

6 SUPER PICTURE-STAMPS FREE INSIDE!

The **MAGNET**

2^d



Caught!



Come Into the Office, Boys!

Always glad to hear from you, chums, so drop me a line to the following address:
The Editor, The "Magnet" Library, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

BY this time, chums, your "Every Boy's World" album will be looking O.K.—especially after you have added the six splendid picture-stamps which I am presenting with this issue of the old paper! The two special tips of Self-Defence—Knuckling the Hand, and Breaking Loose from a Front Clutch—should prove invaluable to all of you who are studying the "Noble Art."

The sixth stamp of the "Locomotives" series is a picture of the famous L.N.E.R. "Hush-Hush!" engine. It gained that name owing to the strict secrecy which surrounded its construction at the Darlington Works. It is the largest locomotive in Great Britain, and is officially known as "No. 10,000." It was especially designed for high speed traffic on the East Coast route between England and Scotland. Here is some information regarding it: The wheels are arranged 4-6-4; the wheelbase is forty feet in length; and it generates the tremendous pressure of 450 pounds per square inch, which is more than twice as much as that of many engines!

The stamp of the Orient liner, Orontes, will especially interest cricket fans, for this is the magnificent liner which is taking our present Test Team out to Australia. I expect you all read a great deal about her in the Press a little while ago. She should be arriving in Australia shortly after you are reading this little chat of mine.

The Polar Samoyed, which figures on another of this week's stamps, is certainly one of the aristocrats of the dog world. It is found on the shores of the Arctic Ocean, between Ob and Yenesei, and belongs to the Eskimo group. It is used for draught purposes and reindeer herding, and attains a height of between 19 and 21 inches, with a weight of about 50 pounds.

The last of this week's picture stamps depicts the Comper Swift (Gipsy engine) aeroplane.

Don't forget that there will be another six splendid free stamps in next week's issue!

If you haven't already placed a regular order for your MAGNET, don't delay! Do it now—for you'll be terribly disappointed should you not be able to fill up our wonderful album, which is undoubtedly the finest free gift ever presented by a boy's paper!

NOW to deal with a few interesting queries which have been sent in by various readers. D. Powell, who does not give his address, wants to know:

HOW AN ELECTRIC REFRIGERATOR WORKS.

You all know, of course, that heat is required to change a liquid into gas. If

this heat is not supplied from outside, it will be taken from the store of heat already existing in a certain thing. This, briefly, is the principle on which refrigeration works. Certain chemicals are changed from liquids to gasses, and back again into liquids. Electricity is used for this purpose, and as the heat is withdrawn from the interior of the refrigerator, the temperature naturally falls.

It would not be possible for me to give a full description in a few paragraphs, so the best thing this reader can do is to go to his local library, and consult a reliable encyclopedia, which will describe the various modern methods now in use.

The same reader sends along an interesting figure trick, but, as this is just a version of the old "think of a number, double it, etc.," I feel sure most of my readers will already know it. I will keep in mind his request for more good card tricks, and see if I can prevail upon "Mr. X." to explain a few more in the near future.

New for a few

RAPID FIRE REPLIES:

How to Join the Metropolitan Police Force. (C. A., of Hammersmith): The recruiting office for this force is at New Scotland Yard, S.W.1, where all particulars can be obtained. I believe there is already a long waiting list.

A Cure for Pimples and Blackheads. ("Magnetite," of Charlton): Plenty of exercise and fresh air will help you to get rid of the first. Ask your local chemist for a lotion for the latter.

Early Adventures of the Greyfriars Chums. (Jane Tubble, of Waltham Abbey): These are published in The "Schoolboys' Own Library." The very first of the stories have already appeared, but they are now out of print. Nugent used to be something of a milksop, but he has improved since those days.

Billy Bunter on the Screen. (H. Wand, of Grantham): I agree with you. It would be most interesting to see the Greyfriars Chums on the screen—but that is a matter for the film companies to decide! Don't you think there would be a difficulty in getting a boy actor to play the part of Billy Bunter?

From a Richmond reader, who signs himself E. G., comes an interesting question. He is evidently

AN AMBITIOUS "WATER-BOB,"

for he tells me that both he and his chum are very anxious to construct a metal boat. They have secured a number of oil drums, and have straightened these out. Now, E. G. wishes to know how they can join them together, without the use of rivets.

I am afraid my friends won't be able to do this job themselves. The modern way

of doing without rivets is to join the metal together by either gas or electrical welding. But that is far too ambitious a job for a couple of amateurs! Besides, the cost of installing the welding plant would be prohibitive. Perhaps a local welding company might be willing to undertake the job—but it might prove expensive. So my advice would be—stick to rivets!

THERE'S just space for a final query. Jack Sweyne, of Swansea, asks me, point-blank:

WHO WON THE WAR?

He says the Americans claim to have done so, and France claims the same thing, while Britons, of course, claim that we did so. The whole fact of the matter is, that the combined might of the allies won the War. No country could have done it without the help of the others. The blockade of the Navy prevented Germany from obtaining her much-needed munitions, and the ceaseless hammer-blows of the various allied armies all along the front soon wore down the morale of the enemy troops, until when our last big push came, our armies swept forward to a decisive victory. So I think that every nation of the allies can justly claim to have had a share in the winning of the War.

"BUY 'THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL'!" is the slogan now, chums. And no wonder! Imagine the amount of pleasure you'll get out of its big budget of ripping school yarns and exciting adventure stories! Here you can meet the jolly schoolboy characters of Greyfriars, St. Jim's, and Rookwood Schools, whose merry pranks cannot fail to entertain. There are a host of other interesting stories, too—besides pithy poems and beautifully-coloured art plates. Can you get better value for six shillings? Why, of course, not!

And don't forget "THE POPULAR BOOK OF BOY'S STORIES." A really handsome book this, chums, with a select collection of stories that are far too good to be missed. Packed full of swift-moving stories, this attractive bargain-price Annual deals with every phase of adventure. Ask your newsagent to show you a copy—you're sure to want one, then! It's only 2s. 6d.!

LOOK out for next week's bumper issue, chums! Frank Richards' latest yarn in our new series of school yarns is entitled:

"THE WAY OF THE REBEL!"

And I can tell you, that it is "the goods!" Once you commence it, you won't be able to lay down the old paper until you have read every line of it. These yarns of Harry Wharton & Co. get better and better every week, and I can tell you that I have some real top-notchers in store for you in the near future!

How are you enjoying "The Red Falcon," our latest serial? It's a real first-class, old-time yarn, that I am sure you will all appreciate. Next week's instalment is the real goods!

There will be the shorter features, as usual!

Cheerio, chums!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE SCHEMER

OF THE

SIXTH!



By Frank Richards.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Wharton Says "No!"

YOU must!"
 "Well, I won't!"
 "You must!" repeated Bob Cherry.
 "The mustfulness," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, solemnly, "is terrific."
 "Look here, Wharton—"
 "Don't play the goat! I tell you—"
 "You've got to do it!"
 "You must!"
 "And you jolly well shall!"

The crowd of fellows in Study No. 1 in the Greyfriars Remove, seemed a little excited. They were nearly all speaking at once. And they were speaking emphatically.

They were all Harry Wharton's friends, but their looks, at the moment, did not appear exactly friendly. Some of them looked as if they would rather have liked to punch the handsome, obstinate face of the captain of the Remove.

Nine or ten fellows had crowded into the study—all members of the Form eleven. Harry Wharton stood facing them, with a cool, inflexible expression on his face. Apparently he had made up his mind on the subject in dispute and was not to be persuaded.

"I tell you," said Bob Cherry angrily, "that you must!"

"And I tell you," answered Wharton, "that I won't!"

"You call yourself captain of the Remove—" hooted Johnny Bull. "Is it a skipper's business to let a team down?"

"You've got to come over to Redclyffe to-morrow!" roared Bob Cherry. "See—you've got to!"

"Can't be done, when I'm under detention."

"You've got to ask Quelch to let you off."

"I won't!"

"And why not?" roared Johnny Bull.

"I won't ask favours of Quelch."

"You'd rather let the eleven down?" exclaimed Squiff.

"Quite."

Harry Wharton made that answer coolly and calmly. It did not have the effect of calming the excited footballers. Rather, it had the effect of a red rag on a bull.

There was a deep murmur of wrath. "That does it!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "If that's how Wharton looks at it the sooner the Remove gets a new skipper, the better."

Wharton smiled sarcastically. "Not a bad idea," he said. "You men had better think it over. If you want a new skipper, here's Smithy all ready to offer. There's no false modesty about Smithy; he knows his own value

By fair means or foul, Loder of the Sixth is determined to get his enemy—Wharton of the Remove—expelled from Greyfriars. But the extent of Loder's villainy in trying to bring this about surprises even himself!

and is ready to tell the world. Go in and win, Smithy!"

The Bounder flushed angrily. "I wasn't thinking of that, you rotter!" he snapped. "But you're not the only pebble on the beach. And you can't play fast and loose with games and keep on as skipper."

Wharton shrugged his shoulders. "If you fellows have come here to ask me to resign, you won't have to ask twice," he said. "The answer is in the affirmative."

"Oh, chuck it!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We don't mean that, and you jolly well know we don't. Nobody wants you to resign. We want you to skipper the team at Redclyffe to-morrow, and you're jolly well going to do it!"

"Look here, Harry—" urged Frank Nugent.

"It's no good talking," said Harry Wharton, "I'm gated for the whole term, and that cuts out games played away. If I'd done anything to deserve it I'd go to Quelch and eat humble pie. I haven't. I'm not going to ask favours of a beak who's got a down on me for nothing. Besides, it wouldn't be any use. Quelch has his rag out."

"You've done nothing?" sneered the Bounder. "You punched Loder of the Sixth in the eye! Do you call punching a prefect nothing?"

"You were jolly lucky to get off with a term's detention!" growled Johnny Bull. "You came jolly near getting sacked. If old Mauly hadn't got your uncle on the spot in time you'd have been turfed out of Greyfriars."

"And you'd jolly well have deserved it," said Tom Brown. "If you want us to believe that you're a little tin angel, Wharton, and that everybody else is in the wrong, you're making a fool of yourself."

"Hear, hear!"
 "Quelch's bark is worse than his bite," said Bob. "If you keep on ragging the man he's bound to keep rusty. Why the dickens shouldn't you toe the line like any other fellow?"

"Echo answers that the whyfulness is terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Quelch would come round," said Frank Nugent. "You've only got to put it civilly."

"Thanks! I've no civility to waste on Quelch," answered Wharton. "Quelch can go and eat coke."

"And what about the game at Redclyffe?" bawled Johnny Bull.

"Smithy will captain the side. He's rather keen on it. Why not give him his head? Or Linley! Linley's bagged my place as head boy, let him bag the captaincy, too!"

"Then you don't care a straw about football?" exclaimed Bob. "You'd rather chuck up games than put your silly pride in your pocket?"

Wharton flushed. "I'm not going to kow-tow to Quelch!" he snapped. "I might beg

off a just punishment, but not an unjust one. I'm not going to Quelch to ask favours, and most likely be refused."

"And I tell you you are!" roared Bob. "And if you don't go of your own accord we'll jolly well make you."

"Hear, hear!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"That wouldn't be easy!" he said.

Bob Cherry looked round on the excited crowd of juniors. He was Wharton's chum, but he was deeply and intensely exasperated with him. So far as the Remove men could see, Wharton was far from being wholly in the right in his feud with his Form master. The term had started with trouble for him, but some of it, at least, he had asked for. Once his back was up, all the doggedness in his nature came to the surface, and he was not the fellow to make concessions.

But the rights and wrongs of the matter did not weigh so much with the Remove footballers as the more immediate concern of the matches. Wharton was wanted to play—and a football captain was expected to put everything else aside for that. If there was a chance of getting off detention by putting it civilly to Quelch it was up to Wharton to do it. So every fellow in the room considered—except Wharton.

"Gentlemen, chaps and sportsmen," said Bob Cherry. "We want Wharton at Redclyffe to-morrow. We're going to have him there. There's a jolly good chance that Quelch will come round, if he's asked. He won't unless he's asked—that stands to reason. Wharton is going to ask him."

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm not!" said Wharton coolly.

"And we're jolly well going to rag him till he does," roared Bob. "Hands up for ragging Wharton till he does the right thing."

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Good egg!" grinned the Bounder.

Hands went up on all sides. Frank Nugent was the only one who hesitated, but his hand went up after the others. The meeting in Study No. 1 was unanimous.

"Passed nem con!" said Bob. "Now, then, collar him! Sorry, old bean, but if you ask for things you must expect to get them. It's your own fault for being the best footballer in the Form, and a man we can't spare. You can't make fellows rely on you and then let them down because you've got your silly back up with a beak. Put his head in the coal-locker!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bag him!"

"Rag him!"

"You silly owls!" roared Wharton, jumping back. "Hands off! I'll jolly well hit out—"

"So will we!" said Bob cheerily. "You're for it, old scout, till you do the right thing. Come on, you men!"

There was a rush.

Harry Wharton kept his word, and hit out.

Bob Cherry gave a roar as he caught Wharton's right on his chin, and sat down suddenly on the study carpet. Vernon-Smith yelled as Wharton's left landed on his rather prominent nose, and he staggered across the study. Then there was a heavy bump as the captain of the Remove went down in the grasp of many hands.

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THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Putting it to Quelch!

"BUMP him!"
"Rag him!"
"Scrag him!"
"Give him jip!"

Every fellow in the study was a friend of Wharton's; but nobody looking into Study No. 1 just then would have supposed so.

The captain of the Remove struggled in the grasp of his excited friends sprawling on the floor.

He struggled in vain.

He was swept up and bumped down, and he smote the study carpet with what a novelist would call a sickening thud.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Ow!" roared Wharton. "Ow! Oh! Leggo, you fatheads! I'll jolly well—Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Going to Quelch?" bawled Bob Cherry.

"No!" yelled Wharton.

"Frog's march!" shouted the Bounder.

"Oh, you rotters!" gasped Wharton.

"Give him toco!"

Round and round the study tramped the excited juniors, with the hapless captain of the Form wriggling and writhing in their hands. His resistance was quite unavailing. Round and round he went in the frog's march, amid a loud trampling and scuffling and shouting.

Wharton was adamant! But the Remove footballers meant business. It was, as Bob declared, his own fault for being the best man at Soccer in the Form, and indispensable in a hard match. Under Smithy's captaincy the team had been beaten at Highcliffe. They were not going to be beaten at Redclyffe if they could help it. Wharton had to toe the line, and he was going to be ragged till he toed it, and it really looked as if there would not be much left of him if he did not make up his mind soon.

"Harry, old man——" urged Nugent.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Still obstinate?" grinned Bob Cherry. "All right, we'll give you something to cure all that!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!

"I say, you fellows!" Billy Bunter blinked into the study through his big spectacles. "I say, you're kicking up a fearful shindy! I say, there's a prefect coming up the stairs! It's Loder!"

The din in Study No. 1 was heard far beyond the limits of the Remove passage. It was no wonder that a prefect was coming on the scene.

But the excited juniors did not heed. Bunter squeaked his warning in vain. Tramp, tramp, tramp! Bump, bump, bump!

Loder of the Sixth, with his ashplant under his arm and a scowl on his face, arrived in the study doorway. A shindy in Study No. 1 was exactly what Loder wanted; it gave him a chance to deal officially with the junior he loathed. He stared into the study.

He was rather surprised to see Harry Wharton struggling helplessly and breathlessly in the grasp of the Removites.

Obviously, Wharton could not be punished for this. Even the bully of the Sixth, his old enemy, could hardly make out that Wharton was the person in fault, when he was plainly getting the ragging of his life! But now that he had found out what was going on Loder of the Sixth had no desire to intervene. His scowl changed into a grin.

Now that he was on the spot Loder was bound, by his duty as a prefect, to stop the shindy. But Loder had never been a whale on duty! If the Remove were ragging Wharton they were welcome to get on with it so far as Gerald Loder was concerned.

Instead, therefore, of butting into the study and handing out whacks with the ashplant, Loder stared for a moment, grinned, and walked away. He lounged down the Remove staircase, still grinning.

"I say, you fellows, Loder's gone!" squeaked Bunter.

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"Not so much row, you men," he said. "We don't want Wingate or Gwynne to come up—or Quelch!"

"Are you going to Quelch, Wharton?" demanded Johnny Bull, as the breathless juniors paused.

"No!" panted Wharton.

"Stick him in the armchair," said the Bounder. "We'll give him the ink. If that doesn't make him change his mind we'll give him the gum, and if that isn't enough, we'll rake soot out of the chimney for him."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Still resisting vainly, the captain of the Remove was plumped into the study armchair and held there by many hands. Herbert Vernon-Smith picked up the inkpot.

Wharton panted.

"You rotter! Keep that away!"

"I don't think!" chuckled the Bounder. And he lifted the inkpot over the head of the struggling junior. "Now then, last time of asking! Are you going to Quelch to ask to be let off to-morrow?"

Wharton's eyes flashed.

Obviously the Remove footballers were in a determined mood. Wharton had had enough of the ragging. There was plenty more to come, and he did not want the ink, the gum, and the soot. He drew a deep breath.

"Very well," he said, between his set lips. "I'll go to Quelch! I'll ask him to let me off to-morrow."

"Good egg!" said the Bounder, and he replaced the inkpot on the table.

"Right as rain!" said Bob cheerily. "Sorry to have to handle you like this, old bean; but you would have it, you know."

"The rightfulness of the esteemed rain is terrific!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Wharton was released. He panted for breath, and set himself to rights a little. The ragging had left him in rather a dishevelled state—not in a state to present himself to his Form master.

"I'll get you a clean collar, old chap!" said Johnny Bull. "Where's his necktie? Oh, here it is!"

All was good-humour now. The recalcitrant captain of the Remove had been brought to reason—by rather drastic measures. Wharton apparently had resolved to abandon his obstinate stubbornness, and that was all that the Remove fellows wanted.

Cheerfully they helped him to put himself to rights. Johnny Bull brought him a clean collar, Nugent brushed him down. He was given time to recover his breath. Then, in the midst of a crowd of fellows, he was marched out of the study.

Only Frank Nugent gave him a rather uneasy look. Wharton's face was still flushed; but it was calm. There was an expression in his eyes that Frank did not quite like. He remembered the old adage, that a horse may be taken to the water but cannot be made to drink.

Nugent had his doubts about the result of that interview with the master of the Remove. But the other fellows had none. Wharton had come round—and that was that!

"Quelch is in his study now," said Bob, "and he was in a good temper when I took in my lines! Just the time to catch him! Half a dozen of us had better go with Wharton, to let Quelch see that we really want him. Quelch won't like disappointing a lot of fellows; he's not a bad sort really. I'm absolutely certain he will come round."

Most of the fellows were of the same

Bull and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh remained in the doorway. Behind them clustered the other fellows.

Mr. Quelch was sitting at his writing-table, pen in hand. He raised his eyebrows in surprise at the sight of this crowd of fellows of his Form. His gimlet eyes fixed on Wharton. No doubt there were wrongs on both sides; but it was certain that Mr. Quelch, this term, had the deepest and strongest antipathy for the junior who had been his trusted head boy the term before.

But his expression was placable. Quelch was in a good humour that afternoon, and if this visit meant that his

"Wharton's football captain in the Remove, sir, and—and we want him to skipper the side. If you'd be so kind, sir, as—as to let him off detention for the afternoon—"

"So very kind, sir," murmured Johnny Bull from the doorway.

"The gratitude of our esteemed and ridiculous selves would be terrific, sir," said Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"I quite understand," he said. "I regret very much that Wharton's detention should interfere with Form games. But let Wharton speak for himself."

"Go it, old chap!" whispered Bob.



Harry Wharton was plumped into the study armchair and held there by many hands. "Now, then, last time of asking!" said Vernon-Smith, lifting the inkpot over the head of the struggling junior. "Are you going to Quelch to ask to be let off to-morrow?"

opinion. It really depended on how Wharton put it to the Form master. A term's detention was a very heavy punishment, and some fellows believed that Quelch would really be glad to let the delinquent off at least part of it if it were made possible for him to do so. All that was required was that the rebel of the Remove should toe the line and submit respectfully to constituted authority, which really was not a great deal to ask of any fellow.

The Famous Five arrived in a body at the study of the Remove master. Five or six other fellows waited in the passage.

Wharton tapped at the door.

"Come in!" came the deep voice of Henry Samuel Quelch.

Wharton opened the door and entered, with Bob Cherry and Nugent. Johnny

boys had any reasonable request to make, he was prepared to grant it. In fact, Quelch rather guessed what was coming. He was aware that it was a football date on the morrow, and that Wharton, being gated, could not go over to Redclyffe with the Remove team. Wharton's offences had, in the eyes of the "beaks," at least, been extremely serious. Still, if the boy was prepared to make proper submission and cease to contemn authority, it might be possible to stretch a point. Anyhow, Mr. Quelch was prepared to give him a patient hearing.

"Please excuse us interrupting you, sir," said Bob Cherry meekly.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"It's the Redclyffe match to-morrow, sir—"

"I am aware of it," said Mr. Quelch.

Wharton had not said a word so far. He stood with a cool, calm face and a faintly mocking glimmer in his eyes. Nugent gave him a look that was almost beseeching, but his chum did not seem to see it.

"You may speak, Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, and his manner was gracious.

"Thank you, sir," said Wharton calmly. "The fellows seem to want me to-morrow. I'm very keen to play, of course. Considering that my detention was an act of injustice—"

Mr. Quelch gasped.

"WHAT!"

"Considering," repeated Wharton, with the utmost coolness, "that my detention was an act of injustice, entirely undeserved, I think you might let me off to-morrow, sir."

A dead silence followed the words.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Unpopular!

MR. QUELCH rose to his feet. The expression on his face was extraordinary. It seemed that the Remove master could hardly believe that his ears had heard aright.

The juniors stood dumb. They had made Wharton come to the Form master's study and ask for leave on the morrow. This was how he had asked!

If the fat was in the fire before, it was doubly and trebly so now. The horse had been taken to the water, but could not be made to drink. Wharton had not only made matters worse, he had made them hopeless. In utter dismay the Co. stood silent, and the fellows in the passage looked at one another aghast. The Bounder whistled softly.

"That's torn it!" he whispered. It was some moments before Mr. Quelch spoke. He seemed to have some difficulty in finding his voice. When at last his words came they came with a rumble like thunder.

"Wharton! You have dared to say—you have dared— Upon my word! You have come to your Form master's study to be guilty of the most audacious insolence! You dare to say that your punishment is unjust!"

"Yes, sir." "Shut up, you idiot!" hissed Bob Cherry savagely.

Wharton gave him a mocking look. He fancied that the fellows were sorry by this time that they had forced him to come. There was no doubt on that point. They were!

"Silence, Cherry! You may all leave my study, except Wharton!" rapped Mr. Quelch.

In silence the Removites went out, and Bob drew the door shut. In a dismayed crowd they moved away down the passage. There was, of course, no hope now that the captain of the Remove would be given leave for the football match. It was pretty certain that he was up for extra punishment for his audacity. Nobody cared about that; even his best chum, Nugent, was fully of opinion that he richly deserved it.

Left alone in the study with his Form master, Wharton waited coolly.

Mr. Quelch eyed him grimly across the table.

"No doubt you expect to be punished for your insolence, Wharton," he said, his eye straying in search of his cane.

"No doubt, sir," answered Wharton calmly.

"You will not have leave to-morrow, Wharton. Your detention will last over the whole term—if you remain so long at Greyfriars!" said the Remove master significantly. "If you do not mend your ways, I think that improbable. This school is no place for a boy who contemns all authority. You have had one narrow escape from expulsion, and on another occasion you cannot expect Colonel Wharton to intervene, neither would his intervention be of any effect."

"Oh, quite, sir!" assented Wharton, with a cool drawl in his voice. "My uncle has turned me down; I don't expect anything of him."

"I should have imagined, Wharton, that your uncle's consistent kindness to you would have made you unwilling to shock and pain him as you have done."

"I have done nothing, sir." Mr. Quelch breathed hard. "It is apparently useless to speak to you, Wharton. Punishment may have more effect. Bend over that chair."

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The Remove master picked up the cane.

One or two fellows who had lingered in the passage heard the swishing of the cane as Mr. Quelch laid it on. But they did not hear a sound from Harry Wharton.

He went through the infliction in grim silence, with set lips and a black brow. Six strokes fell, and every one was hard and heavy.

Then Mr. Quelch pointed to the door with the cane.

"You may go, Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove left the study. He went quietly down the passage, two or three fellows staring at him as he went. He did not seem to observe them.

With a pale, set face he returned to the Remove passage. Most of the Remove fellows had gathered there, and there was a murmur as the captain of the Form appeared.

"You've done it now!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Fairly torn it!" said Vernon-Smith.

"The tornfulness is terrific."

"Never mind all that now!" said Frank Nugent hastily. "Come into the study, Harry."

Wharton, looking neither to right nor to left, went into Study No. 1. Nugent followed him in.

"Well, that's that!" said Bob Cherry dismally. "The game's up now. I suppose you've had enough from Quelch, Wharton—but I've a jolly good mind to give you a little more myself."

Wharton looked at him.

"You can begin as soon as you like," he answered.

"You cheeky, sulky, silly fathead!" said Johnny Bull in measured tones. "You ought to be jolly well kicked out of the captaincy and cut by the Form!"

"Any fellow who wants to cut me can get on with it as soon as he likes," answered Wharton coolly.

"He hasn't had enough!" growled Peter Todd. "Give him the frog's march again up and down the passage."

"Oh, chuck it!" exclaimed Frank Nugent. "There's been enough ragging." He closed the study door in the angry faces of the Removites.

But his own face was clouded as he looked at his obdurate chum. All the fellows were angry; Nugent little less so than the others, though he was still sticking to his wayward friend.

"You must have been mad to talk to Quelch like that, Harry!" he said.

Wharton laughed savagely.

"Why? Why shouldn't I tell even a beak the truth, for once? Do you want me to pretend that I've had justice?"

"Every other fellow at Greyfriars thinks you got off pretty lightly after what you did."

"Let them think so! I don't agree."

"Do you want me to think that you're in the right, and everyone else in the school—masters and fellows alike—in the wrong?" snapped Nugent.

"I don't care two straws what you think!"

Nugent looked at him long and hard. Hot words trembled on his lips. But he did not utter them. He turned to the door and left the study, shutting the door hard after him.

Wharton was left alone with a black and knitted brow. It was tea-time, and the usual arrangement of the Famous Five was to tea together in Study No. 1. Wharton, twitching from the severe "six" he had received from his Form master's cane, was not in a mood for company, and was likely enough to be far from pleasant if his friends came. But they did not come. Even Frank—

for the present, at least—was fed-up. Indeed, there were few fellows in the Remove who were not "fed" with Wharton now.

The study door opened, but it was not a member of the Co. who looked in. It was the fat and fatuous countenance of William George Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove grinned at Wharton.

"Poor old chap!" he said. Wharton's eyes glinted. If he had been in a better temper his temper would have hardly have stood compassion from Billy Bunter.

"Left on your own—what?" said Bunter. "They're tea-ing in Bob's study. Haven't asked you—what?"

"Get out!" "My dear chap, I've come to ask you to tea," said Bunter, blinking at him. "As your pals have turned you down, I should think you'd be rather glad. Might be civil, anyhow. Like to come to tea in No. 7?"

"No," snapped Wharton.

"Well, on the whole, perhaps you're right," assented Bunter, with a nod. "Toddy's there, and he's rather a beast; and Dutton—Dutton's a deaf idiot. Let's tea here. I'll cut down to the tuckshop and get the stuff. What would you like for tea, old bean?"

"For goodness' sake, cut!"

"What about ham and eggs, and sosses, and a cake?" asked Bunter. "I'm standing it, you know—dash the expense! What does expense matter when a fellow's standing by a pal who's down on his luck? What? Here you are, left on your own, every chap down on you, and your friends glad to be shut of you, and all that. Not that you can wonder at it, old chap, with your high-and-mighty ways, if you don't mind my mentioning it. I speak as a pal."

"Will you go?"

"Certainly, old fellow! I'm going at once to the tuckshop, only—" Bunter coughed. "The fact is, old chap, I've been disappointed about a postal order. At the present moment I'm practically stony! I suppose you could lend me five bob and take my postal order when it comes in the morning?"

Bunter blinked hopefully at the captain of the Remove. Left on his own, and down on his luck, Bunter considered that even that stuck-up beast, as he considered Wharton, ought to be glad of such fascinating company, and prepared to make a small—and merely temporary—loan to the kind-hearted fellow who was taking pity on him!

Bunter was rather mistaken.

Harry Wharton's patience was exhausted. He came across to the door. "Will you clear, before I kick you?" he asked.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Get out!" roared Wharton, in a voice that made Bunter jump.

The fat Owl backed into the passage.

"Well, if you're too jolly mean to lend a pal five bob, you can jolly well go and eat coke!" he said. "I should hardly care to tea with you, anyhow. I don't see why I should take you up when everybody else turns you down. I'm always doing these generous things, and what thanks do I get? You can jolly well stick here and sulk, and be blown to you!"

And Bunter, turning up his fat little nose, turned his back on the captain of the Remove, to walk away in dignified contempt. The dignified effect, however, was a little spoiled by

a boot thudding on his tight trousers from behind, and Bunter roared.

"Whoop! Beast! Wow!"

And, forgetting all about dignity, Billy Bunter scooted up the passage on his highest gear. Wharton, with a knitted brow, went down to Hall to tea.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Odd Man Out!

"**T**HUS," sighed Skinner, "are the mighty fallen!" Snoop and Stott giggled. Skinner & Co., at least, were amused.

It was the following morning, and the Remove were coming out in "break." Generally, the Famous Five marched out together in a cheery bunch. Now Harry Wharton walked out on his own, and Bob and Johnny and Hurree Singh, when they joined a crowd to punt a footer, did not call on him to join up, or, indeed, speak to him. Frank Nugent lingered near him for a moment, but, meeting with no encouragement in Wharton's look, walked away and joined the punters.

Wharton, with his hands in his pockets, lounged across the quad, and Harold Skinner made his cheery remark, loud enough for him to hear as he passed.

Wharton's ears burned as he heard it, but he disdained to take heed of Skinner. He walked on, apparently deaf.

Skinner winked at his friends.

"Pride, my beloved 'earers," said Skinner, "goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall!"

And Snoop and Stott giggled again. Wharton passed out of hearing of

Skinner's pleasantry. But he might have done well to reflect on the text quoted by Harold Skinner. Pride and a haughty spirit had been his undoing more than once, and looked like being his undoing again. But a bitter sense of injustice seemed to have changed Harry Wharton's nature, or at least, brought to the surface all that was worst in it.

The previous day his friends and all the footballing fellows in the Form had persuaded him—or rather driven him—to go to Quelch, with unhappy results. Possibly he expected them to stick to their point, but if so, he was mistaken. Not only did the juniors realise that any appeal to Quelch now would be futile, but they were fed-up with the arrogance of the captain of the Remove. If he chose to cut the football, let him cut it, and be blowed, was the way the Bounder put it; and the other fellows assented. They had to do without him, and they hoped that they would do well without him—anyhow, they were not going to ask him again.

But they felt sore about it—very sore; even the good-natured Bob was angry and resentful, and as he felt that he could not speak to Wharton without telling him what he thought of him, he sagely decided not to speak to him at all, for the present.

It looked like a rift coming in the hitherto united Co. A small rift, like a cloud, no larger than a man's hand, on the horizon, portending storm and tempest. If that thought occurred to Harry Wharton, he did not seem to care. He lounged about by himself in break, and did not approach his friends until the Form went in for third school. And then he joined Lord Mauleverer, going to the Form-room, and chatted

to Mauly without looking at the Co., or speaking to them. And Johnny Bull gave an expressive grunt. It looked to him as if Wharton, in his wilful and wayward temper, wanted a break; and if he wanted it Johnny was in a mood to let him have it.

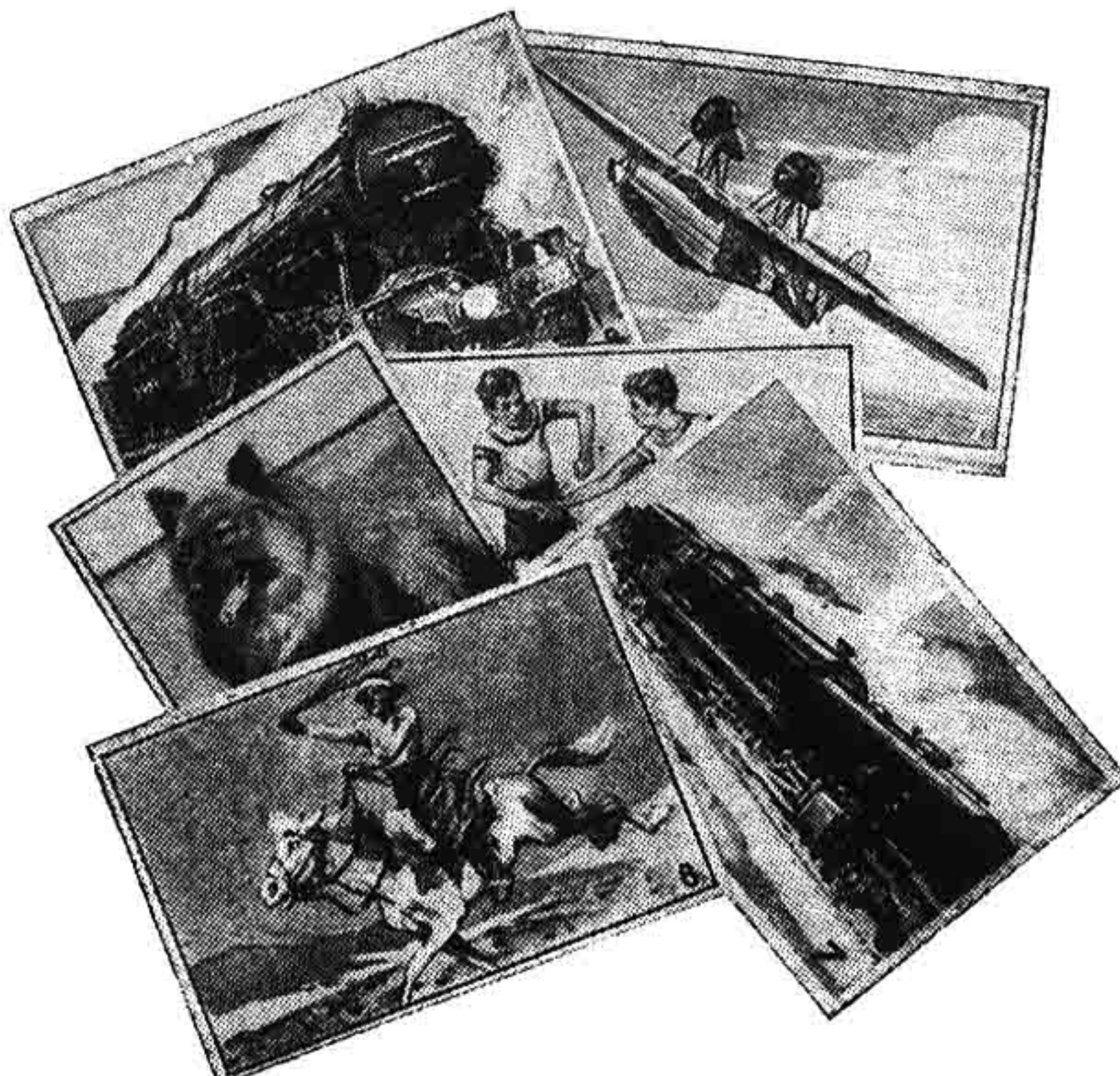
After dinner, when the footballers were getting ready to go over to Redclyffe, not one of them spoke a word to Wharton. It was unusual for Harry Wharton to stand aside, a fellow of no account when football was on the carpet, and he certainly did not feel happy or comfortable. Herbert Vernon-Smith looked rather pleased with himself; he was keen on captaining the team, and Wharton, from a distance, noted the expression on the Bounder's face, with a sarcastic smile. Yet he could not deny that Smithy had done his best, with the others, to get him to go.

The fellows were going over to Redclyffe on their bicycles; it was only a few miles distant. Quite a crowd of Remove men took out their machines to ride with the team, and other fellows started to walk. Wharton went into the House before they started, and some of the footballers noted that he did not even take interest enough in the matter to see them off. But, in point of fact, the captain of the Remove was feeling "rotten." He had a dreary prospect before him, of detention in the Form-room, while the others fellows were playing football, and on that keen, cold autumn afternoon he would have given a great deal to be playing. From his study window he watched them go, and his face was clouded when they were gone.

He walked out into the quad, to fill
(Continued on next page.)

STILL THEY COME!

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up the time before detention, which began at half-past two.

Mr. Quelch, glancing from his study window, sighted him, as he walked, with his hands in his pockets and his eyes bent on the ground.

The Remove master's glance followed him curiously and thoughtfully.

The boy was mutinous, sulky, rebellious, the most troublesome boy in the Form, and seeming to delight in the trouble he gave. But he had not always been so; a strange change had come over him this term. Mr. Quelch was conscious of dislike, yet there was something of a compassionate concern in his look as his eyes lingered on Wharton.

However, he turned his glance back to the detention task he was preparing for the junior. Discipline was discipline!

Wharton came towards the House again at a minute or two before time. Loder of the Sixth met him in the doorway. Loder had also had his eye on the rebel of the Remove, but assuredly not with anything like compassion.

"Go to the Form-room, Wharton!" he rapped out, in his most bullying tone.

Wharton looked at him.

"I'm going, Loder," he answered quietly.

"Well, don't hang about!" grunted Loder.

Wharton had a minute and a half before he was due for detention. But it was well to be on the safe side in dealing with Mr. Quelch, and he passed Loder quietly and went in. Loder of the Sixth scowled after him. He would have preferred disobedience, which would have given him a chance to make himself unpleasant.

Wharton waited at the Form-room door till Mr. Quelch arrived there. Quelch let him into the Form-room, gave him his task in Latin irregular verbs, and left him to it.

When the door had closed behind Quelch, and his footsteps had died away, the junior rose from his desk and went to the Form-room window. He was in no hurry to begin on irregular verbs. He stood looking out into the quad. There was a drift of clouds across the sky, and a few drops of rain were falling.

"So that's your game, you young sweep!"

It was Loder's voice from the path below the Form-room windows. Wharton glanced down at him.

Loder had time on his hands that afternoon. He seemed to be bent on occupying it with the rebel of the Remove.

"Cutting detention, what?" asked Loder, with a disagreeable grin. "You know Quelch is going out, and you fancy you won't be missed, what? Well, try it on and see!"

Wharton smiled faintly. It would have been easy to drop from the Form-room window and bolt, and as Mr. Quelch was going over to the vicarage at Friardale that afternoon, there was a chance that the truant might not be missed.

Seeing Wharton at the open window, Loder had jumped to the conclusion that that was his intention. As a matter of fact, it was not. Wharton stared the bully of the Sixth coolly in the face for a few moments, and then stepped back from the window, and started on his task.

Loder lounged away. Wharton sat quietly at his task; but his thoughts

were not very much concentrated on irregular verbs. He was thinking of the footballers on their way to Redclyffe, and thinking, too, that as Quelch would be out, it might be worth while to risk "cutting," when Loder had cleared off. He was thinking of that when the Form-room door opened.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Loder in Luck!

"DEAR me!" said Mr. Quelch. "Why not Wharton?"

The Remove master, in his study, had a thoughtful look.

A light drizzle of rain had started to fall. It did not look like lasting; but it was dismal and damp. Mr. Quelch was due that afternoon at Friardale Vicarage, where, on certain dates, he played a serious and solemn game of chess with Mr. Lambe. But the drizzle discouraged him.

In the autumn Mr. Quelch had it borne in upon his mind that he was not so young as he had been once upon a time. Certain rheumatic pains visited him in damp weather; and, in fact, the Remove master might have set up as a weather prophet, for rainy weather was generally heralded by a few little twinges here and there in Quelch's rather bony person. And Trotter, the page, had brought him a message from the Head! Dr. Locke would be pleased if Mr. Quelch would step into his study.

Quelch knew what that meant—one of those happy, enjoyable discussions of some obscure passage in a classical author, probably Sophocles. Such a learned discussion was, to the Head and Quelch, what a yo-yo was to a fag in the Third. Chess was chess; but, on the other hand, Sophocles was Sophocles! Like Desdemona, Quelch perceived a divided duty.

The drizzle of rain decided it. He did not want a walk in the drizzle. A walk in the rain might mean that subdued twinges would turn into sharp pangs!

Quelch resolved to send a message to the vicarage, excusing himself, and spend a happy hour instead with the Head and dear old Sophocles.

The difficulty was, that owing to hard times, the vicarage was no longer on the telephone. It was necessary to find a messenger.

That was how Mr. Quelch came to remember Wharton.

He could send a servant with a message; but, naturally, he did not want to take a servant away from his duties if he could help it. A junior under detention would be glad to get out for a bike-ride—indeed, would be sure to jump at the chance. It would be a boon to that junior. A light drizzle of rain which brought rheumatic twinges to a middle-aged Form master was a trifle light as air to a junior in the Lower Fourth. Indeed, Mr. Quelch was aware that any Remove man would have preferred going out in a thunderstorm, a hurricane, or a typhoon, to sitting in the Form-room with Latin irregular verbs to keep him company!

It would be an act of kindness to Wharton. It might have some effect on the boy's sullen, obdurate spirit. And it would be convenient to Quelch. He considered the matter carefully, made up his mind, left his study, and walked away to the Remove-room.

Harry Wharton gave a slight start as his Form master entered. He wondered whether Quelch had the same suspicion as Loder—that he was going to "cut."

He rose to his feet, with a faintly sarcastic expression on his face. He supposed that Quelch had come to ascertain that he was safe, so to speak, before he went out.

"Wharton," said Mr. Quelch, "I have occasion to send a message to Mr. Lambe, at the vicarage."

He paused.

"If you would like to take the message, Wharton, you may leave your detention for the necessary time."

It was on Wharton's lips to refuse—as he had a right to do if he chose. But the chance of getting out of the dismal, solitary Form-room was too good to be missed.

"Very well, sir!" he said.

"Here is the note," said Mr. Quelch. "You will take it to the vicarage and hand it to Mr. Lambe."

"Yes, sir."

"You will return to your detention when you have delivered it; but," added Mr. Quelch, quite graciously, "you need not hurry."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Quelch rustled away. Two minutes later he was with the Head and Sophocles, and had forgotten Wharton's existence.

Harry's face was rather brighter as he left the Form-room, took his cap, and walked down to the bikeshed. He told himself sardonically that Quelch would not have let him off had it not suited him to do so.

Still, he was out of the Form-room, in the keen autumn air, and a bike ride was ever so much more agreeable than Latin verbs. So he was cheerful enough, as he wheeled his machine out of the bikeshed and rolled it down to the gate. A few drops of rain did not bother Wharton; he hardly noticed them. Besides, the shower was already clearing off.

"Wharton!"

His name was shouted as he wheeled his machine into the road.

He glanced back.

Loder of the Sixth was coming towards him at a trot.

Wharton stared at him for a moment, and then laughed. Loder, evidently, had been keeping an eye open.

Seeing Wharton wheeling his machine out, Loder had jumped to the conclusion that the detained junior had, after all, cut detention. It was a natural conclusion for Loder to jump to.

Loder's face had quite a gloating look as he came trotting after the junior. Quelch, he supposed, was gone out; that was why this cheeky young rascal had made the venture. Wharton was going to be marched in to the Head, with Loder's hand on his shoulder, and duly reported.

That was Loder's intention. But it was not carried out! Wharton, with a laugh, mounted his machine, and shot away down the road towards Friardale.

Loder stared after him.

"Wharton!" he shouted.

Wharton did not look back again. He rode on cheerily. Loder, it was plain, supposed that he had cut detention and gone out of bounds! Loder was welcome to think so, if he liked. If Loder was keen on reporting him to Quelch, Loder could get on with it. Heedless of the bully of the Sixth and all his works, Wharton pedalled cheerily on.

Loder stood for a few moments, staring. Then he hurried back and dragged his own machine out of the bikeshed.

Wharton had gone down Friardale Lane. From that lane there was a short cut through the woods to the Redclyffe

road. Loder jumped to the junior's intention at once. Wharton had waited in the Form-room till the coast was clear, then he had cut, and now he was on his way to join the Remove footballers!

With unexampled check, the young rascal was going to play football, while his unsuspecting Form master was playing chess! It was all clear, absolutely clear—to Loder of the Sixth! Nothing, indeed, could have been clearer!

Loder grimly resolved that he was going to put a stop to it. He would collar the young rascal, and march him back, if he had to follow him as far as Redclyffe School, if he had to walk him off the very football ground, under the staring eyes of astonished Redclyffians!

Loder rushed his machine out, mounted, and drove at the pedals.

Wharton was out of sight by that time, but he was soon sighted again as the Sixth-Former rode hard down the lane.

The captain of the Remove was riding at a leisurely pace. Quelch had graciously told him that he need not hurry; but in any case it was not likely that he would have hurried to get back to detention. The rain had already ceased to fall, and a gleam of sunshine came through the clouds. It was reflected in Wharton's face.

The thought of Loder's mistake made him smile, though it had not yet occurred to him that Loder, still in his mistake, was taking the trouble to pursue him and run him down. It was by chance that he glanced back at a bend in the lane, and caught sight of Loder of the Sixth coming on at a rush.

Loder waved a hand to him commandingly.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton.

He burst into a loud laugh—he could not help it! Loder's mistake was a natural one, in the circumstances; but it had its absurd side!

Immediately Wharton put on speed.

Loder was in chase, and it instantly occurred to his mind to give Loder a run for his money, as it were.

He shot away at top speed.

A junior on a junior's bike was hardly likely to equal, in a race, a Sixth-Former man on a big machine. But Wharton was a good rider, hard as nails, and he put all his beef into it.

He fairly whizzed.

After him came Loder, going strong.

If it had occurred to Loder that he was mistaken, which it did not, he would have dismissed the doubt now. The young scoundrel had spotted him, and was trying to escape! If that was not proof that Wharton was breaking bounds, Loder would have liked to know what proof was!

Certainly Loder could never have guessed that Wharton was bound for the vicarage, for he passed the end of the lane that led out of Friardale Lane to that building at top speed.

There was plenty of time to deliver the note. In the meantime, he was going to give Loder a run, dodge him somewhere, and leave him hunting.

"Stop!"

Wharton heard Loder's angry roar behind.

He did not heed it.

He drove at the pedals and flew. Suddenly he swept aside from the road into a bridle-path that led through the wood.

Loder shot on past the path. He jammed on his brakes, and swung round; but in those few moments Wharton had vanished into the wood.

He pedalled on swiftly for fifty yards

or so, dismounted, and dragged his machine into the thickets.

There, in deep cover, he waited, silent, with a cheery grin on his face.

There was a whirr of a bicycle on the bridle-path. Through the interstices in the thicket Wharton had a view of Loder coming up from the lane at high speed.

Loder shot onward.

Not for an instant did it occur to him that the junior had stopped and hunted cover. The junior was on his way to Redclyffe to play football—that was Loder's fixed conviction. Loder rode on hard, and vanished from the sight of the captain of the Remove.

Wharton chuckled.

How far Loder would ride before he discovered that he had been fooled, the junior did not know, or care! Having got rid of his pursuer, he wheeled his bike back to the bridle-path, remounted

at his best. Possibly he was rather keen to let the Remove men see that Wharton was not the only pebble on the beach. Anyhow, he was playing a great game, and the team backed him up well, and Redclyffe had their hands full.

Smithy, with the ball at his feet, was going up the field, and the Greyfriars crowd, who had come over to see the game, shouted and cheered. But the Redclyffe backs had marked Smithy, and he went over under a charge, and Fane, the Redclyffe skipper, captured the ball and got away with it—only to meet disaster from the Greyfriars halves.

There was rather a mix-up in the field, and five or six fellows were down, and when they got going again they looked as if they had been indulging in a mud-bath. Hard and fast the game went on, with narrow escapes on both sides, but no score for either so far.

There were more than a dozen Greyfriars juniors looking on, and twenty or thirty Redclyffe juniors. Their eyes were on the game, and none of them noticed a Greyfriars Sixth-Former striding towards the field, till he was close at hand. Frank Nugent, who was among the followers of the team, was the first to spot Gerald Loder.

He stared at him.

"My hat! That's Loder!" exclaimed Nugent. "What the thump does Loder want here?"

"Loder!" repeated Bolsover major, staring.

All eyes turned on Loder.

What on earth he had come over to Redclyffe for was a mystery to the Removites. The expression on his face, however, showed that his errand was not a pleasant one, whatever it was.

Loder, in fact, was in a towering rage.

He had lost Wharton on his way to Redclyffe! There were plenty of paths in the wood by which an elusive junior could dodge, and Loder had no doubt that Wharton had dodged by one of them, and then, having thrown his pursuer off the track, headed for Redclyffe.

After wasting a considerable amount of time hunting for the elusive Removite, Loder headed for Redclyffe himself. There was no chance now of capturing Wharton on his way! But at Redclyffe the capture was inevitable—if Wharton was playing football there!

Leaving his machine at the porter's lodge, Loder strode towards the junior football ground, where he could see the game going on. He came up with knitted brows.

"Nugent!" he snapped.

"Yes, Loder!" answered Frank, in wonder.

"Where's Wharton?"

"Wharton?" repeated Nugent blankly.

"Yes, Sharp!"

"Eh? At Greyfriars, I suppose," answered Frank.

"Don't tell lies!" snarled Loder. "He can't have got here without you seeing him!"

Nugent started.

"Do you mean to say that Wharton's cut detention?" he exclaimed, in dismay.

"You didn't know?" sneered Loder.

"I never knew anything about it."

"Yes—I dare say you'd like me to believe that! He's here, and I'm here to take him back!" said Loder grimly.

He stared at the players in the field. Which of them was which, so to speak, it was a little difficult to say, so much mud had they collected. But that one of the fellows in Greyfriars colours was Harry Wharton, Loder had not the slightest doubt. He could not have come over simply to watch the match—besides, he was not to be seen in the

S. E. Orchard, of 98, Crescent Road, Reading, Berks, gets one of this week's USEFUL POCKET KNIVES for sending in the following joke:—



Old Lady (to policeman): "Constable, I've had a cat burglar."

Policeman: "H'm! And how much did he take, ma'am?"

Old Lady: "'Arf a 'addick!"

Pile in with your efforts, chums, if you want to WIN A PRIZE WORTH HAVING!

it, and rode back to Friardale Lane. Ten minutes later he had delivered Mr. Quelch's note at the vicarage, and—still not hurrying, by any means—started to ride back to Greyfriars.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Loder Butts In!

"ON the ball!"
"Play up, Greyfriars!"
"Good old Smithy!"

The game had started at Redclyffe, and the first half was well under way. Much to the satisfaction of the footballers, the drizzle of rain had cleared off. The ground was rather muddy; the ball was very muddy; the footballers looked as if they had been mud-collecting. But that was all in the day's work, and nobody minded.

The Remove men missed their captain; but Herbert Vernon-Smith was filling his place well. The Bounder was

watching crowd. Therefore, he was in the field—if Loder was right!

Loder tramped across the touchline. "Loder," yelled Nugent, "you can't interrupt the game! I tell you Wharton's not here!"

Loder did not heed.

He did not care twopence whether he interrupted the game or not. The game was nothing to him. He was after Wharton.

A Redclyffe Sixth Form man was referee. He stared at Loder, his eyes almost bulging from his head at the sight of the stranger striding on the field and getting in the way of the players.

"Here, who are you? What do you want?" he called out. "Get out! See? Hook it, sharp!"

"Get off, Loder!" yelled the Greyfriars crowd angrily.

"Buzz off, Loder!"

"Don't play the goat!"

Heedless of the angry shouts, Loder strode up to the referee.

"One of these juniors has broken detention," he said. "I am here to take him back to Greyfriars!"

"Oh, my hat! You're interrupting the game."

"Hang the game!" retorted Loder. "I'm a Greyfriars prefect, and I've got my duty to do. And I say—Whoooooooooop!"

A rush of footballers interrupted Loder.

There was a crash, and Loder went over, and three or four muddy pairs of football boots passed over him, leaving him breathless. The Bounder was among those who rushed him down, and he contrived to land a boot on Loder's nose as he sprawled. What on earth Loder wanted there Smithy could not imagine; but he knew that he did not want Loder.

Loder sat up dizzily, streaming mud.

"Groooooogh!" he gurgled.

"On the ball!"

"Play up, you men!"

"Oooogh! Look here!" gasped Loder.

But the referee was gone.

Loder staggered to his feet.

Smithy & Co., heedless of him, were making a hot attack on the home goal. Loder dabbed mud from his eyes and nose, and blinked after them.

"Stop this!" he roared.

Nobody heeded him.

He rushed after the players. Smithy was kicking for goal. Loder did not care two straws if he robbed the Remove of a goal. The Remove did. Bob Cherry charged him just in time, catching Loder in flank, and once more the bully of the Sixth went spinning. Perhaps by accident, Bob Cherry sat on his face.

"Goal! Goal!"

"Bravo, Smithy!"

"Good old Bounder!"

"Goal!"

The Greyfriars fellows were roaring. The whistle pheepped, and Bob Cherry detached himself from Loder's face, and joined the rest going back to the centre of the field. Loder, in a breathless, dazed, and dizzy state, got on his feet somehow.

He tottered after the footballers, and clutched at the referee, who glared at him ferociously.

"Look here!" panted Loder.

"Cut off!" bawled the Redclyffe senior. "See? I don't care who you are, or what you want. See? If you've got anything to say, wait for half-time. See? Now shut up!"

"I tell you—"

"Take that man off the field!" bawled the Redclyffe man, and a dozen fellows

rushed on, grabbed Loder, and fairly yanked him away.

The whistle went, and the game went on. Loder of the Sixth, deposited in a gasping heap, gurgled and gasped. The players were muddy; but Loder was muddier than the muddiest—he was fairly smothered. Some of them were breathless; but none so breathless as Loder. He staggered up at last.

But he did not get on the field of play again. It was plain that he was not popular at Redclyffe. Loder did not venture to interrupt any more. At Greyfriars he was a prefect, invested with great powers; at Redclyffe, he was only some silly ass who had butted into a game of football. He had to wait for half-time. While he waited, he stared at the players with glittering eyes, trying to pick out Wharton among them. With so much mud about, several of the footballers were quite unrecognisable. Among those who were recognisable, he could not recognise Wharton. Still, the young rascal was there—he had no doubt about that. He waited.

The whistle went for half-time at last. Then Loder came on the scene again. With a black brow and savage eyes, he strode towards the Greyfriars men.

"I'm here for Wharton!" he snarled. "Which is Wharton?"

"Wharton's not here!" snapped Vernon-Smith.

"Isn't Wharton at Greyfriars?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"He's here!" roared Loder.

"He's not!" grunted Johnny Bull.

Loder, not to be convinced, stared at man after man. But the closest inspection failed to reveal Harry Wharton. He counted the men—he counted them again. There were eleven of them, and not one of them was Harry Wharton. Staring into a muddy face at close quarters, with savage and scrutinising eyes, could not turn that face into Wharton's face. It was borne in upon Loder's mind, at long last, that Wharton was not among the players on the Redclyffe ground.

He was quite at a loss.

"Well, are you through?" jeered the Bounder. "You've come here and made a fool of yourself—are you satisfied now?"

Loder did not reply. With a face crimson with mortification and rage under its splashes and daubs of mud, he strode away. A mocking titter from the footballers followed him. Every fellow on the ground was staring at him, most of them laughing. Loder's feelings could not have been expressed in any known language, as he tramped away for his bicycle. Muddy and untidy, and boiling with rage, Loder of the Sixth rode away from Redclyffe, leaving the football match going on merrily behind him.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

Not Nice for Loder!

MR. QUELCH pursed his lips, and frowned slightly.

Quelch was in the school library. After his chat with the Head, which had lasted a happy hour, the Remove master had turned his thoughts to that "History of Greyfriars," which occupied so much of his leisure. In a deep bay window of the library, Quelch sat at a table, poring over ancient black-lettered—weird old documents relating to the early days of Greyfriars School. Thus it was that his eyes fell on Loder of the

Sixth when he came across the quad, after his return from Redclyffe.

This term Quelch had had an unusually high opinion of Loder, whom he regarded as a very dutiful prefect. Still, he could not approve of a senior, a Sixth Form man, appearing in public with mud on his hands, his face, and his clothes. Loder, as he walked by at a distance from the bay window, looked as if he had had trouble with a mud-cart. He passed out of Quelch's view, however, and Quelch's attention returned to black-letter manuscripts, and he forgot Loder.

Loder went into the House.

He had scraped quite a lot of mud from his features; but they were still rather muddy. His nose had rather a pain in it, from contact with a football boot worn by Herbert Vernon-Smith. His rage had not diminished on his ride home. Rather it had improved, like wine, with keeping.

He had made a fool of himself at Redclyffe. Wharton had not been playing football there. He was there, of course, but he had got out of sight when a Greyfriars prefect appeared in the offing. Anyhow, he was out of bounds—far out of bounds, and vengeance was Loder's. He had a serious report to make—a very serious report. The young scoundrel would be flogged—there was comfort in that reflection.

Loder went in by the Sixth Form lobby, and made himself a little more presentable. He needed a wash and a brush down. Newly swept and garnished, as it were, he made his way to Mr. Quelch's study, to see whether Quelch had yet returned from the vicarage. He was still in blissful ignorance of the fact that Quelch had not gone out at all that damp afternoon.

Quelch was not in his study.

He could scarcely be, as he was sitting in the school library poring over ancient Latin documents.

However, Loder did not know that. He concluded that Quelch had not yet come back from the vicarage. It was not uncommon for some fascinating end-game to keep Quelch, when he played chess with Mr. Lambe.

Having drawn Quelch's study blank, Loder hiked away to the Head's. Wharton, as he had no doubt, was still careering gaily out of bounds on his bicycle, if he was not watching the game at Redclyffe after Loder had gone. It was not a matter that could wait.

He found Dr. Locke at home.

"Wharton?" said the Head gravely, at the first mention of that name. Wharton had been a good deal in the limelight of late, and it had recently been Dr. Locke's painful duty to administer a flogging to him.

"Yes, sir. I am sorry to say that the boy has cut detention, and gone out of bounds," said Loder. "I saw him going—"

"Bless my soul!"

"I followed him for some distance, but he was on his bicycle, and he got away from me, sir," said Loder. "I thought I had better report the matter."

"Quite so, Loder. But you had better go to Mr. Quelch—"

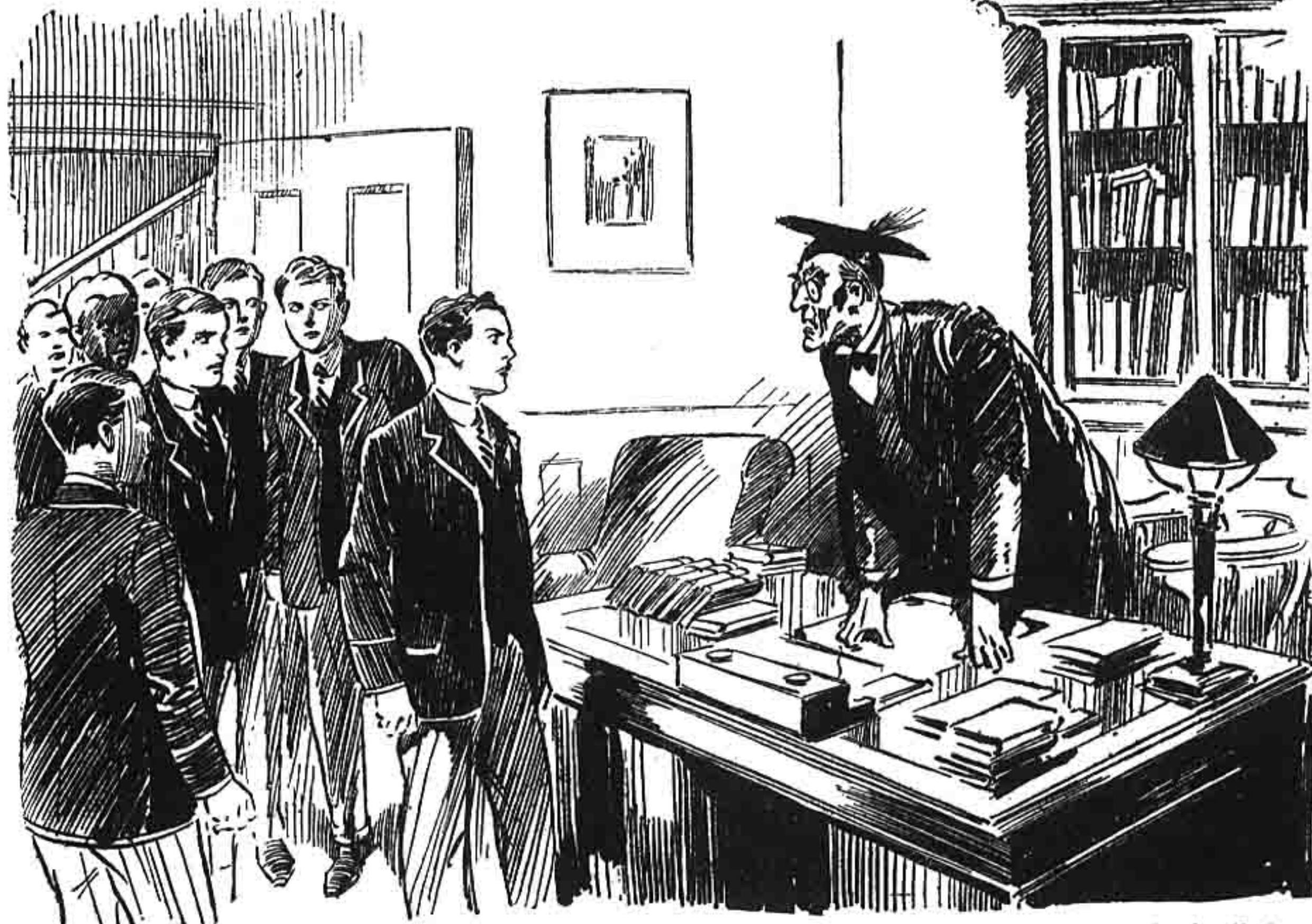
"He has gone out, sir."

"Dear me! This is a serious matter," said Dr. Locke. "Is the boy still out of bounds, Loder?"

"I presume so, sir; he was riding away as fast as he could on his bicycle when I saw him last."

"Did you not call to him, Loder?"

"I did, sir. He laughed," answered Loder. "He looked back and laughed in my face."



"It seems, sir," said Harry Wharton, calmly, "that the fellows want me to play football to-morrow. Considering that my detention was an act of injustice—" "What!" gasped Mr. Quelch. "Considering that my detention was entirely undeserved, I think you might let me off!" A dead silence followed the football captain's words.

"Bless my soul! What unparalleled impudence!" exclaimed Dr. Locke. "I shall deal most severely with this impudent boy. I shall be in my study until tea, Loder; bring the boy to me as soon as he returns."

"Very well, sir."

Loder left the Head, feeling satisfied. It could scarcely be anything short of a flogging for the young rascal of the Remove. Loder went to his own study, to comfort himself after his wild adventures, with a cigarette. Then he strolled out into the quad, to keep an eye open for Wharton. He did not, as a matter of fact, expect the truant to return till lock-up. Having taken the risk of breaking bounds, and having been spotted in his delinquency, it seemed fairly certain to Loder that Wharton would make an afternoon of it. He was, therefore, rather surprised as he strolled past the Form-room windows to see a handsome face looking out of the Remove-room. He stopped and stared up at Harry Wharton, who smiled.

"So you've got back!" said Loder grimly.

"Yes, thanks!" answered Harry. "I saw you come in, Loder! You looked rather muddy! Had a pleasant spin?" Loder set his lips.

"So you got in before I did?"

"Oh, yes, a long time before," answered Wharton carelessly.

"That won't save your bacon!" said Loder. "I'm going to take you to the Head now. Come out of the Form-room."

Loder went into the House again, and along to the door of the Remove-room. Wharton had not come out.

The prefect opened the door and

looked in. Harry Wharton had sat down to his task again, and was at work.

"Wharton! Follow me to the Head's study."

"I'm under detention, Loder," he said mildly.

"A lot you care about that!" said Loder. "You're to follow me at once. Sharp's the word."

"Very well." Wharton rose. "I suppose you'll explain to Mr. Quelch that you ordered me out of detention, Loder. He expects me to stay here till half-past five."

"Never mind that; come on."

Wharton followed Loder out. Loder strode on ahead, and the junior walked in his wake. They passed Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth on the way; and Wingate glanced rather grimly at the junior.

"In trouble again, what?" he asked.

"Not at all!" answered Wharton lightly.

"You're taking this kid to the Head, Loder?" asked the Greyfriars captain. "What's up?"

"Breaking detention," answered Loder.

"You young ass!" said Wingate. "Haven't you sense enough to chuck playing the goat. That means a flogging."

"But I haven't broken detention!" said Harry cheerfully. "That's only a little mistake of Loder's."

"Well, of all the lying young rotters!" exclaimed Loder, in genuine disgust. "Are you going to deny it to the Head, Wharton?"

"Certainly I am."

"I actually saw him out of bounds, Wingate, and followed him on my bike, till he dodged me," said Loder. "Now what do you think of him?"

Wingate looked very grave.

"You'd better be careful what you say to Dr. Locke, Wharton," he said. "You've been a cheeky young rascal this term; but I've never thought you a liar! Don't begin it."

"I'm not going to take Loder for a model, if that's what you mean, Wingate," answered the junior. "I haven't broken detention, and I am sure the Head will believe me when I tell him so."

"We shall see!" grinned Loder. "Follow me."

He stalked on, with Wharton at his heels, leaving the other two prefects looking puzzled. They arrived at the Head's study and Loder marched his victim in.

"Here is Wharton, sir! He has returned," he said.

Dr. Locke rose.

"You have returned, Wharton. I see! I need not waste words on you—you are perfectly aware of the penalty for breaking detention. I shall cane you with the utmost severity. Loder, kindly hand me my cane."

Loder kindly handed the Head his cane. Dr. Locke pointed to a chair with it.

"Bend over that chair, Wharton!"

"May I speak, sir?" asked Harry meekly.

"Certainly, if you have anything to say?" answered the Head sharply. "But I warn you not to waste my time. What have you to say?"

"I haven't broken detention, sir."

The Head lowered the cane, and stared at Wharton in astonishment over his glasses.

"Wharton! Do you venture to deny an explicit report made to me by a

prefect of the Sixth Form?" he exclaimed.

"If Loder has reported that I have broken detention, sir, I certainly do deny it!" answered Harry.

"Bless my soul! Loder, I presume that you are absolutely certain?"

"Absolutely, sir! I saw him and followed him outside the school walls," said Loder. "He is speaking falsely, sir. I am surprised that he should have the impudence to do so."

Loder undoubtedly was surprised. Bitterly as he detested the captain of the Remove, he would never have expected him to lie. His surprise and disgust showed in his face. There was a mocking glimmer in the junior's eyes. Loder, certainly, believed that he had broken detention! That was Loder's look-out. Wharton had no desire whatever to save him from making a fool of himself.

Dr. Locke pointed to the chair again. "Wharton! You need say no more! Bend over!"

"I did not break detention, sir! Loder is making a mistake!" said Wharton.

"A mistake is scarcely possible, as Loder states that he actually saw you and followed you, Wharton," said the Head sternly. "Do you venture to deny Loder's statement?"

"Oh! No, sir! I went out of the school. But I did not break detention. I was given leave."

Loder stared at him. The Head paused.

"Who gave you leave?" he demanded.

"My Form master, sir."

"Mr. Quelch gave you leave out of gates?" exclaimed the Head.

"Yes, sir!"

"I can scarcely believe this, Wharton."

"It is true, sir!" said Harry calmly. He did not add that Quelch had sent him on a message. He was not there to furnish information till he was asked for it.

The Head regarded him very doubtfully. Loder could hardly repress a derisive grin. He wondered whether the young scoundrel really fancied that he could get away with a "whopper" like this! Unaware that Quelch had had a special reason, Loder was not likely to believe that the Remove master had permitted the rebel of his Form to "cut."

"If you persist in this statement, Wharton—" said the Head at last.

"Certainly I do, sir."

"Then the matter must be referred to your Form master! Loder, you will report this matter to Mr. Quelch as soon as he returns. In the meantime, Wharton, you may return to your detention."

"Very well, sir."

There was a tap at the study door, and it opened. Henry Samuel Quelch, master of the Remove, stepped in. He had a black-letter manuscript in his hand, and quite an eager expression on his face. Rooting among the musty old documents in the library, it seemed that Quelch had made some interesting discovery.

"I hope I am not interrupting you, Dr. Locke! I was sure that you would like to see this manuscript, which I am certain—almost certain—must have been written by Ambrose himself, abbot of Greyfriars, in the twelfth century. His mention of King John's visit—" Mr. Quelch was evidently full of it, but he broke off at the sight of the senior and junior in the study. "Dear me! What is Wharton doing here? You should be in the Form-room, Wharton!"

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"Loder ordered me to come here, sir," said Harry.

"Indeed! I fail to see why."

"Mr. Quelch, you have come at an opportune moment," said the Head. "Loder, you may make your report to Mr. Quelch at once."

Loder gave the captain of the Remove a gloating look. If anybody had ever been "for" it, Wharton was for it now, in Loder's opinion. His brazen statement that his Form master had given him leave out of school was not likely to be upheld by Quelch—in Loder's opinion!

"Wharton has been out of bounds, sir," said Loder smoothly. "As you were gone out, sir, I reported the matter to the Head—"

"But I have not been out," said Mr. Quelch. "I have just come from the school library, Loder."

"Oh! I—I thought you were not yet back from the vicarage, sir—"

"I have not been to the vicarage this afternoon, Loder," said Mr. Quelch.

"Oh! Well, sir, I found Wharton going out of bounds, sir, on his bicycle,"

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said Loder. "As he refused to stop when I called to him, and indeed laughed in my face, I followed him, but he escaped. Otherwise, I should have brought him back to the school at once. He has had the audacity, sir, to tell Dr. Locke that you—you, sir—gave him leave out of detention! Such a falsehood—"

"What Wharton states is quite correct, Loder."

"Eh?"

"I sent Wharton down to Friardale with a message to the vicarage—"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. Loder fairly gaped.

"You—you—you sent Wharton to—to Fuf-Fuf-Friardale!" Loder babbled. He almost gabbled.

"Quite so!" said Mr. Quelch. "If you saw him, and supposed that he was breaking detention, Loder, you were in error."

Loder gurgled.

"Bless my soul!" repeated the Head.

"Wharton, you should have told Loder that you had been sent out by Mr. Quelch."

"He did not ask me, sir!"

The Head coughed.

"Well, well, you may go, Wharton," he said hastily.

Wharton went. He walked back to detention in the Remove room with a cheery smile on his face. It might have been supposed, from his look, that there was something quite attractive in detention!

Loder followed him from the study. Loder did not look cheery. He had had a long bike ride, he had been mauled and muddled on the football ground at Redclyffe, and he had wound up by making a complete fool of himself in the presence of the Remove master and the headmaster! Loder's face was so white and furious as he stalked away that every fellow he passed turned his head to look at him.

In his own study Loder lighted a cigarette, threw it unsmoked on the floor, and stamped on it. He roamed about the study like a caged tiger! That young sweep—that young rascal—that young scoundrel—had made a fool of him and beaten him all along the line, and Loder knew only too well that there would be roars of laughter in the Remove over his absurd adventures that afternoon! Somehow—anyhow—he was going to make that young villain squirm for it! The question was how—and Loder devoted long and bitter thought to the "how."

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Short Way With Fags!

COKER of the Fifth frowned.

"This won't do!" said Coker. Potter and Greene of the Fifth looked inquiringly at their great leader. Really, they did not know what Coker was driving at.

The three Fifth Form men were walking in the quad after class. Coker was talking—one of his usual, indeed, constant occupations. Potter and Greene were listening—any pal of Coker's had to do a great deal of listening. Conversation with Horace Coker was a one-way affair.

Coker was laying down the law on the subject of Soccer, and telling his friends for the umpteenth time what a benighted idiot Wingate was not to pick out the best footballer at Greyfriars for the First Eleven. The best footballer at Greyfriars was Horace Coker—according to Coker! Potter and Greene were used to it, and they bore it with fortitude, only hoping that Coker would leave off presently.

He left off quite suddenly, came to a halt, and announced that "This won't do!" in decided and emphatic tones.

"What?" yawned Potter.

"Look!"

Coker pointed. Where the path ran between the old elms and the school wall there was a secluded spot, screened from the school buildings and from the quad. Standing with his back to the path was a junior of the Remove. Having no eyes in the back of his head, Harry Wharton did not see the three seniors coming along. But Coker had a full view of him—and so had Potter and Greene, when Coker drew their attention to him.

Potter and Greene stared at Wharton's back. Why Coker was drawing their attention to it was a mystery. They had seen Wharton's back before, and the rest of him, if it came to that. It had absolutely no interest whatever for Potter and Greene. Apparently it had, for Horace Coker!

"That kid is gated!" said Coker.

"I believe I've heard so!" yawned Greene. "What about it?"

"LINESMAN CALLING!"



Our special sporting contributor offers all "Magnetites" the benefit of his knowledge and experience in first-class football. If you've a Soccer problem that wants solving, write to him at The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HAVE you, in the football sense, "one leg and a swinger?" That sounds a personal question, and I put it to my readers because it is raised by one of my correspondents this week. The phrase, "one leg and a swinger," is one often used by the real footballers—the fellows in the top class that is. When they come up against an opponent who has only one foot for ball-kicking purposes; they say he has one leg and a swinger!

I am afraid my correspondent is in something like the same street. He says that he finds real difficulty in making use of both feet as implements with which to kick the football, and he asks me what he should do about it.

I think my friend must learn to use both feet, and so must all other young players who want to get on.

If you are naturally left-footed, or naturally right-footed, there is only one way to get efficiency with the other foot—insist on using it.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT!

YOU know that Arsenal have recently introduced into their team a young full-back named Leslie Compton. He is even now only nineteen years of age. If I tell you a story about him it will show what I mean by practising with the other foot. This is the story as Compton told it to me. When he played football as a schoolboy he could not get the ball any distance with his left foot, so naturally he played at right-back for his school team. Leslie's father, however, knew a thing or two about football. He wrote to the master of the school and appealed to him to let the boy play at left-back instead of right-back. Young Compton didn't like it. He didn't feel nearly so much at home on

the left as on the right, and for a time he even used his right foot for kicking, although he should have used his left. Gradually, however, kicking strength came to the left leg with compulsory use, and now this Arsenal player can kick "like a mule" with either foot. The probability is that he would never have been a first-class footballer if he had not carried out his father's wishes by changing from right to left-back.

That is the way all young footballers who are "one footed" can improve their game, and get rid of this disability; by changing to the other side of the field.

If you are an outside-right, and are getting into the habit of using only the right foot, change over to the left wing for a spell.

ANOTHER ADVANTAGE.

PERSONALLY, I am all in favour of a change. It helps in other ways. For instance, a change of position helps the player to see the game from a different angle. Harry Hibbs, the Birmingham player, is a goalkeeper who has played for England—about the best in his position at the present day. And I don't suppose he will ever be other than a goalkeeper. It will probably surprise you to learn, however, that when I went on to the Birmingham practice ground during midweek some little time ago, I saw goalkeeper Hibbs among the forwards doing the things which forwards do.

A plain question as to why he was doing it brought from Hibbs a reply which I pass on because it has a value.

"I often do a bit of practising as a forward," he said, "because I think it helps me as a goalkeeper. By playing as a forward I get to know, much better than in any other way, what a forward is likely to do

in given circumstances. I learn, for instance, at which part of the goal he is most likely to shoot. And that knowledge helps me when I go back into goal."

We have to think about this game of football to get the best out of it.

SPEED'S THE THING!

WHAT is the best way of working up speed, which seems so necessary in modern football? is another question just to hand. There are various ways in which this can be done, and first of all I will tell you of the most novel method which has just been brought to my notice. Jack Whitley, the trainer of Chelsea, has introduced a lot of new ideas into the preparation of the players on the staff of Stamford Bridge, but he himself came across a new idea when he went with the Chelsea team to play in South America some time ago.

One morning, so Whitley told me, he went to a football ground in Uruguay when the local players were just starting on their day's training. Whitley had not been there more than a minute or two when he had a real surprise. The trainer came out of the dressing-room with a cockerel under each arm. And in due course he released these cockerels for the players to chase round the field.

You have probably seen cockerels running—or rather half-running, half-flying—at top speed, and noted how rapidly they can twist and turn. And the players of this Uruguay team were set to chase the cockerels as a very good way of learning to twist and turn while going at top speed. "I would not say definitely that it was the cockerel training which was responsible for it," said Whitley in finishing this story, "but those Uruguay players were about the fastest men I have ever seen in football boots. They reminded me of greased lightning."

It is improbable that any of my readers will be able to copy this idea from Uruguay, and I hardly recommend it myself. But here is one good way of practising twisting and turning, while keeping the football under control. It was a method used habitually by Billy Meredith, perhaps the greatest outside-right of all time, and certainly one of the fastest and closest dribblers.

He used to drive stakes into the practice ground at short intervals. Starting at one end, he would dribble in and out of these bits of wood as fast as he could go. And to check whether he was getting any quicker with this close dribbling he used to have a pal standing by with a stop-watch.

"Gated for the term for punching a prefect," said Coker. "I've told you fellows often that I don't think much of the prefects, or of the Sixth generally—"

"Very often!" murmured Potter.

"Too often!" sighed Greene.

"I've often felt jolly nearly driven to punching a prefect myself," went on Coker unheeding. "The way Wingate keeps me out of the footer—"

"Oh dear!" said Potter. Coker seemed to be beginning again when his friends hoped that he had left off.

"What did you say, Potter?"

"Oh! Nothing! Barge on, old bean!"

"But it's rather a different matter with fags," went on Coker. "Cheek of that sort, in fags, can't be too severely put down. That man Loder is rather a rank outsider—still, if the Head had asked me, I should have advised him to bunk a fag for punching even Loder."

"The Head didn't ask you?" inquired Potter, with a private wink at Greene.

"No," said Coker, impervious to sarcasm. "Hadn't gumption enough, if you come to that! Well, they gated this kid Wharton instead of bunking him. Now you can see what he's up to! It won't do!"

"Looks as if he's going to cut!" yawned Potter. "Poor little beast—I dare say he's fed-up with sticking in gates! I suppose all his friends have gone out! No bizney of ours."

"That's where you're wrong, Potter," explained Coker. "I'm not going to allow anything of the sort."

"You're not a prefect!" hinted Potter. "That's the Head's fault! If the beak had sense enough to appoint prefects from the Fifth Form I can tell you that things would go better in this school. Come on—we're stopping this!"

"Oh, let the kid alone!" urged Greene. "What the thump does it matter to us if he cuts?"

"I've told you to come on!" answered Coker, and he strode onward. Coker had no use for argument.

Coker of the Fifth had many weaknesses; but minding his own business had never been counted among them. It was no business of a Fifth Form man to keep Lower boys in order; but Coker made it his business. He had, as he frequently declared, a short way with fags!

He strode towards Wharton, and Potter and Greene followed more slowly. Wharton, just then, made a jump, and caught the top of the wall with his hands. There could be no doubt that he was going out of bounds. It was not surprising that a fellow under a permanent sentence of "gating" was fed-up with it and ready to take a little risk to get a run out of gates.

It was a sunny autumn afternoon, and after class Wharton was left on his own.

(Continued on page 16.)



(Continued from page 13.)

There was something like a rift in the Co.—Wharton had not been on the best of terms with his chums since Redclyffe day. The Co. had gone out on their bikes to run across to Highcliffe to see Courtenay and the Caterpillar there. Most of the Remove were out of gates till lock-up. At the present time, under the frown of the beaks, it was reckless of Wharton to think of breaking bounds, but he was in a reckless humour. Anyhow, he was going. But he had not counted on Coker, and Coker's infinite capacity for minding everybody's business but his own!

Catching the coping with his hands, Wharton drew himself up the wall. Unexpectedly a grasp was laid on one of his ankles.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

Holding on to the wall, he stared down. He rather expected to see Loder of the Sixth; he was well aware that Loder was keeping an embittered eye open for him. It was a relief to see a Fifth-Former.

"Let go, you silly owl!" exclaimed Wharton.

"Come down!" rapped Coker.

"Let go, idiot!"

"You're gated——"

"What bizney is that of yours, you howling ass?" snapped Wharton.

"That's the way these fags think they can talk to a senior!" said Coker to Potter and Greene. "That's the way the prefects let them carry on!"

"Will you let go, you dummy?" roared Wharton.

"Will you come down?" demanded Coker.

"No, ass! No, idiot! No, fathead!"

"Then I'll jolly well hook you down!" said Coker. "I'm not letting you break bounds, my beauty!"

And Coker lugged at the leg he had captured.

"Look here, Coker——" said Potter.

"Shut up, Potter!"

"For goodness' sake let the kid rip!" yapped Greene.

"Shut up, Greene!"

"Let go, you blithering idiot!" yelled Wharton, holding on to the top of the wall above while Coker dragged from below.

Instead of letting go, Coker fastened both hands on the captured ankle, and dragged with all his beef. Coker had lots of beef. What he lacked in brains was made up in brawn.

Wharton had one leg free. He kicked out with it.

"Yaroooop!" came in a tearful roar from Coker, as the heel of a boot clumped on his rugged nose.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Potter and Greene involuntarily. This incident seemed to strike Potter and Greene as funny.

It did not seem funny to Coker! His nose felt as if it had been pushed violently through his head. His nose was hurt! It was damaged! Its beauty was not spoiled, for it hadn't any! But it was shocked and pained.

Coker, infuriated, dragged furiously on the leg he had hold of. Beef did it!

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Wharton was forced to release the wall, and he came down with a crash.

It had not occurred to Coker's powerful brain that if he pulled a fellow down from a wall, standing under him, that fellow was very likely to land on him. He discovered how probable it was when it happened.

Wharton came down with a crash, fairly on Coker's head. The burly Fifth-Former crumpled up under him, and sprawled, spluttering.

"Oooooooooooooogh!" came from Coker, as he crumpled.

Coker landed on the earth, Wharton on Coker; and Coker, sandwiched between the Remove and the solid globe, felt like a pancake.

He gurgled horribly.

Wharton scrambled up. He planted a knee on Coker's waistcoat, and then a foot on Coker's face, and was up.

He leaped back to the wall.

But Coker was a sticker. Crumpled, crushed, breathless and dizzy, Coker was a sticker, and he stuck. He grabbed wildly at the leaping junior, and caught him again and dragged him over.

Thump!

Wharton's fist crashed on Coker's face. Coker's view of this affair was that he was generously doing the prefects' duties for them. Wharton's view was that a meddling ass was butting into what did not concern him. He thumped fiercely to make Coker let go.

"Oooh! Oh, my hat! Lend a hand, you gaping fools!" roared Coker, as the captain of the Remove sprawled over him, thumping.

Potter and Greene lent a hand. They seized Wharton to drag him off Coker. Potter yelled as he caught a fierce jab with his eye; Greene spluttered as an elbow jammed under his chin. The junior was rather like a wildcat to handle.

So far, Potter and Greene had only desired that Coker would mind his own business. But they were getting excited now. A jab in the eye, and a jam under the chin had deplorable effects on their tempers. They collared Wharton right and left, unceremoniously, and in spite of his fierce resistance he was held by the two seniors, while Coker scrambled up gasping.

"Oooh!" said Coker, rubbing his nose. "Ow! Wow! Cheeky little beast! Punching a Fifth Form man, by Jove! Woooh!"

"Let me go, you meddling fools!" panted Wharton.

"Hold him!" said Coker. "I've a jolly good mind to give him a thundering good hiding!" He grasped Wharton's collar. "Now, you cheeky young scoundrel, you're going out of bounds, are you?"

"Yes, you dunderheaded dummy!"

"Well, I say you're not!" said Coker. "Will you go straight back to the House and give me your word to stay there?"

"No, thickhead!"

"Keep him safe!" said Coker. "Pull his ears if he wriggles."

"Ow! Leggo! Wow!"

"We can't take him to his Form master," said Coker thoughtfully. "We can't give the cheeky little beast away to the beaks. But I'm not allowing him to break bounds, of course. Keep still, Wharton! Pull his ears again!"

"Ow!" gasped Wharton.

"Bring him along," said Coker.

"Look here, let's kick him and let him out!" suggested Potter.

"I said bring him along."

Coker led the way, and Wharton, in the midst of the three, had to follow. It was two hours to lock-up, and it was obvious that as soon as Wharton was let go, he would be over the wall in a

twinkling. Coker of the Fifth could not keep him under his personal supervision for two hours. But Coker's uncommon intellect had thought out a way. It was to Gosling's woodshed that the recalcitrant junior was led. The key was in the door, and Coker opened it.

"Chuck him in!" he said.

"But——" gasped Greene.

"I said chuck him in!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Wharton was "chucked" in. He sprawled headlong in the woodshed. Coker drew the door shut, and turned the key. He stepped to the window, closed the wooden shutter over it, and fastened it. Then he gave his astonished friends a triumphant look.

"What about that?" he asked.

Potter and Greene could only stare.

"Safe, what?" smiled Coker. "I've a short way with fags! One of you fellows can trot along before lock-up and let him out. I may not have time myself."

"Oh!" said Potter and Greene.

Coker & Co. walked away.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Revenge!

"WHOOOP!"

It was Mr. Prout, master of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars, who uttered that sudden and remarkable ejaculation. He uttered it at the top of his voice.

Mr. Quelch, who was walking with the Fifth Form master, jumped.

Quelch was not given to jumping. But such a sudden and amazing roar from a portly Form master like Prout, was enough to make any man jump.

The two masters were walking slowly and majestically, by the path through the thick coppice that lay between the river and the road by the school gates. They had walked up the river after class, and now they were walking back. Quelch, who was a good walker, was accommodating his pace to the slower pace of Prout, who had more weight to carry. Then, all of a sudden, Prout roared.

"Whoooo! Good gad! Ow! Wow! Whooop!" roared Prout.

He clasped a hand to his plump and ruddy cheek.

"My dear Prout!" exclaimed Quelch, in amazement.

"Whoooooop! Oh! I have been struck!"

"Struck!" repeated Quelch.

"I have been struck—I am hurt—a stone——"

"But what—— Yarooooooop!" yelled Mr. Quelch, as suddenly as Prout, and he leaped clear of the footpath.

Something had struck him.

It struck him hard, catching him under the chin.

He understood now why Prout had roared.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Quelch, rubbing his chin. "Some—some—some rascal—some scoundrel—some wretch—is—is—is using a catapult!"

That was it!

Each of the masters, in turn, had been struck by a stone from a catapult; and both of them were hurt! A bright red spot showed on Prout's plump cheek; another on Quelch's chin!

"Some dastard!" gasped Prout.

"Some iniquitous ruffian!" panted Quelch.

There was a sound of hurried rustling in the coppice! Whoever it was that had catapulted the two masters, was in prompt retreat.

"Follow me, Prout!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, and he rushed into the trees, Prout lumbered after him.

Many of the trees were leafless, but there were masses of evergreens that afforded ample cover. The two elderly gentlemen had little chance of spotting the rascal who had catapulted them, and so promptly retreated. In fact, they had no chance at all. But if they did not spot the catapult, they spotted the catapult. They reached the spot whence the shots had come, and, on the earth, plain to the view, was a catapult—and a school cap lying beside it. But the catapult had vanished into space.

"A Greyfriars cap!" gasped Prout, staring at it.

"Goodness gracious! Then it was a Greyfriars boy!"

"Undoubtedly."

The two masters gazed at the cap, and at one another. Apparently, in his hurried retreat, the rascal had dropped his catapult and lost his cap, and had not dared to stay to recover either. Anyhow, he had vanished unseen, and the catapult and the cap remained.

There was something like horror in the faces of the two Form masters. Catapulting was not only dangerous, it was not only a malicious and dastardly form of attack, but it was definitely against the law. Not for a moment would it have occurred to Quelch or Prout that a Greyfriars boy could be guilty of such an action. But the school cap spoke for itself.

"This is—is—is almost incredible, Quelch," said Prout at last. "A Greyfriars boy! Can you believe it?"

"I could not believe it, sir, but we must accept the evidence of our own eyes," said Mr. Quelch.

His gimlet eye gleamed at the cap. "Fortunately, it will be easy to discover the young rascal!" he said.

"Very fortunately!" agreed Prout.

Mr. Quelch picked up the cap. It was an invariable rule at Greyfriars that a fellow's name should be written in his hat. The cap left behind by the unknown rascal was, therefore, an unmistakable clue to his identity. Mr. Quelch turned the cap over in his hands and gave a violent start as he read the name in it.

"H. Wharton!"

Mr. Quelch stood looking at that name with a stony gaze.

"Wharton!" said Mr. Prout. "A boy of your Form, Quelch!"

Quelch did not answer. He could not; the fierce anger that burned in his breast made him incapable of speech! A boy in his Form had been guilty of this act of ruffianism—dangerous ruffianism. It was an assault upon members of the staff—an attack on two masters of Greyfriars! And it was a boy in his Form who was guilty!

Wharton—the rebel of the Remove—the worst boy in the Form! He had fallen to this! From insolence, from rebelliousness, from sulky defiance, he had progressed—to this! Each of the masters had been struck; but Quelch had no doubt that both shots had been intended for him! Plainly it was an act of dastardly revenge on the part of a junior justly punished.

"Good heavens!" breathed Quelch at last.

"Iniquitous!" said Prout. "Unheard-of! Unparalleled! Fortunately there is no doubt of the offender."

"None!" said Mr. Quelch.

"A wicked, revengeful boy!" said Prout. "This boy Wharton is the boy who was flogged hardly more than a week ago for assaulting a prefect of the Sixth Form! I understand he is gated for the term—"

"Quite so!"

"Obviously, he is out of bounds, or he could not—"

"Obviously!" said Quelch bitterly.

"As the boy is in your Form, Quelch, I leave the matter in your hands," said Prout, with dignity. "But I am bound to point out that such a young ruffian—such an iniquitous young rascal—is out of place at Greyfriars!"

"I fully agree with you," said Quelch.

"No doubt you will point out to the Head—"

"I shall report this matter to the Head, sir, and request him to expel Wharton from the school on the instant. If the boy should be suffered to remain at Greyfriars after this, I should resign my position, sir, in the school, and leave Greyfriars myself. But I have no doubt—no doubt at all—that Dr. Locke will relieve the school of this young rascal's presence without an hour's delay."

The two masters returned to the path, and walked on to the school. Mr. Prout rubbed the bruise on his cheek as he went. Quelch's brow was black and bitter. All his antipathy, all his dislike, of the rebel of his Form, was concentrated now in a bitter determination. Wharton had escaped expulsion once, very narrowly. He should not escape again. What he had done now was inexpiable; a reformatory, rather than a Public school, was the proper place for such a rascal. Quelch's determination was fixed.

Many glances were turned on the two masters as they walked across the quad to the House. The most careless eye could see that something had happened. Wingate was in the quad, and Mr. Quelch stopped to speak to him.

"Wingate! Wharton, of my Form, is out of bounds. He has assaulted Mr. Prout and myself with a catapult. Will you pass word among the prefects that he is to be brought to the Head as soon as he returns?"

"Certainly, sir."

A dozen fellows had heard Mr. Quelch's words. There was a buzz of excitement as the masters passed into the House and went to Dr. Locke's study. Many eyes had seen the red spots where the stones from the catapult had struck. It was not yet near lock-up, and plenty of fellows were still out of gates; but all the fellows in the school were soon buzzing with the startling news.

"Wharton's done it now, and no mistake!" said Skinner of the Remove.

"It's the sack!" said Temple of the Fourth.

"Can't be anything else!" said Skinner, with a whistle. "The man's been asking for it all this term—now he's getting it!"

"I fancied he was out of bounds," said Billy Bunter. "I've been looking for him, and I couldn't find him anywhere. I was going to ask him to cash a postal order for me, you know."

"Blessed if I understand it," said Peter Todd. "Wharton's up against Quelch; but I'd never have believed that he would catapult a man. It's too beastly rotten!"

"I suppose Quelch knows, as he said so!" remarked Snoop.

"He doesn't!" said Lord Maul-everer.

"Eh?"

"Quelch has made a mistake," said

Maul, shaking his head. "You see, if a thing's impossible, it doesn't happen. Wharton's a bit of a hot-headed ass, and he's got his rag out, but he wouldn't play a trick like that! They've got it wrong somehow."

"Fathead!" said Skinner. "Quelch has gone in to the Head about it. Think he would do that if he wasn't certain?"

"Believe me, Wharton didn't do it!"

"Oh, you're an ass! Where's Wharton now?" asked Skinner. "Nobody seems to have seen him since class. He's gated, but he's not on view. He must be out of bounds."

"I say, you fellows, I jolly well knew he was out of bounds!" squeaked Billy Bunter. "I've looked for him everywhere."

"I dare say he's out of bounds," agreed Lord Maul-everer. "I fancy I should cut sometimes myself if I were gated for the term. But he never catapulted Quelch!"

"Bow-wow!"

Lord Maul-everer was alone in that belief. It was simply incredible that Quelch should make such a statement without positive proof. And there seemed no doubt that Wharton was out of bounds. Gated, he should have been in the school; but fellows who looked for him—and a large number did look—failed to find any sign of him.

Coker & Co., of the Fifth, certainly could have let some light in on the subject; but Coker & Co., in those moments, were tea-ing at the bun-shop in Courtfield, and quite unaware of the excitement reigning at Greyfriars. Fellows hunted up and down the school for Harry Wharton—and those who wished him well hoped that he would be found within bounds. But he was not found.

Loder of the Sixth strolled in at the gates of Greyfriars, and glanced round at excited faces.

"Anything up?" he asked.

"I should jolly well say so!" answered Hilton of the Fifth. "Young Wharton—"

"Wharton! That Remove kid?" said Loder. "Up to something again?"

"Yes, rather! He's done it this time."

Four or five voices spoke at once, telling Loder what had happened. He whistled.

"Well, that's the limit!" he said. "The jolly old limit! I suppose it's certain that he's out of bounds?"

"No doubt about that," said Hilton. "He's been searched for everywhere—and it seems that some fellows missed him just after class, too."


Loder strolled on to the House. He went to his own study and shut the door. His eyes were gleaming. He had not needed telling that Wharton was out of bounds. He had looked for Wharton himself, carefully and sedulously, and satisfied himself that the junior was not in the school, before he had hidden himself in the coppice, with a catapult and a stolen cap, to wait for Mr. Quelch to come back from his walk! The junior he hated had fooled him, punched him,

(Continued on next page.)

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beaten him all along the line; but it was Loder's turn now—and there was not a spark of remorse in the hard heart of the blackguard of Greyfriars!

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Maully Asks for It!

I SAY, you fellows!" Bunter was fairly bursting with it.

The Co. came back from Highcliffe, put up their machines, and walked to the House, in happy ignorance of the thrilling news that awaited them.

"I say!" Bunter spluttered. "Heard about Wharton?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What about Wharton?" asked Bob Cherry.

A quick look of distress appeared for a moment on Frank Nugent's face. He was never surprised, in these days, to hear that his wayward chum was in trouble.

"At it again, what?" asked Johnny Bull, with grim sarcasm. "What is it this time?"

"I say, you fellows, he's catapulted Quelch—" gasped Bunter.

"Rats!" grunted Bob Cherry.

"That's a whopper!" growled Johnny Bull.

"The whopperfulness is terrific, my esteemed and idiotic Bunter!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The kickfulness is the proper caper! Let us kick the absurd Bunter preposterously, my worthy chums!"

"Here, I say, you fellows, chuck it!" exclaimed Bunter, in alarm. "I say, it's true! All the school knows! The perfects are looking for Wharton to come in! Quelch is with the Head! He came in in a fearful rage, with old Prout! Grinding his teeth—"

"What's happened, you fat chump?" snapped Frank Nugent. "Here, Toddy, old man, has anything happened?"

"Oh, really, Nugent! I'm telling you—"

"Shut up, Bunter! Yes, I'm afraid Wharton's for it this time," said Peter Todd. "If he's done what they think, he's getting the boot, and jolly well deserves it, too! Maully thinks he hasn't."

"But what—" exclaimed Bob.

"Quelch and Prout were catapulted in the coppice by the river, so I hear. They say Wharton did it."

"Did they see him?" exclaimed Frank.

"I don't know. They didn't bag him, if they saw him. Quelch had a cap in his hand—may have grabbed his cap off—"

"I say, you fellows, he did it!" said Billy Bunter. "When I found he was out of bounds I thought he'd gone over to Highcliffe after you fellows. But he was watching for Quelch all the time! Lying in wait, you know. Got the old Johnny right in the eye!"

"In the eye!" exclaimed Nugent, aghast.

"Knocked his eye right out, so I hear," answered Bunter, delighted to make an impression. "Blinded him in one eye—I think in both!"

"You lying toad!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You never know what might happen with a catapult," said Frank, his lips white. "Men have been blinded by catapults before now, and the fellows who did it sent to prison. Toddy, do you know—"

"Bunter's talking out of the back of his silly neck, old bean. I saw Quelch. He had a lump on his chin, that was all," answered Toddy.

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"I tell you he had an eye knocked out!" declared Bunter. "At least, Wharton got him in the— Whoop!" Bunter broke off with a roar as Bob Cherry planted a heavy foot on his tight trousers. "Wow! Beast! Wharrer you kicking me for? Yooop!"

The matter was bad enough, in the opinion of the Co. without Bunter's fanciful additions. At the best, it was a matter for the "sack," if Wharton was proved guilty. But if a catapult chanced to blind his victim it was a matter for a juvenile prison for the offender. The mere suggestion was almost blood-curdling, and with one accord the Co. fell on Bunter, and kicked him for his happy suggestion. The Owl of the Remove fled, yelling.

The Co. went into the Rag, where they found an excited crowd. More and more fellows were coming in now, as lock-up drew near; and every fellow who came in heard the startling news at once. Greyfriars buzzed with it from end to end.

All over the school fellows asked where Wharton was. He was not to be seen; apparently he was not coming in till lock-up. Some fellows wondered whether he would come in then. After what he had done he must know it was the "sack"—and he might lack the nerve to face it.

"Cleared off home, as likely as not!" Skinner declared. "They'd pack him off by the first train,—anyhow."

"Rot!" said Lord Mauleverer.

Maully was holding calmly to his opinion that Wharton had not "done it."

"I say, you fellows, Maully's a silly ass!" said Bunter. "Of course, Wharton did it. Quelch knows he did."

"Not a bit!" said Lord Mauleverer cheerfully. "Don't you worry, you men," he added to the Co. "It's all a mistake; it will come out that Wharton never did it."

"And how the thump do you know?" demanded the Bounder.

"I know Wharton, old bean!" answered Maully.

"Well, we all know that Wharton has his knife into Quelch!" said Bolsover major. "And I heard Quelch tell Wingate what he had done."

"A little error of Quelch's," answered Maully. "Wharton would never do such a rotten thing. Quelch is mistaken."

"Shush!" murmured Redwing, as an angular figure appeared in the doorway of the Rag, and a pair of gimlet eyes glittered in.

"Has Wharton returned?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"He's not here, sir!" answered Bob.

"Mauleverer!"

"Yaas, sir?"

"I heard your remark. How dare you make such a remark?"

Maully had certainly not intended his Form master to hear him. But he faced Mr. Quelch with his accustomed calm equanimity.

"I was sayin' what I thought, sir!" he answered. "I'm absolutely certain that Wharton never did it, sir!"

"Are you aware, Mauleverer, that I have reported Wharton to his headmaster for a dastardly attack on Mr. Prout and myself?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Then what do you mean, Mauleverer?" inquired Mr. Quelch, with a dangerous glint in his gimlet eyes. "Do you dare to infer that I should make such a report, involving the expulsion of a Greyfriars junior, without being absolutely certain of the facts?"

"I think you're mistaken, sir!"

"You think I am mistaken!" repeated Mr. Quelch, in measured tones,

the expression on his angular countenance growing simply terrific.

"Yaas, sir."

Mauleverer made that answer calmly in the midst of a dead silence. Mr. Quelch appeared about to choke.

"Linley!" he gasped.

"Yes, sir?" said the new head boy of the Remove.

"Go to my study and fetch my cane!"

Mark Linley hesitated a moment, but he had no choice but to obey. He left the Rag and went for the cane.

"Mauleverer," said Mr. Quelch, his voice trembling with anger and indignation. "I have reported Wharton to Dr. Locke! I have demanded his instant expulsion from the school. If I took this step, Mauleverer, while a shadow of doubt existed, I should be unworthy to hold the position of a Form master at Greyfriars! Your words can, therefore, only be intended as an insult to me personally. I shall punish you severely, Mauleverer!"

"Very well, sir," answered Mauleverer quietly. "I did not mean—"

"That is enough!"

"Anybody might be mistaken, sir—"

"To make a mistake, Mauleverer, in a matter involving the expulsion of a schoolboy would prove a master unworthy of his trust. That is the opinion you are pleased to express of your Form master!"

"Not at all, sir!" said Lord Mauleverer earnestly. "I never—"

"Silence!"

Mark Linley came back, and Mr. Quelch took the cane from him. He pointed to the table in the Rag with it.

"You will bend over, Mauleverer!"

"But, sir, I really never meant—"

"Bend over!" said Mr. Quelch, in a voice like unto that of the Great Huge Bear.

Lord Mauleverer sighed, and bent over. The crowd of fellows in the Rag looked on in silence as the Remove master laid on the cane.

He laid it on hard! Mr. Quelch was intensely angry, and he felt that he had reason to be. And the juniors, though they sympathised with poor Maully, could not help thinking that he had asked for it. To express the opinion that a master had made a "mistake" in so awfully serious a matter was altogether too thick.

Maully uttered six successive yells as the six strokes fell; the last being a yell like that of a Red Indian on the war-path.

Mr. Quelch tucked the cane under his arm, with a grim frown.

"I trust, Mauleverer, that that will be a warning to you!" he rapped.

"Oh!" gasped Maully. "Yaas! Wow!"

Mr. Quelch walked away. Lord Mauleverer was left twisting in anguish, and looking as if he was trying to tie himself into a knot.

"Poor old Maully!" said Bob Cherry.

"Poor old bean! Feel bad?"

"Ow! Wow! Yaas! Wow!"

"The poorfulness of the esteemed old Maully is terrific! But the askfulness was preposterous!"

"Ow! Wow! Yow!"

It was some minutes before the hapless Mauleverer recovered something of his noble and aristocratic calm. Quelch had laid on that "six" not wisely, but too well.

"It's rather rotten, you men," said Maully. "Poor old Quelch!"

"Eh?"

"Can't help feelin' sorry for the man!" said Mauleverer, shaking his head.

"My only hat!" said the Bounder, staring at him. "What the jolly old thump do you feel sorry for Quelch for?"



"Hang interrupting the game!" roared Loder. "I'm a Greyfriars prefect, and I've got my duty to do! And I say—whoooooop!" A rush of footballers interrupted the prefect. There was a crash, and Loder went over, and three or four muddy pairs of football boots passed over him, leaving him breathless.

"Think what an awful ass he will look when it comes out that he's made a mistake, and whopped me for merely mentionin' the fact!" answered Maul-everer.

"Oh crikey!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lord Mauleverer evidently was still of his own opinion. But he realised that he had better not let Quelch hear him say so.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

For It!

"BY Jove!" exclaimed Coker of the Fifth.

"Eh?" said Potter.

"What?" said Greene.

"That kid in the woodshed! Blessed if I hadn't forgotten him!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Coker & Co. had tea'd at the bunshop at Courtfield. It was one of Coker's lavish spreads, and it rewarded Potter and Greene even for having to listen to Coker talking football. Coker of the Fifth was not always popular even with his nearest and dearest pals. But at such times as this his friends felt an affectionate attachment for Coker. When Coker stood a spread, it was a royal spread. So it was not surprising that the three Fifth-Formers, thoroughly enjoying that spread, had forgotten the unimportant existence of so trivial an individual as a Lower Fourth junior.

They forgot Wharton, and did not remember him when they walked back to Greyfriars School and wedged in half a minute before Gosling locked the gates.

Walking to the House, Coker was talking football again, and it was not till the bell rang for calling-over that

he remembered the prisoner of the woodshed. Fellows were crowding towards Hall, and on many lips was the name of Harry Wharton, which recalled the existence of that junior to Coker's mind.

"No time to get down to the woodshed," said Coker. "Still, we can't let the kid cut call-over and get a whopping for it. I don't want to be late for call-over—it's rather bad form! You cut down to the woodshed, Greene."

"It doesn't matter if I'm late for call-over, I suppose?" asked William Greene, with overwhelming sarcasm.

"Exactly! It doesn't matter much what you do at any time, old fellow—nobody notices you, you know!" explained Coker. "It's rather different with a fellow like me! Cut off!"

Greene seemed at a loss for words. He stared at Coker, and then glared at him, and then walked away to Hall.

"What's the fathead up to?" asked Coker, staring after the wrathful and offended Greene. "I told him to go to the woodshed and let that kid out! Here, Greene!"

Greene disappeared.

"Is the fellow deaf or potty, or what?" asked Coker testily. "You cut down to the woodshed, Potter! Here, Potter, where are you going? I said cut down to the woodshed!"

But Potter was gone, too.

"Well, my hat!" said Coker.

Coker was puzzled, perplexed, and annoyed. But Potter and Greene were gone; and if anybody was to go down to the woodshed, evidently it had to be Coker himself. This was very irritating, and Coker was tempted to leave the cheeky fag to it. But Coker was a good-natured fellow. He had a short way with fags, but he was good-natured. He felt that it was not the

thing to get the kid a whopping for cutting call-over.

So he hurried out of the House and cut down to the woodshed. He had the key in his pocket, and he jerked it out as he ran. When he arrived at the woodshed he found Gosling there, with an extremely angry expression on his face. Gosling, apparently, had gone to his woodshed for something, and failed to get in. He was rapping angrily on the door.

"You young rip, you hopen this 'ere door!" he was calling out. "Wot I says is this 'ere—I'll report yer!"

"You old idiot!" came a still angrier voice from within. "The door's locked on the outside, you frabjous old frump!"

"Don't you tell me any fibs, Master Wharton! 'Ow can the door be locked on the houtside when the key ain't 'ere?"

"Coker of the Fifth has got it!" yelled Wharton. "I've been locked in here a couple of hours, you old ass! Why couldn't you come along before, you dummy? Get me out somehow, you fathead!"

"Wot I says is this 'ere—I've 'eard all about you," said Gosling. "And you're 'iding in this 'ere woodshed, you are, and if you don't come hout, I'll go straight to the 'Ead!"

"You can go to the Head, or go to Jericho, you silly ass!"

Coker arrived, breathless.

"It's all right, Gosling," he said. "I've got the key!"

"You!" ejaculated Gosling.

"Yes." Coker inserted the key in the lock. "I locked the cheeky young rascal in to keep him from breaking bounds. It's all right."

"My eye!" said Gosling. "Wot I says is this 'ere—"

Coker unlocked the door and threw it open. He grinned into the woodshed.

"You can come out, kid! You—Whoooooo-hooooop!"

Wharton came out! He came out like a bullet from a rifle! Two hours' solitary confinement in a woodshed had brought his temper up to boiling-point. He had longed and yearned for Coker to come back and release him, not so much for his liberty as for summary vengeance on the Fifth Form man who had a short way with fags. Wharton proceeded to demonstrate that it was possible also to have a short way with Fifth-Formers!

The instant the door was open he leaped.

A fist crashed into Coker's eye, and he staggered. Another fist crashed on his nose, and he sat down.

Then two hands grasped him and rolled him over.

Bang!

Coker's head smote the earth with a terrific smite.

"Yaroooh!"

Bang! Bang!

Coker hardly knew what was happening. But he knew that it was painful—awfully painful. He roared, and he bellowed.

"There, you meddling idiot!" gasped Wharton.

"Whooop!"

Bang!

"There, you silly chump!"

"Whooop!"

Coker clutched. Wharton jumped away and ran for the House. He could hear the bell ringing for call-over, and he had no time to lose. He sprinted hard and fast.

Horace Coker staggered up. He

clasped both hands to his head, and spluttered. Gosling gazed at him, with a crusty grin on his gnarled visage. Gosling seemed amused.

"Oooogh!" gasped Coker. "I'll pulverise him! Oooogh! I'll smash him! This is his—groogh—thanks for being let out! Wow! I'll spiflicate him! Oooooooh!"

Coker, gasping, with his head singing, started for the House. The bell had ceased to ring; all the fellows were in Hall when Coker arrived there. He squeezed in as Wingate of the Sixth was closing the big oak door, and the Greyfriars captain frowned and let him pass. His Form master, Prout, frowned as Coker went dizzily to his place. But Coker was heedless of frowns. There was a terrific ache in his bullet head; there was a pain in his eye, and another in his nose. Coker was not feeling good. He stood, gasping, among the Fifth, and did not even observe Potter and Greene grinning.

In the ranks of the Remove there was a buzz. Wharton had entered a minute before Coker and gone to his place. He was rather breathless, and it could be seen that he had been running. All eyes were turned on him, not only in the Remove, but all over the crowded Hall. Mr. Quelch's gimlet eye turned on him with a deadly glitter. Wharton was unaware of it. He was totally unconscious of the intense excitement reigning in the school on his account. He did not even know that he was supposed to have been out of bounds. But he realised that something was "on" from the looks of the fellows round him, and wondered what it was.

"Anything up?" he whispered to Nugent.

Frank could only stare.

"The upfulness is terrific, my

esteemed idiotic Wharton!" murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Well, what is it?" asked Harry.

"You don't know!" giggled Skinner. Wharton looked at him.

"No. How should I know? I haven't been in the House for a couple of hours. What's happened?"

"You have," grinned Skinner—"and Quelch!"

"What do you mean, you ass?"

"Silence!" came the deep voice of Prout, as the Head was seen to enter by the upper door. Dr. Locke was taking call-over in person that evening.

Mr. Quelch was seen to speak to the Head, though in a low voice that was not heard in Hall. Dr. Locke's glance immediately turned towards the Remove. It seemed to Wharton that it singled him out, though he could not imagine why.

A hard look came over his face. The expressions of the fellows round him told their own tale—a few, like Skinner, were grinning; most of them looked grave, many of them concerned. The faces of his chums were pictures of dismay. Wharton realised that there was trouble to come for him, though what it was he could not begin to guess. But his face hardened bitterly. He glanced at Mr. Quelch, caught his cold, steely look, and returned it with a stare of defiance. He had done nothing—nothing—but they were going to be down on him; he could see that!

"Looks as if I'm for it, Frank!" he muttered.

"Harry, old man—" muttered Nugent miserably.

"What do they make out that I've done now?" asked Wharton, with a sneer that was far from pleasant to see.

"You know what you've done, I suppose?" growled Johnny Bull.

"I've done nothing!"

Johnny Bull shrugged his shoulders.

"You must have been mad to do it!" muttered Bob.

"I've said that I've done nothing!" said Harry Wharton icily.

"What's the good of that? Quelch must have seen you."

"Quelch?" repeated Wharton.

"Anyhow, he's got proof—he must have—he caned Mauly for saying that he'd made a mistake—"

"Proof of what?" asked Wharton blankly.

"Will you be silent in the Remove?" came Mr. Quelch's voice. "If there is another whisper, I will cane the whole Form after call-over."

There was not another whisper.

Dr. Locke, in a deep voice, proceeded to call the roll. Every fellow at Greyfriars answered to his name; and when Wharton's clear, steady voice was heard to call "Adsum," every neck was craned to look at him. The colour burned in Wharton's cheeks, and a fierce light gleamed in his eyes. He could not guess what it was, but he knew that it was serious, whatever it was; so serious that he was the centre of the whole school's attention. He was not alarmed, but he was perplexed, and more angry than perplexed.

Silence followed the end of roll-call. But the signal was not given to dismiss. Through the silence came the acid voice of Mr. Quelch.

"Wharton! Step forward! Go to your headmaster!"

Wharton drew a deep breath.

With all the eyes of Greyfriars on him, he walked with a proud, firm step up the crowded Hall.



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THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Accused!

"WHARTON!" Dr. Locke's voice was very deep. His usually kind face was cold and grim. There was scorn in it, which stung Wharton like a lash. What had he done?

What was he supposed to have done? Facing the Head, he was conscious of the sea of eyes on him. He knew that there was condemnation, contempt, in many of the faces. He was accused of something—what, he could not imagine; but evidently everybody else knew, and it was something that was considered "rotten."

He threw up his head, his face firm, his lips set. He returned the cold, grim, scornful look of the headmaster with a steady stare. He was not, and would not be daunted.

"You are accused, Wharton," the Head's deep voice went on, "of an action disgraceful, not only to a Greyfriars boy, but to any boy—an action disgraceful and cowardly. The proof of this action seems complete; but if you have anything to say in your defence I will hear you. I will condemn no one unheard! Have you anything to say?"

Wharton's eyes glinted. "Only that I don't know anything about it, sir," he answered.

"Wharton!" "Perhaps you would be kind enough to tell me what I am accused of, sir?" said Wharton, with cool sarcasm. "Unless I know that, it is difficult to answer."

The Head stared at him. There was a low murmur in Hall!

"Sarc—to the Head!" murmured Skinner. "What a cheek!"

"What a neck!" whispered Snoop. "Jevver see such a cheeky young scoundrel?" Walker of the Sixth asked Loder.

Loder grinned. "Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Prout, glancing round. "Silence!"

"Wharton!" The Head was speaking. "Do you stand before me and tell me that you do not know of what you are accused?"

"Certainly, sir!" answered Harry calmly.

"Then I will tell you, Wharton. Clear as your guilt appears, you shall not be condemned unheard. You are accused of a vicious, cowardly, and malicious attack on your Form master."

Wharton stared in sheer bewilderment.

"A-an attack," he stuttered, "on Mr. Quelch?"

"Precisely! You used a catapult, and struck your Form master in the face with a missile, and Mr. Prout also——"

"I did nothing of the sort!"

"Take care what you say, Wharton!" Wharton looked round at Mr. Quelch and Prout. He now became aware of the burning red spots on the visages of those two gentlemen. Apparently, they had been struck by stones from a catapult. Why he was supposed to have used the weapon was a mystery to him—unless the "beaks" were determined to find him in fault with or without evidence.

His gaze returned to the Head. It was steady and fearless.

"I did not do it, sir! I can't guess why you should think I did! I've never done such a rotten thing."

"You deny having waylaid Mr. Quelch in the coppice near the river?"

"Certainly!"

"You deny having pelted him with a catapult, and fled?"

"Of course I do!"

"Mr. Quelch," said the Head, "pray speak."

The Remove master stepped towards him, with a cap in his hand. He held that article out towards Wharton.

"This is yours, Wharton?" he said.

Wharton looked at it, Mr. Quelch holding it so that he could see the name written within.

"Yes, it is mine," said Harry, in wonder. "It is not the cap I was wearing to-day, but it is mine."

"It is not the cap you were wearing to-day?" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"No, sir. I left my cap in the lobby as I came in. This one was in my box—at least, I left it there."

"Then how," said Mr. Quelch, coldly and contemptuously, "did it come to be lying in the coppice, beside the catapult, which was dropped by the person who assaulted Mr. Prout and myself?"

Wharton stared at him.

"It was not in the coppice," he answered.

"Wha-a-at?"

"It was not in the coppice," repeated Wharton steadily. "It cannot have been. That cap was left in my box

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in the House. Anyone who says that it was in the coppice is telling lies!"

Sensations in Hall!

Mr. Quelch turned almost green.

Wharton, of course, was unaware that it was Mr. Quelch himself who had picked up his cap in the coppice. His Form master had stated what seemed to him an impossibility.

"Wharton!" gasped the Head. "How dare you? I repeat, how dare you?"

Wharton's eyes flashed.

"I say that cap was not in the coppice!" he said, raising his voice. "I say that I left it in my box. I say that whoever says he found that cap in the coppice is telling lies!"

"Miserable boy!" exclaimed the Head. "It was your own Form master, Mr. Quelch, who found the cap!"

"Mr. Quelch?" exclaimed Wharton stupefied.

"You were not, perhaps, aware of that?" said Dr. Locke grimly.

"N-no — of — of course not!" stammered Wharton. "If Mr. Quelch says he found it in the coppice, of course it is true. But I don't know how it got there."

"You do not know?"

"No! How should I know?"

"How should you know?" repeated the Head. "In your haste to escape after assaulting your Form master, you left your cap and the catapult behind. Do you dare to deny it?"

"Of course I deny it, when it isn't true!" exclaimed Wharton passionately.

"I've been nowhere near the coppice.

How could I, when I am gated, and have not been outside the school walls?"

Another sensation in Hall!

"Jevver hear anything like it?" whispered Skinner, in the Remove.

"Hardly ever!" grinned the Bounder.

"I will hear no more of this, Wharton," said the Head sternly. "You have the audacity—the effrontery—to deny that you have been out of school bounds, when the whole school has been searched for you for more than an hour, and you could not be found!"

"Certainly," said Harry coolly. He almost smiled.

"I will hear no more. You——"

"You are bound to hear me, sir!" interrupted Wharton.

"What? What?"

"I have not been outside the walls of Greyfriars to-day. I can prove it," said the captain of the Remove.

"This passes all patience," said Mr. Quelch. "Dr. Locke, this boy's unscrupulous falsehoods——"

"Dr. Locke will hear me, if you will not, sir!" said Harry Wharton steadily. "I know that my headmaster will see justice done."

"I must hear the boy, Mr. Quelch!" said the Head. "Wharton, you shall have every chance, before I pronounce sentence of expulsion. You declare that you have not been outside the walls of the school?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Yet for more than an hour the school was searched for you, and you could not be found. You pretend that you can explain this?"

"Easily, sir!"

"Very well, I will hear you! Where have you been?"

"In the woodshed."

"The—the what?"

"The woodshed," said Harry, with the utmost calmness, almost amused by the amazement in the faces round him.

"Are you in your senses?" exclaimed the Head. "Do you dare to expect me to believe that you passed a whole hour in the woodshed?"

"I passed two whole hours in the woodshed," answered Harry.

The Greyfriars fellows stared at one another. Such a statement was enough to take their breath away. It could only meet with utter derision. But there were three fellows who did not look derisive. They were Coker, Potter, and Greene, of the Fifth Form.

"You had better be silent, Wharton!" snapped Mr. Quelch. "Such absurd and palpable falsehoods——"

"I will not be silent!" said Harry Wharton. "I repeat that I have passed the last two hours in the woodshed, and can prove it!"

"I will hear you," said Dr. Locke. "Your statement is absolutely incredible, but you shall be heard to the end. For what reason, Wharton, if you were in the building to which you refer, were you there?"

"A good reason, sir. I was locked in, and could not get out."

"Locked in?" repeated the Head.

"Yes, sir."

"This wretched boy has condemned himself out of his own mouth," said Mr. Quelch grimly. "If he was locked in the shed, as he states, someone must have locked him in. Let him give that person's name."

"That does it!" murmured Skinner.

"Wharton, if you were, as you state, locked in the woodshed, who locked you in?" demanded the Head.

"Coker, of the Fifth Form, sir; and he will tell you so!" answered Harry Wharton.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Cleared—by Coker!

A DEAD silence followed Wharton's reply.

The whole school stared. That the junior had been locked in the woodshed at the time that he was being searched for and supposed to be out of bounds, no one believed—except three of the Fifth! It seemed to all Greyfriars the lamest, most palpable falsehood that any fellow in a scrape could possibly have told. So the mention of Coker's name came as a climax of surprise. Coker was there, in his place in the Fifth. He had only to be called upon to speak. It really seemed as if the accused junior must have lost his senses; unless, indeed, he was telling the truth. Some of the fellows began to wonder whether, after all, he was.

Mr. Quelch, thunderstruck, gazed at Wharton, speechless. It was several long moments before the Head found his voice.

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Locke in sheer astonishment. "You—you—you say that—that Coker of the Fifth Form locked you in the woodshed, Wharton?"

"Yes, sir."

"At what time?"

"About half an hour after class."

"You say that you have been there ever since?"

"Yes, sir; I couldn't get out. Coker fastened the shutter over the window after locking the door."

"It is difficult to believe that a Fifth Form senior boy can have played such a prank. But Coker is here to speak for himself. Mr. Prout, send Coker to me."

Prout signed to Horace Coker, who came up the Hall with an extraordinary expression on his rugged face.

All eyes turned on Coker.

"Coker," said the Head, "you have heard this junior's statement?"

"Yes, sir," answered Coker.

"Do you corroborate it?"

"Yes, sir. You see, I chucked him into the woodshed for his own good, really," explained Coker. "I locked him in."

"For what reason, Coker, did you play this amazing, this extraordinary prank?" exclaimed the Head.

"Prank, sir!" Coker stared. "It wasn't a prank! I hope I'm not the fellow to play pranks like a silly fag!" Coker was indignant. "Wharton knows why I locked him in! The young ass was going to break bounds, and I jolly well stopped him!"

"You—you stopped Wharton when he was about to go out of school bounds?"

"Yes, sir," said Coker cheerfully.

"As a senior, I considered that it was up to me. I wasn't going to let a Remove fag be cheeky."

"At what time did this happen, Coker? Was it before the attack on Mr. Quelch in the coppice?"

"I don't know anything about that, sir. I went down to Courtfield with Potter and Greene after locking Wharton in. I hadn't heard about Mr. Quelch, sir, till I heard you here. But it was half an hour after class that I locked Wharton in—more than two hours ago."

"You released Wharton afterwards, I presume?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long ago was that?"

"About ten minutes, I suppose. I forgot about him, but I remembered that he was in the woodshed when the

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bell was ringing for call-over. So I went and let him out."

"He was still there?"

"Eh! Oh, yes! He couldn't get out, you see, sir! I took jolly good care of that! I wasn't going to let the young ass break bounds."

Silence followed. Dr. Locke looked at Mr. Quelch.

"If Coker's statement is correct, Mr. Quelch, it appears that Wharton cannot have been in the coppice at the time of the attack on you," he said slowly. "It appears that he was within school bounds at the time, owing to the extraordinary prank played by Coker."

Mr. Quelch's face was a study.

He had had no doubt; not the slightest doubt. He had caned Mauleverer for merely suggesting that he had made a mistake. He had stated, in the hearing of fifty fellows, that a master who made a mistake in so very serious a matter was unworthy of his trust. Perhaps it was natural that Mr. Quelch, in such circumstances, should cling to his belief.

"Dr. Locke, I do not believe Coker's statement," he said. "I regard it as a concocted story."

Coker's jaw dropped as he stared at Quelch.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Coker. "You're not making out that I'm telling lies, I suppose, sir! My only hat!"

"I do not believe a single word you have uttered, Coker!" said Mr. Quelch in a grinding voice.

Wharton looked at his Form master. He could almost have pitied Mr. Quelch at that moment.

Coker's face was crimson.

"Me—telling lies!" he gasped. "Well, I like that! As if I'd tell lies to the Head! I'm jolly certain that Dr. Locke doesn't think so! Ask my Form master, sir. Mr. Prout will tell you whether I tell lies or not."

"Mr. Prout—"

"Sir," said Prout in his deep, fruity voice, "I place unhesitating faith in the statement of this boy of my Form. Coker is a stupid, headstrong, meddling, unthinking boy, but he is incapable of falsehood."

"Mr. Quelch—"

"I repeat, sir," said Mr. Quelch, his face very white; "I repeat that I do not believe a single word Coker has uttered!"

"What about Potter and Greene?" bawled Coker. "Are they liars, too?"

"Moderate your voice, Coker! Do you mean that Potter and Greene were present at the time?" snapped the Head.

"Of course I do! They helped me yank that young sweep to the woodshed and bung him in—"

"Potter! Greene! Stand forward!" boomed Prout.

Potter and Greene came up the Hall.

"Do you two Fifth Form boys corroborate the statement made by Coker?" asked the Head.

"Certainly, sir," said Potter. "We were there."

"We were there, sir," said Greene.

"And what about Gosling?" snorted Coker indignantly. "Gosling was there when I went to let the young tick out; he couldn't get into the woodshed because I had the key. He saw me let him out; he saw the young sweep jump at me and hit me in the eye—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the crowded Hall.

Coker had unintentionally furnished a little comic relief to the tense situation.

"Silence!" hooted masters and prefects.

Dr. Locke fixed his eyes on Mr. Quelch's white, set face. The Head had no further doubts himself; it was absurd to suppose that three Fifth Form men had concocted a lying story to save a fag, whom they hardly knew, from a just punishment. Indeed, Mr. Quelch could have no further doubts himself. In a calmer moment he would hardly have supposed that Coker was lying; and it was really impossible to suppose that Potter and Greene were lying, too.

Quelch knew now that there had been a mistake. The evidence against Wharton had been overwhelming, yet it was clear, even to Quelch, that the rebel of the Remove was innocent, because it was a physical impossibility for him to be guilty. It was a bitter pill for Quelch to swallow; but he had to get it down.

"What do you say now, Mr. Quelch?" asked the Head, very quietly.

Quelch's white face flushed scarlet.

"I—I fail to understand it, sir," he stammered. "The cap was found with the catapult. It was dropped there by the—the person who assaulted Mr. Prout and myself. It was Wharton's cap."

"Obviously, from what we have now learned, some other boy was wearing Wharton's cap," said the Head. "That is the only explanation."

"It is incredible, sir, that a boy should have gone out in another boy's cap."

"Mr. Quelch, will you say explicitly whether or not you believe Wharton to be cleared of this charge?" asked the Head. His voice was sharp.

Mr. Quelch choked.

"Yes, sir!" The words seemed torn from him. "I—I cannot cast doubt on statements made to you by three boys of the Fifth Form. It—it appears that Wharton could not have been in the coppice at—at the time, therefore, he—he cannot be guilty."

"Thank you, sir!" said Wharton, with cool irony.

"It remains to discover the guilty party," said the Head—a remark that made Loder of the Sixth feel a tremor run down his back. "Unfortunately after this lapse of time, the matter may be very difficult. However, I am sure that masters and prefects will do their best to discover the offender. Wharton, you are completely cleared of this charge. Not a shadow of suspicion rests upon you."

"Discharged by the beak without a stain on his giddy character," murmured the Bounder; and there was a suppressed snigger in the Remove.

"I am sorry," said the Head, feeling that it was up to him—"I am sorry, Wharton, that suspicion of such an action should ever have been directed towards you. I am glad—more glad than I can say, that you have been so completely cleared of this charge. You may go, my boy."

"Thank you, sir!"

"Dismiss!" said the Head.

It was over. Harry Wharton walked out of the Hall with the Remove, and Mr. Quelch hurried away to his own study. His feelings were unenviable, and for the present Mr. Quelch was only anxious to get out of the public eye.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Split in the Co.!

GRATTERS, old bean!" Lord Mauleverer joined Harry Wharton as they left Hall. There was a cheery smile on Mauly's amiable face.

There was no smile on Wharton's.



Bang! A fist crashed into Coker's eye, and then—bang!—another crashed on his nose. "Yaroooh!" he roared. "That's for being a meddling idiot!" gasped Wharton. Gosling stood looking on, with a crusty grin on his gnarled visage. The old school porter seemed amused.

He had been cleared. Nobody now, not even Mr. Quelch, believed that he had had anything to do with the outrage in the coppice. Some fellow had done it—some fellow who had, apparently, borrowed a cap of Wharton's when he went out—a sufficiently unusual thing. A fellow in a hurry might snatch a cap from a peg—but that was not what had happened. Wharton's own cap had been on his head at the time. It was a cap from his box that had been taken. Why? Many fellows were asking that question. Wharton was asking it himself with fierce anger. Why, if the cap had not been deliberately left on the spot, in order to fix the outrage on him?

He looked at Mauleverer as his lordship congratulated him.

"Thanks!" he said. "But did you believe it?"

Mauly smiled and shook his head.

"Mauly was the only fellow that didn't," said the Bounder, with a grin. "Quelch heard him say it was a mistake, and whacked him for saying so."

Wharton's lip curled.

"That was like him," he said. "And it was like you, Mauly, old man, to stick to a friend. I should have fancied that there were other fellows here who would have known that I hadn't done a rotten, sneaking, cowardly thing, and it seems that you were the only man in the Remove who had sense enough to know. Thanks, old chap!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said the Bounder. "What were fellows to think, when Quelch said positively—"

"Anything they liked, of course," answered Harry contemptuously; and he walked away without a glance at the Co.

Bob Cherry and Frank Nugent, Johnny Bull, and Hurree Singh looked at one another in deep discomfort. They had believed it; they could not have helped but believe it when their Form master stated it as a positive fact, for which Wharton had to be expelled. They had taken it for granted—as they had a right to do—that Quelch had not spoken without absolute proof. Indeed, they had supposed that he had actually seen Wharton with the catapult in the coppice.

"Well," said Bob, with a deep breath, "it's torn now. Wharton's got his jolly old back up, and—and I—I'm afraid he's got some reason."

"That ass Quelch!" breathed Nugent. "He caned Mauly for saying that he had made a mistake, and he was making mistakes all the time. But how was a fellow to know?"

"I thought he'd seen him doing it," growled Johnny Bull.

"The thoughtfulness was terrific," said the Nabob of Bhanipur. "The esteemed Quelch is a preposterous ass!"

"If we'd known it was only circumstantial evidence, we'd have known what to think," groaned Bob. "Any fellow might borrow any fellow's cap—though Quelch never thought of that. We'd have thought of it fast enough, if we'd known what he was banking on."

"Did Quelch want to think it, or anything else in Wharton's favour?" asked Frank bitterly. "He tried to make Coker out a liar. Any man at Greyfriars could tell him that Coker's no liar."

"He's got his knife into Wharton, and no mistake," said Bob. "Look here, you men, we've been to blame.

It wasn't our fault, but we have. The sooner we set it right the better. Come on!"

Wharton had gone to Study No. 1 in the Remove. The Co., in a dubious and troubled frame of mind, followed him there.

They found him sitting at the study table, calmly and sedately demolishing bread and cheese. Owing to Coker's antics, he had missed his tea. It was a relief to see him looking so cool and calm. They had expected signs of storm.

He glanced up as they appeared in the doorway, with a face that had no expression on it at all. It was rather difficult to discern what mood he was in.

"Sorry, old man!" said Bob, plunging into the matter at once. "Sorry we believed a word of it!"

"The sorrowfulness is terrific, my esteemed chum," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh earnestly.

"I don't see what else we were to think," said Johnny Bull. "Quelch said he knew, and we supposed he did. But I'm jolly glad that it's turned out all right."

Nugent did not speak; he only looked at Wharton's cold, expressionless face. That face did not change.

"Is that all?" asked Wharton calmly.

"Well, what do you want us to say?" asked Bob.

"Nothing. If that's all, drop the subject. What's the good of talking about it? It's rather lucky, though," added Wharton reflectively, "that that born idiot, Coker, barged into what didn't concern him, isn't it? I was going out of bounds when the silly fat-head grabbed me, and if I'd been out

of bounds at the time, I should have been done for. Quelch had all the evidence he wanted to get me sacked. He's let up on me, because it's proved that I couldn't possibly have been on the spot, owing to dear old Coker. But if it had been possible for me to be on the spot, think he would have let up?"

"Quelch believed—"

"Yes; the dear man wanted to. Must have been no end of a windfall to him, finding my cap there—if he didn't put it there himself."

"Wharton!" exclaimed Frank, almost in horror.

"Well, somebody put it there," said Wharton coolly. "Whoever put it there, meant me to be sacked for catapulting a beak."

"Somebody borrowed the cap—"

"And went to my box to borrow it?" smiled Wharton. "Likely, isn't it? He couldn't borrow one from a dozen on the pegs in the lobby. He had to root in my box."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Bob Cherry aghast. "You really think—"

Wharton laughed contemptuously.

"I don't think—I know!"

"Blessed if it doesn't look like it!" said Bob slowly. "But—but who—who'd do such a thing? What awful rotter—"

"Thank goodness Coker played the goat!" said Frank.

"Yes. Quelch would have had me on toast. And you fellows, instead of telling me you're sorry you thought me a rotten, cowardly rascal, would be cutting me dead, and telling one another that such a rotter ought to be bunked."

"If you'd done such a rotten thing you ought to be bunked for it," said Johnny Bull, "and Quelch stated as a positive fact—"

"Dear old Quelch! He's rather fallen down on his positive facts, hasn't he?" said Wharton. "He will have to get out a fresh lot if he wants to get away with what he's set his mind on."

"Don't be an ass," said Bob gruffly. "Quelch found the cap there, and you can hardly blame him for believing that you dropped it, as it was your cap. You've got his back up. We shouldn't have believed it, but, of course, we supposed Quelch knew, from what he said."

"You'd have supposed the same in our place!" said Johnny Bull.

"I wonder!" said Wharton. "If I heard Quelch say that you were a rotten, sneaking, cowardly cur, Bull, I think I might possibly suppose that he had made a mistake. It's not as if it were a lark. Catapulting an elderly man from cover is a dirty, cowardly trick. It's the sort of thing a hooligan might be ashamed to do. I can't see that I've ever given you any reason to think me capable of it."

"Well, no," said Johnny Bull slowly. "But a fellow never knows what you might do when your back's up. A fellow who gives a prefect a black eye—"

"Look here, Wharton, we're sorry," said Bob. "Wash it all out!"

"What's the good?" asked Wharton in the same calm tone. "The fellow who planted this on me won't be found out. He's been too jolly wary for that. I can't even guess who he was myself. I can't quite believe that Quelch got up the whole thing, and though I've thought of Loder, I can't quite get it down that even a rotter like Loder would go over the limit like this. I just can't guess who it was! But whoever he was, he's after my scalp, and what's to prevent him from trying it on again?"

"Trying again!" repeated Bob.

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"Why not? Looks as if he means business, doesn't it? Next time I can't expect Coker of the Fifth to butt in and play the goat. The rotter, whoever he is, may get away with it next time. It won't be catapulting—that's a chicken that won't fight a second time. Something else—I can't say what—with plenty of evidence for Quelch to jump at! You'll believe it, as you've believed it now—Quelch's word is law, isn't it? What's the good of washing this out, when next week, or the week after, you may be saying that I jolly well ought to be bunked for something or other, whatever it is that Quelch is pleased to believe that I've done?"

The chums of the Remove stood silent.

Wharton rose from the table.

His face was still calm, with a hard calmness. But there was a look of concentrated bitterness on it.

"I wouldn't have believed such a thing of any of you fellows," he said. "Not if I'd seen it—I should have fancied I was dreaming! You believed it fast enough, because Quelch said so—a man that's set out to get me bunked if he can! Only one fellow in the Remove gave me credit for being a decent chap—old Maully! The fellows call him an ass, and he was the only one who could see that Quelch was making a bloomer. I suppose I'm lucky to have one friend who didn't turn me down."

"We're all your friends—"

Wharton snapped his fingers contemptuously.

"That's what your friendship's worth," he said.

Bob drew a deep breath.

"If you mean that you want a row—"

"I don't! Nothing to row about that I know of! But don't talk piffle about friendship to a fellow you've let down."

"I won't!" said Bob grimly, and he turned and walked out of the study, and Johnny Bull followed him in silence. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh glanced after them with a distressed dusky face, and then at the captain of the Remove. Wharton met his eyes with a steely stare, and the Nabob of Bhanipur slowly followed Bob and Johnny.

Frank Nugent lingered.

Wharton looked at him.

"Staying here?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Then I'll go down," said Harry.

And he went.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

All Right for Bunter!

LORD MAULEVERER stood at his study window and looked out into the quad.

There was a cloud on his lordship's noble brow.

Maully looked worried.

It was the following day, and classes were over at Greyfriars. The Remove were out, and from his study window Maully could see the Famous Five—once the inseparable chums of the Remove. They were not together now. Harry Wharton came along with his hands in his pockets, a cool and careless expression on his face, and the Co., who were standing in a group by one of the old elms, moved a little to come in his way. Evidently, to the junior watching from the study window above, it was an effort to break the ice, the ice that seemed to have frozen hard between Harry Wharton and his old friends. Since the interview in the study the previous day they had not spoken.

Lord Mauleverer watched anxiously. He saw Harry Wharton glance at the Co., swerve aside, and walk in another

direction, obviously avoiding a meeting. He saw the red and discomfited looks of the Co., and traces of anger in their faces.

It worried Maully.

He quite understood Wharton's feelings, his anger and indignation and resentment. But he knew that Wharton was wrong to give them rein as he was doing, and he knew what it might mean to the wayward junior to lose his chums. If the Co. had been in fault it was not a fault that could not be forgiven. It was up to a fellow to forgive and forget; but Wharton was in an unforgiving mood. Maully wondered whether it was possible for a fellow who liked both parties to wedge in as a peacemaker.

"I say, Maully, old chap!"

"Oh, get out, Bunter!" said Lord Mauleverer, with less patience than he generally showed to the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter blinked at him from the doorway.

"Oh, really, Maully! If that's what you call being civil to a pal—"

"Don't bother now, old bean! Cut off."

"The fact is, old chap, I came specially to speak to you," explained Billy Bunter. "It's rather important."

"Well, cough it up!" sighed Mauleverer. "What is it?"

"I've been disappointed about a postal order—"

"Oh gad!"

"I mean it," said Bunter. "I was expecting a postal order from one of my titled relations, you know. Well, it hasn't come. And poor old Wharton—"

"Eh! What about Wharton?" asked Maully, in surprise.

"I was going to ask him to tea," said Bunter. "The poor old chap is left on his own. Everybody's turning him down these days. Of course, he's a silly, unreasonable ass—"

"Shut up, you fathead!"

"And he's got a beastly temper—"

"Do you want me to kick you, Bunter?"

"Eh! No, old chap! As I was saying, he's left on the beach. You're his pal, Maully, ain't you? Well, what about asking him to tea? I'll come!"

Lord Mauleverer stared at the fat Owl.

A thoughtful expression came over his face. Billy Bunter was putting in one word for Wharton and two for himself. But he had also put an idea into Maully's noble brain.

"You're a howling ass, Bunter, and a silly chump, and a pernicious porpoise!" said Lord Mauleverer amiably. "But, dash it all, I'll try it on! Fellows can't row in another fellow's study; they can't glare at one another over the jolly old festive board. Get 'em together—what?"

"Eh?" said Bunter. He did not understand.

"Get 'em together round a friendly table—what?" said Maully reflectively. "Worth tryin', anyhow. Bunter, old fat bean, will you do some shoppin' for me?"

Bunter beamed.

"Won't I just!" he ejaculated. "My dear old chap—"

"I'll give you a note for Mrs. Mible. Get anythin' you think of—the more the merrier. Make it a toppin' spread! Don't get too little."

"No fear!" said Bunter.

Maully's credit at the school shop was unlimited, and if Bunter was given carte blanche he was not likely to get too little.

"Well, here you are! Cut off!"

(Continued on page 28.)

THE RED FALCON!

By ARTHUR STEFFENS



The Black Mask!

HAL and Jerry stayed in their forest retreat until mists began to creep among the trees and birds to fly to their nests as night drew on.

Then through the gathering dusk they walked their horses out into the lane and followed it until it was almost too dark for them to see.

They had the high red brick wall to guide them, however, and following it, came at last to a broad, white main road along which they went.

About a mile along this they came to some tall iron gates set between great stone pillars. On the iron gates they were able to see, as the moon swung high in the sky above, the device of a falcon jessed and belled and hooded. And on the stone pillars were falcons carved like life.

The gates were shut, but in the lodge beyond them a light glimmered. As Hal and Jerry stopped to view the scene the light in the lodge went out.

For a quarter of an hour longer the adventurers waited in silence under the shadow of the wall. Then Jerry, who had dismounted, crept on tiptoe to the gates, and, turning the iron handle there, set one half open far enough to admit the horses.

Through the gates, very slowly, the adventurers led Galloper and Beauty, and then Jerry went back and shut the half gate again.

The rest was easy. The horses made

no sound as the chums led them along the velvety grass, and soon the moon showed them a great and noble house which lay back from the gravelled space which fronted it, flanked on either side by a great spreading cedar-tree.

In the middle of the open space lay a lily pond, from the centre of which a marble statue reared itself gracefully. Fountain-jets played about it.

The two adventurers tethered up their horses, and, advancing to the house, ran nimbly and noiselessly up the marble steps that led to the front door.

The house was in darkness, and though they listened intently, they could hear no sound.

"The Earl of Huntford is our mortal enemy, boy," whispered Jerry, "and we have the right to fight him. Are you game to enter this place with me?"

Hal's eyes swept the noble front of the manor. He looked puzzled.

"Why, yes," he said, looking puzzled.

Then Jerry revealed his talents as a cracksman. Climbing from the stone parapet that flanked the steps, he gained a broad window-sill. Here he drew out a steel tool, and Hal heard the sound of crunching, bruising wood as Jerry manipulated this.

He heard a catch click back, and the sound of a window being forced. Then Jerry vanished within the house, and Hal followed him.

Once inside, Jerry shut the window. Then he struck flint and set fire to tinder, and in the flame saw candles set

READ THIS FIRST.

Convicted of robbing the Earl of Huntford of a diamond star, Hal Lovett and Jerry McLean are conveyed to the convict hulk *Ethalion*, anchored at Woolwich. As the result of a prearranged plan, the convicts fire the ship, and Hal and Jerry escape, eventually reaching the Huntford Arms. They are betrayed, however, by Colonel York, a highwayman, but succeed in turning the tables on their enemy. Galloping away, they seek sanctuary in a wood close to the home of the Earl of Huntford, whom they decide to visit after nightfall.

in a candelabrum that graced a massive sideboard. These candles Jerry lit.

Brandishing the candelabrum above his head, Jerry stalked onward. They found more candles and lit these, too, and then, after drawing tight the curtains so that no ray of light would shine outside, they stared about them.

Objects took shape. Fine pictures, a magnificent fireplace, rich rugs, and splendid furniture. Above all, a smiling portrait that beamed at them from above the mantelpiece, the portrait of a handsome and gracious gentleman. The sight of this portrait made Jerry gasp.

"Strap me, boy," he cried, "if the gentleman isn't very like you!"

And then came Hal Lovett's startling and excited response:

"Jerry—Jerry, I have seen this place before!"

Jerry McLean stared at Hal Lovett in blank amazement. Hal knew this place? How could the boy possibly know Huntford Hall, the home of the Earls of Huntford?

Jerry steadied the candelabrum which he held at arm's length, and once again cast a glance around the splendid room. His appraising eyes missed no detail of the magnificent furnishings, finally coming to rest at the splendid portrait which hung above the fireplace.

"Know the place, do you say, boy?" he ejaculated. "Strap me, but that's odd! And that portrait—I swear it could be of your older brother."

Hal Lovett gripped hold of his friend's right arm.

"I have been here before, Jerry," he said. "In this very room. I know that portrait. I have seen the man alive."

"But, Hal, you'd never been more than a mile from Wych Street up to the night they took you for stealing the Earl of Huntford's diamond star outside Drury Lane Theatre. You told me that yourself."

Hal nodded and frowned.

"I know I did, And yet I know I have been here. Listen, Jerry." Hal pointed to a closed door. "That door leads into a smaller room. Beyond that is the hall. And I can describe the hall to you. There is a broad marble staircase on each side, which runs up to a gallery. A marble balcony looks down upon the hall. A great lamp hangs there, all cut glass, like diamonds. The pavement of the hall is made of great black-and-white marble slabs, with a border pattern running round it. The ceiling is high and painted, with a lot of gold. There are fine marble statues standing in the hall, and—"

"Strap me," said Jerry, putting down the candelabrum and seizing a candlestick containing a single lighted candle.

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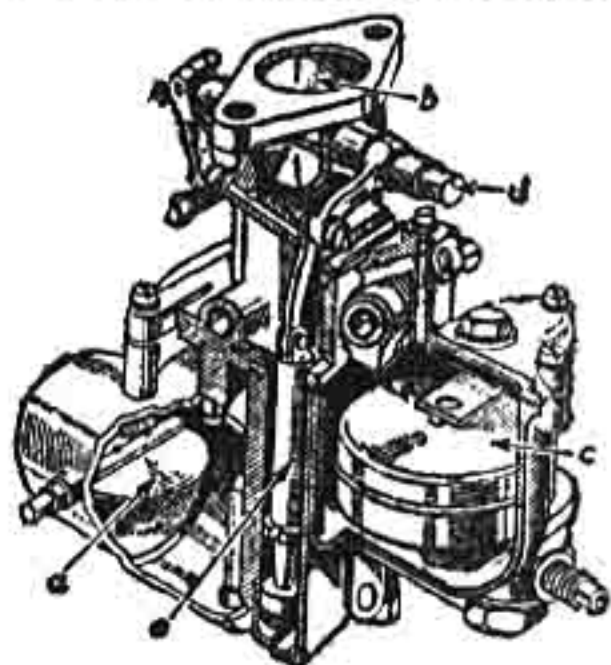
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"But as you have the details down so clearly I think we'll go and look."

He was in the act of opening the between door, when Hal spoke again.

"It is a wood-walled room, and painted blue, Jerry," said the boy. "There is a fine painting of birds over the mantelpiece."

Jerry McLean passed into the room and looked around, and, as his eyes grew accustomed to the semi-darkness, he saw that it was just as Hal had described.

"Egad, but it's amazing," he said, as he passed onward, after having looked at the bird painting, and at the bright-blue panelling of the room.

Hal snatched up a candlestick which stood upon a side table, lit the wick at Jerry's candle flame, and together they went out into the hall. There they stood together holding high their candlesticks and looking about them.

Jerry made no comment, but his eyes widened in amazement as he saw that Hal Lovett had accurately described the great hall of Huntford.

"But what does it mean—what does it mean?" he muttered, as he trod onward on tiptoe, anxious not to make a sound. "That red falcon on the lad's chest, too—and the deadly enmity of the earl. Here's a mystery worth the probing."

He clutched at Hal's sleeve.

"But let us not forget the purpose that brought us here, lad," he said. "The Earl of Huntford sent us to the hulks on a lying charge, and we have the right to rob him. Where are we going to start?"

Hal led the way across the hall, and through a door which he opened after turning the key noiselessly.

"In here," he whispered hoarsely. "This should be the drawing-room. It runs along the whole of the back of the house."

The room proved indeed to be the drawing-room, and it actually did run almost along the whole back of the house. A magnificent room!

Here were candles a-plenty, waiting to be lit. Heavy silk curtains had been pulled across the windows, and shutters had been closed upon the glass panes, and caught with drop-latches, and barred.

The heavy carpet was inches thick. Not a sound within the room could have been heard outside when the doors were closed.

In show tables and glass cabinets were to be seen snuff-boxes of great value, miniatures set with diamonds, and beautiful trinkets of all kinds.

Swiftly Jerry McLean pulled a tool out of his side pocket, and with it prised open the lock of one of the glass-topped tables. His greedy fingers snatched up objects of gold and enamel which lay upon a satin bed. These he stowed away.

"Come, Hal, my boy, you are slow," he said. "Remember we are only punishing an enemy. It would serve that devil of an earl right if we were to set fire to his house."

Hal shook his handsome boyish head disapprovingly.

"No, Jerry," he said, "we could never do such a villainous deed as that. This house is far too lovely to be burnt down."

Jerry's face hardened as he paused in the act of forcing open a cabinet.

"I'd burn it down, and laugh to see it burn!" he cried. "And the earl with it. I can't forget that he had me sentenced to transportation for life for a crime I never did!"

Then Jerry caught his breath, as did

Hal, too. And with good reason, for they heard the distinct shattering of glass, and then a click as a latch of one of the windows was forced back. There followed the sound of bruising wood, and a wicked tongue of steel forced its way in at the seam of the window shutters, and played with the catch. This catch thrown back, the thief outside attacked the shutters from another angle, working away at the section to which the flat bar of iron was fixed.

Jerry winked at Hal, then sobered again, and watched the deadly play of the steel tool.

A minute or two passed, it might have been a longer period of time even, and then the uncanny worker managed to force a hole big enough to allow of his hand coming through. The hand showed with wrist and clever fingers played at the bar. It fell down with a sudden clang.

Jerry snuffed out the candle he carried, and Hal Lovett did the same. They set the candlesticks down, and drew back against the wall, watching breathlessly the entry of the burglar.

He was heralded by a keen puff of wind through the broken window. The shutters were doubled back, and a big and powerfully built man, whose face was completely hidden by a mask with fringe attached, dropped down lightly into the room.

Moonlight streamed in at the break in the shutters. The figure moved noiselessly across the room. When about half-way over, the man halted abruptly, and sniffed.

"Burnt candles!" the adventurers heard him mutter. "Just snuffed out!"

And there he stood, crouching as if for a spring, a pistol in his right hand, moving his masked head this way and that, his eyes shining like phosphorus in the darkened room.

Hal felt Jerry's steadying fingers on his arm. Jerry McLean dared not speak. The man could not see them where they stood flattened against the wall in the darkened corner of the room.

Suddenly all three heard noises in the hall that set their blood racing. They could hear a confused babble of men talking, the tread of hurrying feet, a shout as someone discovered the door of the ante-room ajar. Then in the depths of the house an alarm bell started ringing.

Clang, clang, clang, clang!

"The devil take it!" snarled the burglar.

He did not attempt to flee, however, but just stood watching the drawing-room door, and listening to the hurrying footsteps which came towards it.

"The rascals are in here, sir!" bawled a high-pitched voice.

"Then, by Jove, we have got them!" came in the earl's silken, but ringing tones, "for my men have surrounded the house. They cannot get away. They have fallen into a trap. Come! Open that door!"

Isaac Quilt!

THE EARL OF HUNTFORD was at home. The house had been roused. Possibly somebody had seen the burglar breaking in. The servants were just outside the room. It was time to do something.

"We must make a bolt for it, and gain our horses, boy," whispered Jerry, in Hal Lovett's ear. "The best way is through the broken window of this room."

The burglar heard them whispering. He turned as they sprang into view, and his pistol covered them. Jerry whipped out of his pocket one of the stolen snuff-boxes.

"No need to shoot, friend," he said. "We're on the same lay as you."

The burglar at once lowered his pistol-arm.

"Housebreakers!" he laughed. "Well, make haste and get away, then, friends. I am not afraid of the earl. He won't harm me."

Before Jerry or Hal could move a single step, however, the door was thrown wide open, and into the room swarmed a crowd of servants carrying lighted candles and lanterns. In the midst of the servants was the Earl of Huntford, wearing a silken nightcap and a dressing-gown of powdered silk. Black, high-heeled slippers with red heels twinkled below the swaying robe, and he held a small sword in his right hand.

In an instant the men saw the three intruders and raced round the walls in an attempt to surround them. The flickering lights showed up the faces of Jerry McLean and Hal, and the earl laughed.

"Why, our gallows-birds! The men from the hulks!" he scoffed. "It was indeed a friendly thought to come here, for now I can send you both to Tyburn." He turned his handsome head and addressed his servants whilst he pointed with his naked sword-blade at Jerry and Hal. "Apprehend those men!" he ordered fiercely. "If they attempt to resist, cut them down or shoot them! They are wanted—dead or alive!"

The man in the fringed mask the earl entirely ignored.

The menservants were plucky enough. Perhaps they were more afraid of their master than they were of the thieves, for they precipitated themselves on Hal and Jerry McLean, gripped them by the arms, and swayed with them in a fierce struggle all over the floor. Chairs were overturned and tables crashed as Jerry and Hal fought desperately to get away from their captors.

Heavy blows crashed on their heads, arms, and shoulders. As they whirled and swayed in the battle for the mastery Hal nearly got away. But the hands that gripped him were like steel. His clothes were torn open, his shirt was ripped, and as they struggled close to him the man in the mask saw the red falcon showing plainly on Hal Lovett's bare white flesh.

For a moment his eyes remained fixed upon the tattoo mark, and then, hurling himself into the fray, he struck one of the servants down with a blow from the butt-end of the pistol he carried; then he jolted the hard wood and iron to the chin of another man, sending him spinning to the floor.

Hal, finding himself free, sprang at the men who were hanging on to Jerry McLean. The masked man also jumped to his assistance. In a moment Jerry was free, and so angry was he at the rough usage to which he had been subjected, that he hit one of the men, who was staggering weakly, clean off his feet with one mighty smashing blow.

"Get away if you can," said the man in the mask, backing across the room, as they made for the window.

The Earl of Huntford followed, pulling into view a silver-mounted pistol, the priming of which he examined coolly as he advanced, his naked small sword dangling by a cord from his wrist.

"I've heard of you two," said the masked man to Jerry in a hoarse whisper. "I know you, Jerry McLean. The whole country will be roused over this. Kent is already too hot to hold you. Ride to the wharf at Chading. Find out a man named Charlie Marten. Tell him Isaac Quilt sent you. He'll ferry you and your horses across in a light barge, and, once safe on the Essex side, make for the forest at Epping. There you'll find the Grey Mill Inn. Simon Babbett is the landlord. Remember the name—Simon Babbett. Give him my name. Tell him your business. He'll tell you where you and your pal the Falcon can safely hide. Don't forget the names—Charlie Marten, at Chading Wharf; Babbett, at the Grey Mill Inn."

The man spoke in a tense, low whisper with great rapidity, biting each word so that they rang clearly. Then, as the servants came on in another rush, he struck one of them down with a sweep of his pistol, and then, sending a shot into the ceiling, brought down a shower of plaster—but he drove them back.

Hal Lovett memorised every word this strange friend uttered, including his own name, Isaac Quilt. Jerry McLean did the same. Then both pushed their way through the broken window and out on to the sill beyond.

The park was silvered by the moon.

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They could see dark shadows moving near the house, heard men whispering. But even so they paused.

"Boy," said Jerry, "our friend rendered us signal service just now. I don't think we ought to desert him."

"No," said Hal excitedly, "we can't let those men take him."

They looked again into the room and saw the masked man beat off his attackers. But they were too many in number, and, four of them getting hold of his arms, they wrenched him to a standstill, whilst the earl snatched off the fringed mask.

"Isaac Quilt, by all that's horrible!" he gasped, as he recognised the man; then, levelling his pistol at the man's head, he said through stiffening lips: "By St. Anthony, I have half a mind to blow your brains out and save the hangman a job!"

Quilt was an extraordinary-looking man. His complexion showed almost olive in the candle-light, and his face was seamed and furrowed and lined. He wore a wig, which had been twisted nearly off his head in the struggle. His hat lay at his feet. But his eyes were his most striking feature—coal-black eyes, which seemed all alight.

When the earl ceased speaking he laughed.

"Bah, my lord!" he mocked. "You

dare not murder me. You know I never work alone. It is known that I came here."

"Why, in the devil's name, did you come?" demanded the earl.

"I was hard up; I wanted money. I thought I'd take some of your valuables, my lord. You'd never miss 'em."

With a wrench the man broke away from the servants' clutching hold, and as they made to seize him again the earl waved them back.

"Leave the man alone!" he cried. Then his eyes travelled past Quilt and he saw Hal Lovett's handsome head peeping in through the broken window-shutter.

In a moment his pistol-arm swung round and the weapon pointed at Hal.

The earl's trigger finger moved. But as the pistol crashed, Hal ducked his head aside, and the bullet went whistling past him out into the park.

The smoke was drifting across the lovely drawing-room when Isaac Quilt made a sudden dash, overturning two of the servants and dodging the rest. As he ran, he flung a table in the way of his pursuers, then came leaping after Hal.

Down into the grounds leapt Jerry McLean, with Hal close on his heels. Isaac Quilt followed, pausing just for a moment to close the wooden shutters.

As the three gained the ground, men came running at them from all sides. But Jerry and Hal were fleet of foot, and their strange ally also knew how to run. He gained on them.

"Have you horses?" he gasped.

"Yes," answered Jerry.

"Good! Then you can get away. Remember what I told you. Soon I, too, shall be at Epping. I also have a horse hidden among the bushes. First let me stop that rabble."

He turned, planting his feet firmly, and, drawing a second pistol out of his pocket, fired as it seemed at the ranks of the oncoming men.

As the flash of flame seamed the darkness and the report of the explosion echoed through the grounds the pursuers stopped dead in their tracks.

"Rabble!" cried Quilt, as he waved his arm in a farewell gesture and tore away to the right. "Good-bye! I've had a lot of work for no loot."

Jerry whipped a gold-and-enamel snuffbox out of his pocket and flung it after the man.

"Catch!" he said.

Isaac Quilt caught the flying box deftly in his left hand while still running, and then paced on with lengthening strides.

"The Red Falcon must be Samuel Lovett of Wych Street's brat!" he shouted, as he ran. "See you later, comrades!"

Their opposite ways took them farther apart, and, racing round to the front of the house, Jerry and Hal sped to where their horses were tethered, freed them, and sprang into the saddle.

Galloper and Bow Street Beauty were heading in a mad gallop for the gates before the earl, half-dressed, had even reached the stable yard. And as they went, the clamorous call of the alarm-bell of Huntford Hall followed them through the night.

(Isaac Quilt has certainly rendered Hal and Jerry yeoman service. But what fate awaits the two young adventurers at the Grey Mill Inn? You'll read all about it in next week's MAGNET, which will also contain six more FREE picture stamps to stick in your album.)

THE SCHEMER OF THE SIXTH!

(Continued from page 24.)

Billy Bunter cut off joyfully. Lord Mauleverer remained some minutes in reflection, then he strolled out of No. 12 and looked round for guests for the spread in the study. Fellows were coming in to tea, and every fellow whom Mauly asked gave a cheery assent. One fellow—Harry Wharton—did not come up to the studies, and Mauly caught him on his way to Hall and asked him. Wharton assented at once. If he could not forget that his friends had failed him neither did he forget that Mauly, alone in the Remove, had stood up for him.

"Half-past five!" said Mauleverer. "I'll be there, old bean!" said Harry cheerily.

"Relyin' on you!" said Mauly; and he ambled amiably away.

He had told the rest of the party twenty-past five. This was a tactful arrangement to get them all on the scene before Wharton arrived.

Soon after five o'clock Study No. 12 in the Remove was like unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

Bunter had done his bit nobly.

He had not brought in too little. Indeed, though it was to be a numerous tea-party it looked as if Bunter might have brought in too much. The study table fairly groaned.

All was ready at twenty-past five, when Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh arrived. Mauleverer welcomed them with his cheery smile.

"Trickle in, old beanlets! Jolly glad to see you! 'Nuff chairs, I think—I'll take this box! Bunter, old bean, make the tea! You men mind waitin' a few

minutes—another man comin'. No, don't wait—stap on the sosses. Bunter's done them to a turn! Bunter can't do anythin' else, but he can cook—what?"

"Oh, really, Mauly—"

"Begin, old beans!"

Lord Mauleverer was a little anxious. The four juniors were not looking their brightest. Mauly hoped that the ameliorating influence of a spread would melt resentful feelings.

"I say, you fellows, the sosses are prime!" said Bunter, beaming. "And there's lots and lots and lots. And the ham's good! And the eggs—you know how I poach eggs! And the toast—"

"My hat! Looks like a jolly old feast of the gods, Mauly," said Bob Cherry. "Who's the other lucky man?"

"He'll be here in a minute," said Mauly vaguely. "Get goin'!"

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

"Try the sosses," said Mauly anxiously. "Have some of the jam with them—I mean the marmalade—that is, the pineapple—I—I mean— Sit down, old beans! Why don't you sit down?"

Billy Bunter was already beginning. But the Co. stood, and looked at one another with uncertain looks. They had all guessed now.

"Look here, Mauly—" said Johnny Bull.

"Have some jam and eggs—I mean ham and eggs. Try the fried pineapple—I mean the fried spuds. You know how Bunter fries spuds—"

There was a footstep in the passage. The captain of the Remove swung cheerily in at the doorway.

"Here I am, Mauly, old fellow! I—"

Wharton broke off and stopped dead at the sight of the Co.

There was an instant of silence, broken only by the champing of the jaws of Billy Bunter.

"Stagger in, old top!" gasped Mauleverer. "All friends here—what? I say, Wharton old bean— Stop! Oh gad!"

Harry Wharton turned on his heel and walked out of the study. Lord Mauleverer gazed after him blankly, in dismay.

"Oh gad!" he repeated feebly.

He glanced at the Co.

"Look here, you men, I—I meant—"

"Fathead!" said Johnny Bull—and he left the study, followed by the others.

"Oh gad!" said Mauleverer.

Evidently the feast of reconciliation was not going to be a success.

"I say, Mauly!" Bunter spoke with his mouth full. "What's the matter with the silly idiots? Never mind—all the more for us! I say, try the sosses, Mauly."

"Br-r-r-r-r-r-r!"

"Well, what about the ham?"

"Idiot!"

Lord Mauleverer's appetite seemed to have been taken away. His tea-party had boiled down to Bunter, and perhaps he did not expect to derive solace from seeing Bunter packing away the food-stuffs. He walked out of the study.

Bunter blinked after him in amazement.

"Must be batty, the lot of them!" he ejaculated. "Turning up their noses at a spread like this! Must be potty! The whole jolly lot must have gone cracked—Mauly and all! A spread like this! My hat! Well, I can finish it!"

And he did! Mauly's wheeze had been rather a failure; but it was all right for Bunter, at least!

THE END.

(Next Saturday's yarn in this ripping series is entitled: "THE WAY OF THE REBEL." It's absolutely tiptop, chums, and so are the six picture-stamps which will be presented FREE with this issue.)



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