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The Magnet

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Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:
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NOTE.—All Jokes and Limericks should be sent to
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NOW I'll kick off this week with a query that comes from a very old reader of mine in the North of England who signs himself P. C. He wants to know

WHO ARE THE DIE HARDS?

Well, I can give you one definition of these gentlemen, and that is, Editors! Goodness knows, they have a hard time of it. But seriously, Die Hards is a nickname given to the Middlesex Regiment. It was earned by the 1st Battalion (then known as the 57th Foot) at Albuera, in 1811. Out of 570 officers and men who went into this action, only about 150 came out alive, and many of these were severely wounded. Although badly wounded himself, their commanding officer, Colonel Inglis, cried out: "Die hard, my men—die hard!"

W. Harris, of 4, Garden Terrace, Trinity Road, West Bromwich, carries off a leather pocket wallet for the following clever Limerick:

When Bunter goes out for a walk,
To some fellow's study he'll stalk.
If the cupboard's unlocked,
And maybe well-stocked,
The "Owl" will swoop down like a
"hawk!"

There are more of these useful prizes waiting to be won, chums. Send in your efforts to-day.

Do any of you chaps know

WHERE PEOPLE LIVE IN TREES?

Not a bad idea in the summer, by the way. I shouldn't mind it myself, although it would be rather breezy on a stormy night.

In New Guinea in the South Seas it is a common sight to find whole villages in the tree-tops. There is a reason for this, of course. The natives are so subject to attack from war-like neighbours that they build their houses high from the ground, and when they turn in at nights, pull up the ladders after them. The houses themselves are built of inter-woven sticks covered with grass, and the general appearance of them may be gained if you visualise one of those pigeon cots that are thatched and are so popular with landscape gardeners. Once the ladders of these strange New Guinea dwellings are drawn up, the only things able to get indoors are flies, ticks, mosquitoes, centipedes, ants, scorpions, beetles, moths, hornets, and wood-lice. Otherwise you are free from troubles. So now you know, Robert Somers, of Exeter.

If I were to ask you

WHAT IS A MAGOT,

I hope you would not say, "a thing that comes from cheese." For you would be wrong, for two reasons—and here they are.
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A Sunderland reader is very worried on this subject. Now list to what he says in the following pathetic letter which arrived on my desk in company with hundreds more: "Dear Mr. Editor,—My Uncle Daniel has been for some time in Southern Europe on a business visit getting orders for the supply to the Young Turks of saxophones and banjuleles. He has written home to say he has suffered severely in outlying places and once had to live for two days on goat's cheese. Also he spent half a day hunting a magot which at last he caught alive after a desperate struggle, and intends bringing it home as a birthday present for me (deep breath). Now uncle's spelling is weak, it would appear to me as if his hardships have given him bats in the belfry. Mother is even more worried than me—etc. Jimmy Cole." Now, Jimmy, tell mother to worry no longer on the score you have set out, and yourself cease from troubling. A magot is a Barbary ape and the only species of monkey that now exists in Europe. I am sorry your uncle has suffered so severely in Turkey, but he can take comfort that it is nothing to what the relations of the Young Turks will suffer when he has delivered his orders for the saxophones and banjuleles!

Now we'll have a laugh with John Reid, of 35, Dingola Road, Ayr, who has been awarded a MAGNET pocket-knife for the following amusing joke:

"Any remarks before I sentence you?" asked the magistrate of the prisoner. "Yes," bawled Burglar Bill. "It's pretty tough being identified by a scraggy blighter that kept his head under the bedclothes the whole time I was 'blowing' the safe!"

Who's going to be the next reader to win one of these useful prizes? Get busy on your attempts to-day, chums.

I wonder how many of you fellows know WHAT CAUSES AN EARTHQUAKE?

The main reason is undoubtedly because the earth shrinks as it slowly loses heat. Comparatively speaking, the earth has a very thin crust which is cool although great fires burn deep down within the globe. So, as the fires die down slightly within, the outer crust of the earth is left unsupported in places and is apt to sink or crack. In some parts of the world, the crust of the earth is very thin as, for instance, in Japan, and here a great number of earthquakes occur. The earth's crust is much thicker in England and so earthquakes are very rare—and a good job too for all of us!

Now all you sportsmen should know

WHAT A GOOGLY IS,

and how to try it on your opponents. But those of you who don't will find the answer here. A googly is a cricketing

term for a ball that breaks from the off, although the action of the bowler in sending it down has appeared to suggest that it will break from leg. Conversely, it may be a ball breaking from the leg with an apparent off-break action on the bowler's part. A googly bowler is a very useful man to have in a team—the kind of chappie to upset a solid partnership.

SCHUYT AND SCOOT!

On appearance these two words are nothing like one another, and, indeed, they mean two different things. But they are pronounced the same—"scoot." Got that Walter Edmunds, of Ipswich? We'll take the first one, "Schuyt." This is the name of a Dutch boat which is employed in the eel trade between Holland and the Thames. These boats have peculiar characteristics, too many to describe here, which make them readily recognised from any other kind of craft. Now for "scoot." This is a slang word that you often hear one boy say to another when he sees a master, monitor or farmer entering the horizon, especially when that horizon is out of bounds—"scoot!"

LIFE UNDERGROUND.

I am always on the look-out for new experiences, and when I was asked the other day if I had ever been down a mine, and was given an opportunity of doing so if I wished to, I jumped at the chance. So last Sunday saw me descending one of the deepest mines in the country, and in a very short space of time I was three thousand feet below the ground! I had been up in an aeroplane before, but I had never been so far underground, so I can now congratulate myself on having soared to the heights and having descended to the depths.

Somebody once told me that if one stood at the foot of a mine and looked up the shaft, one could see the stars, even in daylight. I decided to put it to the test, and go under the shaft, but—alas!—it happened to be raining, and, furthermore, a large amount of water drains into this particular shaft, so all I got for my pains was my eyes full of dirty water! Besides, at that depth the top of the shaft looks to be about the size of a pin-head!

However, I saw something of the conditions of life underground, and could not help wondering what people will think in a couple of thousand years time about these mysterious galleries which delve right into the bowels of the earth. By that time I expect folk will have forgotten all about coal, and will wonder why mines were ever dug, just as people wonder nowadays who first constructed those caves at Chislehurst and other places which are now just show-places for interested sightseers.

I wonder how many of my readers have been

DOWN THE MINE

on similar expeditions to that upon which I was? Anyway, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience, although I certainly prefer my comfortable desk at Fleetway House to crouching down in a few feet at the coal-face. This was quite a modern mine, and the galleries were constructed in a similar manner to the tube passages one sees in London's Underground railways. Going down in the "cage" was also similar to descending in the lift to a tube station—but what a difference there was in the speed! We went down at a speed of almost eight yards a second! Some going, eh?

(Continued on page 28.)



—featuring Harry Wharton & Co., the world-famous chums of Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Chingachgook of the Sixth!

THE worm!"

"The rotter!"

"The slinking toad!"

"We're not standing it!"

exclaimed Harry Wharton wrathfully.

It was exasperating.

The best-tempered member of the Famous Five, of the Greyfriars Remove, was exasperated.

Not a man in the famous Co. was disposed to "stand it" if it could be helped. The trouble was that it couldn't.

It was a half-holiday at Greyfriars School, and Harry Wharton & Co. had started cheerily on an afternoon ramble. They were going to explore the sea-caves under the cliffs; quite a harmless and healthy way of passing a sunny summer's afternoon.

They had started with cheery faces. Now, as they stood in the footpath in Friardale Wood, looking back, their brows were clouded with wrath and indignation.

Coming along the path, at a distance behind them was Loder, of the Sixth Form.

Loder, as he saw them at a halt, stopped suddenly.

He turned from the footpath, and disappeared into the wood, looking—or trying to look—as if he took no special interest in the chums of the Remove.

But the juniors were quite aware that Gerald Loder was taking a very particular interest in them that afternoon.

They had noticed him stroll away from the school gates when they left. They had seen him again in Friardale Lane. Now they found him following

them along the shady footpath through the wood. And they knew that they were being kept under observation by the suspicious prefect.

"The worm!" repeated Bob Cherry wrathfully.

"The unspeakable toad!" said Frank Nugent.

"The toadfulness of the esteemed Loder is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The worthy and absurd beast is tracking us like the ludicrous Chingachgook in the ridiculous story."

Harry Wharton knitted his brows.

"We're not standing it!" he repeated.

Times innumerable has Gerald Loder, the blackguardly prefect of the Sixth qualified for expulsion from Greyfriars. But never has he so narrowly escaped that dreaded fate as is instanced in this enthralling story.

"Let's go back and have it out with the rotter."

"Hold on, old chap!" said Nugent. "We can't handle a Sixth-Form prefect. Easy does it!"

"We're not going to be watched like this!" snapped the captain of the Remove. "It's not a prefect's business to play the spy."

It was intensely exasperating. It was not only the annoying fact that a suspicious prefect was following them; but the fact that Loder believed that there was something to be found out. In the view of the Famous Five, Loder had no right to believe anything of the sort. No doubt he judged others by himself; but there was the rub! Loder had no right to judge the chums of the Remove by himself.

The penalties for "handling" a Sixth-Form prefect were dire. But Harry Wharton was strongly inclined to turn back and call the bully of the Sixth to account. Loder had vanished in the trees; but the juniors knew well enough that he had not gone far. He had set out that afternoon to keep an eye on them—an absurd and undignified proceeding on the part of a prefect. They knew that he would crop up again; that he was devoting his afternoon to keeping an eye on them.

"What does the rotter think he is going to find out?" exclaimed the captain of the Remove angrily.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"He's got it into his silly head that we go pub-haunting on a half-holiday," he said. "He's got that fixed in his poor little brain ever since he caught us taking a short cut by the Cross Keys."

"And the fathead thinks he will catch us out!" growled Johnny Bull. "He wants to catch us red-handed, and take us to Quelchy."

Harry Wharton laughed impatiently. Loder's proceedings were ridiculous as well as exasperating. But they were very exasperating indeed. The suspicions he entertained were an insult to the Famous Five.

"My esteemed chums—" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"We're not going to stand it!" said Harry. "Prefect or not, he has no right to spy on us, and we've a right to stop him. Quelchy would give him a royal jaw if he knew what he was up to. So would the Head, if he knew."

"My esteemed Wharton, a wheezy idea has occurred to my absurd and idiotic mind."

"Give it a name, old black bean!" said Bob.

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Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled a dusky smile.

"Lend me your ridiculous ears, as poet Shakespeare remarkably observes," he said. "The excellent and disgusting Loder has set out to trail us like the ridiculous Chingachgook. Let us lead him on an esteemed dance."

"I'd rather punch his cheeky head!" growled Wharton.

"Quitefully so; but the punchfulness of an absurd prefect means the terrific lickfulness from the Head, which is neither grateful nor comforting. Moreover, we can pull the excellent leg of the absurd Loder and make a terrific fool of him."

"How's that?" asked Harry.

"The preposterous Loder is after us to bowl us out!" said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "There is nothing to bowl out; but the excellent Loder believes otherwise. Let us gratify him. If he is so keen on making a discovery, why should he not make one?"

"Oh! A jape!" said Johnny Bull.

"The japefulness will be terrific, if my esteemed chums will follow my absurd leadfulness."

Harry Wharton did not speak. He was savagely angry, and inclined to "have it out" with Loder of the Sixth, at the risk of a Head's licking. But the other fellows realised that, in dealing with a prefect, discretion was undoubtedly the better part of valour.

"Leave it to Inky!" said Bob Cherry. "Inky's got a lot of gumption in that old black noddle of his."

"Oh, all right!" grunted Wharton. "You lead, Inky!"

And Hurree Jamset Ram Singh led.

The juniors resumed their way along the footpath; but instead of keeping on towards the cliff, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh struck off by another path that led towards the river.

When they came out on the towpath by the Sark the juniors glanced back, and were not surprised to see a hat appear for a moment among the trees behind them. Loder of the Sixth, evidently, was still understudying Chingachgook.

"Which way now, Inky?" asked Frank.

"Up the river, my esteemed Franky."

"Then we're not going to the caves?"

"The answer is in the preposterous negative."

"Oh, all right!"

Up the river, by the towpath, went the chums of the Remove. They passed the Greyfriars boat-house, and proceeded onward up the bank of the Sark.

"Look here," said Wharton restively, "I don't see walking about all the afternoon, just to lead that fool a dance."

"Oh, leave it to Inky," said Bob.

"Well, how far are we going, Inky?"

"Half an esteemed mile!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Then we shall reach the disreputable and ludicrous resort known as the Three Fishers."

The juniors stared at the nabob.

"You howling ass!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "That's the show where they have prize fights. A Greyfriars man was sacked for going there. Why, you chump, it would be just pie to Loder to catch us in such a place! Are you off your rocker?"

"My esteemed Johnny—"

"I'm not going to the Three Fishers," said Johnny Bull gruffly. "I think you're a silly ass, Inky. Playing into Loder's hands."

"The playfulness into Loder's esteemed hands is the proper caper,"

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explained the nabob patiently. "There is no law against passing the place on the towpath. But it would be the esteemed sack for any Greyfriars man going into the place. We are going to give the spying and preposterous Loder the impression that we have gone in."

"Oh!" said Johnny Bull. "I see."

"Time you did," remarked Bob Cherry. "Get on with it, Inky."

The chums of the Remove walked on up the towpath, grinning now. Even the captain of the Remove's angry frown had given place to a smile. There was no doubt that it would be "pie" to Loder to catch his old enemies of the Remove entering such a place as the Three Fishers. It was a place where surreptitious prize-fights took place—a meeting-place for all that was shady and disreputable for miles around. It was Saturday afternoon, and on Saturday afternoons there was always something "on" at the Three Fishers—a glove-fight, or a cock-fight, or something unlawful and disreputable. They could imagine Loder's delighted feelings when he saw them making for such a spot. Certainly, as a dutiful prefect, he ought to be grieved and shocked. But they had a very shrewd suspicion that he would be pleased.

As they drew nearer to the inn, the juniors found a good many other pedestrians on the path. They were not, most of them, very respectable to look at. Obviously, there was "something on" at the Three Fishers that afternoon, and it was drawing disreputable bounders from all quarters. Quite a little mob was going in at the gate that opened towards the towpath.

But the Famous Five passed the gate, beyond which lay the fence of the extensive grounds for a good distance. Here there was nobody on the towpath, and the juniors had it to themselves.

The fence was high, and covered with thick ivy and creepers. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh came to a halt.

"Do not look back, my esteemed chums," he murmured. "We do not want to put the spyful Loder on his disgusting guard."

The nabob stooped and tied his shoelace. While in that attitude he took a swift and surreptitious glance back along the towpath.

As he expected, he had a glimpse of Loder of the Sixth, still faithfully following the methods of that celebrated Red Indian tracker, Chingachgook.

Loder was coming slowly along the towpath, keeping as much as he could among the trees that grew along the fence. But as he saw that the juniors had stopped, he stopped also, and backed behind a tree. There he remained out of sight—watching.

The nabob rose again, with a dusky grin.

"The esteemed Loder is skulking behind a tree, watching us, my excellent chums," he remarked. "Now is the time."

"But what?" said Harry doubtfully.

The nabob whispered a few words. The chums of the Remove chuckled, and proceeded to carry out the scheme. They selected a spot where a thick tree, heavy with foliage, grew over the high fence. In full view of the hidden prefect, they climbed the fence, easily done by holding on to the masses of clinging ivy and virginia creeper. On top of the fence they were hidden by the thick, low-hanging boughs of the tree. And, instead of dropping down on the inner side of the fence, as the watcher naturally supposed, they climbed into the tree, and took cover among the highest branches.

There they waited, in cheery silence.

Two or three minutes later there were footsteps below the tree, and Loder of the Sixth was standing there, staring at the spot where the Famous Five had climbed the fence, with gloating eyes.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Pulling Loder's Leg!

L ODER chuckled.

His chuckle was quite audible to five juniors hidden in the thick foliage above, and they grinned at one another blissfully.

Loder really could not help chuckling.

Nothing succeeds like success, and Loder had been successful beyond his hopes.

For a long time he had suspected these juniors. He had actually caught them in the precincts of the Cross Keys, and they had got off with a story of taking a short cut. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, had believed that story—or, as Loder suspected, pretended to believe it, to avert disgrace from his Form. Some senior, Mr. Quelch had said, had seen the juniors taking the short cut, and the Remove master had chosen to accept that flimsy evidence as conclusive. Loder wondered what he would say to this. The rankest favouritism would not serve, when he received the prefect's report that the five juniors had been seen—actually seen with Loder's own eyes—climbing over the fence into the Three Fishers' grounds. They could scarcely palm off a story of a short cut this time.

Loder fairly gloated.

To do him justice, Loder really believed that the Famous Five were a set of young rascals. He disliked them so intensely that he was willing to believe anything. The wish was father to the thought. Circumstances that were merely suspicious were absolutely conclusive to Loder's mind.

He chuckled again. Now he had got them where he wanted them. Five Greyfriars juniors had climbed surreptitiously over that fence; and by this time, of course, they were mingling with the disreputable mob who had gathered at the Three Fishers that afternoon to see the Friardale Chicken tackling the Courtfield Pug, without gloves. Making bets on the fight, as likely as not. Loder had his own reasons for knowing what blackguardly fellows did, when they attended the fights at the Three Fishers. Had he not set himself the task, that afternoon, of tracking down these young rascals and showing them up, Loder would have been at the Three Fishers himself.

Well, it was worth missing the fight to bowl these shady young scoundrels out so completely. The best of it was that they were early for the fight, so they would remain in those lawless precincts for some time to come—quite long enough to be caught there. Loder might have followed them in, and hunted for them among the crowd. But that would have been a task rather like looking for a needle in a haystack, as there were some hundreds of people gathered at the place, and the young sweeps, of course, would be on the lookout, ready to dodge and hide. At the sight of a prefect they would scud, and make up some story to satisfy a Form master who was, in Loder's opinion, only too easily satisfied where these juniors were concerned. Loder knew a trick worth two of that, if not three. They were there. He only wanted to make absolutely certain they were there. After that, his plan was cut and dried.

He had made absolutely certain now.



"I say, you fellows," said Bunter eagerly, "are you going to the bun-shop?" "Right on the wicket," said Bob Cherry. "Good!" said the Owl of the Remove, rubbing his fat hands together. "I'll come!" "Do!" said the Famous Five cordially. "No larks, though!" said Bunter suspiciously. (See Chapter 2.)

He had seen them climb the fence and disappear. Tendrils of ivy, dragged loose, showed where they had climbed, if evidence was wanted.

Loder waited under the tree for several minutes, gloating. Then he turned and walked swiftly away down the towpath. He was heading for Greyfriars, with a report for the Remove master. Quelch might like it or lump it; but he could not refuse to act when he heard Loder's report. The vision of a flogging, perhaps the "sack" for five, and a complete showing-up of these young scoundrels who had fooled everybody but Loder, made the prefect feel quite happy as he trod his homeward way.

From the top of the tree the juniors had a glimpse of Loder in the distance, vanishing along the towpath.

"There he goes!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"May as well get down!" chuckled Nugent.

The five juniors slithered down the branches to the top of the fence, and dropped back to the towpath.

There they looked at one another with grinning, gleeful faces.

"That fathead has gone back to tell Quelch that we're at the giddy fight at the Three Fishers," chortled Bob. "I wonder what Quelch will say?"

"He may believe him," grinned Johnny Bull. "Quelch's face will be worth watching when we tell him that we only climbed a tree to pull Loder's jolly old leg."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My esteemed chums," murmured the nabob, "in the ridiculous circumstances we cannot be too careful. We must be able to prove a ludicrous alibi."

"That's so," agreed Wharton. "The fight doesn't come off yet—the people are still going in. When it comes off we must be somewhere else, and able to prove that we were somewhere else."

"Good egg!" said Bob. "What's the programme, Inky?"

"There is a short cut across the fields to Courtfield, my esteemed chums. We can be in Courtfield before the esteemed and absurd Loder arrivally reaches Greyfriars. We shall find plenty of Greyfriars men in Courtfield on a half-holiday, and we will gatherfully collect a party for tea at the bun-shop. The more the better—as we shall want absurd witnesses."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

The juniors hurried up the towpath to the spot where a footpath led through the woods of Popper Court to the Courtfield road.

They negotiated the footpath as if they were doing the school mile.

In a very short time they came out on the road over Courtfield Common.

There, as they walked into the town, it was easy enough to collect Greyfriars men for a party at the bunshop. There were plenty of Greyfriars men about on a half-holiday.

The first one they met was a fat youth with a pair of large spectacles perched on a fat little nose. He greeted them with an expansive grin.

"I say, you fellows!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's Bunter."

"I've been looking for you fellows," said Billy Bunter brightly. "Glad I've found you. I say, are you going to Courtfield?"

"Just that!"

"Good! Going to the bun-shop?" asked Bunter eagerly.

"Right on the wicket."

"Is it a feed?"

"You're a jolly old thought-reader."

"Good! I'll come!"

"Do!" said all the Famous Five together, cordially.

Bunter blinked at them.

He was not accustomed to a hearty

welcome like this when he added himself to a spread.

"I say, you fellows, no larks!" he said suspiciously.

"My dear old porpoise, you're welcome as the flowers in May!" said Bob Cherry. "We're clubbing together for a royal spread at the bunshop, and everybody's welcome. The more the merrier."

"Come on, Bunter!" grinned Johnny Bull.

And Bunter came on gleefully. It was quite a happy meeting for William George Bunter.

A few minutes later Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing of the Remove were sighted on the common. Bob Cherry shouted to them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Smithy! Reddy! Join up."

"What's on?" asked the Bounder.

"Spread at the tuckshop. We're gathering a party."

"Right-ho; we'll come."

By the time the party reached Courtfield Peter Todd and Russell and Ogilvy, Tom Brown and Hazeldene, Mark Linley and Lord Mauleverer, and five or six other fellows had been gathered in. Loder could hardly have reached Greyfriars by the time the Famous Five marched into Courtfield with their army.

The object of the party was not kept a secret. All the fellows knew that an alibi was to be proved, and they roared over it. Loder was hurrying home to report that the Famous Five were in the disreputable crowd watching the fight at the Three Fishers, and nearly half the Remove were prepared to swear that the Famous Five were in Courtfield while that fight was going on. It was a score over the bully of the Sixth that made the Removites rejoice.

It was yet early in the afternoon, and nobody was ready for tea except Bunter, THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,115.

who was always ready. So the numerous party put in an hour at the Courtfield Picture Palace, an establishment which had the approval of their headmaster, as it showed wholesome English films, instead of the usual American crook rubbish.

After an hour at the pictures the "army" marched along to the bunshop in great spirits. In the High Street they picked up more Greyfriars fellows—Hobson and Hoskins of the Shell. Shell fellows, as a rule, rather disdained the company of the Lower Fourth; but circumstances alter cases. A spread made all the difference. After all, as Hobson nobly said, they were all Greyfriars men, and why not be friendly?

So they were friendly, and when they arrived at the bunshop it was quite a rush of custom. Greyfriars men often gave little parties at the Courtfield bunshop, but never had there been a merrier party than this. The Famous Five were in funds, the spread was extensive and good, and every fellow enjoyed himself; but most of all they enjoyed the happy thought of Loder of the Sixth and his report to Quelch.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Quelch is Not Taking Any!

"NONSENSE!"

Mr. Quelch's remark was short, if not sweet.

Loder breathed hard.

It was not customary for a Sixth-Form prefect's remarks to be described as nonsense by the most testy Form master. But Mr. Quelch, in point of fact, was out of patience with Loder.

To put it in language used by Mr. Quelch's Form, though never by Mr. Quelch, he was fed-up right to the chin.

He sat back in his chair, looked at Loder across his writing-table, and repeated:

"Nonsense!"

It was rather a facer for Loder.

He had not expected Quelch to be pleased. He had anticipated that Quelch would be annoyed and irritated. That had not made him hesitate. He rather liked the idea of annoying and irritating Quelch.

But whatever Quelch's feelings might be Loder had expected him to sit up and take notice, so to speak. The report he brought in was a terribly serious one. It involved the good name of Quelch's Form, it involved floggings for five of his boys; it might involve the "sack" for some of them. But instead of sitting up and taking notice Mr. Quelch sat up and glared at Loder like a basilisk.

"Nonsense!" he said, for the third time. "You are mistaken! You are deluded by your personal dislike of these juniors, Loder! You are making an absurd blunder. The less you say on this subject the better."

Loder was almost pale with suppressed rage. Dearly he would have liked to tell Quelch what he thought of him. But that was impossible. Such language was not permitted at Greyfriars or any other school.

Mr. Quelch waved a hand. That afternoon was a half-holiday for Mr. Quelch as well as his Form. He was spending it in his own happy way with that jolly boon companion, Sophocles. Sophocles would have made the toughest head in the Remove ache. But to Quelch it was simply pie.

Loder had butted in at a very inopportune moment. Picture a scholarly gentleman, deep in the "Seven against Thebes," who had just lighted on a possible explanation of an obscure passage, such as the festive Sophocles delighted to leave behind him to puzzle succeeding generations. Picture that scholarly gentleman about to rise from his chair, take his hefty Sophoclean volume under his learned arm and trot off to the Head's study, there to compare notes on this entrancing subject with the headmaster! And picture an excited prefect butting in at the psychological moment with an incredible report about a number of juniors in whom Mr. Quelch had the completest confidence!

It was no wonder that Quelch was angry. The wonder was that he did not smite Loder to the floor with the Sophoclean volume.

Form masters, of course, never give way to their feelings. That was fortunate for Loder. Had Quelch followed his natural impulse Loder and Sophocles would have come into violent contact. Sophocles, no doubt, would not have

minced; but Loder would have been hurt.

Loder stared and stared as Quelch waved him away. Quelch seemed to think the matter at an end.

But it was not at an end. Loder of the Sixth was not to be waved away like a troublesome bluebottle.

"Mr. Quelch!" he gasped. "I repeat that—"

"You need repeat nothing!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "I have already stated my opinion of what you have told me, Loder!"

The prefect set his lips.

"I repeat, sir, that with my own eyes I saw five Remove boys climb the fence of the Three Fishers—"

"Nonsense!"

"Their names are Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Bull, and Hurree Singh. I recognised every one of them."

"I fully expected to hear those names!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Now, I will speak plainly to you, Loder. Some time ago you brought me a report concerning these very juniors. You found them in hiding, as you stated, in the purlieus of the Cross Keys Public House. The matter wore a very serious aspect. There was much unpleasant talk and comment."

"The boys explained that they had taken a short cut. You stated a positive opinion to the contrary. In spite of my high opinion of these juniors, I allowed myself to doubt. I was greatly disturbed. Then came the statement of a senior boy, which completely exonerated these juniors. You had made a mistake!"

"I—" Loder tried to get a word in edge-wise, as it were. But Henry Samuel Quelch was going strong, and there was no room for remarks from Gerald Loder.

"Allow me to speak!" hooted Quelch. "You made a mistake. A foolish mistake! I cannot help thinking, Loder, that you would never have made such a mistake but for your personal feelings of enmity towards these juniors."

"I have no such—"

"I differ!" said Quelch. "These feelings may be unconscious on your part, but they have been only too much in evidence. You were misled by them, Loder. You have been misled again. On the last occasion, Loder, I allowed you to waste my time and disturb my serenity. On this occasion I shall allow nothing of the sort."

Loder drew a deep, deep breath.

He had to admit that he had come rather a "mucker" in that Cross Keys affair. But this was really rather too thick.

"Am I to understand sir, that you refuse to take up this matter, now that I have reported it to you?" he exclaimed.

"You are to understand precisely that, Loder. I decline to have my time wasted with these frivolous reports."

"It is not a frivolous matter, sir, for a number of Greyfriars juniors to attend a prize-fight at a low resort not only out of school bounds, but outside the law of the land."

"Nonsense!" Mr. Quelch glared. "You seem to be well acquainted with the peculiar proceedings at the Three Fishers, Loder. May I ask how you know that a prize-fight is taking place there this afternoon?"

Loder caught his breath for a moment.

"I—I—I have heard so," he stammered.

"Hearsay is not proof," said Mr. Quelch. "If the fact were known for certain, it should be reported to the police."



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"It would scarcely be good for Greyfriars, sir, for a number of boys of this school to be found there by the police!" said Loder venomously.

"Nonsense!"

"The boys are actually there at this moment," said Loder. "If proper measures are taken, they may be detected either in the place itself, or as they leave, and the matter placed beyond any possible doubt. I have no doubt that you, sir, as their Form master, would be eager to establish the facts—"

"If I trusted your report, Loder, I should take instant measures. If I believed that boys of my Form were in such a place, I should not waste a moment. I should see that they were discovered, exposed, flogged, and that their leader was expelled from the school. But I do not," said Quelch, with a glare, "believe a word of it!"

"Sir! You accuse me of—of—of falsehood!" stuttered Loder.

"Do not put words into my mouth, Loder. I accuse you of nothing of the kind. I believe that you are deluded by your inordinate desire to cause these juniors to be punished. I presume that you fancy yourself to be actuated by a sense of duty. You are deceiving yourself, Loder. You are, in fact, talking nonsense, as I have said."

"You refuse to take the matter up, sir?"

"Most emphatically!"

"Then," said Loder desperately, "I shall go to the Head!"

"What?"

"I shall go to Dr. Locke!" said Loder savagely. "As you refuse to act on my report, sir, you leave me no choice. You practically accuse me of slandering a number of juniors, from feelings of personal ill-will. I shall place myself in Dr. Locke's hands."

A sound came from Mr. Quelch, which, if Form masters could be supposed to snort, would have been described as a snort.

"You may do as you please, Loder! You are well aware that Dr. Locke leaves matters appertaining to every form, in the hands of the Form master concerned. Dr. Locke will doubtless refer you to me, and I warn you in advance, that I will hear nothing further on this subject."

"I trust that Dr. Locke will see justice done, sir," said Loder, his voice trembling with rage. "If he should refuse me his support, I shall resign my position as a prefect."

"That would involve no loss to the school," said Mr. Quelch caustically.

Loder moved to the door. He would have given ten years of life—anybody's life but his own—to tell Quelch what he thought of him.

Quelch's glance followed him grimly. But as Loder reached the door, the Remove master spoke again, in a kinder tone.

"Loder, pray listen to reason! I assure you that there is no doubt in my mind that you are making another foolish mistake. You will serve no purpose by troubling your headmaster in the matter."

Loder gave him a bitter look. He had no doubt that Quelch was unwilling for his rank favouritism to be brought to the notice of the Head.

"I have no choice in the matter, sir," he said coldly. "My good faith and ability as a prefect have been questioned. I am bound to place myself in my headmaster's hands."

Mr. Quelch eyed him dubiously.

Loder was in deadly earnest, and the Remove master certainly did not want

the Head to be dragged into Lower Fourth affairs. If it was barely possible that Loder was right, and that Quelch was wrong in passing over his report unheeded—

That was a disconcerting reflection. It was unlikely, almost unthinkable, that Harry Wharton & Co. were as the suspicious prefect described them. But no doubt the bare possibility existed.

Loder, as he saw the doubt creeping into Quelch's face, allowed his lip to curl.

"If you decide to take the matter up, sir—" he began, and he could not keep a note of triumph out of his voice.

Quelch hardened again at once. He was not the man to admit defeat. What he had said he had said!

"Nonsense, Loder! I decline to have my time wasted by any such absurdity!" he snapped.

"Then I shall go to the Head!"

Mr. Quelch's lips tightened.

"Very well, Loder, you will, of course, do as you think best. But I warn you that Dr. Locke will not listen favourably to such an absurd story."

Loder's eyes glinted.

"If the Head thinks my story is absurd I am prepared to tender my resignation," he said. "But I don't think he will!"

The sender of this rousing rib-tickler has been awarded a MAGNET pocket-knife.

HOW HE KNEW!

A boy who was leaving school was speaking to a chum. "What are you going to be?" asked the chum. "A book-keeper," was the prompt reply. "You'll make a jolly good one." "How do you know?" "Because you have not returned the MAGNET I lent you three months ago!"

A useful pocket-knife has been forwarded to: Stanley Maddams, 11, Bury Road, Hatfield, Herts.

And with that, Gerald Loder left the study.

Mr. Quelch glared at the door after it had closed behind Loder. Sophocles lay unheeded on the table. The Remove master was intensely irritated, and not wholly at ease in his mind. If the Head, after all, took the report seriously—and certainly the matter was serious enough, if well-founded—it would be very uncomfortable for Quelch. Even if the Head doubted, he might think—he probably would think—that Quelch should have investigated, after receiving a formal report from a prefect of the Sixth Form. And if, by some horrid and unexpected chance, it should turn out that Loder was right—

Mr. Quelch breathed hard. He sat and glared at the door. And on the table Sophocles lay—packed with those obscurities which delight the heart of the investigating scholar, but quite unlikely to have any more of his obscurities elucidated that afternoon by Henry Samuel Quelch.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

By Order of the Head!

"IMPOSSIBLE!"

That was the Head's first comment, and it did not sound very encouraging to Loder. It seemed to hint that he would have as much difficulty with the headmaster as with the master of the Remove.

Loder carefully suppressed his irrita-

tion and gave no sign of the contempt he felt.

Dr. Locke pronounced it impossible for a Greyfriars man so to disgrace himself as to be present at a prize-fight at a low resort like the Three Fishers. So far from being impossible, Loder could have told him that it was very possible indeed, and on the very best of evidence—Loder himself having attended such functions several times.

That, however, he was not likely to tell the Head, even to convince him that it was "possible" that the Removites were there.

Dr. Locke looked troubled.

Like Mr. Quelch, he was taking his ease on that half-holiday, school matters dismissed from his mind and a classical volume open on his desk. He did not desire to be interrupted; he did not desire to be bothered. Still, it was his duty that the prefect was doing—and a very important duty, if his statements were true.

"Are you absolutely certain of what you say, Loder?" asked the Head, peering at the prefect over his glasses.

"Absolutely, sir."

"You actually saw five boys belonging to the Lower Fourth Form climb the wall into a disreputable resort which is strictly out of school bounds?"

"I did, sir."

"Why did you not stop them, Loder?"

Loder, of course, could not explain that he had been keen to see the Famous Five land themselves in trouble and disgrace. That sort of explanation would not have done for the Head.

"They were well ahead of me, sir, and they nipped over the fence almost in a twinkling," he explained.

"That implies that you were following them, Loder?"

"Quite so, sir! An incident occurred a week or two ago which placed these boys under serious suspicion. Their Form-master was satisfied with their explanation—I could not help feeling that they had abused his confidence, sir, and deceived him. For that reason I kept them under observation this afternoon."

"I have every faith in Mr. Quelch's judgment and discernment, Loder," said the Head stiffly.

"Certainly, sir; but these juniors are very wary—very wary, indeed—and I may say cunning. I thought that they deluded Mr. Quelch on the last occasion. This afternoon, sir, their actions left no doubt in my mind that they contemplated breaking bounds. They started in the direction of the cliffs and changed that direction in the middle of Friar-dale Wood, and then made for the Three Fishers by way of the towpath."

"That certainly looks suspicious," said the Head. "If you actually saw them climb the fence and disappear inside—"

"I saw them, sir, with my own eyes. They are there now, to attend the fight that is to take place—there can be no question of that!" said Loder. "They could have no other object in going there on this special afternoon."

"Very well, Loder—the matter certainly must be looked into. You will place the facts before Mr. Quelch. I am, indeed, surprised that you came to me instead of the Form master concerned."

"I have been to Mr. Quelch, sir, and he refuses to take up the matter at all, or to take any notice of my report."

"Indeed," said the Head, raising his eyebrows in astonishment. "I do not understand why."

"Mr. Quelch has an impression that I

have a personal feeling against these juniors, sir. I need not say that is a mistake."

The Head drummed thoughtfully on his desk.

"Mr. Quelch must have good reasons for declining to act in the matter," he said slowly.

Loder breathed hard. He knew that the headmaster's reliance on Mr. Quelch was complete; and again he feared that his victims would escape him.

"May I point out, sir," he said, "that my own honour as a Greyfriars prefect is at stake. Unless it is concluded that I have made a false statement, my report must be acted upon. I trust, sir, that you do not presume that I have spoken false in stating that I saw these juniors enter a place out of bounds."

"Certainly not, Loder."

"In that case, sir, I cannot see how my report can be passed over," said Loder. "If I am not trusted, I have no alternative but to resign my position as a prefect. If that is your desire, sir—" went on Loder, with an air of martyr-like patience and resignation.

"Nothing of the kind, Loder. On what grounds did Mr. Quelch refuse to take note of your report?"

"On the grounds that I had made a foolish mistake, sir," said Loder. "As if there could be any mistake in the matter. My report is either true or false—there is no room for mistakes."

"That certainly seems to be the case," said the Head slowly. "If you are positive that you yourself watched these boys climb over the fence into a forbidden place—"

"I did, sir."

"The matter must be inquired into," said the Head decidedly. "If the boys are there they must be convicted of this serious dereliction of duty, and undoubtedly the ringleader will be expelled from Greyfriars."

Loder drooped his eyes, conscious of the blaze of triumphant malice in them. The expulsion of Harry Wharton would pay off many an old score against the captain of the Remove. Loder could have chuckled aloud at the thought of it. To do him justice, Loder had no doubt that Wharton deserved to be sacked—as much as he himself deserved it. He had not the slightest doubt that Harry Wharton & Co. in these very moments were mingling with the shady mob at the Three Fishers, probably laying the odds on the fight between the Friardale Chicken and the Courtfield Pug. He had no doubt that such a scene had as much attraction for the Remove men as it had for himself.

"The matter is difficult," said the Head, drumming on the desk again. "I cannot allow Greyfriars prefects to enter such a place in search of the boys—that is out of the question."

"And it would be useless, sir, as they would dodge out of sight and deny afterwards the truth of my report," said Loder. "As the matter stands, they have no suspicion that their presence there is known; and they may be easily detected when they leave."

"No doubt," said the Head. "I will explain to Mr. Quelch, personally, that I desire this matter to be investigated, Loder. I shall trust the investigation in your hands, and you will have the assistance of the other prefects. No doubt the exits from the place may be kept under observation, and the boys caught as they leave. Inform Wingate that I desire him to give you every aid—in fact I will speak to Wingate myself."

"Thank you, sir."

The Head suppressed a sigh and left

the quiet seclusion of his study to attend to this troublesome matter.

Loder was not a witness of his interview with Mr. Quelch, but he smiled as he imagined the feelings of the Remove master in being thus over-ruled by his chief.

It was a blow for Quelch—a "facer" for him, as Loder expressed it to himself.

No doubt Quelch would attempt to pooh-pooh the matter, and talk rot about his confidence in those young scamps. He could keep that up until they were marched back to Greyfriars with proof of their guilt. But what would he say then?

He would have to admit that Loder was right: he would have to admit that he had been careless in his duty. Certainly it would shake the Head's confidence in him.

Loder smiled at the prospect.

After Mr. Quelch, the Head spoke to Wingate of the Sixth. The captain of Greyfriars may or may not have been pleased thereby; but he had no choice but to carry out the instructions of his headmaster.

There was a general gathering of the prefects. Loder joined them in the quad. As they went down to the gates Loder glanced back at the House and saw Quelch standing at his study window. Never had Quelch's brow looked so black—and Loder smiled again. This was his day for smiling.

Some of the Sixth-Form men were frowning, irritated at this duty that had been thrust upon them on a half-holiday. But Loder did not frown; for once he was all smiles.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

On Patrol!

"RUBBISH!" grunted Wingate. "Rot!" agreed Gwynne of the Sixth.

"Tommy-rot!" said North.

Out of hearing of the headmaster, they did not hesitate to express their opinion of the matter in hand.

Of all the Greyfriars prefects, in fact, only two were in accord with Loder, and they were his own friends, Carne and Walker. And even Carne and Walker had lingering doubts whether Loder might not have made some awful "bloomer." They did not like the cheery heroes of the Remove. They considered them cheeky young sweeps. But they were not so blinded by animosity as Loder. And they knew, or at least felt sure, that the Famous Five were not the shady young rotters Loder believed them to be. And only shady young rotters would be doing what Loder reported the Famous Five as doing.

However, Head's orders were Head's orders, and all the prefects had been gathered for this job of work. All of them were needed, if the culprits were to be caught. It was fortunate, Loder considered, that they were all within gates that afternoon, and ready to be called on. For the task was not a small one. The Three Fishers had two exits—one on the towpath, the other on a lane leading to Courtfield Common. Both exits had to be watched, and they were at a considerable distance from one another. Added to that the grounds were extensive, surrounded by a tree-lined fence, and at any point of the circumference, the culprits might climb that fence to get away. It was, indeed, very unlikely that they would leave by either gate, in the midst of the rowdy mob that would be pouring out after the fight.

Rascals as they were—in Loder's valuable opinion—they were certain to be all the more cautious for that very reason.

So every fence round the extensive grounds of the Three Fishers had to be patrolled, if the young scoundrels were not to escape.

Loder was bitterly determined that they should not escape. If they got away unseen, they would, of course, deny point-blank that they had ever been in the place at all. They would say Loder had been mistaken, and in that, as Loder realised, they would have the whole-hearted support of their Form master. Quelch would be only too glad of a chance to make Loder out to be in the wrong. A prefect's report should have clinched the matter beyond question; but in this case it did not, owing to the excellent reputation of the young villains, and to the rotten, rank favouritism of their Form master. Loder realised very clearly that they had to be caught in the act.

There was a plentiful lack of enthusiasm on the part of most of the prefects. But they were ready to play up—there was no choice about that. Being a prefect did not mean merely that a man carried an ashplant under his arm, and was entitled to give a Lower boy "six." There were duties attached to the position, as well as privileges. Grumbling and grouching, to a very considerable extent, the prefects were prepared to carry out their duties all the same.

"Well, what's the programme, Loder?" asked Wingate gruffly. "You're in charge of the job."

"You're head prefect," sneered Loder. "But if you're not keen on catching those disreputable young rotters—"

"That's all bunkum!" said the Greyfriars captain. "I don't believe they're anything of the sort. And I believe you've made some idiotic mistake."

"I suppose I can believe my own eyes," said Loder.

"Well, you ought to be able to," admitted Wingate. "All the same, I fancy you've made a bloomer. Don't think of putting this on me. The Head's asked me to give you every assistance. Well, I'll give it. I'm not acting now as head prefect. As head prefect I should chuck the thing, here and now. So give your directions, and we'll carry them out, leaving it to you to look a silly ass when it all turns out to be tommy-rot."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Gwynne.

So Loder gave his directions. That he was quite willing to do, preferring to trust his own judgment in the matter of tactics.

Wingate, Gwynne, and Lawrence were posted on the towpath, to patrol the length of fence on that side. Walker and Carne were placed in a little shady lane that divided the Three Fishers' grounds from Popper Court; more men patrolled the lane that led to Courtfield Common, along which the Three Fishers fence ran for some distance. Three or four others were posted at various strategic points, where Loder considered it possible that the young rascals might attempt to make a break.

These arrangements having been made and carried out, Loder was satisfied that all escape for the five culprits was cut off.

By that time the fight at the Three Fishers was going on. How long it was likely to last, and how long after it was over the juniors might linger,



Gerald Loder gave his directions, and every fence round the extensive grounds of the Three Fishers was patrolled by Sixth-Formers. "I believe you've made some idiotic mistake, Loder," said Wingate. "I don't believe Wharton and his friends are in the place at all." There was a snigger from the Removites who were looking on. (See Chapter 5.)

there was no telling. The Greyfriars prefects, grousing more irritably than ever, settled down to waste a golden summer's afternoon.

Needless to say, the gathering of the clans, as it were, had not escaped attention at the school. It was a half-holiday, and all the fellows were at liberty. And the marching forth of all the school prefects in a body naturally drew many glances and excited wide comment.

Naturally, fellows wanted to know what was on.

Thus it happened that the great and lordly Sixth-Form prefects, performing their duty on sentry-go, found themselves objects of attention from crowds of Greyfriars juniors.

Some of the Shell, having nothing particular on that afternoon, interested themselves in the proceedings of the prefects. So did Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth. So did fags of the Third and Second. So did a number of Removites, except, of course, those Remove men who were at Courtfield with the Famous Five. The party at the bunshop little dreamed of the growing excitement that was going on at Greyfriars. They would have been greatly astonished had they known that their little jape had set all the Sixth-Form prefects in motion, and half the Lower School as well.

Skinner of the Remove got a word from Loder, who was by no means unwilling to let all Greyfriars know that the prefects were after the Famous Five, and that a "catch" was a certainty.

Skinner chuckled over it.

"Loder's got that lot at last, you men," he told Snoop and Stott. "Fairly got them this time. I say, they're at the Three Fishers, and the prefects are going to nab them as they come out."

Snoop whistled.

"My hat! Lucky we didn't butt in there to-day," he remarked.

"Jolly lucky!" agreed Skinner. "I shouldn't wonder if some Greyfriars men are there. And they'll get nabbed, too, very likely. What price seeing Hilton of the Fifth sacked?"

"I don't believe Wharton's there," said Stott slowly. "He's not that sort, Skinner."

"Loder saw him go in, fathead."

"Well, I shall be surprised if he's nailed there."

"Looks as if they're bound to nail him," said Skinner. "I don't see how he will get away."

Had Harry Wharton & Co. been within the borders of the Three Fishers, certainly their escape would have been very doubtful, for not only were all avenues of escape watched by official eyes, but swarms of Greyfriars fellows were now on the scene, watching the watchers, as it were. The affair was turning itself into a half-holiday's entertainment. And frowning glances from the irritated prefects could not drive away the interested onlookers.

More than one Greyfriars man had rather a painful shock when he discovered what was going on. Blundell and Hilton of the Fifth had been at cricket practice, after which they took a walk along the towpath, where they came on Wingate and Gwynne and Lawrence patrolling, with glum and bored faces. And when Blundell asked the reason, and was told, Hilton turned quite pale.

"Oh, gad!" he said under his breath.

Very nearly had Hilton of the Fifth gone to the Three Fishers that afternoon with his chum Price. Blundell had prevailed, and kept him to games practice. Price had stalked away in a morose temper at being turned down; but Hilton reflected that Price would

be jolly glad he hadn't gone, when he heard about this. The prefects were fishing for juniors, as it were; but any Greyfriars man emerging from these forbidden precincts would have been caught in the net.

A little later Aubrey Angel, of the Fourth Form, came up the towpath at a trot. The sportsman of the Fourth was booked to see the fight at the Three Fishers, but luckily for himself Capper had detained him, and he was late. At the sight of three prefects patrolling the towpath, Angel of the Fourth did not stop at the Three Fishers. He walked on up the river, with as careless an air as he could assume, Wingate staring after him rather suspiciously. Angel's heart was beating fast as he went. He had had a narrow escape.

Later still, an angular gentleman came with long strides up the path by the Sark. It was Mr. Quelch this time.

Mr. Quelch was looking decidedly cross.

The afternoon's events had irritated him deeply. The Head had put it gently, kindly, tactfully; he was an extremely courteous old gentleman; but kindness and tact and courtesy could not alter facts, and the fact was that a matter appertaining to Quelch's Form had been taken out of Quelch's hands.

That was annoying, irritating, discomposing. Sophocles no longer appealed to Mr. Quelch; he had given Sophocles the go-by, and left the great tragic poet forlorn on his study table. In a mood of irritation he could not deal with Sophocles. Sophocles required a calm and concentrated mood, like a crossword puzzle, for instance—though, of course, Mr. Quelch would never have dreamed of comparing the great works of the mighty Greek with crossword puzzles.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,115.

Hoping that a walk in the sunny summer weather would calm his irritation, Mr. Quelch walked forth—and came on the patrol on the towpath.

He paused and looked at the prefects. Wingate met his grim glance sheepishly.

"Wingate! Are you on the watch here?" asked Mr. Quelch acidly.

"Yes, sir."

"On account of Loder's report—"

"Yes; the Head asked me, sir," said the Greyfriars captain apologetically.

"Quite so, Wingate; you are only doing your duty," said Mr. Quelch. "I will only say that I am sorry you are compelled to waste your time on this nonsense!"

And Quelch stalked on.

"Lot of asses he must think us!" grunted Gwynno. "That idiot Loder—"

"That fathead Loder—" growled Wingate.

Mr. Quelch pursued his way, turning from the towpath into the lane that led to Courtfield Common and the town. There he was gratified—or otherwise—by a view of Gerald Loder and several other prefects, on patrol. He paused to speak to Loder.

"You have made no discovery, so far, Loder?" asked Mr. Quelch, in a tone of acid sarcasm.

"Not yet, sir," said Loder. "I think the fight is not yet over; and those boys of your Form, sir, will not leave till the finish."

Henry Samuel Quelch compressed his lips.

"I have not the slightest belief, Loder, that any boys of my form are within those walls!" he snapped.

Loder smiled maliciously.

"The Head seems to think it possible, sir," he said demurely. "I am now carrying out the Head's instructions."

It was not for Mr. Quelch, of course, to say anything that could be construed into criticism of his chief. He walked on, leaving Loder grinning.

He proceeded across the sunny common, and walked into Courtfield. The walk had not had the effect of soothing his irritated nerves. Perhaps at the back of his mind was a faint, lingering dread that Loder might, for once, be in the right; and, if it proved so, Mr. Quelch undoubtedly would be placed in a very awkward and painful position. He frowned his way along Courtfield High Street.

By that time Mr. Quelch was tired.

He decided to step in at the bunshop for a cup of tea, and then take a taxi back to the school.

He stepped in at the bunshop.

Then he jumped.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Tea at the Bunshop!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Quelch!"

Harry Wharton rose to his feet smiling. Remove men were not always glad to see their Form master. On this occasion, however, there were five Removites who were very pleased indeed to see him.

A number of small tables had been placed together, to accommodate the numerous party of schoolboys. The feast was going strong. Mr. Quelch, entering the bunshop, had a full and gratifying view of a crowd of his boys and some Shell fellows and two or three of the Fourth at tea; and among them the five juniors who were supposed, at that moment, to be watching the prizefight at the Three Fishers.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,115.

The frown melted from Mr. Quelch's brow.

He smiled.

It was quite an expansive smile. It could almost have been described as a grin.

It was enough to make Rhadamanthus himself grin, to think of Loder and the array of prefects, patrolling every exit from the Three Fishers, on the watch for these fellows, who were having tea in the Courtfield bunshop.

The Famous Five smiled, too. They had gathered an army of juniors to place their alibi beyond question. But the presence of a Form master gave it the finishing touch. An important member of Dr. Locke's staff was now a witness on their behalf.

Wharton approached the Remove master respectfully.

"Will you join us, sir?" he asked.

"What—what?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"It will be an honour, sir, if you would be kind enough to join us," said the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, please, do, sir!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, placing a chair for the master.

"Please, sir!" said a dozen cheery voices.

All the juniors were on their feet; all of them looking as if the crowning touch of felicity would be given to the feast.

WHAT NAME?

The following letters have been jumbled together purposely. Put in their proper order, they spell the name of a well-known junior at Greyfriars.

NIPGREKWNCATY

Who is it? The answer will appear in next week's MAGNET.

Last week's solution was—
Robert Cherry.

if Mr. Quelch would condescend to join it.

Mr. Quelch did not often relax. Still, he could relax. He did now.

"Why, my dear boys, I came in for a cup of tea!" he said graciously. "I shall certainly be very pleased to join your little party for a moment or two."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"Please sit down, sir!"

"Waiter! Waiter!"

"Here you are, sir!"

"That's a comfortable chair, sir."

"How nice to see you here, sir!"

"I say, you fellows, Mr. Quelch would like some of those juicy jam-tarts! I've just finished the last—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"A fresh pot of tea, waiter, and some of those dry biscuits—"

"Yessir."

"I say, you fellows— Ow! What beast is stamping on my foot? Wow!"

"Try the cake, sir!"

Mr. Quelch beamed—he positively beamed. He was so glad and relieved to find the five accused members of his Form thus harmlessly occupied, that he was in his happiest and most expansive mood. Even Sophocles was nothing to this.

Anyone beholding Mr. Quelch at that moment would never have dreamed that he was a Tartar in the Form-room at Greyfriars. Anyone listening to his pleasant tones would not have guessed that, in the Form-room, he was capable of saying "Bend over!" in a voice like that of the Great Huge Bear.

It really was the happiest of meetings.

Mr. Quelch accepted a cup of tea, of which he was in need; and a helping of cake, of which he was not in need, and which he judiciously left on his plate. But he courteously consumed two or three dry biscuits with his tea. In matters of digestion there was a considerable difference between fifty and fifteen. Mr. Quelch had to be careful. He was in a very satisfied mood; but his satisfaction would have been dashed had he swallowed a tenth part of the sticky provender that was hospitably pressed upon him.

"It's simply jolly, you dropping in like this, sir!" said the captain of the Remove. "It makes our little feed quite a success!"

"The jolliffulness is terrific, honoured sir!"

"It is a pleasure to me," said Mr. Quelch—"an unexpected pleasure! You have been here some time, Wharton?"

That question was quite casually put; but it told the juniors that Loder of the Sixth had made his report.

"Oh, quite a little time, sir!" said Wharton innocently. "Ever since we came out of the pictures."

"You have been to the pictures?"

"Yes, sir; we put in an hour at Courtfield Picture Palace. Quite a good film showing there now, sir."

"Quite!" said Mr. Quelch.

He smiled more expansively than ever, if possible. The juniors had been some time at the bunshop, and before that they had put in an hour at the pictures. Obviously they could not possibly have seen anything of the fight at the Three Fishers. Indeed, by a rapid mental comparison of times, Mr. Quelch worked it out that these juniors must have been at the pictures at the very time that Loder was making his report at Greyfriars. Loder's report was all moonshine, as Mr. Quelch had said from the first. He had made some egregious mistake—if, indeed, his prejudice against these happy, innocent schoolboys had not led him into actual fabrication.

People teazing in the bunshop glanced at the party with interested looks. It was pleasant to see a schoolmaster thus unbending in the company of his pupils; it showed on what friendly—indeed, affectionate—terms they must be at school. Certainly Mr. Quelch did not look just then as if he had ever told any of these nice boys to bend over a desk while he wielded a cane. Appearances are sometimes a little deceptive.

Mr. Quelch did not stay long. One of his most valuable gifts was tact. Mr. Prout would sometimes bore Fifth Form men almost to the point of weeping. The Remove master had too much perception for that. His boys were pleased to see him, proud to have him sitting at their feast; but a master's company was liable to pall. Mr. Quelch remembered enough of his youth to be aware of that. Every fellow was so carefully on his best behaviour that the strain was likely to become terrible if prolonged. Tactfully the Form master took his leave before the schoolboys wanted him to clear.

With great respect they stood up to watch him depart, and the captain of the Remove uttered a few well-chosen words expressive of the general sense of the honour they had received.

Mr. Quelch departed in high good-humour.

His taxi bore a very pleased and cheerful gentleman back to Greyfriars.

Arriving there, he went to his study, smiling.

He might have called on the Head and mentioned to him that he had seen the accused juniors, that he knew where they were, and that the patrol round

the Three Fishers might as well be recalled. He might have done so; but he did not do so. The Head had taken the affair out of his hands, and it was not for him to intervene.

Mr. Quelch calmly left matters to take their own course.

In a soothed mood, he returned to Sophocles, like a cheery schoolboy to a jig-saw puzzle.

Weary prefects continued to watch the fences of the Three Fishers. Crowds of entertained juniors continued to watch the weary prefects. In the bunshop at Courtfield a happy party continued their tea.

After which Harry Wharton & Co. and their numerous companions took their homeward way; but not in a hurry. They did not want to get in much before call-over. They had had quite a happy half-holiday, and a pleasant stroll homeward in the summer sunset was grateful and comforting. But certainly they would have hurried their steps had they known of the excitement, now growing intense, that was going on at Greyfriars.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise!

SKINNER jumped. He jumped almost clear of the floor in his amazement.

"You!" he stuttered. The Famous Five strolled into the House looking as if they had not a care in the world—as, indeed, they had not just then.

Skinner stared at them blankly. They did not look like fellows who had been caught "blagging" and were booked for floggings, or the sack. They looked like anything but that. "You!" repeated Skinner almost dazedly.

"Little us!" said Bob Cherry. "Us; not our ghosts, old bean! Did you take us for giddy spooks?"

Really Skinner could not have looked more startled if he had beheld the phantoms of the Famous Five, instead of those cheery youths themselves.

"How did you do it?" he gasped. "What and which?" "I mean—how did you get away?" "Get away?" repeated Frank Nugent, staring at Skinner. "What do you mean?"

"How did you dodge out?" "Out of where, fathead?" "The Three Fishers!" gasped Skinner. "You haven't been spotted—I can see you haven't been spotted. But how did you get clear, with all the prefects watching for you?"

"All the prefects watching for us!" repeated Johnny Bull. "Are you off your rocker, Skinner?" "You didn't know?" demanded Skinner.

"We don't know now," said Bob. "I suppose you're trying to pull our leg. What are you driving at, anyhow?" Skinner stared. He could not make it out.

"Well, some fellows have all the luck!" he said at last. "Can't imagine how you got out of the place without being spotted. Every prefect in the school is there, watching for you, and a crowd of other fellows."

"My only hat!" "Watching for us?" said Harry Wharton. "Oh crumbs! But what—how—"

"You didn't know Loder spotted you going in?" grinned Skinner.

"Ha, ha! Yes, we knew that."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Blessed if I should think it funny!"

said the puzzled Skinner. "It may mean the sack!"

"The sackfulness will not be terrific, my esteemed Skinner," grinned the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Mean to say Loder's got the prefects watching that show, waiting for us to come out?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Yes, rather!" "My only Aunt Sempronia!"

Five or six other fellows came up now, as astonished as Skinner to see the Famous Five looking so cheery.

"Weren't you caught?" asked Snoop. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's it all about, you men?" asked Squiff of the Remove. "I knew it was all bunkum, but I couldn't make it out. You fellows haven't been at the fight at the Three Fishers?"

"Ha, ha! No fear!" "Loder thinks you have—"

"Loder would!" chuckled Nugent.

"He's got all the prefects watching the place to catch you when you leave, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Famous Five.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Fan me, somebody! This is working out better than we thought! Poor old Loder!"

"They're still at it," said Bolsover major. "How you got out without being spotted beats me!"

"Simple enough!" said Harry. "We haven't been in the place at all. We've been in Courtfield."

"Gammon!"

"You silly ass! We've been with twenty fellows, or more!" growled Johnny Bull.

"But Loder thought—"

"We're not responsible for what Loder thinks—if he thinks at all!" chuckled Bob. "My opinion is that he doesn't—and can't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mean to say the prefects are wandering round the Three Fishers now, waiting for us to drop into their hands?" asked Nugent.

"Yes, rather! They'll keep it up till call-over, I expect."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Famous Five yelled. They almost wept. They had planned to pull Loder's leg, but they had never dreamed of pulling it to this extent. The joke had assumed undreamt-of proportions.

"They're still watching, and half Greyfriars are watching them," said Bolsover major. "It's a regular sensation!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And you say you've been at Courtfield?" said Skinner. "You've fixed it up with some fellows to make out you were there?"

"Yes; Quelch is one of the fellows we've fixed it up with!" chortled Bob Cherry.

"Quelch?" howled Skinner.

"Yes; he happened to drop in at the bunshop and had tea with us."

"Oh, my hat! That does Loder in the eye!" said Squiff.

"It does—it do!" chuckled Bob.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But, I say, you fellows, Loder's just come in at the gates—"

"Getting tired of waiting for the fruit to drop!" chuckled Nugent. "Let's get up to the study, you men. We don't want to see Loder."

The Famous Five went up the Remove passage. Quite a crowd followed them there, eager to know the happenings of that eventful afternoon. Roars of laughter awoke the echoes of the Remove studies when they were told.

Loder of the Sixth, when he came

(Continued on next page.)

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into the House, saw nothing of the Famous Five. He did not, of course, expect to see them. To the best of his belief, those young rascals were still at the Three Fishers—doubtless in a mood of panic.

The fight was long over, the crowd was gone; but the watching prefects had seen nothing of any Greyfriars fellows leaving. Now it was close on call-over, and Loder had returned to the school to report progress.

Many smiling faces watched Loder as he strode, lofty and important, to the Head's study. Many of the juniors knew, now, that the Famous Five had returned; but they did not mention it to Loder. Lofty, regardless of smiling faces, Loder stalked to the Head's study. It was quite a pleasant reflection to him, that the culprits, about to leave after the fight, had discovered the watching prefects on patrol, and did not dare to venture forth.

But Loder repressed his glee as he entered the Head's presence. His face was grave and concerned.

"Well, Loder?" asked the Head.

"The boys have not yet come out, sir," said Loder. "I've no doubt they found that the place was watched."

"No doubt," said the Head.

"They cannot come out without being detected, sir," said Loder, "and I conclude that they will miss calling-over, and remain till dark. After dark, of course, they may escape undiscovered, and return to the school with some lying tale of having been somewhere else. In the circumstances, sir, if you have any instructions—"

"If those boys are missing from call-over, Loder, it will be taken as proof positive of their guilt," said the Head. "I shall myself take the roll in Hall. In the meantime, let the prefects remain on duty, and you may rejoin them, Loder. Remain till dark."

"Very well, sir."

Loder of the Sixth left the House again, to convey the Head's instructions to the prefects, who by this time were not only tired, bored, and angry, but getting almost rabid.

From a Remove study window a group of grinning faces watched him go.

"Loder's still on the job!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly old Chingachgook still on the trail!" chortled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A regular bloodhound, isn't he?" remarked Johnny Bull. "What a pity we've got to turn up for call-over! They might keep it up till midnight!" And the juniors roared.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Adsum!

DR. Locke entered Big Hall with a grave brow.

All the masters were in their places, and all were looking grave; though perhaps there was a faint twinkle in the eyes of one—the master of the Remove.

The ranks of the Sixth were considerably thinned. Not a prefect was present.

With that exception, all Greyfriars was present. Over most of the assembly hung an air of solemnity. Small fags, in the Second and Third, were quite nervous.

Every fellow knew that something was on—something unusual and solemn. Fellows belonging to the school were in forbidden precincts—and

those precincts were so carefully guarded by the Sixth Form prefects that the delinquents were unable to escape; and therefore had to draw attention to themselves, and practically announce their guilt, by cutting call-over.

Many fellows knew that the Famous Five of the Remove were the parties concerned. Other fellows didn't know that—and wondered who the guilty parties were—surmises ranging from Angel of the Fourth, to Hilton of the Fifth, and even to Loder himself.

Some fellows thought Price was the chief offender—till they saw him, looking as cool as ever, in the ranks of the Fifth. Others thought of Walker and Carne of the Sixth—in fact, there were all sorts of wild rumours.

Before the Head entered there was a buzz of whispers, and fellows craned their necks to see who was missing from his place; but the odd thing was that nobody seemed to be missing, except the Sixth Form prefects. Whereupon there was a whispered rumour that the offenders were Sixth Form men and prefects—and suspicion centred on Walker and Loder—whom, for a brief space, quite a lot of fellows believed were at the Three Fishers, cut off from escape by the rest of the prefects.

But the fellows who knew that the Famous Five were the goods, so to speak, were amazed to see them in Hall with the Remove, looking merry and bright, as if calling-over were a very entertaining function. Shell fellows, Fourth-Formers, fags of the Third and Second, stared at the Famous Five and wondered.

Most of the Remove, by this time, knew all about it, though a few were still in the dark. There were many smiles in the Remove—a contrast to the uneasy solemnity of the rest of the school.

Dr. Locke did not often take the roll at calling-over. Generally that duty was left to another master or a prefect. Only on special occasions did the Head call the roll. So this, evidently, was a special occasion.

There was still a buzz of excited whispering going on when the Head entered. The masters called for silence.

There was stillness when the Head began to call the names. His voice was not loud, but it was deep and clear, and heard in the farthest recesses of Hall. Of the names of the Famous Five, that of Johnny Bull came first alphabetically, and so was the first of the five to be called.

"Bull!"

"Adsum!"

The Head started.

From where he stood it was difficult for him to pick out one junior amid a swarm. He had called the name without expecting an answer. Were not the prefects still keeping watch and ward round the spot where Bull and his companions were cornered?

In his surprise, the Head repeated the name.

"Bull!"

"Adsum!" repeated Johnny, in a louder tone, as if he suspected that the Head was getting deaf.

The Head went on, a strange expression on his face. Cherry was the next of the Famous Five to be called, and in reply came Bob's powerful voice:

"Adsum!"

When Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's name came along the reply was still the same. Nugent, in cheery tones, answered to his name. Wharton came later, and answered when his name came.

Quite an extraordinary expression

was on the headmaster's face. Every one of the five juniors were present; yet Loder had assured him that every exit from the Three Fishers was carefully guarded, and that the culprits were still there, afraid to venture forth. There was something wrong somewhere. The Head, glancing at Mr. Quelch, read a slightly ironical expression on that gentleman's face. He coloured faintly. He had over-ruled the Remove master's judgment in this matter, feeling it his duty to do so. It was borne in upon his mind that he would have acted wisely in ignoring Loder's report as the Form master had done.

At the end of the roll there was an excitement in Hall that could hardly be subdued. Nobody was missing, except the prefects. This, to many fellows, indicated that the offenders must, beyond question, be Sixth Form men.

To most of the fellows, however, it indicated that some extraordinary mistake had been made, and that the august body of prefects, still watching the precincts of the Three Fishers, were on a wild-goose chase!

The school were not dismissed, as usual, at the end of the roll. The Head made a sign to Mr. Quelch, who approached him. The Remove master's expression was almost demure. Probably, he was beginning to enjoy the situation.

"No boys belonging to your Form appear to be missing, my dear Quelch," said the Head.

He spoke in a low voice, much to the annoyance of the school, who strained their ears to hear.

"None, sir."

"It is very strange," said the Head.

"Indeed, sir."

"Very extraordinary indeed. Unless Loder is very strangely mistaken, those boys, whom he named, must have escaped from that—that resort, in spite of the watch that was kept."

"As they never were there, sir, it was unnecessary for them to escape," said Mr. Quelch drily.

"Loder stated positively what he saw, sir."

"I have little faith in Loder's positive statements, sir," said Mr. Quelch tartly, "in matters touching the good name of my Form."

The Head pursed his lips.

"I am completely perplexed," he said. "The school will remain here until the matter is inquired into publicly. I shall send a message to the prefects at once."

Several messengers were dispatched to call in the prefects. The school waited.

Being detained in Hall like this, in other circumstances, would have caused deadly fury in the breasts of all the fellows kept waiting there. Now nobody objected. Nobody would willingly have left Hall before the climax.

The prefects were not long in arriving, though it seemed a long time to the waiting school.

At length the big door opened, and Wingate of the Sixth came in, followed by the rest of the august body.

They looked tired and cross.

Loder looked more than cross. All his self-command could scarcely hide the rage that possessed him.

The Head's message, recalling the seniors from their patrol, had utterly astounded Loder. He knew that the young scoundrels, if they were within the walls of the Three Fishers, could not have escaped undetected. The watch had been too careful for that. He was certain that they were lurking within the fences, in a state of panic,



Harry Wharton addressed Mr. Quelch respectfully. "It would be an honour, sir," he said, "if you would be kind enough to join us at tea." "Oh, please do, sir!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, placing a chair for the Form master. Mr. Quelch relaxed immediately. "Why, my dear boys, I came in for a cup of tea," he said graciously. "I shall be very pleased to join your little party, for a moment or two." (See Chapter 6.)

escape cut off, and detection assured. The news that they were in Hall at Greyfriars, and had answered to their names there, almost unnerved Loder. He tramped back to the school, puzzled and enraged—not at all comforted by the gibes of the other prefects.

His glance fell on five smiling faces in the Remove ranks, as he came in. Bob Cherry winked at him.

Almost choking, Loder went to his place in the Sixth.

The excitement was tense. All Greyfriars was gathered in Hall; obviously, nobody belonging to the school was out of bounds. Somebody had discovered a mare's nest. That was certain now.

"Loder!"

The Head spoke quietly; but there was a tone in his voice that gave the bully of the Sixth an unpleasant thrill. He came up to the headmaster on the dais at the upper end of Hall.

At a sign from the head Mr. Quelch directed the Famous Five to go up to their headmaster. With cheery faces, the chums of the Remove walked up the hall, with the eyes of all Greyfriars upon them.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

No Luck for Loder!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. faced their headmaster, calm and respectful, and waited. There was no sign of alarm in their cheery faces. Loder, on the other hand, could not hide his uneasiness. Something had gone wrong—he could not guess what it was, but he realised that his victims were slipping from his grasp. Instead of trouble ahead for them, he had an uneasy feeling of trouble ahead

for himself. Perplexed and furious, he wondered whether, after all, he had made a "bloomer." But he could believe his own eyes! With his own eyes he had seen the young rascals, one after another, disappear into the precincts of the Three Fishers. Yet, somehow, they hadn't been there! It was very portending.

The Head eyed the juniors not unkindly. He was going to ascertain the truth of this strange affair; but his keen and experienced eye failed to read any trace of a guilty conscience in the calm and cheery faces that confronted him.

"My boys," said the Head quietly. "I have to ask you how you spent your time this afternoon. In the circumstances, this matter having obtained such publicity, I am making this inquiry in the presence of all the school. Answer me frankly."

"Certainly, sir," said Wharton.

"The frankfulness will be terrific, honoured schib," said Hurree Singh.

"You will speak, Wharton."

"Very well, sir! After dinner we went out of gates," said Harry, speaking slowly and thoughtfully, as if particular to leave out nothing that his headmaster might desire to know. "We walked down Priardale Lane, sir, as far as the wood."

"And then?"

"Then we went on the footpath towards the cliffs, sir. After that, we followed another path to the river, and up the Sark."

"Proceed."

"We followed the towpath as far as the Three Fishers, sir. Just past that place there is a footpath through the Popper Court Woods, and we followed that to Courtfield Common."

Loder made a movement, and opened his lips. But at a look from the Head he closed them again.

"And after that, Wharton?"

"We joined up with some more fellows, sir, and went to the pictures at Courtfield?"

"The boys to whom you refer will bear out your statement?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"How long did you remain at the pictures?"

"About an hour, sir."

"And then?"

"We went to the bunshop to tea."

"You can prove this?"

"A lot of fellows were with us, sir," said Harry, "and our Form master saw us there."

The Head started, and Loder almost jumped.

"Your Form master—Mr. Quelch?"

"Yes, sir. He came into the bunshop while we were there, and very kindly sat down for a cup of tea with us."

The Head glanced at Mr. Quelch.

"The statement is perfectly correct," sir," said the Remove master calmly. "I may add that these boys were in company with about fifteen or twenty other boys—a large crowd of juniors, sir—all of whom will bear out their statements. Most of them were Remove boys, but some belong to the Fourth Form and the Shell."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"At what time, Wharton, did you reach Courtfield, in company with other boys who will support your statement?"

"About three o'clock, sir."

"At what time, Mr. Quelch, did Loder report to you that these boys had entered a low resort?"

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

"About three o'clock, sir."

"Some strange mistake appears to have been made," said the Head—and his eye was fixed grimly on Loder for a moment. Loder felt his heart beating very unpleasantly. "Wharton, now answer me carefully. Have you been, even for a few minutes, out of bounds this afternoon?"

"No, sir."

"Have you entered the precincts of a place known as the Three Fishers?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"The notfulness is terrific, sir."

"I will now hear you, Loder," said the Head. "You adhere to your statement that you saw these boys climb the fence into the grounds of the Three Fishers?"

"I do, sir," said Loder savagely. "I saw them; I had had them under observation for some time, and I saw them climb the fence from the towpath and enter the Three Fishers."

"How do you account for the undisputed fact that they spent the afternoon, in company with many others, at a distance from the place?"

Loder breathed hard.

"I—I can only suppose, sir, that they—they altered their minds—got frightened, perhaps, and got out of the place again immediately."

"You do not now, then, accuse them of having been present at a pugilistic contest at that place?"

"I—I suppose not, sir. Naturally, I supposed that was their object when they went into the place. I—I did not know they got out again the minute my back was turned."

The Head turned to the juniors again.

"Do you give me your word, Wharton, that you never entered the precincts of the Three Fishers?"

"My word of honour, sir."

"It's false!" broke out Loder, loudly and savagely. "I saw them climb the fence, sir—"

"Let the boys speak, please, Loder. It is clear that some mistake has been made. Wharton, did you or did you not climb the fence separating the grounds of the Three Fishers from the towpath?"

All ears in Big Hall hung on Wharton's answer. When it came, it was unexpected.

"Yes, sir!"

"You admit that?" exclaimed the Head.

"I should not deny what was true, sir," said Wharton quietly. "We all climbed the fence of the Three Fishers. The fence is not out of bounds, sir—only the grounds inside."

"No doubt that is correct," said the Head, a little perplexed; "but with what object did you climb the fence, if not to enter the grounds? If you had merely climbed the fence and descended again, Loder would have seen that you had not entered the place."

"They did not descend, sir," broke out Loder, unable to keep silence. "I watched the place for several minutes before leaving."

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"May I explain, sir?" asked Wharton meekly.

"I am waiting for you to explain, Wharton."

"We climbed the fence, sir, at a place where there is a big tree growing over it. We climbed on into the tree, and stopped there."

"You stopped in the tree?"

"Yes; until Loder was gone."

"Do you mean to imply that you knew that Loder was observing your actions?"

Wharton grinned for a moment.

"Oh, yes, sir! We'd spotted him—I mean, seen him—long before that. We knew he was spying on us."

"That is not a word to use in connection with a prefect, Wharton," said the Head sternly.

"I'm bound to tell you the truth, sir," said Harry. "Loder was spying on us—there's no other word for it. He suspects us of breaking bounds, and doing rotten things, and he was watching us to catch us out. So we climbed into the tree on the towpath to pull his leg."

"Bless my soul!"

"We knew he'd jump to it that we'd gone into that low den to see the prize-fight," said Wharton, with a curl of the lip. "That was the sort of thing Loder would think."

"Wharton!"

"After we'd seen him clear off we came down from the tree and went to Courtfield, sir," said Harry. "We never went into the Three Fishers. We never wanted to, or thought of doing so. We had a right to climb a tree over the towpath if we liked. That is all we did."

"You deliberately misled a prefect, and caused him to make an unfounded report to your headmaster!" exclaimed Dr. Locke.

"We had no idea there was going to be such a fuss, sir," said Harry. "We thought Loder would report us to our Form master, that's all. We should have explained to Mr. Quelch that we had acted as we had done as a lesson to a fellow who suspected us and spied on us. We expected to make him look a fool!"

Loder gasped.

He understood it all now, and the expression on his face showed that the Famous Five's expectation had been well-founded. Loder undoubtedly looked a fool.

There was a giggle in the crowded Hall. In vain masters and prefects called for silence. It swelled to a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Wingate to Gwynne. "So that's it, is it? Pulling that suspicious fool's leg!"

"Silence!"

Silence was restored at last. But the gravity of the solemn proceedings in Hall had quite vanished. Every face was grinning now—even the crusty countenance of Quelch wore a smile—and there was a quivering at the corners of the Head's own august mouth, which hinted that he saw the humour of the situation.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head at last. "You should not have acted in this manner, Wharton! You have caused great commotion in the school, wasted my time and the time of the prefects—"

"I don't think we're to blame for that, sir," murmured Wharton. "We never asked Loder to make such a shindy about us. We never asked him to suspect us of being a shady set, and to spy on us."

"You must not use that word, Wharton. I accept your word that you merely concealed yourselves in a tree to

give Loder a false impression. You should certainly not have done so. However—"

The Head paused.

There was another prolonged giggle in Hall. It was suppressed with difficulty. The proceedings were growing a little absurd, and the Head felt it, as well as the other masters. A serious transgression had turned out to be nothing but a practical joke on an over-zealous prefect. The Head began to wish he had not conducted that inquiry in public.

"Loder!"

"Yes, sir?" gasped Loder.

"Had you no suspicions that these juniors were merely hidden in the tree?"

"Nunno, sir."

"You were not aware that they had detected your pursuit and were leading you into a ridiculous position?"

Loder breathed hard.

"No, sir."

"You appear to have satisfied yourself very easily that these juniors were guilty of disreputable conduct, Loder. I presume you are now satisfied that you were mistaken?"

"I am satisfied that they took me in!" almost hissed Loder. "They played a trick on me—"

"Before accusing boys of conduct deserving of expulsion, Loder, you should have made absolutely sure that there was no mistake in the matter."

Loder had to swallow that the best he could. Dr. Locke turned to the juniors again.

"You have acted thoughtlessly and recklessly," he said. "You should never have played this—this trick on a prefect of the Sixth Form. I shall leave that matter to be dealt with by your Form master. Loder, you will follow me to my study. I have a few words to say to you."

The school was dismissed.

The Famous Five walked out in the midst of a grinning, chortling, congratulating crowd.

Loder followed the Head to his study, with a well-grounded apprehension that the "few words" Dr. Locke had to say to him would not be pleasant to hear.

Harry Wharton & Co. strolled along to the Rag, in the midst of an hilarious crowd. From their point of view, at least, the afternoon had been a complete success.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and absurd fellows," said Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, "the esteemed and rotten Loder has been done in his ludicrous eye—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And perhapsfully this will be a preposterous warning to him," chuckled the nabob.

"Perhaps!" said Bob Cherry. "My idea is, that after this Loder will want to lynch us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wonder what the beak's saying to him?" chortled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Talking to him like a Dutch uncle, you bet," grinned the Bounder. "Loder's enjoying that little talk—I don't think."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is where we gloat!" chirruped Bob Cherry. "We've done Loder fairly in the eye this time, and this is where we gloat."

"The gloatfulness is terrific!"

And the chums of the Remove gloated.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Not Nice!

DURING the next few days, Gerald Loder of the Sixth Form was not only the most unpleasant fellow at Greyfriars, but probably in the wide world.

His temper, never good, had suffered severely.

He had been through a painful ordeal. What the Head had said to him nobody ever knew, not even his chums Walker and Carne. Loder said nothing of that interview. But he was looking quite pale when he came away from the Head's study, and undoubtedly that heart-to-heart talk with the Head had dismayed him. The Head, in point of fact, had read him a very severe lecture, pointing out that he had acted rashly, thoughtlessly, inconsiderately—that his unthinking haste and want of reflection had caused a most deplorable commotion in the school—that his methods were calculated to bring the office of prefect itself into contempt among Lower boys; and Dr. Locke wound up by observing that he would have to consider very seriously whether Loder could continue to be a prefect at all.

For though the Head had objected to the word "spying," as used by Wharton, he told Loder quite plainly that that description could justly be applied to his methods. A prefect's duty was rather delicate, and required tact. Certainly a prefect was bound to keep an eye upon any fellow whom he had reason to suspect of wrong-doing, or intended wrong-doing. Still, he should not place himself in such a position that Lower boys could accuse him of spying and prying. He was, the Head said, a school prefect, not a detective. Circumstances might arise justifying the following and shadowing of Lower boys. Yet, in this case, obviously such circumstances had not arisen.

By unjustified suspicion, by spying methods, Loder had, in fact, delivered himself into the hands of a set of mischievous juniors, who had fooled him, made him look a fool to all Greyfriars, and set the whole school laughing at him. This kind of thing was likely to have an ill effect on the discipline of the school. Contempt and derision for one prefect might extend to others.

All this, and more, the Head said to Loder; and Loder almost crawled away from the study when he had finished.

The following days were dismal enough for Loder.

All Greyfriars was chuckling over the affair. Fellows smiled broadly when they met Loder. Lower boys could not venture to chip him; but Fifth Form men, like Blundell and Fitzgerald and Potter, could and did. They would ask him genially whether he had made any more catches, and when the prefects were going on a wild-goose chase again, and whether he had discovered any more mare's-nests.

Worst of all was the attitude of the Sixth Form prefects. That august body was deeply incensed. They could not think without blushing of the watch they had kept round about the Three Fishers, for the culprits who were not there. They had been made fools of—they looked fools. The whole school smiled at them as much as it laughed at Loder. In the prefects' room, Loder was cut for some days by all the prefects. Wingate turned his back on him. Even Walker, his chum, let him down, and for some time avoided the company of the fellow who had made himself so unpopular. During those days, Gerald Loder ploughed a lonely furrow.

Loder had not even the satisfaction of knowing that the Famous Five had been punished for tricking him. The Head left that detail in the hands of their Form master, and their Form master apparently did not consider that punishment was due. Loder, in his bitterness and resentment, called on Mr. Quelch to speak on the subject, and received the

sharpest edge of the Remove master's acid tongue.

"I see no occasion for punishment, Loder," said Mr. Quelch, with his gimlet eyes fixed on Loder's sullen face. "A prefect who descends to the methods of a detective deserves all he may receive."

"Are juniors to be allowed to play practical jokes on a Sixth Form prefect, sir?" asked Loder.

"In such circumstances—yes!" answered Mr. Quelch calmly. "The boys were, naturally, indignant at your unjust and degrading suspicions. They took their own method of making it clear to the school that your suspicions were foolish, unfounded, and due to personal ill-will. If you have brought yourself into contempt, Loder, you have only yourself to blame. I recommend you to reflect upon this, and amend both your methods and your mental outlook."

That was all the satisfaction Loder received from Henry Samuel Quelch, and it was not very satisfactory.

Another irritating thing was that Loder found himself referred to under the name of "Chingachgook!" Loder, whose reading was not extensive, outside school books and the "Sporting Tipster," did not know who Chingachgook was, never having heard of that great Delaware chief. He heard Chingachgook bandied about the studies and passages for some time without knowing that it was a new nickname applied to himself. When the fact dawned upon his intelligence, he wondered who and what the thump Chingachgook might be; learning, finally, from a Sixth Form man, who had read Fenimore Cooper, that Chingachgook was the Last of the Mohicans, a Red Indian great on following a trail. Then Loder understood.

Those young sweeps of the Remove had fastened that name on him, of course, in allusion to his exploits as a trailer. Once, in open quad, in the hearing of a score of fellows, Loder came on the Famous Five, and without looking at him, or appearing aware of his proximity, the juniors chanted an absurd chant:

"Look, look, look!
At Chin-gach-gook!
Take your hook!
Here's Chin-gach-gook!"

And they fled, laughing. Loder glared after them, tempted to pursue them and smite them hip and thigh. But it was scarcely possible to punish Lower boys for talking about the Last of the Mohicans. Loder stamped away, followed by a howl of laughter.

Mr. Quelch had recommended Loder to reflect and amend. He did reflect, but not on the subject of amendment. He reflected on the subject of vengeance.

Somehow or other, he was going to make those young scoundrels suffer for their sins.

But he knew that he had to be wary. They were as full of tricks as monkeys, and another such catch as that at the Three Fishers might well close his career as a Greyfriars prefect. He realised very clearly that it

would not be judicious to put his foot in it again.

Not even when, walking in quad, a crowd of Removites following him, and yelling with laughter at a notice pinned on his back, bearing the astonishing statement:

"I CAN'T HELP BEING A ROTTER AND A SPY!"

did Loder break out into one of his usual fits of temper. He was convinced in his own mind that one of the Famous Five was responsible for that cheeky notice; which one, however, he did not know. And without definite proof Loder could do nothing.

He was still convinced that the Famous Five were a set of young rascals who had deceived everybody but himself. Sooner or later, therefore, he would bowl them out, and bring it home to them. It was rather a hopeless task that Loder set himself, as there was nothing to find out. But he was not aware of that, and he still hoped to show them up in their true colours. Hope, as the poet has said, springs eternal in the human breast.

So, instead of reforming his prefectorial methods, Loder rather intensified them on the same lines. He began watching the Famous Five like a cat. He would drop into the Remove passage unexpectedly, and glance into Study No. 1. No doubt he hoped to find cigarettes going there, sooner or later. He never did; but that, he considered, only showed what cunning young rascals these juniors were. In hardly any spot were the Famous Five safe from Loder's observation. For the present, Loder had concentrated on them. He felt that if he could show these young scoundrels up it would set him right again with the Head; it would show that he had been right all the time. So he hopefully pursued that will-o'-the-wisp.

Needless to say, the chums of the Remove did not remain ignorant of Loder's special attention, and they were very soon fed-up with it.

Five heads were put together to consult on the subject. And so it happened that Bob Cherry, passing Loder at the corner of Masters' passage, dropped a cardboard box, full in Loder's sight, on which the words "Silver Flake Cigarettes" fairly stared at Loder. And the thud when the box fell showed that it was full.

Loder fairly jumped to it. "Cherry!" he almost gasped. Bob, who was passing on, looked round.

"Yes, Loder!" he said meekly. "You dropped that box."
"D-d-d-did I?" stammered Bob, staring at the box. "Are—are you sure I—I dropped it, Loder?"

(Continued on next page.)



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"I saw you."

Bob stood covered with confusion. Bob was by no means the worst actor in the Remove Dramatic Society.

"Pick it up!" said Loder grimly.

Bob picked up the box.

"I—I say, Loder," he mumbled, "I—I wasn't doing any harm, you know. I—I—I hope you're not going to take me to Quelch."

"Do you?" said Loder. "Well, that's exactly what I'm going to do, Cherry. Walk in front of me to your Form master's study."

"I—I say——"

"That's enough, you smoky little beast. Walk to Quelch's study with that box of cigarettes in your hand."

"W-won't you let me off this once, Loder?"

"Go!"

Bob went.

Cigarette-box in hand, he arrived at Mr. Quelch's study, with Loder, triumphant, at his heels. The prefect followed the junior in, to meet a glinting glance from Henry Samuel Quelch. The Remove master was as "fed" with Loder as his boys were.

"Well, what is it, Loder?" asked Mr. Quelch acidly.

"Put that box on the table, Cherry."

"Yes, Loder."

Mr. Quelch started a little as he looked at the box.

"What does this mean?" he asked.

"It means sir," said Loder maliciously, "that this junior dropped that box of cigarettes under my eyes, and I have made him bring it to you, sir. That is what it means."

"This box belongs to you, Cherry?"

"Yes, sir."

"Open it."

Bob Cherry opened the box. A large piece of indiarubber was revealed. Loder gazed at the indiarubber.

Mr. Quelch knitted his brows.

"You should not keep your indiarubber in a box that has contained cigarettes, Cherry," he said. "It is liable to cause misunderstanding—at least, in a foolish and suspicious mind."

"Very well, sir," said Bob meekly.

"You had better throw that box into my wastepaper-basket and find some other receptacle for your indiarubber."

"Certainly, sir."

The cigarette-box was consigned to the wastepaper-basket. Bob put the indiarubber in his pocket, and at a sign from Quelch retired from the study. Loder stood rooted to the floor. Once more it dawned upon him—too late—that his leg had been pulled.

"Well, Loder," said Mr. Quelch, in a grinding voice, "have you anything more to say?"

Loder gasped.

"That—that—that young rascal took me in deliberately; he intended me to believe that he had cigarettes!" he stuttered.

"I am quite aware of that," said the Remove master. "You have been the victim of another practical joke—and once more wasted my time, and made yourself ridiculous by your unreflecting suspicions. I cannot punish a junior for playing such tricks, when it is obvious that you provoke them, Loder. If you keep on like this, Loder, I warn you that you will become the laughing-stock of the school."

Loder left the Remove master's study with feelings too deep for words. Once more he had put his foot in it; once more he had fallen a victim to those young rascals. He strode out into the quad with a black brow, and was further entertained by the sight of a crowd of Remove men surrounding Bob Cherry and yelling with laughter. Bob

evidently was telling the story of the indiarubber in the cigarette-box, and the Removites found it amusing.

Loder walked on, silent and bitter. It was from that moment that Loder's thoughts on the subject of his old enemies in the Remove took a darker turn.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

In Hiding!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Bow-wow!"

"I say, seen Hobson?" asked Billy Bunter anxiously.

Harry Wharton & Co. were surprised. It was Saturday afternoon, and games practice was on—a compulsory occasion which called up all the Form. The Famous Five were heading for Little Side, when Billy Bunter stopped them. Wharton naturally supposed—knowing Bunter—that he was going to ask to be let off practice; or alternatively, as the lawyers say, that he was going to ask for a little loan to tide him over till his celebrated postal-order came. Instead of which Bunter inquired concerning Hobson of the Shell, a fellow with whom Removites had little concern.

"Seen him?" queried Bunter. "It's rather important."

"Haven't seen him for days," answered Bob Cherry. "Not since we fed him at the bunshop in Courtfield."

"You didn't notice him hanging about the Remove passage?"

"No, ass! What would a Shell man be doing in the Remove passage?"

"Well he might be looking for me," said Bunter.

"The mightfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The seekfulness of the esteemed Bunter's boreful and ludicrous company would argue that the worthy Hobson was a little off his ridiculous rocker."

"I mean he's got his knife into me," said Bunter. "He makes out that I went into his study——"

"And you didn't?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"No. I hardly know which is his study. Besides, I only went in for a minute. I suppose a fellow can look into a fellow's study and no harm done. Besides, as a matter of fact, I haven't been near his study. Hobson's rather a cad not to take a fellow's word."

"Oh crumbs!"

"As for that bag of toffees," said Bunter argumentatively, "I know nothing about it. What should I know? The way fellows pick on me when they miss any tuck is simply sickening."

"So you've been pinching toffee from Hobson's study in the Shell?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"I've just said I haven't!" hooted Bunter.

"That's how I know you have. I hope Hobby will kick you—in fact, I'm sure he will."

"Oh, really, Wharton! Some fellows would stand by a pal when he's being hunted like a wild Indian by a beast in the Shell," said Bunter reproachfully. "I'm perfectly innocent—as usual. You know how Blundell of the Fifth picked on me when he lost a spread. I'm as innocent this time as I was that time."

"Just about!" agreed Bob Cherry.

"Well, get into your flannels and come along to the cricket," said Harry. "You'll only play the goat as usual; but it will help you to bring down your fat. You'd be all the better for losing a ton or two."

"I shall have to be let off games practice to-day, old chap. You see, Hobson may nab me there."

"Fathead! Come along!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Rats!"

The Famous Five went on their way.

"Beasts!" murmured Billy Bunter.

Apparently the Famous Five did not worry, if Hobson of the Shell was hunting Bunter like a wild Indian. They did not seem to mind if Bunter was kicked. Bunter himself minded very much. Often and often had Bunter been kicked, though not so often as he deserved. But he had never grown to like it.

The Owl of the Remove rolled into the House. He was not thinking of changing for cricket; he had no time to worry about that. Hobson's toffee was reposing safely inside Bunter, and Hobson had shown unequivocal signs of being annoyed about it. Hobson had a heavy foot, and Bunter was anxious to avoid Hobson, especially that part of him.

"Here, Bunter!" shouted a voice, as the fat junior went up the staircase.

Bunter cast a startled blink over the banisters. It was Hobson of the Shell glaring after him.

"Stop!" shouted Hobson. "I want you, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter did not stop.

He did not want Hobson.

He flew up the stairs.

Bunter seldom put on speed, but there were times when he could accelerate. He accelerated.

Hobson of the Shell was left far behind as Bunter rolled panting into the Remove passage.

His idea was to bolt into his study, like a rabbit into a burrow, and turn the key in the lock. But second thoughts are proverbially the best. That beast Hobson would wait outside Study No. 7 if he found the door locked. Under the stress of dire peril Bunter became strategic.

He dodged into Study No. 1.

Keeping the door nearly shut he peered through the crack into the passage.

Hobson of the Shell passed the study a minute later.

He went tramping up the Remove passage to Study No. 7, and Bunter heard him hurl the door open.

"Now, you fat rotter," roared Hobson. "I'll teach you to pinch a fellow's toffee from a fellow's study!"

Bunter heard him roar.

"Not here!" went on Hobson's angry voice. "My hat! Where is that fat rotter? I'll root him out, by gum!"

"Beast!" breathed Bunter.

He heard the door of another study open, and bang shut again. That unspeakable beast, Hobson, was going along the Remove passage, looking into study after study.

All the Remove men, except Bunter, were out of the House. The passage was deserted. Games practice claimed all the Remove. There was no help for Bunter if he was discovered—no one to raise objections to James Hobson's lawless proceedings.

Bunter quaked.

Hobson was going up the passage, and when he reached the end he would turn back and examine the other numbers below No. 7. Bunter felt sure of that. Study No. 1 would be the last he would look into, but he would look into it at last. Only a few minutes' respite remained to the fat junior, and then retribution, in the shape of James Hobson's boot, would overtake him. Dodging out of the room was no use—Hobson would spot him from along the passage. Bunter blinked wildly round for a hiding-place.

Fortunately, there was one at hand.

The study armchair was quite a large chair, and it had a high, padded back. Bunter hurriedly backed it into a corner

of the room and left just space enough to creep behind it.

There he crouched on all fours, completely hidden by the armchair.

Hobson, as he judged by the sound of slamming, was looking rapidly into one study after another, passing on up the passage as he found them vacant. Obviously, he was not searching the studies—only glancing into them from the doorways. Unless he was more particular with Study No. 1 when he came to it, Bunter was secure.

He waited.

Slamming went on along the Remove passage. In the absence of the Removites Hobson was free to do as he liked. Had the Remove men been at home undoubtedly Hobson would have been pitched, neck and crop, down the Remove staircase. Now there was no one to say him nay. But the slamming ceased at last, and Hobson's heavy tread was heard coming back. Slam again, at No. 6, then at No. 5, then at No. 4, then at No. 3, then at No. 2—and then Bunter stilled his breathing as the door of Study No. 1 was hurled open.

Hobson of the Shell glared in.

Scarcely breathing, Bunter crouched behind the armchair in the corner. He heard Hobson's wrathful voice:

"The fat rotter! He's dodged me!"

Slam!

The door of Study No. 1 closed.

Bunter grinned.

He had escaped, after all.

But he was in no hurry to leave his hiding-place. Hobson knew he was hanging about somewhere, and was quite beast enough to lurk in the Remove passage on the watch for him, for a time at least.

That was Bunter's opinion, at least.

As a matter of fact, Hobson of the Shell gave it up and went along to Little Side to see whether Bunter was there—as he certainly ought to have been. Bunter, unaware that the coast was clear, remained in Study No. 1—listening. And he was glad that he had been so cautious when, about ten minutes later, he heard a footstep, and the door of Study No. 1 swung open again. Deep in cover in the corner behind the armchair, Billy Bunter remained as quiet as a fat mouse, trying not to breathe.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Only Way!

"H, sheer off!" Loder of the Sixth snapped out the words irritably as Walker looked into his study.

Walker glanced at him in surprise.

Loder was moving restlessly about his study with a deep frown of thought on his brow. The interruption of his reflections, whatever they were, seemed to irritate him intensely. He almost snarled at Walker of the Sixth.

"Keep your wool on, old bean!" said Walker. "No need to bite a man's head off, even if you don't want company."

"I haven't had a lot of your company lately," said Loder sourly. "You've been against me, like all the rest. Now leave me alone!"

"Well, you made a silly ass of yourself, and made all the prefects look fools. You couldn't expect us to be pleased."

"I was taken in by a gang of young scoundrels," said Loder. "I'll spot them yet, and show them up as they really are."

"Piffle!" said Walker. "The kids are all right! You'd see it if you weren't feelin' so frightfully ratty."

"Oh, give us a rest!"

Walker grinned.



Bob Cherry, passing Loder at the corner of Masters passage, dropped a cigarette box. The thud when the box fell showed that it was full. "Cherry!" gasped the prefect. "Yes, Loder!" said Cherry, looking round. "You dropped that box!" "D-d-d-did I?" stammered Bob. "Are—are you sure I—I dropped it, Loder?" (See Chapter 10.)

"Well, you don't seem good company at the present moment," he remarked. "I'll give you a miss till you're in a better temper, old bean."

And Walker drew the study door shut and went on his way.

Loder scowled at the door and resumed his restless wanderings up and down and round about the study.

He did not want company just then—no company but that of his own black and bitter thoughts. Defeat and humiliation rankled deep in the breast of the bully of the Sixth. He might have let the matter drop and taken no further heed of the cheery heroes of the Remove—and that certainly would have been wise on his part. But his rancour was too deep for that. Moreover, he knew that nothing could set him right with the Head and the body of prefects except proof that his accusations against the Famous Five were true—that their apparent innocence was only cunning humbug. That was what Loder himself believed—judging others by himself. The question was to make the rest of the school believe the same.

Watching the wary young rascals was no use. That only led to practical

jokes, making him look a bigger fool than ever. They were too keen for him, and he had to admit it. But were they to escape detention and carry on their nefarious proceedings unchecked, simply because they were cunning as well as rascally? Loder asked himself that question, and answered with an emphatic "No!"

"The end justifies the means!" he said to himself more than once, as he moved about the study unresting. "They're shady young rascals—and too wary to be caught except by a trick. A trick's justified to bring out the truth—practically the truth—and show up humbugs in their true colours. The end justifies the means!"

Loder found comfort in that phrase. It helped him to stifle his conscience. Loder was a bully—he was selfish and unscrupulous—but he certainly was not a villain. Yet he was now contemplating what was, in point of fact, an act of villainy, and he found that he had a conscience, and that it troubled him. So that bad old maxim about the end justifying the means was a solace to him.

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His object was a good one—to show up in their true colours a set of young rascals who were deceiving their Form master, deluding their headmaster, acting in ways that might bring disgrace upon the school to which they belonged. Any means to such a good end were surely justifiable. He preferred to forget the solemn injunction that one should not do evil that good may come of it. He preferred to forget, too, that to err is human, and that he was possibly mistaken in his estimate of the Famous Five. The general opinion of Greyfriars was quite a contrary one. But that, instead of giving him pause, only convinced him that he was keen enough to see what others could not see.

These young sweeps, Loder was convinced, smoked cigarettes, haunted pubs, dabbled in betting—did, in fact, everything that Loder had been accustomed to do in his days in the Lower School. The question was, to bring it home to them!

If cigarettes, sporting papers, betting lists, and so forth were found in their quarters, it would be proof. They were too sharp for that. But suppose such evidence was placed there, without their knowledge, to be discovered by authority? It would simply prove what would be proved anyhow if they were a little less wary. The truth—what Loder believed to be the truth—would be revealed—surely a good thing! The end would justify the means!

Loder had thought it over long and hard. The idea had startled and shocked him at first; but he had grown accustomed to it. He told himself over and over again that he would be wronging no one; he would only be establishing what he knew to be the truth, but what he could not prove by any other means.

Yet it was not easy to stifle his conscience to the required extent. Loder did not realise that he was being tempted by the powers of evil; but some instinct warned him against what he contemplated. Instinct is a safer guide than reason. There are things which every right-thinking fellow knows cannot be done, though it would often be difficult to give a logical reason why they should not be done.

Unfortunately, Loder stifled his warning instinct, and preferred to reason the matter out—and he succeeded in reasoning himself into an act of the basest rascality.

He left his study at last.

If the thing was to be done, it had to be done that afternoon; such an opportunity Loder had to seize, for, of course, he could not risk being seen in the Remove quarters shortly before such a discovery as was to be made. He might tell himself that the end justified the means; but it would not be much use telling that wretched sophism to anyone else. If what he was going to do came out, it meant undying disgrace and expulsion from Greyfriars.

Loder strolled along to the staircase as casually as he could. Hobson of the Shell, coming down, passed him, and went out into the quad. No one was about near the Remove landing—the Remove passage was empty.

Loder loitered about the Remove passage for a few minutes, to make quite sure. Had a junior come along and seen him, he would have given up his project for that day. But no junior came along. Games practice was going on on Little Side; the studies were empty. But Loder knew that some

fellows were sometimes excused games practice, on some plea or other, and sometimes dodged it without excuse; and he loitered and listened for long minutes. But all was silent and still; and at last he stepped to the door of Study No. 1, opened it quickly, stepped in, and closed the door behind him.

He gave a swift glance round the study. It was not likely that Wharton or Nugent would be cutting games practice; in fact, he had seen them going out in flannels with their friends. That a fat junior—for reasons totally unconnected with Loder—was crouching in hiding behind the armchair in the corner, naturally never occurred to him. After glancing round the study, and making sure that it was untenanted, Loder proceeded to business.

Under the study window was what the juniors rather proudly called an ottoman. It was a large box, which Nugent had covered with a cheap cretonne of a gaudy flowering pattern, which he considered brightened up the study wonderfully.

The box served as a seat when there were visitors in the study, exceeding the chairs in number. It served also as a receptacle for all sorts of odds and ends that overflowed from the study cupboard.

Loder lifted the lid of the box, and

MANCHESTER WINS!

The following clever limerick wins for its author a useful leather pocket wallet:

It is said that the world's
biggest fool
Is Horace Coker, of Greyfriars
School.
When trouble's about
He'll find it, no doubt,
And he comes off the worst as
a rule.

Sent in by Fred Hunt, 51, Wood Street, Middleton, near Manchester. Who's next for one of these useful prizes?

grinned sourly at a collection of worn-out slippers, discarded school books, dog-eared exercises, an alarm clock that wouldn't go, a fives bat, and a burst tennis racket, and other things of similar kinds.

He proceeded to root among the lumber, with a faint hope of finding articles which would save him from placing incriminating goods there. But there was nothing to be found but lumber. He drew several little packets from various pockets, and concealed them under the odds and ends in the box.

That done, he dropped the lid shut.

He stepped back to the door, his face pale, and perspiration beading his brow. There he listened, his heart beating painfully. Something like remorse seemed to touch him, for he made a step back towards the box under the window. But his evil genius triumphed, and he stopped again.

He stood at the door, listening, and then suddenly opened it and went. The coast was clear. In a few minutes he was far from the Remove quarters, unseen. Walker of the Sixth met him as he left the House, and stared at him curiously.

"Seedy, old bean?" he asked.

"What rot!"

"You're as white as a sheet."

"Rubbish!"

Loder walked on, leaving Walker staring.

In Study No. 1 a fat junior had

emerged from behind the armchair, and stood staring through a pair of big spectacles at the box under the window.

"Oh crikey!" ejaculated Billy Bunter.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came in cheerily after the cricket. They stopped at Study No. 1 in the Remove.

"Tea in our study!" said Nugent.

And the Famous Five turned in at the doorway of Study No. 1.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" said Bob Cherry, staring at a fat figure that was reposing, more or less gracefully, in the armchair. "You cut games practice, you fat boulder!"

"I've been rather busy!" grinned Bunter. "Something on hand more important than games practice, old beans!"

"Hobson came down to Little Side to look for you—"

"Blow Hobson!"

"Well, roll away, old barrel," said Harry Wharton. "You'd better go and see Hobby. He's the only man at Greyfriars who wants to see you."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Hook it, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows, one good turn deserves another, you know," said Bunter. "I'll stay to tea, and you can handle that beast Hobson if he comes after me again. That's only fair. After all, I'm saving you from a flogging."

"Wandering in that desert waste you call a mind?" asked Bob Cherry.

"He, he, he!"

The chums of the Remove looked more attentively at Bunter. It was plain that the Owl of the Remove was bursting with news and importance; but what could have happened, during games practice, was rather a mystery.

"What do you mean?" asked Harry. "Nobody here's in danger of a flogging, that I know of."

"He, he, he! That's all you know!" grinned Bunter. "I fancy you and Nugent will be up before the Head after call-over, if I don't see you through. He, he, he!"

"Fathead!"

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, cut the cackle!" said Harry. "What are you driving at, you fat duffer, if anything?"

"He, he, he! Suppose a fellow dodged into this study, because a Shell beast was hunting him," said Bunter. "Suppose he hid behind this armchair in the corner. Suppose Hobson looked in and didn't see him, and then—he, he, he!—another fellow came in—say, a Sixth Form prefect—"

The juniors stared at Bunter.

"Loder been up here?" asked Nugent.

"The silly ass is always nosing in the Remove passage these days."

"The nosfulness of the esteemed Loder is terrific."

"That's telling!" chuckled Bunter.

"Of course, I'm going to stand by my old pals, and see them through. I'm not going to see them flogged for nothing. That wouldn't be pally. Still, one good turn deserves another. What are you having for tea?"

"There's one thing we're not having—and that's a fat and sticky old thing called Bunter."

"Oh, really, Nugent! If you knew what Loder had been up to in this study, you'd go down on your bended knees and ask me to tell you."

"If I knew, fathead, I shouldn't need you to tell me. Has Loder been up to anything in this study?"

"He, he, he!"

"My esteemed and absurd chums!" murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, who was watching Bunter very curiously and keenly, "there has been some preposterous proceeding here, which the spyful Bunter has ridiculously spotted. Let us bump him bangfully on the floor till he coughs it up!"

"Good egg!"

"I say, you fellows, I'm just going to tell you!" exclaimed Bunter, in great haste. "You don't think I'd leave my pals in the lurch, do you? Would that be like me?"

"Cough it up, fathead!" said Johnny Bull.

"Well, I'll leave it to you to do the decent thing," said Bunter. "If you don't have cake and jam for tea after what I've told you, I can only say that you're an ungrateful lot. I prefer strawberry jam——"

"Do you prefer to have your silly head banged on the study wall?" asked Harry.

"Eh? No!"

"Then buck up and tell us what Loder did here—if he was here at all, and did anything!" said the captain of the Remove distrustfully.

"You'd jolly well think he did something, if you'd seen him," said Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you could have knocked me down with a feather, when I saw those smokes and things!"

"Smokes and things!" ejaculated Wharton.

"Yes; enough to get you an awful ragging from the Beak."

"Is he potty?" asked Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"You fat idiot, what do you mean?" exclaimed Wharton angrily.

"Ain't I telling you as fast as I can?" demanded Bunter. "You keep on interrupting a fellow. You chaps are like a sheep's head—nearly all jaw. A fellow hasn't a chance to get in a word edge-ways when you start wagging your chins. Never saw such fellows for talking——"

"Will you come to the point?" shrieked Bob.

"Certainly, old chap, if you leave off interrupting me, and give a fellow a chance to speak. I say, I thought it was Hobson hunting me, you know, when he came in——"

"Who?"

"Loder! I didn't know it was Loder till he went to the window. You see, from where I was behind the armchair, I could see the window. I just peeped at him, and I was jolly surprised when he opened the box."

"Loder opened the ottoman?" asked Nugent blankly. "What the thump did he want to open that for?"

"He, he, he! That's what I wondered," chuckled Bunter. "I thought at first he was looking for something—you know he suspects you fellows of keeping smokes in the study——"

"Oh, cut all that out!" snapped Wharton.

"Well, Loder never took anything out of the box," grinned Bunter. "He jolly well put something into it, see?"

"Rubbish!"

"It's there now!" howled Bunter. "I looked after he was gone, and I can tell you, I jumped. I saw him take three packets out of his pockets, and hide them in the box, and I wondered what on earth the game was—till I looked!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Wharton.

Bunter sniffed.

"Well, look!" he sneered.

The chums of the Remove exchanged startled glances. Then Wharton, with a set face, went to the box under the window, and raised the lid.

Nothing but a collection of lumber and odds-and-ends met his view there. But Billy Bunter reached into the box and dragged some of the lumber aside. Three packets were revealed which certainly did not belong to the occupants of study No. 1.

Wharton lifted them out, and placed them on the study table. The juniors gathered round, with startled faces.

The packets were loosely wrapped. Bunter probably had looked into them. The contents were soon exposed to view. One contained about twenty cigarettes. Another contained the current number of the "Racegoer," folded open, with pencil-marks against the names of several horses in a list. The third contained a pack of playing-cards and a box of dices.

There was deep silence in Study No. 1 as the juniors gazed at that astounding discovery. They gazed at the articles on the table, bereft of speech.

— —

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Remorse!

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter's fat cackling broke the silence.

"My only hat!" said Bob Cherry, quite amazed.

Wharton's eyes were gleaming.

"So that's Loder's latest!" he said.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter! That's Loder's latest!" said the captain of the Remove,

(Continued on next page.)

"PLAYING FOR THE FORTH!"

(Continued from page 15.)

our feeble best against St. Bill's while you're gone, won't we, chaps?"

"What-ho!" grinned the St. Sam's team.

Jack Jolly & Co. then went out to field, feeling only too glad to be rid of the old buffer. As for the Head himself, he fairly raced off to the skool gates in his anxiety to get on the track of the diamond ring.

Sprinting past Fossil's lodge like an athlete, he reached the lane, and continued running until he was past the skool grounds and within site of Major Snorter's domain.

Then he slackened down, and, after a cautious look round to make sure that he was not observed, climbed up on the high wall that surrounded Major Snorter's property and dropped lightly into the wooded grounds.

For the next hour or so Dr. Birchmall was bizzily engaged in searching for the missing valuable. So rapped up in his task was the Head that he did not notice the approach of a stern, military looking gentleman, accompanied by a gamekeeper.

The first inkling he had of his danger was a roar of rage from the military-looking gentleman, who, as a matter of fact, was Major Snorter himself.

"A trespasser, by gad! Seeze him, Green!"

Immediately the gamekeeper hurled himself at the Head and pinned that

dismayed gentleman's arms to his sides in a grip of iron.

"Gotcher!" he growled, with a triumphant leer.

Dr. Birchmall's fizz turned deadly pale.

"Lemme go, you rotter!" he cried. "If you think I'm a common trespasser, you're jolly well mistaken! I am Dr. Birchmall——"

"What! Dr. Birchmall, of St. Sam's Collidge?" roared Major Snorter.

"The same!" smirked the Head.

"By gad! Then you're the very man I want to meet!" bellowed the major, a grate, notted vain standing out from his forehead. "The cheeky young raskals from your skool are always trespassing on my propperty, and I have been meaning to give you a peace of my mind for a long time!"

"Oh crumbs!" mermured the dismayed Head.

"Now that I have caught you in the act of trespassing myself," shouted the major, "I shan't trubble to give you a peace of my mind! Instead of that, sir, I shall give you a taste of my mallaoca cane! Hold him, Green!"

"I, I, sir!"

The Head struggled desprightly. But all his struggles were in vain. Major Snorter's heavy cane rose and fell, and blinding clouds of dust began to ascend from the Head's trowsis.

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

"Yow-ow-ow! Yooooop!"

Only when Major Snorter had tired himself out did he stop whacking the Head, and by that time the Head was feeling utterly whacked.

"Now chuck him over the wall, Green!" ordered the major harshly.

"I, I, sir!"

Dr. Birchmall felt himself whirled in the air and chucked. And the next thing he remembered was picking himself up in the lane and trudging back to St. Sam's, aching in every lim.

A grinning crowd of juniors, headed by Jack Jolly & Co., met him at the gates.

"Hallo, hallo! You've been a long time, sir!" bawled out Jack Jolly.

"Grooooo!" moaned the Head.

"We manniged to beat St. Bill's, sir, in spite of your absence," remarked Frank Fearless.

"Grooooo! Blow St. Bill's! Bust St. Bill's!" said the Head savvidgely.

"By the way, sir," said Jack Jolly casually, "if you've been looking for a diamond ring that was lost——"

"Well, what about it?" barked Dr. Birchmall.

"It turned out to be only a roomer, after all!" grinned Jack Jolly.

"Only a roomer!" shrieked the Head.

Jack nodded.

"Somebody was indulging in a bit of leg-pulling, sir, it seems!"

The kaptin of the Fourth omitted to mention that the leg-puller was himself.

For a moment Dr. Birchmall stood stock still, while Jack Jolly's news pennytrated his brane-box. Then, with a yell of rage, he rushed into the Skool House and spent the rest of the evening kicking himself round his study.

After that it was evvident that Dr. Birchmall had come to the conclussion that cricket was his unlucky game. He didn't offer to play for the Junior Eleven again, and the Junior Eleven were trooly thankful for that mersy!

THE END.

between his teeth. "He's been watching us, and spying on us, and as he can't find out anything, he's manufactured something to find."

"This is rather thick!" said Bob.

"The thickfulness is terrific!"

"I suppose," said Johnny Bull slowly, "that that benighted rotter really believes we're the sort he makes us out to be. He really fancies we've got this sort of rubbish hidden away somewhere."

"This does it!" said Harry. "We'll take the lot to the Head, and hand it over to him."

"Good!"

"And the sooner the better," said Nugent. "Loder hasn't planted that stuff in the study as a present for us. There will be a Beak coming along presently to find it where he put it."

"Of course," said Bob, "that's his game. He will get Quelch, or the Head, or Wingate, to come here—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, dry up, Bunter!"

"Well, I like that, when I've saved you from a flogging!" said Bunter indignantly. "Look here! You'd better not go to the Head. I don't want Loder down on me."

"Loder won't be down on anybody after the Heads knows about this, fathead. He will be sacked!"

"The sackfulness will be terrific!"

"Oh!" said Bunter. "Oh, all right, in that case. If you're sure he'll be sacked, I'll come to the Head with pleasure."

"Not much doubt about it," said Bob Cherry. "My hat. Fancy his face, when he's called up by the Beak, and finds us there with this stuff!"

Wharton compressed his lips.

"The fellow's an absolute scoundrel!" he said. "We shouldn't be safe if we didn't show this up. We—"

"I say, you fellows—"

"For goodness' sake dry up, Bunter!"

"I say, somebody coming—"

There were footsteps outside the study. Harry Wharton hastily threw a duster over the packets on the table.

"I say, you fellows, if it's Hobson—"

It was not Hobson of the Shell who opened the study door and looked in. It was Loder of the Sixth—rather to the surprise of the juniors.

They looked at him in silence.

They had taken it for granted that Loder, having concealed the incriminating evidence in the study, would "wangle" the matter for the discovery to be made by some other prefect, or a master. That would have been only common caution on his part. So they were surprised to see Loder himself at the door.

Loder stared at them. His manner was perturbed and uneasy, and there was a flush in his cheeks. He glanced swiftly across the study at the box under the window. The lid was closed again, and the duster concealed the articles on the table. The juniors saw relief flash into Loder's face, though they did not understand it.

"Oh! You've come in from the cricket!" said Loder awkwardly.

"Looks like it!" said Harry curtly.

Loder paused.

The juniors did not speak. There was something odd about the prefect's manner that puzzled them. Loder did not appear to be his usual hostile, bullying self.

He stood hesitating, with a flush coming and going in his face.

"The—the fact is—" he said.

"Well?"

"I—I—" Loder stammered.

"Have you come to search this

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study?" asked Nugent sarcastically. "No objection, if you have, Chingachgook."

"No!" gasped Loder. "Certainly not. The fact is—"

He paused again uncomfortably.

The juniors could only wonder. Apparently their old enemy had not come there to "search" the study, and find the things he had hidden. What he had come there for at all was a puzzle.

"Look here, you kids!" said Loder, at last. "I—I think I'll look round the study while I'm here."

"Look as much as you like!" said Wharton grimly. "We've no objection—and we're quite ready to go to the Head."

"Quite!" grinned Nugent.

"The quitefulness is terrific."

"You kids had better clear off while I'm looking round," said Loder.

"Had we?" said Wharton.

"Yes. Get outside for a few minutes."

"Thanks: we'll stay inside."

"Look here, you're talking to a prefect," said Loder, with a revival of his old bullying manner. "I order you to get outside the study. Do you hear?"

"We hear," assented Wharton. "But we're not going out and leaving you here, all the same, Loder."

"The hearfulness is not the obeyfulness, my esteemed and preposterous Loder."

LOOK OUT for the first
of a series of interesting
articles dealing with

**"GIANTS of
CRICKET"**

In next week's MAGNET.

Loder stood uncertain, his glance wandering again to the box under the window. That box seemed to have an irresistible fascination for his eyes, and he hardly seemed able to withdraw them from it. The juniors knew the reason, though Loder was not aware that they knew.

The bully of the Sixth backed out of the study at last, and they heard his footsteps receding to the stairs.

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter.

"What on earth is Loder's game?" asked Bob Cherry, in wonder. "Has he gone to fetch Quelch up?"

Wharton wrinkled his brows.

"Blessed if I can make him out," he said. "He would be a fool to find the things here with nobody present, if that's what he wanted. It would look too jolly thin."

"That's not it," said Nugent. "Loder's not such an ass as that. But I can't make out what he was after."

"My esteemed chums—" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

The nabob had read more in Loder's troubled face than the other fellows had seen there.

"Well, what have you got in your old black noddle, Inky?" asked Bob.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled.

"My absurd chums, the preposterous

Loder, in my ridiculous opinion, has thought better of his excellent and rascally scheme," he said. "Second thoughts are better than a stitch in time, as the English proverb says. The absurd Loder is in a state of preposterous repentance."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton.

Bob Cherry whistled.

"My hat! Was the rotter going to take the stuff away again?" he said. "Blessed if he doesn't look like it. Perhaps he's not such a thorough rotter as he thinks he is."

Wharton nodded slowly.

"It looks like it," he said. "He may have got scared, or he may have thought better of it. We were going to the Head—"

"We are going to the Head!" growled Johnny Bull.

"I think we'll go to Loder instead," said the captain of the Remove quietly. "These things belong to him—and we'll take them back to him. We'll mention that a fellow saw him put them here and—"

"I say, you fellows, don't you mention me to Loder, if he ain't to be sacked!" exclaimed Billy Bunter anxiously.

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"

"Beast! I tell you—"

"I won't mention your name, you fat dummy!" Wharton tied up the three packets in the duster for transport. "Come on, you men!"

"I say, you fellows, you've forgotten something!" exclaimed Bunter anxiously.

"What's that, fathead?"

"Tea!" exclaimed Bunter. "It's past tea-time. I say, you fellows, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you. I say, what about that strawberry jam? Beasts!"

The Famous Five left the study, leaving William George Bunter to waste his sweetness on the desert air, and in a state of painful uncertainty about tea and the strawberry jam.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

Loder's Luck!

GERALD LODER threw himself into the armchair in his study. His brow was black, his face almost haggard.

Just then the bully of the Sixth was the most thoroughly wretched fellow in Greyfriars, or out of it.

His plans had been cut and dried. The incriminating evidence was hidden in No. 1 Study. Nothing remained but to have it discovered there. Quelch, certainly, would not welcome another "report" from Loder; neither was the Head likely to welcome one. Wingate was more likely than not to refuse to listen to a word. Still, upon a statement from Loder that he had seen "smokes" in the possession of the chums of No. 1 Study, the Head would be bound to inspect that study. The discovery of the evidence in the box would settle the matter—and Loder, at long last, would be justified.

And it was at that juncture that Loder weakened. That miserable maxim, that the end justifies the means, failed to satisfy him now. In spite of sophistry, in spite of his bitter dislike of the Famous Five, it was borne in upon Loder's mind that what he was doing was an act of base treachery, an act that, even if never revealed, would bar him off for life from all decent fellows. Loder was not the first fellow to discover that, when put to the test, he was by no means so ruthless as he had fancied.



Loder lifted the lid of the box, and then drew several little packets from his jacket pocket and concealed them under the odds and ends in the box. "That'll put paid to Wharton and his friends when this little lot's discovered!" he said under his breath. But the rascally Sixth-Former did not notice that Bunter, crouching behind the easy chair, was watching his every movement. (See Chapter 12.)

Hence his belated visit to Study No. 1. He had intended to remove what he had placed in the box, but he had been too late. He had argued the matter out with his conscience a little too long, and when he arrived at Study No. 1 the juniors were there.

Now Loder was in a state of wretched dismay and apprehension. Unless he carried out his scheme, what would happen? Sooner or later the juniors themselves would find the concealed articles in the box. There was no doubt that when they found them they would make the discovery known. All the school would know that someone had hidden the things there. The question would be—who? And plenty of fellows would guess the answer to that question.

For his own safety's sake now, Loder had to carry on with the scheme. The incriminating evidence had to be found by a master, before it was found by Wharton or Nugent.

And he could not do it. He could not go to Quelch and tell him a direct lie, leading him to search the study. He felt that he had to do it now; and he felt that he could not.

What would have been the ultimate outcome of Loder's miserable reflections cannot be said. They were interrupted by a knock at his door.

The door opened, and he stared at the Famous Five of the Remove. That visit was utterly unexpected.

The juniors walked coolly into the study. Harry Wharton laid a duster on the table, which was wrapped round several articles.

Loder rose to his feet.

"What do you fags want?" he snapped huskily.

"Nothing, old bean," answered Bob Cherry cheerily. "It's a case of restoring lost property to the owner."

"What?"

Wharton unwrapped the duster.

Loder's eyes almost started from his head at the sight of the articles he had concealed in the box in Study No. 1.

"These things belong to you, Loder, I think," said Wharton.

Loder panted.

"What—what do you mean? How dare you bring these things here? What do you mean?"

"They're the things you put in the box in our study," said Nugent.

"I—I—I—How dare you?" articulated Loder.

"Oh, can it!" interrupted Johnny Bull. "You were seen to put them there, and the fellow who saw you is willing to come to the Head with us. And if I had my way we should be taking these things to Dr. Locke, instead of bringing them here."

Loder collapsed into the chair from which he had risen.

He had been seen!

Visions of a crowded Hall, of a headmaster's stern face, floated before Loder's mind. In his ears the words seemed to echo: "You are expelled from Greyfriars!" Sacked! It was bound to be that. Loder, white as chalk, stared at the chums of the Remove.

Wharton fixed his eyes on the pallid face.

"We've got an idea, Loder," he said quietly, "that you changed your mind, and that you came to our study, intending to take these things away again. That's why we're giving you a chance."

Loder could not speak.

"But for that we were going to the Head," said the captain of the Remove.

Loder only gazed at him. But he understood that it was his repentance that had saved him from certain ruin. His scheme had gone wrong, as schemes so often do. Cunning had failed him, and it was that glimpse of his better self that had saved him.

After this, went on the captain of the Remove, "you'll let us alone, Loder. No more watching, no more spying, no more of your Chingachgook stunts. No more dirty tricks. We shall say nothing about this, if you leave us alone. But if you don't, the

matter goes before the Head. That's all."

With that Harry Wharton left the study with his friends.

Loder, still speechless, stared at the door after it had closed on them. Then his gaze went to the articles on the table.

He had had the narrowest escape of his life. He realised that. And he realised, too, that the fellows who had spared him could not be the shady, disreputable young rascals he had persisted in believing them to be. He realised that, had his scheme gone on to success, he would have convicted, not the guilty, but the innocent. Loder, in the circumstances, had much to be thankful for. But to do him justice, he was most thankful of all that the scheme had failed.

"I say, you fellows— Oh, good! Good!"

Billy Bunter beamed.

When the Famous Five came back to Study No. 1 they brought in supplies for tea. And among the supplies was strawberry jam. Bunter's long and painful doubts were banished. The strawberry jam had materialised. And Bunter proceeded to show his appreciation by eating it all.

So the matter ended in satisfaction for Bunter. It was also satisfactory for the Famous Five, for Chingachgook of the Sixth had quite given up the trail. Loder was only too anxious to keep his distance from the heroes of the Remove. And the juniors were only too glad to keep their distance from Loder, so it was satisfactory all round. The Famous Five were not likely to be troubled again by Loder on the warpath.

THE END.

(Now look out for "THE MYSTERY OF MARK LINLEY!" next week's splendid story of Harry Wharton & Co., at Greyfriars.)

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THE MASKED DEATH



By
JOHN SYLVESTER

The Stranger!

THE sheer stupefaction of Inspector Webster was almost ludicrous. He seemed hardly able to credit the evidence of his senses.

"But it's impossible!"

"Why?" asked Locke dryly.

"The doors were bolted on the inside. You saw how we had to break into the room. And look at the windows!" He waved his hand dramatically. "They've got steel shutters."

"Yes, I see all that."

"Then how—" Webster broke off and rushed towards the bed. For a moment he stared down at the dead man. "I suppose he can't have committed suicide?"

"It's a little difficult to throttle yourself. That is obviously how Morecombe met his death."

Ferrers Locke also crossed, and was about to bend over the body when the inspector gripped his arm.

"Don't touch anything. The body mustn't be moved until I've had the room photographed."

The Baker Street detective frowned slightly, but he straightened again.

"If you learnt to use your eyes you wouldn't need to rely on a camera. Do you definitely refuse me permission to examine the body?"

"I can't help myself," said the other, a trifle irritably. "Those are the regulations. You see, from our point of view, you are an amateur. You've made some lucky hits in the past, I agree. I don't mind letting you in on this—but it's strictly irregular."

"Then I'll leave you to carry on," said Ferrers Locke, pleasantly. "I'll resume my interrupted night's rest."

He made as though to cross to the door, but Webster looked up in alarm.

"Don't run away," he said, unable to conceal his anxiety. "There's no need to get huffy. You know I never refuse to listen to your opinion."

"I've noticed that," replied the Baker Street detective, with an irony that was too subtle for the inspector. He paused and looked the other straight in the eyes. "Now look here, Webster, I'm going to repeat what I've told you many times before. If I'm to work on this case, and give you the benefit of any results I happen to get, I must

have a free hand. If you are going to take up a stiffly professional attitude then you'll have to do without my help."

The Yard man frowned sullenly. He had been talking largely to impress his subordinates. The last thing he wanted was to lose Ferrers Locke's assistance.

There were times when he felt satisfied that everything was plain sailing, when he resented any outside intrusion; but he had never felt more hopelessly out of his depths than at the present moment.

"Oh, very well," he said ungraciously. "Don't upset things more than you can help. I'll have to swear that nothing's been touched."

"Nothing will be disturbed—you can rely on that. I rather pride myself on my eye for detail."

"Going to get out the magnifying-glass, I suppose." The inspector found an outlet for his ruffled feelings in sarcasm. "Shall we start sweeping the carpet and collecting the cobwebs?"

In south Devon a certain gentleman is astonishing the natives with his zeal for butterfly-collecting. Gee, but the locals would have some shocks if they knew that the butterfly collector was really Ferrers Locke, "crook collector."

"Cobwebs," replied Locke quietly, "are sometimes an important clue? Do you remember the Venning case? I can see you do. If I hadn't been able to tell you how long a spider takes to spin its web you would have accepted Venning's alibi, and he would never have gone to the scaffold. But you are past learning anything, Webster. And even if you had the patience to collect data you lack the intelligence to make use of it."

"Confound it, Locke!" spluttered Inspector Webster, looking indignantly at the two policemen by the door.

They could hardly conceal their delight at this autocrat from the Yard being "ticked off."

"There was that handkerchief I sent you yesterday. You asked me to report on it. I suppose by this time you've read—"

"But that's where I score," broke in Webster, with a chuckle of triumph. "I sent it for a joke. You deduced some wonderful things, but not the fact

that it was picked up in Half Moon Street. I found it myself, lying in the gutter. I could hardly hope you would take it seriously—but you fell for it."

Ferrers Locke's interest suddenly quickened. He looked up sharply.

"You found it in the street? I suppose you couldn't tell me the number of the house nearest the spot?"

"I couldn't," Webster grinned. "Surely that isn't too much for you—an important fact like that?"

But Ferrers Locke didn't smile. His face was alive with repressed excitement.

"It's a most important fact. The man who dropped that handkerchief murdered Silas Morecombe."

It was as though a bombshell had exploded. Jack Drake, who had been listening to the inspector with rising indignation positively gaped. Surely—

"Come and look!"

The protesting inspector was almost dragged to the bed. Locke whipped out a measuring tape and called across some figures for Jack Drake to take down as he bent over the murdered man.

"You must be crazy!"

"The ball of the thumb eleven-twelfths of an inch; the first finger four and one-eighth inches from knuckle to the tip of the nail. The measurements fit with those on the handkerchief. They are only approximate, I grant, but it's too much to suppose it is a coincidence."

"What the blazes are you talking about?"

"I'm giving you facts!" snapped Locke. "Those

bloodstains on the handkerchief betrayed the shape of the hand over which it had been wrapped. It was abnormally long and powerful. And you get exactly the same results by comparing the bruises on Morecombe's throat. Moreover, this house fits with the description of the house where I said the handkerchief had been used. It is two hundred years old. It is in Devonshire, near a clay pit. It had been recently burgled."

"But how—"

"Notice it's a left hand. The murderer may be left-handed, which will help us considerably. Or perhaps he was gripping Morecombe's arm, as they were struggling, with his right. Anyhow the way he entered the room is clear enough."

"Clear? But—"

"Through the ceiling. Look at the sawdust on the bed! As in many of these old houses the walls and ceiling are oak-panelled. The joists are probably wide apart. We'll try."

Before Inspector Webster had recovered from his astonishment, Ferrers Locke had seized a chair, mounted it, and was running his electric torch along the ceiling between the heavy beams.

"Here is the join!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "It has been recently sawn through. It must have been done in the daytime when the room was unoccupied. He made a manhole for himself. It's almost above the bed. It must have given Morecombe a shock when he started up and saw a man's legs dangling over him. I suppose he reached for his revolver, but before he could fire the intruder had leapt on top of him. There was a desperate struggle. We know the rest."

As he spoke the Baker Street detective pressed upwards with both hands against a square panel. It yielded, and by standing on tiptoe he could see into the loft.

"Simple but effective," he muttered. "A small brass peg and a piece of cord kept the panel in position. The murderer left this way as well. He didn't need a chair, therefore he must be tall and fairly athletic to be able to get a hold with his hands at a single jump and hoist himself up with practically no mess. It tallies with my original description."

Inspector Webster's efforts to keep pace with the speed of Ferrers Locke's brain were like a winded runner panting behind a trained professional.

But there was the concrete evidence of the hole in the ceiling.

"Take care," he warned. "You'll spoil the finger-prints."

"There won't be any. We aren't dealing with a crook of that sort. This has been planned down to the last detail."

"Where are you going?" cried Inspector Webster, as Ferrers Locke suddenly drew his legs up, hung for a second, and then disappeared.

"You can follow!" shouted a muffled voice.

"But he may be still there! Take care!"

Ferrers Locke chuckled as he ducked to avoid hitting his head against a rafter. The perspiring face of Webster came in view, and he had a revolver in one hand. He was not taking any chances.

Jack Drake followed. He was tingling with excitement. He knew from long experience that his chief was satisfied he had really picked up the scent. Surely, even if the murderer were no longer in hiding, he must have left some clue in this loft, which he scarcely expected the police to penetrate.

It was pitch dark on every side. Ferrers Locke advanced boldly, however, his torch throwing a brilliant cone of light. They were now over another wing of the house. There was a stale, mouldy smell, a mingling of age and rot. Occasionally a drop of moisture dripped from the tiles.

"Stop!" rasped Webster, holding up his hand. "Did you hear anything?"

There were two soft thuds, like the pad of stockinged feet. Jack felt a cold trickle run down his spine. He waited tensely. He noticed the Yard man had switched his revolver towards the direction the sound had come from.

"What is it, Locke?" he whispered.

"Rats!" was the cool retort. "Dozens of them up here! Our quarry is miles away by this time so you needn't get jumpy!"

"We've got to go carefully, haven't we? How can you be so infernally cocksure?"

"Because this is the way he left," answered Ferrers Locke, pointing his

torch to the floor and revealing an iron ring attached to the usual type of manhole. "He left the same way as he entered. We'll soon see where it leads."

The Baker Street detective stooped down, grasped the ring, jerked up the trapdoor, and shone his torch straight on a startled face looking up. The man on the landing below gave a hoarse cry and nearly dropped the candle he was carrying.

"Sorry to disturb you, Soames," murmured Locke, without showing a flicker of surprise. "No, don't run—stay just where you are!"

He lowered himself neatly. The inspector descended like a sack of coal, grimly prepared for any eventualities. Even Jack Drake thought that from the very suaveness of Locke's manner the butler was the man he had expected to find.

"What are you doing here?" bellowed Webster.

"I—I was going to my room, sir," stammered the man.

"What in the name of Jericho were you going to your room for? Do you suppose you can calmly walk off to your room when a murder has been committed and the police are searching the house?"

"Not so calmly," murmured Ferrers Locke.

The wretched man was holding a candlestick that shook so violently that the grease splashed all over the floor. His chattering teeth and rolling eyes made him a pitiable sight.

He was clad in pyjamas, over which he had flung a frayed-looking coat.

"I was only going to get into some clothes, sir," he pleaded.

The butler seemed so comically aware of his appearance that even Inspector Webster relented and gave a hoarse laugh.

"You'd better get into the bed-clothes, my friend."

"One moment," put in Ferrers Locke, "before you go. Did you have any visitors to-day? Think carefully."

Soames did his best to think. His hair seemed to stand up on end.

"No, sir—at least, yes. Though you wouldn't call him a visitor, sir. But there was a man came to examine the telephone."

"What time did he call?"

INTRODUCTION.

Ferrers Locke, the world-famous detective, and his assistant, Jack Drake, receive a visit from Mr. Silas Morecombe, of Bridgewater, South Devon, who tells Locke of the mystery surrounding his old and lonely house, and of the shadow that looms over him. Morecombe had received two notes threatening his life—one, a month before from an unknown, masked burglar, who had vanished without a trace, leaving his grim message behind him with the crude drawing of a cowl for signature. The second note, telling Morecombe that he had but one day longer to live, had arrived by post that morning, and driven him to ask Locke's help. The detective however, divines that the man is concealing something, and refuses his aid. For all that, Locke decides to investigate the case in the interests of justice, and he and Drake catch the midnight train to Plymouth. The next morning the sleuth makes a careful survey of the country surrounding the lonely house on the edge of Dartmoor, and then, at nightfall, the two take up their positions to watch the black pile. It is nearly midnight when the hoot of an owl, the agreed-upon signal from Drake, breaks the silence, and Locke runs towards the house. Next instant, a pointed cowl, white and ghostly, appears above a wall of mist, but as he raises his revolver to fire, the detective is sent spinning to the ground and hands fasten round his throat. Locke struggles on top, and his torch reveals the prostrate figure of Inspector Webster, of Scotland Yard. The frantic blowing of police whistles cuts short any explanation, however, and the pair dash to the house. The inspector's men are breaking down a door when Ferrers Locke arrives. Lying on a bed inside the room, his fleshy face almost purple, is the motionless form of Silas Morecombe!

"About five o'clock, sir. I was having tea. He said he'd been sent to look at the connections."

"And what time did he leave?"

"Well, that I couldn't really say, sir. I went on with my tea, and he had gone when I finished. Must have let himself out. But he scamped his job most disgraceful. The phone was worse than ever afterwards."

"Naturally," said the London sleuth grimly. "He'd cut the wires."

"You don't mean—"

"You can go now, Soames. But I may want you again in the morning." Locke turned to Webster, whose eyes had widened. "Do you see now how the murderer got into the house?"

"I'm beginning to!" exclaimed Webster, with an oath. "He came up here and remained hidden in the loft. He spent part of the time cutting through the bed-room ceiling. He came with the definite intention of killing this man—but for what reason nobody knows."

"I suppose Morecombe applied to you for protection?"

"He swore his life was threatened that night. He showed me two notes containing warnings. He was paralysed with fright, and offered to pay the extra expense if I had special police to watch the house. There was some story about a ghost—"

"A solid enough ghost! Look at these marks on the window-sill."

The Baker Street detective pointed to two thick lines, a foot apart, on the dust, and some deep scratches on the wood itself.

"What are they?" demanded the inspector in surprise.

"A rope ladder. The dents are caused by steel hooks. He knew every door would be watched, so he escaped that way. Remind me to ask Soames whether the window was shut."

"But it must have been! Hallo!"

Through the window the blazing headlamps of an approaching car could be seen.

"It's the doctor!" grunted Webster.

"Not much he can do, though. I suppose I'd better see him. But you haven't told me yet what brought you here."

"Morecombe also came to me with his story. When I refused to act for him he must have gone straight to the Yard."

"You refused!" exclaimed Inspector Webster. "But why did you come, after all?"

"I will be able to answer that better in the morning. And it's just possible I may be able to tell you why Morecombe was murdered."

"I'm not sure I shouldn't have been scouring the moor for a flesh-and-blood murderer instead of wasting this precious time listening to your theories. He's bound to have got away by this time, though I suppose we shouldn't have stood much chance chasing a man in this mist."

"No chance, whatever. But don't worry. The murderer will return."

"Is that only one of your blessed hunches, or—"

"A syllogism, inspector. Ever heard of it?" Locke smiled and motioned to Jack Drake. "You should try cross-word puzzles. It will improve your vocabulary."

"Are you trying to be funny?"

"I envy those who succeed without trying," he said softly. "And now for a feather bed and a well-earned night's rest. If you call for me at the inn remember I'm a Mr. Smith, with a passion for collecting butterflies."

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 1,115.

On the Right Track!

THE murder caused a tremendous sensation at the sleepy village of Bridgeworthy. Silas Morecombe had never been popular. Now that he was dead all kinds of stories sprang into circulation, none of which, however, appeared to shed any light on the mystery.

He had no friends, and only one near relation—a brother, who had just returned from Australia, but with whom it was rumoured he was on bad terms. But Silas was such an exceedingly unpleasant man that to quarrel with him was almost a proof of respectability.

Newspaper reporters were on the scene before Ferrers Locks was even awake. They got rather brusque treatment from Inspector Webster, although he mentioned importantly that the police were satisfied with the progress they were making.

From their point of view, however, the story of the ghost amply compensated for the dearth of more exact information. A cowed monk who disappeared before the eyes of half-a-dozen watchers. A man mysteriously slain in a locked room with shuttered windows. Undoubtedly it was good stuff.

Ferrers Locke was late coming down to breakfast. He found Jack Drake talking to an excited landlord, who at once rushed up to him, bursting with the news of the tragedy.

"There's been a murder, sir—"

He broke off, bewildered by his guest's look of annoyance.

"That's a beastly nuisance, Mr. Yelland! I suppose the whole of the moor will be overrun by sightseers."

The landlord folded his arms over his prodigious chest and gaped, converting three chins into four.

"But don't you want to see what's been happening for yourself? You ain't interested—"

"Interested?" queried the Baker Street detective, with a touch of asperity. "It has entirely spoilt my holiday. I particularly wanted to find those admirable specimens of the *Acherontia atropos* that visit this side of the moor. And I was also on the look out for *Protoparce convolvuli*. They migrate across the Channel, you know. It's curious," he added, with a frown, "that although you find the caterpillars feeding here the pupæ never seem to survive. I believe that every one of those butterflies has flown up from the south."

"Well, you're lucky you've booked your room," grunted the landlord, quite indignant to find anyone more interested in butterflies than the murder of Silas Morecombe. "I've refused six people already this morning."

"But I'm leaving at once. I shan't come back until this disturbance is over."

Even Jack Drake stared at this. But it was altogether too much for Joe Yelland. He swallowed hard, and then hurried away, shaking his head from side to side as he left the room.

"Now," smiled Ferrers Locke, sitting down with alacrity, "we can do justice to this bacon and eggs. And I see some Devonshire cream awaiting us."

"But what's the big idea, guv'nor?" asked his young assistant in perplexity. "Why did you say we were leaving Bridgeworthy?"

"We are catching something more dangerous than butterflies, Jack. By the way, I think I bluffed the landlord successfully. He is sure to pass on the

news. If it wasn't that Webster would give the whole game away—quite unconsciously, of course—I might stay on."

"Webster's a prize idiot. How on earth—"

"No, he's not an idiot, Jack. He can be confoundingly shrewd. The trouble is he neglects the importance of detail. For the average sort of crime he's just the man. But this is far from being average. Pour out the coffee and tell me just what you think about it all."

There was a twinkle in the detective's eyes that Jack Drake didn't fail to notice. However, he complied.

"I know what you'll say, sir, before I start. You'll tell me I'm putting the cart before the horse—beginning with a theory, and then looking for facts to fit, instead of the other way about. But I've got a theory, all the same."

"Let me hear it," encouraged Ferrers Locke, attacking his bacon with relish.

"First of all, we know that Morecombe was at one time a crook. He'd been in gaol. We also know he's been living in close seclusion; yet apparently he had plenty of money to enjoy himself with if he'd wanted to. He told us he had been warned that his life was in danger. Now, wouldn't it have been the most natural thing for him to have taken a holiday abroad until the danger was over? Why should he go back to a lonely house on the moor with that threat hanging over him? Again, why should the murderer have advertised his intentions beforehand?"

"You sum up the difficulties admirably," murmured Ferrers Locke. "I'm waiting to hear the solution."

"I can only see one possible solution. There was something in the house itself that the murderer wanted, and that it was so valuable that Morecombe dared not leave it unwatched. Also, it must have been something too bulky for him to take away. He refused to divulge where he had hidden it, and so his life was threatened. He was given an ultimatum, which expired last night."

"Can you tell me any more?"

"Only that I've got a strong suspicion the treasure concealed somewhere in that house was the swag from some previous robbery in which Morecombe double-crossed his pals. Perhaps he came out of prison first, and now they are after him." Jack paused and made a rueful face. "Now blow my precious theory to bits. I know you are going to."

But to his surprise the detective shook his head.

"On the contrary, I'm going to congratulate you. There's nothing whatever wrong with that bit of reasoning. You'll be glad to know that it only slightly differs from my own. What is more, I have proof that I am on the right track."

"Proof?" ejaculated the boy eagerly.

"When Morecombe called on me I took the precaution of getting his fingerprints. I sent them across to the Yard, and this morning I received a wire. Read it yourself."

He passed over a slip of pink paper and Jack Drake stared, frankly puzzled at the contents.

"Oscar Lomax, financed Peter the Pedlar, sentenced Garfield jewel theft, believed in America."

Jack Drake looked up inquiringly.

"The important point," observed Ferrers Locke, receiving back the wire,

"is that Morecombe—whose real name was Lomax—was mixed up in Peter the Pedlar's gang. He was sentenced to three years in 1921 for stealing Lady Garfield's collection of rubies. That doesn't matter to us. But after he came out of prison and pretended to go to America, Peter the Pedlar brought off the coup of his career. He stole half a million pounds' worth of bullion."

"Bullion?" cried Jack Drake, aghast. "Then—"

"Precisely. The bullion was transferred from a liner at Plymouth to a waiting train. The train had only gone twelve miles when an obstruction on the line compelled it to stop. During that interval the van containing the bullion was uncoupled. It was an audacious raid. The detectives inside were shot down and the gold moved into a waiting lorry. The lorry drove off into the night and was never seen again."

"All the members of the gang were ultimately captured, but they refused to disclose where the booty was hidden. To this day the mystery is unsolved."

"But you think Morecombe was mixed up in the business?"

"I am satisfied," replied Locke quietly, "that half a million pounds of gold ingots is concealed at the Grange. How it got there I don't know. Where it is hidden is a secret which cost Morecombe his life."

"Yet it ought to be the easiest thing in the world to find."

"That remains to be seen." Ferrers Locke set down his cup and glanced through the window. "Here is Webster—but I don't think somehow we will tell him just yet."

The door opened and the inspector burst in.

"Morning, Mr. Smith," he said breezily. "How are the lepidoptera—isn't that what you call 'em?"

"The net is closing," replied Locke, with a smile.

"You needn't trouble to draw it any tighter. We've got our man. I'm just waiting confirmation before I slip on the bracelets."

"Who are you going to arrest?"

"Soames" was the triumphant reply. "He fooled us nicely last night. But I've learnt a lot since then. It was an inside job right enough. Although he managed very ingeniously to throw us on a false scent."

"This is interesting."

Ferrers Locke selected a cigarette from his case and lit it, still with the suspicion of a smile.

"You remember the window with the marks of a rope ladder?" asked Inspector Webster. "Well, we found the ladder tucked away in the garden. I took plaster casts of the footprints leading to it. They fit Soames perfectly."

To his disappointment Ferrers Locke merely nodded.

"In that case you won't be wanting me any more. Jack and I thought of running down to Plymouth to see the sights. They have one of the best aquariums in the country although the inhabitants don't seem to know it."

Webster glared and then shrugged his shoulders.

"You are a bad loser," he said.

After the bracing air of the moors Plymouth was decidedly rennervating. Ferrers Locke, however, spent a busy afternoon. First of all, he went to the Devon and Cornwall reference library

and examined the register of visitors over the past month.

He seemed rather disappointed with the result, but next he went on to the Marine Biological Laboratory.

"Care to see a diver at work?" he asked Jack. "Because I believe we are in luck this afternoon. They are testing a new chamber with deep sea pressure."

Jack Drake would have been interested at any other time, but there seemed so much else to do. He was convinced that Soames was innocent, and he protested that they ought to have remained behind.

"I don't think Webster will even get enough evidence to justify a warrant. He is a bit too optimistic, as usual."

"But oughtn't you have told him about the bullion?"

"He'll learn all that between now and the inquest. Although I doubt if he will pay much attention to it. There's no direct proof that Morecombe was connected with the robbery. More of my theorising."

"Still, if it's true it narrows down the possible murderers."

"I warned him the net was getting tighter. However, here is the aquarium. We'll have an afternoon's holiday."

Jack Drake still found it difficult to concentrate, but it turned out to be an interesting spectacle. Ferrers Locke himself was completely absorbed.

In a big glass tank a diver descended a ladder, and his clumsy movements resembled oddly a slow motion cinematograph. In his hand he had a complicated piece of apparatus, which suddenly belched forth a brilliant flame.

"Ever seen fire burning under water before?" queried the Baker Street detective. "Looks like magic, doesn't it? That's an oxy-acetylene torch. Watch it go through that three-inch plate."

The flame cut through the iron like a knife through cheese, and the queerest thing was the number of glowing sparks that sank to the ground.

"Awkward if it slipped," commented Jack, as he thought of the heat required to make those iron edges red-hot while submerged.

Ferrers Locke had a long conversation with the diver afterwards, asking him all sorts of technical questions.

"You never know," he remarked, as they left, "when a scrap of information is going to come in useful. The trouble with so many people is that they go about with their eyes shut. They've no curiosity."

He stopped to buy an evening paper. Hastily glancing through it he suddenly stiffened.

"I expected as much," he muttered. "We must return to London at once."

"What's wrong?" asked Jack Drake in astonishment; and then he saw the paragraph his guv'nor had been reading.

"Unknown Man's Suicide!" ran the headlines. "Shooting Tragedy in Half Moon Street!"

Within seven minutes of reading that paragraph in the evening papers, Ferrers Locke and his assistant were seated in an already moving train. There had been no time to return for their luggage.

"Whew! That was a bit of luck." Jack mopped his perspiring brow with a handkerchief. "But why we have to arrive in London in the middle of the night beats me. Unless—unless you don't believe it's a case of suicide?"

"I regard it with very great suspicion," was the reply.

"What makes you?"

Jack had seen too much of his chief's uncanny insight to doubt that there were excellent reasons for what they



Ferrers Locke stooped down, grasped the ring, jerked up the trap-door, and shone his torch straight on a startled face looking up. The man on the landing below gave a hoarse cry, and nearly dropped the candle he was carrying! (See page 25.)

were doing. It distressed him that he couldn't think of a single one.

"You're the limit, guv'nor," he went on, in mock protest. "We've no sooner got started on one of the brightest cases we've had for years than you suddenly throw it over. The very time the police are about to arrest a man you think innocent, you run away to see over an aquarium. All very well, of course, if we had nothing better to do. But, to crown the lot, you then shoot right away at a tangent and take up another case."

"Are you sure it's another case?" asked Locke quietly.

"Am I sure?" Jack caught the meaning of that flickering smile. "Well—I don't see any connection between a man shooting himself in Half Moon Street, and the murder of Silas Morecombe."

"Try again. Doesn't the address convey anything?"

"Half Moon Street?" Jack frowned hard and then suddenly gave a low whistle. "By Jove, that's where Webster said he picked up the handkerchief he gave you to examine!"

"Exactly. At the time I particularly asked him if he noted the number of the house outside which it had been dropped. Probably that doesn't matter now. I don't say," he added, "I've been actually expecting something of this sort to happen; yet I'm not entirely taken by surprise."

"But what on earth had you got to go on?"

"Very little," confessed Locke. "For once I indulged in guesswork. It's a dangerous practice as a rule, and it would only encourage you in bad habits if I told you how my mind worked."

"Can't you take the risk?"

But Locke shook his head.

"If you don't mind, we won't talk any more at present. I want to think."

As he spoke he drew a blackened looking briar pipe from his pocket, and filled it carefully. A sharp cleft had formed between his dark, straight eyebrows, and throwing his legs up on the empty seat opposite, he settled down.

It was possible, he had to admit to himself, that this affair in Half Moon Street had no connection with the mystery he was investigating.

On the other hand, he was quite prepared to believe that Morecombe had been merely the first of several victims who were to meet their death in this quest, opening up for half a million pounds.

Half a million sterling! It was a big stake to play for. And a man who had committed one murder would not hesitate to commit a second or a third, if the occasion demanded.

(Now, chums, be sure you do not miss reading next week's exciting long instalment of this powerful Ferrers Locke story!)

Come Into the Office, Boys!

(Continued from page 2.)

And now, having safely and successfully managed my delve into the earth, let me take

ANOTHER DIP INTO MY POST-BAG,

and see what you other fellows have to ask this week. Hallo, here is Harry Caruthers, of Brighton, asking me: "What is a Bummel?" The word "Bummel" is of Continental origin and means a holiday or a walk without any definite object in view. If you start off without any clear intention of what you are going to do, or where you are going, you may be said to be going on the bummel. Personally, I think these are the best kind of holidays to have, because one comes across many interesting people and many interesting places, and there is always the possibility that Adventure—with a big "A"—is waiting around the corner for you!

"WHAT ABOUT MUSTARD?"

is the query which Jack Harvey, of Penzance, puts up to me. He says that he has heard that most of the mustard used in this country is wasted by being left on the sides of plates. He is perfectly correct, and it was a wealthy mustard manufacturer himself who said that he made his wealth not out of the mustard which people used, but out of that which they wasted. Reliable figures state that at least three million pounds' worth of mustard is wasted in a year! But mustard is by no means the only thing that is wasted. Scraps of soap to the value of twenty-five thousand pounds are thrown away each year, while if match-ends were made into wood-pulp they would be worth thousands of pounds, and could even be transformed into paper suitable for printing the MAGNET upon! Waste tram and train tickets are estimated to be worth twenty-two million pounds, while other things which are wasted include candle-ends, cigarette ends, string, waste-paper, pins, and clips. The amount of

money which we are supposed to waste on these things in a year is estimated to be one hundred and fifty million pounds! So you can see that there are fortunes to be picked up even in dust-bins!

"IS A STEAMER A SHIP?"

is the poser which Bert Golding, of Weybridge, puts up to me this week. Strictly speaking it is not, Bert, although we always talk of "steamships." A "ship" really means a sailing vessel with four or more masts, all of which are "square-rigged," which means that the sails are suspended from yards which run across the ship from side to side. A schooner is a vessel in which the sails run fore-and-aft, and a barque is a vessel which has two or three masts square-rigged, while its mizzen-mast is fore-and-aft rigged. The mizzen-mast, in case you don't know, is the mast nearest to the stern of the vessel. Bert also wants to know why we call a ship "she"? I have heard it said that it is because her rigging is so expensive! I hope my girl readers don't think this a reflection upon them!

BOHEMIA AND THE BOHEMIANS

interest George Cuss, of Wakefield, who wants to know why artists and literary people are generally referred to as Bohemians, and where Bohemia is, anyway? Bohemia used to be a country of its own, but, like many other Continental countries it has been swallowed up by others, and has changed its nationality again and again. At the present time it forms part of Czechoslovakia. I should think that it is very unlikely that there are any genuine Bohemian nationals in existence to-day, and I am afraid that I can't tell George how artists came to be dubbed "Bohemians." But the name is likely to survive to describe any people who put art first,

and who don't particularly care whether they are poor or rich so long as they enjoy life.

And now, as space is getting short,

LET'S HAVE A LAUGH

at this joke which earns a penknife for W. Neville Jones, of 25, Church Street, Bleanan, Festiniog, N. Wales.

A little boy on an errand to the chemist asked for: "A pen'orth of—" (forgetting what he was sent for).

"A pennyworth of what?" asked the chemist, trying to help the youngster.

"A pen'orth of—"

"Hurry up, sonny," said the chemist.

"Have you forgotten what you came for?"

"Ah!" exclaimed the boy suddenly.

"That's it! A pen'orth of campher!"

Now of course you're all eager to know what I have in store for you next week. Very well, I won't keep you waiting any longer. For a start there's a delightful story of Greyfriars entitled:

"THE MYSTERY OF MARK LINLEY!"

which shows that Frank Richards hasn't forgotten the sterling character of Mark Linley, the scholarship boy, although he has left him out in the cold a bit lately. You'll enjoy this story no end. Next there's the opening story of a new St. Sam's series, which possesses a distinctly novel theme. You'll laugh loud and long over

"THE TREZZURE-SEEKERS OF ST. SAM'S!"

which incidentally provides another feather in the cap of Master Dicky Nugent. Then there's another sparkling instalment of our new detective serial which must not on any account be missed. And for the cricketing fans among you I can promise the first of a superb new series of Cricket articles, written by an expert who knows cricket and cricketers inside out, so to speak. His first interesting contribution features Maurice Tate, the wonderful Sussex and All England bowler. Good programme, what? Father, and one you'll enjoy! Till next week, then.

YOUR EDITOR.

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PLAYING for the FORTH!

our DICKY NUGENT

At flogging the junior at St. Sam's, Dr. Birchmell can put up a pretty good innings, but when it comes to slogging a cricket ball in a Fourth Form match, well—nuff said!

match. For the present, I intend to devote all my attention to the task of vanquishing the St. Bill's team. Come!

And the Head rushed off in the direction of the junior cricket field. Jack Jolly & Co., looking the reverse of cheerful now, followed him.

When they arrived on the scene of battle a crowd had already assembled, and the St. Bill's men were in front of the pavilion, chatting with their acquaintances in the home team.

Everybody stared on seeing the Head in his cricketer's garb, and the St. Bill's fellows laughed aloud.

"Brought your mascot along with you, Jolly?" asked Swiper, the captain of the St. Bill's team.

"Silence!" roared Dr. Birchmell, with a few words at the grinning cricketers. "Allow me to tell you, my boy, that I'm the headmaster of this college."

"Oh, crickey! Sorry, sir!"

"For once in a way, I have decided to honour the St. Sam's juniors by playing for them," explained Dr. Birchmell. "Of course, that makes the result a foregone conclusion."

"Of course it does!" grinned Swiper.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"However, we won't argue the toss any longer," said the Head. "I suggest we get on with the giddy washing at once. Naturally, I shall take Jolly's place as captain."

"Well, of all the cheek—" gasped Jack Jolly.

"Silence, Jolly! We will toss for choice of innings."

"Tails!" called Swiper.

"Wrong!" grinned Dr. Birchmell, displaying one side of his double-headed penny. "We bat first. I'll start the innings with you, Jolly. Get your pads on, my boy, and don't forget to stonewall for all you're worth. Leave the scoring to me."

With feelings that were too deep for words, Jack Jolly strapped on his pads, and went in with the Head.

Dr. Birchmell faced the bowler with a confident expression on his skollery dille. Swiper was the bowler, and he was grinning as he prepared to send down one of his self-branded "yorkers."

"Play!" he yelled.

The Head braced himself up for a terrific effort. Closing his eyes he lifted up his bat, and swung it round with tremendous force.

Crash!

That was not the sound of the Head smiting a boundary. It was the sound of Swiper's deadly ball making a rare old mess of the Head's wicket.

"How's that?" roared Swiper.

"Dear me! That was a fluke, and no mistake."

"Out!" said Tallopy of the Sixth, who was acting as umpire. "Hook it!"

Dr. Birchmell frowned.

"Pray don't talk rot, Tallopy! That was a trial ball, of course."

"What?"

"You can't give me out when it was only a trial ball," said the Head calmly.

"But it wasn't a trial ball!" hooted Swiper.

"The decision rests with the umpire, not you!" snorted the Head. "Now, Tallopy, I warn you to be careful. A wrong decision on your part now may have painful consequences. I need hardly remind you that I have not hesitated to flog seniors in the past."

"Not out," said Tallopy hurriedly.

"Look here—" roared Swiper.

"Carry on the game!" ordered Tallopy.

And Swiper manfully prepared to swallow his wrath somehow, and prepared to bowl again.

"Play!"

Crash! Wallop!

Once again the Head's wicket was spreadeagled.

"Out this time, aren't you, sir?" asked Tallopy.

Dr. Birchmell snorted.

"Certainly not! That was a foul ball. A babe in the First Form could see that much, Tallopy."

"Yes, but I'm not a babe in the First Form, sir," said Tallopy, who was beginning to feel rather uncomfortable.

"It looked fair enough to me."

"Then it's about time you got something extra-strong in the way of spectacles," said the Head cuttingly.

"Carry on, bowler!"

"Bust me!" muttered Swiper, as he picked up the ball again.

This time the St. Bill's bowler made up his mind that if he couldn't get the Head out by fair means, he would get him out by foul.

"Play!" he yelled; and he sent down a ball at such a speed that the Head didn't see it at all.



so well as they might have done otherwise, for, of course, the presence of the Head meant that one of their regular players had to stand down.

However, they manfully got to knock up the respectable score of 99 before they were finally dismissed.

The interval followed, and under the soothing influence of several cups of tea and innumerable donnuts, Dr. Birchmell recovered his usual good spirits, and declared his intention of going on to bowl when the St. Bill's innings started.

Jack Jolly & Co. felt completely dismayed when they heard that. If the Head started bowling, that would certainly put an end to their chances of victory.

"Something must be done!" said Frank Fearless, gritting his teeth.

"Something jolly well will be done!" answered Jack Jolly. "I've got a wheeze, you fellows! Listen to me!"

The Co. crowded round eagerly and listened to their leader's wheeze. Evidently it was a good one, for they were all chuckling when Jack had egg-plained.

"And now to work the giddy oracle!" said the captain of the Fourth.

--- II. ---

A DIAMOND ring, did you say?"

Dr. Birchmell pricked up his ears.

He was resting in a deckchair for a few minutes before the St. Bill's innings began when Tabby Barrell and Todday of the Fourth strolled by, deep in conversation.

The fat junior nodded in reply to Todday's question.

"A diamond ring worth a quid, at least!" he said impressively. "I happened to overhear Jolly mentioning it just now. The Honorable Guy de Vere

thinks he may have dropped it in the woods near Major Snorter's house."

"Shall we go and look for it, then?" asked Todday.

"Wish we could!" said Tabby. "Unfortunately, it's private property, and Major Snorter gets awfully waxy if he finds chaps trespassing."

The voices of the two little-tattlers of the Fourth died away. But Dr. Birchmell had heard enough. He sat upright, a look of greed on his lean dille.

"My hat!" he muttered to himself. "A diamond ring worth a quid! Worth picking up, I fancy!"

He rose to his feet and trotted over to the cricketers, who were just preparing to go on the field.

"Hallo, sir! Ready to make a start?" asked Jack Jolly cheerily.

"Hem! That's just what I wanted to speak to you about," said Dr. Birchmell, with rather a sheepish grin. "I wonder if you would mind doing without my valuable services for about an hour?"

"What's happened, sir?" asked Jack innocently. "Did the donnuts disagree with you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Certainly not, Jolly! As a matter of fact, I've just remembered an important appointment with our neighbour, Major Snorter," explained Dr. Birchmell, a crafty expression creeping into his face. "I shan't be long, my boy; in fact, if luck is with me, I may be back in much less than an hour. You don't mind?"

"Of course it is!"

"But if you really must go—"

"To be postponed, Jolly!"

"Then in that case we'll try to do

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