing to drive his fist into the face of the evil beast.

"Now, take 'em down to the washings," ordered Cray. And Rufe, only too glad of a chance to pay off his score

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against the white boys, strutted off, driving them, helpless, before him.

They were taken to the waste of bare gravel where the wretched convicts toiled under the rifles of their guards, and there the thongs which bound their wrists were loosened, and each had a shovel thrust into his swollen, stiffened hands.

"Now dig!" snapped Cray. "Dig, dern ye, or I'll hev ye out and tie ye up and warm ye till yew do!"

Dick saw that there was no help for it, and, quietly taking his shovel, began to turn the gravel into the nearest cradle.

But Dudley hesitated.

"Come on, Dudley," said Dick under his breath. "Get on with the work. It's the only thing to do for the present."

Dudley's face was like death. There was a look in his eyes which Dick had never seen before.

"With the niggers," he whispered—"with the niggers! Dick, I wish I'd gone overboard! I'd rather be in the jaws of a tiger-shark than here!"

And Dick, knowing the old Southern blood which flowed in his friend's veins, and the horrible degradation which it was to him to work with niggers, for once had no word of comfort to offer.

At Bay.

For a time Cray's white associates stood by the creek-bank and amused themselves by jeering at the two new recruits to the labour gang. But after a while, and as they got no answers from their victims, that sort of thing began to pall, and they went up to the shack for breakfast.

Dick and Dudley had had no breakfast—nothing since the scanty meal of bully-beef and biscuit on the previous night. And they had gone through a great deal during the past twenty-four hours. They were very weary, and soon became faint with hunger.

Dick saw Dudley's face go from white to grey, and as the hours passed, and the sun blazed down hotter and hotter, saw him stagger as he lifted shovelful after shovelful of the gravel. True, there was water—plenty of it—and even the two brutal mulattoes who guarded them did not prevent them from drinking as much as they pleased. It was only this that kept them going.

At noon one of the mulattoes in charge blew a whistle, and the gang straightened their bent backs and slouched away to their barracks. Dick and Dudley followed. Dudley staggered as he walked. He was still suffering from that bad blow when he had fallen in the cave on the previous day. That and the heat and humiliation—to say nothing of stark hunger—had brought him very low indeed.

Yet Dick did not dare offer to help him, for fear the guards might interfere. The latter forced them into the hut with the negroes.

The place was filthy. It swarmed with flies, which settled in humming hordes on the refuse lying about. No civilised person would have kept a pig in such a place. Around it was a rough but heavily-built stockade of logs, with two rows of barbed wire along the top. The entrance was closed by heavy bars, which fitted into sockets and which were set with great spikes.

For the negroes themselves such precautions seemed quite unnecessary. The unfortunate creatures were in such miserable condition that not one of them could have run a hundred yards even if there had been no fence at all. Not one of them had so much as spoken to Dudley or Dick. They seemed hardly to notice them. Hollow-cheeked, gaunt, ragged, and dirty, whatever their crimes had been, they had paid for them a thousand times.

As soon as they were all inside the enclosure rations were dealt out. To each man was given a handful of coarse maize-meal, known as hominy, and a single slice of what is called in the South "white meat," or sow belly. This is the cheapest and nastiest form of salt pork, cut from the "razor-back" hogs which roam the pine-forests of South Florida.

The boys took their rations in silence. There was no use complaining. Food was absolutely necessary in order to keep themselves alive. To each was also handed a tin can, presumably for cooking purposes. Rufe, who dealt out the rations, added a jeering recommendation to hurry up with their cooking, for they'd have to go to work again in an hour's time.

They were both so utterly worn out that the mere exertion of making a fire seemed beyond them. Yet they could not by any possibility eat the food raw.

They withdrew to one corner of the place, and there Dick forced Dudley to lie down while he himself collected some chips, and, following the example of their fellow-slaves, lit a small fire.

There was water in a barrel by the gate. He boiled the hominy, and toasted the rashers on the end of a bit of stick. There was not time to cook the hominy properly, while the bacon should have been soaked first to make it eatable. But, horrible as the stuff was, it did something to fill their stomachs, and for the rest of the time they lay flat on their faces, resting, as far as rest was possible.

Too soon came the whistle summoning them back to the afternoon's toil. The heat seemed worse than ever, for the breeze had died away, and the sun blazed down with terrible force.

Soon Dudley began to flag again. Dick watched him anxiously. Dudley had barely recovered from the ague, and working in the sun with their feet in wet gravel was the surest way of bringing it back again. But Dudley did not utter a word of complaint. He kept on like a machine, shovelling the golden gravel into the cradle. Golden it was, in truth. They could actually see the specks of yellow metal in almost every spadeful.

It was about five o'clock that the trouble came. Quite suddenly Dudley reeled and, in the very act of lifting his shovel, dropped.

Dick instantly dropped his own shovel, and, lifting him, carried him to the grass at the side of the creek.

The nearest mulatto got there as soon as he did. He was a yellow-faced mongrel, known as Zeke Russ, a short, square man, with high cheekbones like a Chinaman, and a face deeply pitted with scars of smallpox.

"Yo' white man, what yo' think yo're doing?" he began, in a hectoring tone.

"My friend has fainted," answered Dick quietly. "Fetch some whisky."

For a moment—so strong is the word of the white man where the nigger is concerned—Russ hesitated. But only for a moment. Then he burst into an ugly laugh.

"Whisky! Mo' like a whip—dat's what he wants!" And so saying, he kicked the insensible Dudley brutally in the ribs.

It was the last thing he ever did in his life. Without a sound Dick was on him. Russ had his rifle, and Dick nothing but his bare hands. Yet Russ never had a chance.

Before Russ know what was happening Dick, ironed as he was, had wrested the weapon from him. Russ, terrified at the cold fury which blazed in Dick's eyes, stumbled backwards.

Dick swung up the butt, and brought it down on the yellow brute's head with a force that even the double thickness of a negro's skull could not resist. The bone crushed like rotten wood, and the man dropped as does a poleaxed bullock. He was dead before he reached the ground.

There came a yell from the other guard, who was on the far side of the creek-bed, but before he could make up his mind whether to shoot or run, Dick had him covered with the captured rifle.

"Put up your hands!" he ordered, and there was a ring in his voice which caused the other to obey with almost ludicrous haste. His rifle clattered on the ground, exploding in its fall.

Now was Dick's chance to escape. Yet what could he do with his legs ironed, and Dudley still insensible on the ground?

"Pick up that rifle, one of you!" he shouted to the negroes.

Not one moved. Terrified, nerveless from long ill-usage, they stood herded like so many sheep.

Shouts came from the direction of the hut. With the tail of his eye Dick saw four men running down towards the creek.

He ground his teeth in despair. He could not move, and he dared not turn his rifle aside from the second guard for fear the man might recover from his panic and regain his own weapon.

It was Cray himself—Cray, Degan, and two other men who were charging down towards him. All were armed.

"What's up?" roared Cray. Then, with a fierce oath: "It's them whelps again!"

"Stop!" shouted Dick, in a voice that carried further than Cray's bellow of rage. "Stop! If any of you come another step I'll shoot your other guard!"

Terms.

It was a queer scene. Dick, white-faced and desperate, standing over Dudley's insensible form, kept his rifle-muzzle full on the wretched guard, who, with no cover to protect him, stood shaking and shivering in an extremity of terror.

For a moment or two there was dead silence. No one moved.

At last Cray, much against his will, was obliged to bottle up his wrath.

"What yew want anyways, yew, Daunt?" he demanded in a voice hoarse with badly-suppressed rage.

Dick's answer was prompt. He had already decided what he would ask for.

MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FOR READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND," 1D. OUT TO-DAY.

"Our boat, enough provisions and water to take us across, and a half-share of the gold."

Cray burst into a jeering laugh.

"Yew wants the earth ploughed up and fenced in, don't yew?"

"Those are my terms, and easy ones, too. We were here before you, and, by rights, all the gold is ours. We staked the claim. As for you, if you got your deserts, you'd all be hung. You came over here and did your level best to murder us in cold blood, and now you're kicking because I ask for only half the gold."

Cray was about to burst out again, but Bendall spoke to him in a voice too low for Dick to hear what he said, and Cray refrained. When he spoke again it was in a milder tone.

"You've got the drop on us, an' I s'pose we'll hev to do as you say. But I can't do nothing without Bent. Guess I'd best go along up to the cabin and ask him."

"No, you don't," retorted Dick. "Call to him. He can come down here."

He would see rather than hear the oath that Cray stifled in his throat. But he obeyed, and shouted loudly for Bent.

Bent must have been asleep, for it took more than one call to rouse him. Then his great hulking figure appeared, slouching lazily down from the direction of the hut. He did not look so angry or dismayed as the other three white men. Dick, in fact, fancied there was a half-amused expression on his face, as if he was not altogether sorry to see the fix Ezra was in. He was not carrying a rifle, but for all Dick knew, probably had a pistol somewhere about him.

"So the boy's got the drop on ye, Ezra!" he growled out in his harsh, heavy voice.

"It's that fool Russ!" snarled back Cray.

"Seems to me he's paid for his fooling," answered Bent. "Wal, yew, Daunt, what ye got ter say?"

Dick repeated his terms.

"Seth thar ain't wuth thet much," returned Bent. "Guess yew'll hev to shoot him up if yew wants to."

"I don't want to," retorted Dick; "and if I have to, I'll get one or two of you besides. You'd better remember that."

"Wal," said Bent leisurely, "it's right possible yew might git Cray here or one on us afore we pulled you up. Still, I guess we've had enough o' this here shooting. Tell ye what I will do. Yew kin take your boat, the grub and the water, and fifty ounces of gold between yew. Yew, on your side, gives us your word that yew'll git straight back to Floridy and won't say nothin' to nobody. How does thet suit yew?"

Dick hesitated a moment. Fifty ounces of gold was two hundred pounds. It was enough to get him and Dudley out of the worst of their difficulties. And he had the feeling, too, that he could put some reliance on Bent's word—much more, at any rate, than he could on Cray's. Besides, he longed to be quit of the island and all the miseries and hardships they had undergone. Above all, there was Dudley to be thought of—Dudley, who was now no use for fighting or anything else.

And while he hesitated, Dudley's voice came to his ears.

"Don't you do it, Dick! Half or nothing!"

He glanced down. Dudley's eyes were open and bright as ever.

"Half or nothing!" he repeated. "And that's a long sight more than the swabs deserve."

Dick stiffened.

"It's half or nothing, Bent. And think yourselves lucky I don't ask more."

Bent laughed—actually laughed. It was a hoarse, rumbling sound, and was oddly prolonged by a louder, deeper rumble. All this time it had been getting rapidly darker, and Dick, casting a quick glance at the sky, saw that a storm was working up. The heat had been terrific all day, and now a thunder burst was coming to clear the air.

This might improve their chances, or it might not. Anyhow, there was no time to consider the matter, for Bent was speaking again.

"Nothing doing, young feller. Ez I said before, yew'll hev to shoot the nigger if yew wants to. He ain't wuth fifty ounces, let alone anything more."

"Shoot Ezra—not the nigger!" came Dudley's voice quick and low.

Like a flash Dick turned his rifle from the cowering Seth, and levelled it full on Cray.

"I'll have Cray, not the nigger!" he shouted.

Cray gave a howl and dropped in a heap flat on the ground.

Dick kept the rifle remorselessly levelled on him.

"That won't do you any good, Cray!" he cried. "I couldn't miss you if I tried!"

"Look out, Dick!" came a sharp exclamation from Dudley. "Look out behind!"

Dick whirled to meet the coming danger. He was just too late.

A rope came hissing through the air, and the noose at the end settled over his head. Before he could tear it off, it tightened, and the next instant he was jerked off his feet and dragged backwards, his rifle clattering to the ground as he fell.

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Dudley made a desperate effort to reach the rifle. He was too weak, and fell back.

"Wal done, Rufe! Good for yew, Rufe Finn!" came a triumphant yell from Cray, and, springing to his feet, he dashed across the stretch of bare gravel.

The File.

"Thought yew was smart, eh?" Cray emphasised his sneer with a kick from his heavy boot, which made Dick gasp. "Thought yew'd got the drop on us, did ye? Never knowed I waz fooling ye!"

He chuckled fiendishly, and kicked Dick again.

"Take 'em across, Rufe," he continued. "Tie 'em both to them two trees up in front o' the cabin."

Rufe jerked Dick to his feet. Dick's hands were tied behind his back as they had been in the morning. He was entirely helpless. Dudley, too, was tied. Not that there was any necessity for this, for the young American was too weak and exhausted to offer any resistance.

Dick hardly thought of his own plight. He was too desperately anxious on Dudley's account. If they two were to be tied up and thrashed, as he fully expected, it was hardly likely that Dudley would survive it. Bitterly he reproached himself for not having kept a sharper look-out for the trickery which he felt he ought to have suspected from the first. Now—now he could do nothing. At that moment he would have given all the gold in the island, if he had owned it, just to have his hands free and the rifle back in them. Cray, at any rate, would not have survived for many seconds.

They were dragged back across the desert of upturned gravel in the fast-gathering darkness, and as they were brought to the two trees which stood in front of the cabin, all Cray's lawless crowd was gathered round—all except the guard Seth, who was herding his wretched charges into the stockade.

"Tie him here," said Cray, licking his thin lips in malicious glee. "I'll teach him! I'll give him something besides gold!"

He went into the cabin, and came back with one of those rawhide quirts which are used for riding-whips in the south. Cruel things they are, and will cut through a horse's hide, let alone a man's.

Rufe was already in the act of tying Dick to the thick trunk, spread-eagling him against the rough bark so that the whip might have the more terrible effect.

And then—then from the darkness above leaped a tongue of white electric fire. So fierce and brilliant was the flash that Cray staggered back, half blinded. There followed instantly a crash which made the solid ground quiver. Then, as the echoes died, came a drumming roar like the sound of a great waterfall.

"Thet's the rain a-coming, Cray," observed Ambrose Bent, in his harsh voice. "Guess you'd best to put off this here little entertainment until the shower's over."

Cray swore savagely. But the man had been badly scared by the flash. He was secretly afraid of lightning. And the intense blackness above daunted him. After a moment's hesitation, he told Rufe to take the two back to the stockade, and keep a good watch on them.

"Yew got to keep guard to-night, 'stead of Russ," he said. Then he turned on Dick.

"Don't yew think you're going to get off one lick of it!" he snarled. "To-morrow, at sun-up, yew'll be tied up here again, and I'll lay I won't leave ye enough skin between ye to make a belt out of! Get to your kennel, ye dogs, and ye can spend the night a-thinking what's coming to yew in the morning!"

He and the gap-toothed Degan helped Rufe to take the two boys to the stockade. Before they reached it, the storm burst in all its fury. It turned black as night, the lightning blazed in wide, ribbon-like flashes, which darted in and out among the trees in a most terrifying fashion. The thunder roared like great siege-guns, but the wind and rain were so terrific that between them they almost drowned the bellow of the thunder.

Cray fairly funked it, and bolted for the cabin, but Rufe and Bendall took good care to see the prisoners carefully shut up.

Dick and Dudley dropped down in the corner of the shed which they had taken possession of at dinner-time. The roof was anything but watertight, and the rain beat in upon them from every direction. But as they were soaked to the skin already this made little difference.

The worst of it was that lighting a fire or cooking was out of the question, and the bacon and hominy were, of course, utterly uneatable without some sort of preparation.

Dick hardly thought of his own predicament. He was worried to death about Dudley. He believed that the ex-

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posure would simply finish him. Oddly enough, it did nothing of the sort. The coolness which the deluge of rain brought seemed to revive his chum, and he seemed stronger and brighter than at any time during the day.

But Dick was very down.

"If I'd only had the sense to look out behind!" he groaned. "To be caught like a bullock with a rope—it makes me fairly sick with shame!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Dudley. "That was my job, if anyone's. I guess you haven't got eyes both ends of your head, have you?"

"But I might have known they were up to some game with all that parleying," declared Dick, still unable to forgive himself. "It's no use talking, Dudley. I was a thick-headed ass. I wouldn't mind so much if I hadn't got you into the hole as well."

"I reckon you're talking through your hat, Dick," replied Dudley drily. "Even suppose you had plugged a brace of them, what difference would it have made? How far could we have run with these irons on? Stop grousing, and let's see if there's any chance for us to light out before morning."

It was the wisest thing he could have said, for his suggestion at once turned Dick's thoughts into a more useful channel.

"Are you fit for it?" he asked doubtfully.

"Get these irons off, and you'd mighty soon see," declared Dudley.

Dick groaned.

"That's the rub. We can't do it without a file, and we might as well wish for the moon."

It seemed he was right. The last thing that either of them was likely to obtain was a file. They talked it over again and again, while the thunder bellowed overhead, but no possible plan suggested itself for escape.

The storm lasted about an hour. Then it died away, and the rain stopped. But the sky still remained covered with heavy clouds, and the thunder rumbled in the distance.

Someone crept up to them. It was one of the wretched negro slaves.

"Boss, you got any matches?" he whispered to Dick.

"Why, yes; I've got a few," Dick answered, fishing out the little corked bottle in which he kept his matches.

"Dat's all right, boss. I done cut up some fat wood for kindling, and I kin fix up a fire all right. You gotter eat, ef them debbils gwine to beat you in the mawning."

Dick was touched.

"That's very kind of you," he said. "It's a fact we need some food pretty badly. If you can light a fire, I'll come and do the cooking."

"No, sah; I do de cooking. We 'uns am all mighty pleased 'cos you killed dat no count Zeke Russ."

The wretched man who spoke was mere skin and bone. He was half-starved, and less than half-alive. A lump rose in Dick's throat, and it was all he could do to thank him.

"What's your name?" he asked, and the man answered:

"Dan Grayson."

"Dan, is it? Well, Dan, if ever I get out of this place, I'll never rest till I get you out, too. So remember that, and keep your heart up, if you can."

He then turned to Dudley, and suggested that they had better try to make their corner of the shed waterproof. There was a big stack of palmetto-branches lying outside which the negroes had cut for bedding, and some of these they had spread earlier in the day to use for bedding. Dick thought that they might weave some of these together as a shelter.

He lifted a pile of them, and as he did so something slipped through his hands, and fell with a slight clinking sound to the hard ground.

Dick dropped the branches, and, turning, began to grope about.

A moment later Dudley heard him give a quick gasp. Then Dick bent over, and put his mouth close to Dudley's ear.

"A file!" he whispered. "A file!" His voice, low as it was, shook with excitement.

Before Dudley could answer, the thunder bellowed again almost overhead, and once more the rain beat in huge drops on the roof of the crazy shed.

The Tunnel.

"You first, Dudley. No, it's no use objecting. Sit tight, and let me get to work."

In a moment Dick was at it, cutting away at Dudley's irons with an energy which no metal could withstand. The file was new and sharp, and the roar of the storm entirely drowned all other sounds. There was no need for caution, and Dick made the most of his opportunity.

He began on the link closest to the band which clipped Dudley's right leg, and in little more than five minutes it was through. Then he turned to the chain on the other leg, and soon that, too, was severed.

The storm still raged as he set to work upon his own fetters. The file was now getting a little blunted and the work took somewhat longer. But the noise and the darkness made all safe, and within another quarter of an hour Dick, too, was free.

He stood up, and stretched his legs rejoicingly.

"We're our own men again, Dudley. Now for the next act!"

"Guess we might dig," suggested Dudley.

"I don't know about that," replied Dick doubtfully. "These palisades are sure to be planted pretty deep. Cray wouldn't be apt to risk the niggers getting out."

There was a rustle close beside them. Both started violently, and Dick was on the point of flinging himself on the dark figure which loomed vaguely alongside, when Dudley caught hold of his arm.

"Go slow! It's Dan."

"Yas, it's me, sah. I done watched you cut dem irons off, and I was gwine to ask yo' to lend me dat file when yo' done wid him. Ef yo'll do dat, I'll show yo' all a place whar yo' kin dig out real easy."

"You're sure you know of such a place?" demanded Dick.

"Yo' bet I'm shuah! Didn't I help build dis place when ole Buzzard Cray brought we 'uns ober hyah? I jest fixed it a purpose, and I could ha' got out any night, only it wasn't no sort o' use so long as I had dem irons on mah legs."

"Show it us," said Dick eagerly. "You shall have the file, and welcome."

"Den yo' come along mighty quick. Yo' got to get clear befoah dis hyah storm go ober."

There was sound sense in Dan's words, and they followed him at once.

He went very slowly, and at last stopped.

"Dis am de place," he said, and his tone was one of absolute certainty. "Dese hyah logs, dey ain't planted deep like de rest. Ef you digs under dem, yo' all will get out for shuah."

Dick and Dudley went down on hands and knees, and began scratching at the earth. It was the usually gravelly stuff, and on the face of it was not the sort of material which would be easily moved without a spade.

"Wish we'd got something to dig with," said Dudley, in a low voice.

"We have. There's the file!"

"Doan't you go using dat file, boss!" put in Dan hastily. "Yo'll be breaking it or somethin'. Hyah's what yo' kin dig with!"

The two dug and delved with desperate energy.

The broad, flat pieces of iron formed excellent tools for shifting the gravel, and soon a good-sized hole yawned at the base of the palisades. Of course, it rapidly filled with water, for the whole ground streamed. But as Dick and Dudley were already as wet as it was possible to be, this did not trouble them much. Their chief anxiety was whether Dan had really known the proper place to dig. It seemed to them that, in this pitch darkness, he might very easily have made a mistake.

But Dan was quite confident. Dick had suggested that he had much better go back to the shed, so as to avoid trouble in case Rufe did come in. But he refused.

"I'se gwine to wait till yo' all gets out," he said. "Den I'll go back. Dey won't catch old Dan. Nebber fear dat."

Dudley gave a low exclamation.

"Dan's right. I've struck the bottom of this pile. It's not a foot down, Dick."

So anxious were they that Dick and Dudley forgot all about the chances of the guard coming in, and in the end it was Dan who saved them from being detected.

"Rufe's a-coming!" he whispered sharply, and was off like a shadow for the shed.

Dick was on his feet in a second, and had Dudley by the arm.

"Come on!" he hissed, and dragged him away to cover.

A moment later the light of a hurricane-lamp gleamed inside the shed, and under half-closed lids Dick saw the burly figure of the negro passing along the line of sleepers who lay on their beds of soaking leaves.

The man stopped opposite to Dick and Dudley, and flung the light across them. But both lay absolutely still, and, apparently satisfied, he passed on, and went out again into the rain.

Once more Dick held his breath in suspense. Rufe's way out would take him quite close to the burrow. A lightning flash, even the light of his lantern, might be enough to show up the heap of soil, and to put an end to all their hopes.

(Another long instalment of this splendid new serial story next Monday. To avoid disappointment order your copy early.)

MAGNIFICENT TUCK-HAMPERS FOR READERS OF THE "BOYS' FRIEND."—1D. OUT TO-DAY.

MY READERS' PAGE

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE BOYS' FRIEND," 1d., Every Monday. "THE GEM" LIBRARY, 1d., Every Wednesday. "THE BOYS' FRIEND" 3d. COMPLETE LIBRARY. "THE PENNY POPULAR," 1d., Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," Price ½d., Every Saturday.

The Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums, at home or abroad, and is only too willing to give his best advice to them if they are in difficulty or in trouble. . . . Whom to write to: Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

For Next Monday:

"FALSE EVIDENCE!"

By Frank Richards.

In the grand, long, complete story which appears next week Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull play the principal parts. Through the machinations of Stott and Snoop these two are made to appear guilty of a dastardly assault upon Mr. Quelch, their Form-master. Stott and Snoop supply the false evidence, which comes very near to getting the two members of the Famous Five expelled, after a public flogging. As a matter of fact, the condition in which the master is found is not really due to an assault at all, but to the effects of an accident, for which his own carelessness was largely to blame. Before the matter is cleared up and the two chums declared guiltless there are very trying experiences to be gone through, both by them and by their staunch comrades. But in the end all comes right, and Stott and Snoop suffer the well-deserved penalty of those who give

"FALSE EVIDENCE!"

CORRESPONDENTS, PLEASE NOTE!

Pressure on space is so great just now, and is likely to continue so great, that the room allotted to "Replies in Brief" has had to be cut down very considerably. I regret this, for I know that many of my readers besides those who are looking out for a reply take a good deal of interest in these columns. But it really cannot be helped, for it would never do to cut down the length of the stories. Now, I want to ask my readers to do something which will make it a little easier to keep abreast of the constantly increasing piles of letters I receive. Hundreds of these have to be put by for replies in the papers when they could quite easily be answered by post within a day or two. The replies have to be kept waiting, even after they are in type, till there is room for them. Then come impatient letters demanding to know why an answer to a query—or more likely a dozen queries—sent six weeks ago has not been received.

If you will only give your names and addresses when writing, there would be no such delay as this. Will you give them, therefore, and thus ensure for yourselves earlier replies?

Here is a case in point. A reader who signed himself "Bob Cherry"—which, of course, is not his name—and gave his address as Leigh, Lancashire—which is, obviously, insufficient for postal purposes—wrote to me on January 27th, asking me to tell him of a good book from which to learn copper-plate writing. At first I was in some doubt as to his exact meaning, but came to the conclusion eventually that he was moved by a praiseworthy desire to improve his handwriting. (I don't know just how bad this is, because his letter to me was typewritten, but it would not hurt most of us to effect this improvement.) So I wrote a reply for the "Replies in Brief" column, which went to the printers in due course, and is now awaiting insertion, together with many scores of replies to others. At the best it could not have appeared under four or five weeks. But on March 1st "Bob Cherry" wrote again. "This is the second time I have written to you," he said. "I wrote about a month ago, but I have had no reply, so I take it you must have overlooked it. I wish you would reply to this letter as soon as possible, as I want the book on copper-plate writing very urgent."

He then made a few comments on other matters, and, after again taking Bob Cherry's name in vain, finished up thus:

"P.S.—Please reply to this letter as soon as possible, as I want the book very badly.

"P.P.S.—Please tell me where I can get the book, and the price of same.

"P.P.P.S.—Don't forget to reply as soon as possible.

"P.P.P.P.S.—Please don't reply if it puts you to any inconvenience."

And again he failed to give an address which would have let me answer him by post! You have all heard of "Much Ado About Nothing." I don't in the least want to hurt my correspondent's feelings, but all this really strikes me as much ado about a copy-book, which he could have obtained by walking into the nearest stationer's. I only quote it here because it seems to me mildly amusing, and because the impatient letter of my friend "Bob Cherry" is a fair sample of scores I receive every week.

NOTICES.

Private E. Connoll, 5093, C Company, 4/3 City of London Regiment, Hurdcott Camp, Salisbury, will be obliged to any readers who will forward him back numbers of the Companion Papers.

Driver H. E. Lear, of the R.F.A., who lately appealed for correspondence, asks me to say that the response has been so overwhelming that he has found himself quite unable to answer all who have written to him. He hopes that those who do not hear will accept this notice as an apology.

Trooper Arthur Sargent, 1728, 2/1 West Kent Yeomanry, Hillside, 10, Bradbourne Park Road, Sevenoaks, who expects very shortly to be ordered on service abroad, would be glad to correspond with a girl reader of the "Magnet."

Private R. C. Garnham, 1731, 39, Stockmore Street, Cowley Road, Oxford, would be pleased to correspond with "Magnet" readers.

Football team requires fixtures home and away in Swansea district (Brynmill). Average age 15-16. Apply J. C. P., 33, Victoria Avenue, Mumbles.

David Smith, 684, Govan Road, Govan, Glasgow, wishes to form a "Magnet" and "Gem" social club, not confined to the locality, and would be pleased to hear from any readers in the United Kingdom interested in the project. Will all who write enclose stamped and addressed envelope for reply?

H. P. Lawson, 15, Byfield Road, Walthamstow, has all the numbers of the "Magnet," "Gem," "Penny Popular," "Union Jack," and "Greyfriars Herald," from the first in each case, and generously offers to supply readers with special numbers which they may happen to want at the cost of one penny each (for postage) as far as his stock allows. But he will not part with the first issue of any of the papers.

Private Lionel E. Lewis, 4439, No. 14 Platoon, D Company, 1/3 Batt. Gloucester Regiment, B.E.F., France, would be obliged to readers for copies of any of the Companion Papers.

Will Harold Butler, late of Forest Hill, please communicate with G. Bennett, with a view to the formation of a "Magnet" League?

Will R. Thurlow, last heard of at Stowmarket, please communicate with his old chums at Gainsborough, who are anxious to hear from him?

Will Tom Margetts, of Bridgwater, please communicate with his old girl chum Dolly at the same address as before?

A. G. Fowler, 53, Kennington Road, Wollaton Road, Nottingham, wants to buy back numbers of the "Magnet."

B. V. and S. S., 20, Fairbank Road, Bradford, desire to form a "Gem" and "Magnet" League, and would be glad to hear from readers in their neighbourhood who would care to join.

Yours Editor

NEXT MONDAY— "FALSE EVIDENCE!" A Grand, Long, Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE PRIDE OF THE RING!

A Magnificent Serial Story dealing with the Noble Art of Self-defence.

By MARK LINLEY.

(EDITORIAL NOTE.—Although the Government restrictions on the import of paper have brought the "Greyfriars Herald" to an untimely conclusion, readers may still continue Mark Linley's rousing serial story of school and boxing life, which will run its course in the MAGNET Library.)

The Vanished Schoolboy.

"Don't prate of honour to me!" said Neddy Welsh, in contempt. "You don't know the meaning of the word! Bump him, you fellows!"

"Leggo! I—I say——"

Bump!

"Yaroooooh!"

"Once again!"

Bump!

"Ow—ow—ow! Gerraway, you beasts!"

Bump!

For the third time, the hulking bully of the Fourth met the floor with a sickening concussion.

"Now p'r'aps you'll tell us where Binks is!" panted Neddy Welsh.

"Geroooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors didn't feel a bit sorry for Barker. They were pretty certain that he was directly connected with the new boy's disappearance, and hoped to terrorise him into confessing.

But Barker, though he groaned and grunted a good deal, gave his persecutors no satisfaction. Lomax and Lee, his chief allies, were also bumped soundly, but they, too, kept silence on the subject of Benjamin Bartholomew Baraduff Binks. The whole affair seemed most mysterious.

"I can't think what's happened if Barker's telling the truth by some miraculous chance," said Neddy Welsh.

Dolly Gray caught his chum by the arm.

"Don't you think it's possible," he said, "that he's run away of his own accord? We did it ourselves once, you know."

"My hat! Perhaps you're right, old man! He may have gone back to his darling mamma for some milksops instead of roast pork."

"If that's the case, it's up to us to stop him while there's yet time," said Weston, glancing at his watch. "He can't have had more than an hour's start. We'd better wait till Hobbs sees lights out, and then form a giddy search-party."

That seemed about the only thing to do under the circumstances. Idiot and imbecile though he was, there was a touch of nerve about Binks that the juniors rather admired. The cool way in which he had demanded chicken for his dinner on his second day at Earlingham, and his daring defiance of the oily Mr. Snope, had caused Neddy Welsh & Co. to be vastly amused. In his way, Binks was quite an acquisition to the Fourth, and the juniors did not wish to see him vanish for ever.

Out in the quad the old elms swayed and creaked beneath the power of the tempestuous wind, and presently the rain came rattling against the window-panes with relentless force.

"My hat! What a night!" exclaimed Neddy Welsh. "I hope poor old Binks isn't out in it! What can a kid like him do in the face of such a storm?"

The juniors were silent, even Barker & Co. looking grave and dismayed.

And the same question was on everybody's lips:

What had become of Binks?

In the Teeth of the Storm.

"Good-night, you kids!"

Hobbs of the Sixth turned out the light in the Fourth-Form dormitory and departed, without noticing that one of the beds—that belonging to Binks—was vacant. He left the juniors in a state of the wildest excitement.

"I'm going to call for volunteers to come and find poor old Binks," said Neddy Welsh. "Don't be backward in coming forward."

"Count me in!" said Dolly Gray promptly.

"And me!" said Weston and Phipps and Raymond together.

"Ditto this child!" said Kenrick.

"Good! That's six. We ought to be able to find out where the kid's got to. Tumble out, you chaps!"

The volunteers noiselessly slipped from their beds, and dressed in the darkness.

"You must be mad, to go on a wild-goose chase like this!" growled Lomax.

"Of course, you'd let the poor little wretch perish of hunger and cold; wouldn't you?" said Neddy scathingly. "Stay in your snug bed, you craven cur, and don't dare to start snoring again, or I'll lam you with my slipper!"

Lomax promptly dried up.

"Now," said Neddy Welsh briskly, "follow your leader!" And he led the way out of the dormitory.

The juniors went at once to their studies for their raincoats, for the storm was still raging with demoniacal fury. Then they proceeded stealthily along the passage, and clambered out into the quad via the box-room window.

"Phew! What a night!" panted Dolly Gray, as the wind whistled around his ears. "Talk about a typhoon! That's nothing to this!"

With the drenching rain beating into their faces, the members of the search-party battled their way towards the school wall, which they scaled without much difficulty. Out in the roadway they paused, scarcely knowing which way to go.

"Where do the kid's people live?" asked Dolly Gray.

"London," said Neddy Welsh.

"Then the best thing we can do is to go to the railway-station and make inquiries."

"Quite so. They can 'phone up the line, and find out if a fellow answering to the description of Binks has been seen knocking about."

The hour was late, and the sleepy old porter who hobbled about the platform, waiting for the last train, could give the juniors no information.

"Have you seen a goggle-eyed merchant, as thin as a matchstick, get into a train here?" asked Neddy Welsh.

"Which there ain't bin a single, solitary soul hon this 'ere platform since height o'clock!" growled the porter surlily. "And which young rips like yerselves orter be in bed long ago!"

"Go and eat coke!"

And the party of juniors, deeply disappointed, passed out into the driving storm once more.

"N.G." said Neddy Welsh. "If no one's been at the station since eight, Binks can't have gone by train. Besides, come to think of it, he wouldn't be such a silly ass. I expect he walked."

"But London's a long, long way from here!" said Weston, aghast.

"I know, but he might be doing the journey in easy stages. He's probably taken shelter somewhere on the route. Let's take to the main road, and see if we can discover something."

Despite their raincoats, the juniors were soon soaked to the

(Continued on page iv of cover.)

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MISS PHYLLIS DARE.

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(Signed) "PHYLLIS DARE."

Photo:] [Rita Martin.

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An innovation that will be much appreciated by travellers, and, incidentally, soldiers and sailors at home and abroad, is announced by Mr. Edwards' introduction of "Solidified Harlene." For a long time, in response to many requests, Mr. Edwards has been experimenting in this direction, and has at last produced Edwards' "Harlene" in solid form, so that it can more conveniently be carried in one's portmanteau or equipment than when in liquid form in a bottle. "Solidified Harlene" possesses exactly the same properties as the liquid "Harlene," and the same pleasant, stimulating "Hair-Drill" method of application suffices.

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MAGNET, April 8th, 1916.

THE PRIDE OF THE RING!

(Continued from page 24.)

skin. It was the most terrific storm within the memory of even the oldest inhabitant. Slates went clattering off roofs, and the trees in the woods groaned and swayed incessantly at the mercy of the hurricane.

A steady half-mile tramp brought the Fourth-Formers on to the main London road, along which they proceeded, making inquiries at one or two cottages whose occupants had not retired for the night. Not a vestige of news, however, could be gleaned.

Phipps was the first to find a clue, and a pretty substantial one, too. He stopped suddenly by a signpost, and flashed on the electric torch he was carrying.

"What's up?" roared Neddy Welsh. He had to roar, for the gale was so intense.

"Here's a cap!" shouted back Phipps. "It belongs to an Earlingham chap, too. There's the school badge!"

The juniors crowded round, and examined the find with interest. Then their eyes met by mutual instinct.

"Binks!" said Neddy Welsh, voicing the thoughts which were in everybody's mind.

"He's come this way," said Raymond. "We're on the right tack, after all!"

"But it's difficult to know what to do, even now," said Dolly Gray, shaking his head doubtfully. "There's a road branching off here to the stone-quarry. The question is, did Binks go straight ahead towards London, or turn off to the quarry to shelter from the storm?"

"That's a puzzle!" said Neddy Welsh. "We'd better put it to the vote. How many think Binks went straight on?"

Phipps and Raymond and Weston responded at once.

"I think so, too," said Neddy; "so we'll go right ahead and stick to the main road."

Dolly Gray and Kenrick were therefore the only two who favoured the theory that Binks had gone into the stone-quarry to take shelter. Kenrick was a quiet youth, who thought much and spoke little. Whenever he did unburden himself to speak he always said something well worth listening to.

"I believe we are wrong," he declared. "A chap of Binks' calibre would not be likely to tramp miles and miles in a tempest like this. It is far more probable that he would turn aside and seek the shelter of the quarry. However, we won't come to blows over it. Let the majority have their way."

The juniors tramped on in the teeth of the storm, but found no further clues as to the whereabouts of their missing schoolfellow.

At length they came to the little village of Cranleigh, and forged ahead through the old-fashioned High Street. Then, to their unbounded astonishment, a tall figure sprang out of the gloom and confronted them.

"Stop!" cried a familiar voice.

"Hobbs!" cried Neddy Welsh, in amazement. "What the merry dickens——"

The juniors almost fell down at the unexpected apparition. They had naturally supposed that the captain of Earlingham was sleeping soundly many miles away.

"You seem surprised to see me!" said Hobbs, with a grim smile. "I was informed of your absence by Barker."

"Rotten sneak!" muttered Dolly Gray.

Hobbs laughed.

"You needn't think that I took advantage of what he told me, and came out to spy on you!" he said. "As a matter of fact, I, too, am searching for Binks. We had better all go together!"

"Good egg!"

"You're a brick, Hobbs!" said Neddy Welsh heartily. He had expected to be severely censured by the captain of Earlingham, and possibly reported to the Head in the morning for breaking bounds. Hobbs, however, was one of those fellows who, although in the high-and-mighty Sixth, did not forget the days when they themselves were high-spirited juniors.

"What's the next move?" asked Neddy Welsh.

"I have made careful and numerous inquiries in the various villages, but with no result," said Hobbs. "Have you gleaned anything?"

"Yes, rather!"

And Phipps triumphantly produced the runaway's cap.

"Good! That's something to go upon, at any rate. I think the best thing we can do is to go back to Earlingham village and solicit the aid of a couple of constables. I will pop in at the school, too, and tell the Head I gave you permission to assist in the search."

"Thanks awfully, Hobbs!" said Neddy Welsh gratefully. "You're a real sport!"

"Abso-giddy-lutely!" seconded Dolly Gray.

The little party wended their way back to the village, where they were reinforced by a couple of policemen—the only two that the village boasted. Then Hobbs proceeded to the school, informed the Head of their clue, and enlisted the services of Hanks, the porter. Then the searchers, with grim, determined looks, set out into the night.

Fallen Among Foes.

And, meanwhile, what of Binks? Had he turned his back for ever upon the old school, within whose walls he had spent such a brief but exciting time?

He had been feeling very sore that evening, both physically and mentally—physically because of the rough handling he had received from Barker & Co. some hours previously, and mentally because he didn't like the rough-and-tumble routine of a public-school. Brought up in the nursery, and spoiled and fondled by a doting mother, it was small wonder that Binks decided to run away.

He had plenty of money, and anticipated no difficulty in getting to London. But, fool though he was in many respects, he knew that it would excite suspicion if he took train at the local station; so he decided to walk a dozen miles, and travel by train from the market-town of Lingfield, that being on a different line.

To get clear of the school precincts was a simple enough matter. Most of the fellows were in the common-room, playing chess or reading books, and no one had a thought for Binks. The new boy packed up a few cherished possessions, and started on his long journey.

Black clouds were gathering overhead as he scaled the school wall; but Binks was not a weather prophet, and he had a nasty shock when, having completed a mile of his pilgrimage, the rain came down in a drenching deluge, and the wind grew boisterous in the extreme.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "This is most unfortunate! I have no overcoat, either."

But he had proceeded too far now to think of turning back, and kept on doggedly, hoping against hope that the storm would subside.

But the driving rain continued, soaking the wretched runaway to the skin. He plodded on for another couple of miles, and then came upon a sequestered country inn.

"I will seek shelter and hospitality within," he said to himself. "It is unfortunate, because they might discover what I am doing; but I cannot weather this dreadful storm a moment longer!"

There were a couple of men in the little parlour—rough, thick-set fellows of the loafing type, which the war has happily made nearly extinct. They looked up sharply as Binks entered.

"Wot cheer, my pippin!" said the heftier of the two. "Wot dost want 'ere, at this time o' night?"

"Food and drink, my good man," said Binks, "and shelter from the stormy blast."

"Landlord's gorn to bed," said the other man shortly.

"How unfortunate! Never mind. Perhaps you can serve me?"

The loafers exchanged quick glances.

"Sit down afore the fire," said the man who had spoken first, "and make thyself at home. How much money hast got about thee?"

"A couple of pounds," replied Binks proudly.

The scoundrel elevated his eyebrows.

"Thou comest of a rich fambly, like enough?" he said.

"Rich?" echoed Binks. "Why, my pater's simply rolling in filthy lucre! He's got a magnificent residence in Kensington, and another at Putney; besides owning a couple of cars and large estates. Oh, yes! My pater's made good. Trust him for that!"

"And wot's yer name?" inquired the shorter of the two men, who was known by the undignified sobriquet of Mike.

"My name is Binks—Benjamin Bartholomew Baraduff Binks."

"My heye!"

"You takes all them to bed with yer?" inquired the big man, known among those of his acquaintance as the "Bruiser."

"Pray do not resort to ribaldry," said Binks peevishly. "Get me something to eat. I'm famished!"

The Bruiser got out some bread-and-cheese from the cupboard, and set it on the table. Binks eyed the frugal fare with the utmost disfavour.

"Have you nothing more pleasing to the palate?" he asked.

"I dunno as we 'ave! This ain't the bloomin' 'Otel Sizzle, or wotever they calls it. Better make the most on it, young shaver. Like a glass o' beer with it?"

"Nun-no, thank you!" said Binks, hurriedly. "Beer-swilling was never one of my accomplishments."

He pitched gingerly into the bread-and-cheese, Mike and the Bruiser watching him keenly, and conversing with each other in low tones.

(To be continued next Monday.)