

"THE DANDIES OF THE REMOVE."

NUMBER 101
VOLUME 4

THE

Magnet

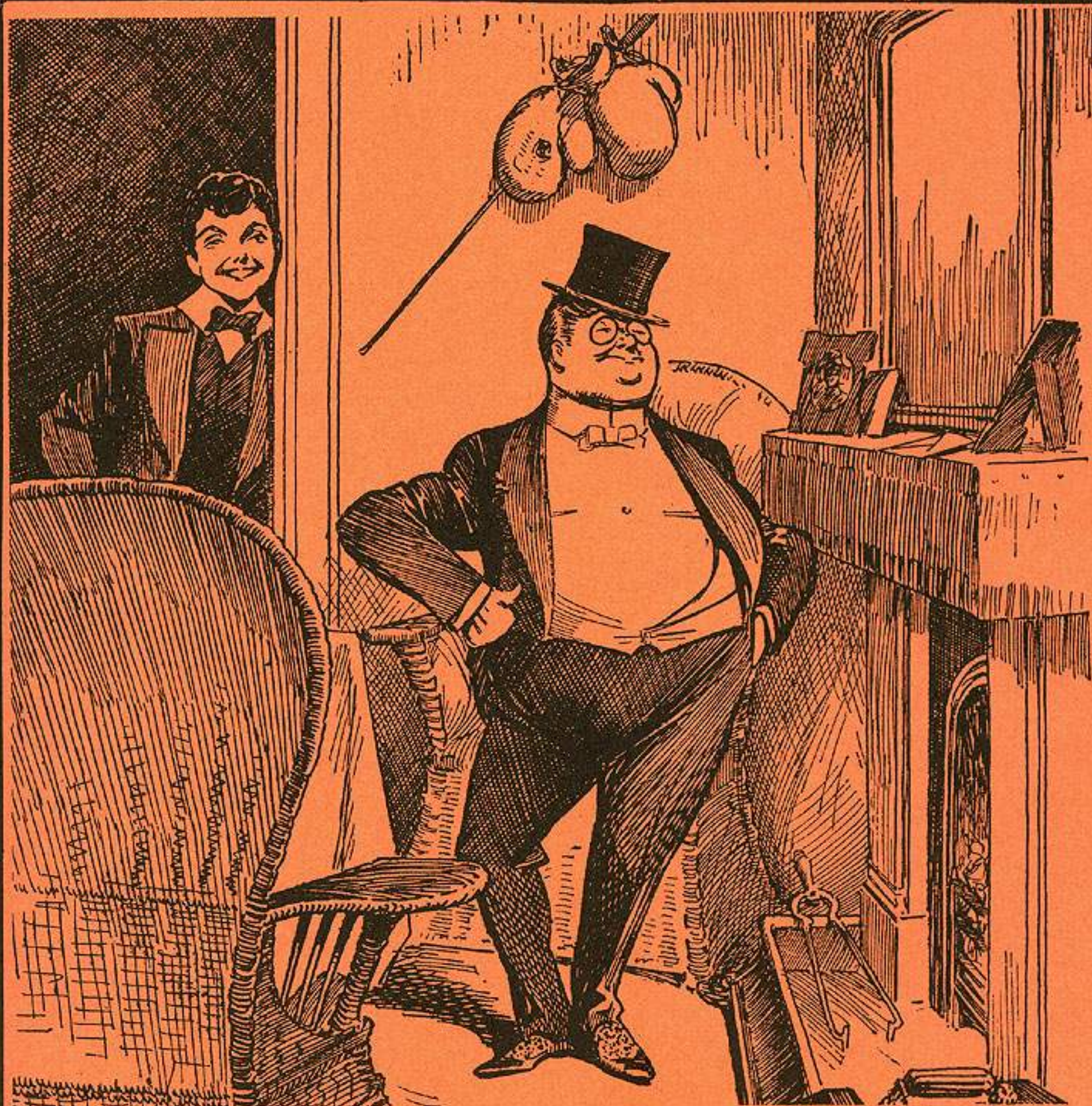
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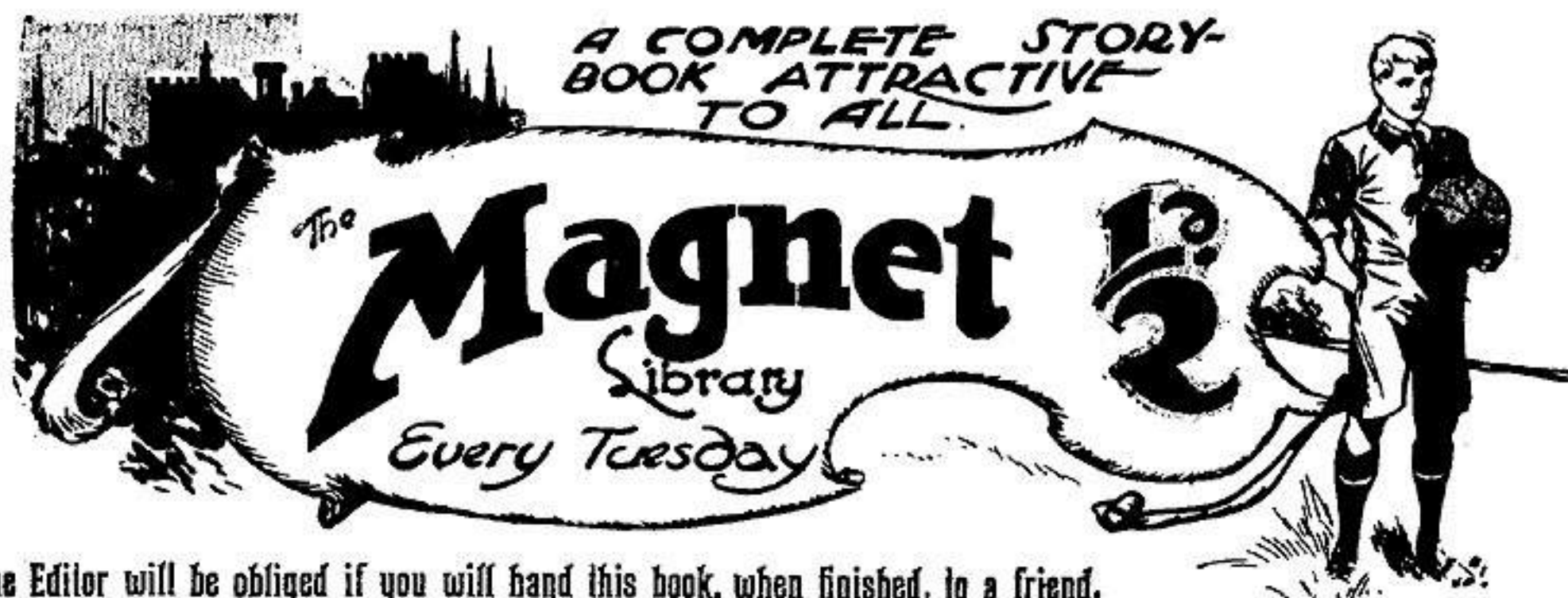
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The Dandies of the Remove

A Splendid Long, Complete
School Tale of
The Boys of Greyfriars.

BY

FRANK RICHARDS.



THE FIRST CHAPTER. In Borrowed Plumes.

"MY only hat!"
Harry Wharton, the captain of the Greyfriars Remove, uttered that exclamation in tones of unbounded amazement.

He was coming into No. 1 Study in the Remove, and he paused in the doorway to gaze in amazement upon what he saw, and to utter that ejaculation.

Billy Bunter was in the study.

There was nothing surprising in that, because Billy Bunter shared No. 1 Study with Harry Wharton, Frank Eulent, and Hurree Singh. But there was something very surprising about Bunter at that moment.

Billy Bunter, besides being the fattest and greediest fellow in the Lower Fourth, was generally the most slovenly in addition. His strong objection to soap and water was well

known, and the amount of washing he did in the morning was a standing joke in the Form.

Some of the fellows had seriously suggested bathing him by force some day; while others declared that such a sudden change, after so many years, would be fatal to him. Bunter had all sorts of manners and customs that were a little out of the ordinary, but no one had ever suspected him of being elegant or dandified.

Hence Harry Wharton's astonishment.

For—but for the fat form and the big spectacles—he would hardly have known William George Bunter at that moment.

Bunter was in evening-clothes, which his fat limbs seemed to be filling almost to bursting-point. His broad chest was covered with spotless white, and in the centre of his shirt-front gleamed a diamond. He was wearing gold sleeve-links, in each of which glittered a ruby.

His fat neck was enclosed in a high collar, which seemed

to be on the verge of cutting his ears off. His hair was nicely parted in the middle. His white tie was arranged with the greatest elegance. And—wonder of wonders!—he was trying on a crush hat before the glass as Wharton arrived upon the scene.

Wharton could only stare.

Bunter as a dandy was a new thing—quite new. Bunter the ventriloquist, Bunter the hypnotist, Bunter the photographer—all of them had made the Remove laugh. But Bunter the dude!

Bunter was too busy to see or hear Wharton. He was trying on that topper very carefully. It seemed a little too small for his wide, fat head, and he made a grimace or two as he jammed it down.

Once on, however, he seemed to be quite satisfied with the look of it, for he grinned and smirked with a gratified air at his reflection in the glass.

"Good," he muttered—"jolly good! I think it looks ripping! Won't the girls look at it, too? I'll jolly well bet that I'm the only chap in the Remove who will go in an opera hat! The other fellows will take their toppers, and they can't say that a topper looks as well as an opera hat on an occasion like this. I think I shall make a bit of a sensation. I like the look of that diamond, too. These little things enhance a fellow's natural good looks."

Harry Wharton clung to the door-post in a paroxysm of silent merriment. Bunter's reflections, muttered aloud, seemed to him too funny.

"I know girls, I think," Bunter went on, smirking at himself in the glass. "They always prefer a handsome, medium-sized fellow to those big, clumsy asses like Bob Cherry! That's why the big chaps are so jealous of us medium-sized fellows. The curious thing about a girl, though, is the way she never lets on that she likes a chap. There's Marjorie Hazeldene. I know how fascinated she is by me, yet if I didn't know 'em so well, her manner would make any chap think that she disliked me."

"You silly, fat duffer!"

Wharton's indignant voice made Billy Bunter spin round, startled.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

Wharton glared at him. Bunter's unpleasant conceit was always very irritating to the chums of No. 1 Study, and they never allowed him to mention Marjorie's name. Wharton picked up a ruler—a proceeding which Billy Bunter eyed with great alarm.

"I—I say, Wharton—"

"Where will you have it, Bunt?"

"Look here, Wharton, don't you—Ow!"

Bunter jumped in the air as the ruler rapped him across the shoulders. There was an ominous rending sound, and his evening-coat split down the back.

"Oh!"

"My hat!" gasped Wharton. "That was a tight fit!"

"You—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter squirmed round, to try to get a view of his back in the glass. The sight of the back of the waistcoat showing through the coat made him red with wrath.

"You—you beast! You've busted my coat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton threw down the ruler and roared. Billy Bunter glared at him like a basilisk through his spectacles.

"You—you utter ass! You'll have to explain to Ogilvy, that's all."

"Eh?"

"You'll have to own up, and pay for the coat."

"What on earth has Ogilvy to do with it?" asked Wharton, in amazement.

"It's Ogilvy's coat, that's all."

"Ogilvy's coat! Did he lend it to you?"

"Well, yes, in a way. I borrowed it."

"Phew! Without asking Ogilvy, I suppose?"

"Well, what was the good of asking him?" demanded Billy Bunter aggressively. "He would only have refused."

"You cheeky young ass! What are you dressed up in that way for, anyway? I suppose you're going to start having tea in the study in evening-dress?"

"Oh, don't be an ass! I was seeing how I should look for the party at Cliff House."

Wharton laughed.

"I see. A sort of dress rehearsal?"

"Exactly."

"Well, you're coming out strong, I must say. Where on earth did you get that diamond stud from, and those sleeve-links? You never bought them!"

"I'm treated with a jolly lot of meanness on all sides," said Bunter. "I never have enough to eat, and never get enough money. If I want to dress decently for a party, I have to borrow the things. It's rotten! Now, you've got all the things you want."

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"Well, I take care of them," said Harry. "You wear a thing out in next to no time, through being so lazy and slovenly."

"Oh, really—"

"I expect your clothes cost your people more than mine do," said Harry. "But who have you borrowed those things of?"

"Well, this stud belongs to Ionides, of the Sixth, that Greek beast; and I borrowed the sleeve-links from Blundell, of the Fifth. The shirt is Nugent's, and the coat and waistcoat Ogilvy's. The trousers belong to Bob Cherry. I shall have to shorten them if I wear them at the party."

"You've borrowed them, without asking permission?"

"Well, you see—"

"They're the only pair of evening trucks that Bob has at the school, as I happen to know!" said Harry indignantly. "What is he going to do?"

"Well, I suppose he could borrow some, the same as I have!" said Billy Bunter peevishly.

"You young ass! If the owners of those things come along, and find you like that, there will be trouble," said Harry Wharton. "People don't like their things being borrowed without their permission being asked."

"Well, I had no other resource, you see. I must have clothes for the party. I suppose you don't want to take me there in a blessed Norfolk jacket?"

"I don't want to take you at all, if it comes to that," said Wharton, with a shrug of the shoulders. "You're a nasty, conceited, troublesome little beast! The sooner you take those things back to their owners, the better."

And, picking up the book he had come to the study for, Wharton strode out, leaving Billy Bunter blinking after him.

Bunter made a grimace.

"Curious thing, it is," he murmured. "Wharton's not bad-looking, in his way, but even he's jealous of me! It's getting on my nerves, all this petty jealousy of a chap in his own study, just because he happens to be a little out of the ordinary run in looks. I must say, I thought Wharton would be above it."

And Bunter shook his head sadly and seriously.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter Loses His Feathers.

IT was raining at Greyfriars; the winter evening was wet and dark. Most of the fellows were in their studies or the common-rooms. Among the Remove, the chief topic of conversation was the forthcoming party at Cliff House.

Miss Penelope Primrose, the Principal of Cliff House School for Girls, had asked the Fourth Form at Greyfriars over for a little party in the evening.

The Remove were on the best of terms with Marjorie Hazeldene and her friends, and they had often cycled and skated together; and on one never-to-be-forgotten occasion there had been a dance at Cliff House, which had been a great success.

Miss Primrose was repeating the experiment now, and in the long winter evenings it was natural that both boys and girls should look forward to the party with great eagerness.

It was to be quite a swell affair, and some of the Greyfriars fellows were looking over their wardrobes of late with anxious eyes.

The whole of the Fourth Form was going—the Upper Fourth and the Remove, or Lower—and Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, were known to be making great efforts to dress gorgeously for the occasion.

The Remove, naturally, felt a spirit of emulation.

It was settled that evening-clothes were imperative; that was a *sine qua non*. Those of the fellows who didn't happen to have any dress-clothes at the school wrote or wired home to their parents, or tore off to the local tailor. But even when that was settled, there remained many details upon which a gorgeous fancy might disport itself—as in the design of the waistcoat, for instance. Jewellery, too, was an important item. Toppers were indispensable; but a crush hat was better than a topper, and the few fellows who were the happy possessors of gibus hats sorted them out in great glee.

Harry Wharton went down to the junior common-room with a book. The weather was so bad that even Harry had given up his evening sprint round the Close. Ogilvy, of the Remove, was in the common-room, looking worried. He glanced across at Wharton as the latter came in.

"Hallo, Wharton! Have you seen anything of my coat?"

"Coat?"

"Evening-coat," explained Ogilvy. "I had it out, you know, because there's a spot I have to get off it somehow and I left it on my bed. It's gone."

"Is it really?"

"And there's my shirt," said Nugent. "I left it in the dormitory, and it's gone!"

"And somebody has taken a collar out of my study," exclaimed Bob Cherry, "and a pair of blessed trousers—the only evening pair I've got!"

"My waistcoat has gone, too!" said Ogilvy.

"And my evening-shoes!" said Mark Linley seriously. "They've been taken out of my study—for a lark, I suppose!"

"And my tie-box has been opened," said Bulstrode. "Somebody's taken a tie out. I had three there, and when I went to try one on, there were only two."

Blundell of the Fifth looked into the room with a very red face.

"Here, you kids!" he exclaimed.

There was a general snort from the Remove. The Fifth Form were seniors, and they seemed to feel themselves really more senior than the Sixth sometimes. The Removites were not likely to be called "kids" in their own room by a member of the Fifth.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What's that?"

"Outside!"

"Get back to the Zoo!"

"Yah!"

"Look here——"

Bob Cherry covered his eyes with his hands.

"Ask us anything else," he said tearfully. "But, really, you must—you must not ask us to gaze upon a chivvy like that."

"You cheeky young rotter——"

"Ain't he nice and polite, too. The Fifth Form must be proud of their Blundy—I don't think!"

"Look here!" roared Blundell. "Somebody has been and taken a set of sleeve-links off the table in my study. I suppose it was a lark; but they cost two guineas, and I don't like larks with jewellery. It's apt to lead to trouble."

"My hat!" said Bob Cherry. "There seems to have been some chap on the rampage, and no mistake. Who was it?"

"We've had a lot of things borrowed too, Blundell," explained Nugent. "It's a lark of some silly ass."

"He'll jolly well sit up when I find him," said Blundell. "Haven't you any idea who it is?"

"Not the faintest."

Harry Wharton was silent. He did not feel called upon to give Bunter away; though it was probably only a question of minutes before the fat junior was discovered. As a matter of fact, the discovery was about to be made. Nugent minor—Frank's younger brother—came into the common-room grinning.

"Guess the latest?" he exclaimed.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What is it?"

"Bunter the beau!"

"The which?"

"Bunter, the dandy! Bunter, the dude! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I've just passed his study," explained Dick Nugent. "He was twisting round and round before a glass, in evening clothes, admiring himself."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Bob Cherry. "None of your larks, young Nugent. Bunter hasn't an evening-coat here!"

"He's got somebody's evening-coat, anyway," said Nugent minor. "He has one on, and it was split down the back, too."

Ogilvy gave a roar.

"My coat!"

"What!"

"It's my coat! It is Bunter who has been raiding the things."

"Bunter! Of course."

"Come and scalp him!" roared Nugent, and he dashed out of the room, and led the way to No. 1 Study in the Remove passage.

The Removites followed with a rush.

Blundell of the Fifth dashed along with them. In a minute or less they were swarming round the doorway of No. 1 Study.

Nugent and Ogilvy and Bob Cherry rushed in, with others at their heels.

Bunter spun round from the glass.

He smiled a sickly smile as he saw the owners of the various garments, and read the wrath in their very expressive faces.

"I—I say, you fellows——" he began.

"You fat burglar!"

"You tubby brigand!"

"You—you worm!"

"My coat!"

"My shirt!"

"My tie!"

"My trousers!"

"My hat!"

"My sleeve-links!"

"It's all right——"

"All right, is it?" roared Bob Cherry, seizing the fat junior and flopping him down in the armchair. "Take those trousers off!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Ogilvy. "I'm going to have my

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coat off the fat beast first. He's split it down the back already."

"That was Wharton——"

"Yank those shoes off him——"

"I say, you fellow——"

"Hold his shoulders, Elliott, will you? while I yank at the trousers," exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Blessed if they don't fit him as tight as the skin of a sausage!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I say, Cherry——"

"Hold him tight."

"I've got him."

"Keep still, Bunter, while I uncase you."

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

Elliott and Nugent grasped the fat junior round the arms and shoulders, and unhooked the braces, and Bob Cherry dragged at the trousers.

Bunter filled them out as if he had been carefully packed into them, and it was a labour of patience and difficulty to get them off.

Slowly they yielded to the strain.

"They're coming!" gasped Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha! Pull, chap! Pull, baker!"

"Go it, Cherry!"

With a final wrench the garments came off, and Bob Cherry rolled over backwards on the hearthrug, with the trousers in his hands. He bumped the back of his head on the floor, and gave a wild yell.

"Ow! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now the coat," exclaimed Ogilvy.

"Oh! I say, you fellows——"

The coat was torn off, and then the waistcoat. Then the tie was reclaimed by Bulstrode, and then the shirt by Nugent. Blundell jerked out his sleeve-links, and departed grumbling, and Nugent took out the diamond-stud and laid it on the table. Bunter's socks were claimed by another Removite; and by that time somebody thought it advisable to close the door of the study.

Billy Bunter, thus forcibly divested of his borrowed plumes, lay in the armchair, grunting and gasping and blinking.

The juniors surrounded him with still wrathful faces.

"My coat's ruined!" growled Ogilvy. "That coat's going to be paid for, or else I'm going to slap that fat porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Ogilvy!"

"I want thirty bob," said Ogilvy.

"Oh, very well!" said Bunter, with dignity. "If your coat is damaged—though it's really Wharton's fault—I am quite willing to make the damage good."

"Oh, you are, are you?" said Ogilvy, looking at him suspiciously. "Hand over the cash, then. I'll take fifteen bob, as the coat wasn't new."

"Very well. I'm expecting a postal-order on Saturday, and I'll let you have the fifteen bob out of it. You'll have to wait a little longer for the five bob I owe you, Wharton."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Yes, I expect I shall; and so will Ogilvy for his fifteen bob, if it depends on the arrival of your postal-order," he remarked.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Well, if I don't have the fifteen bob on Saturday, there will be war," said Ogilvy, departing with his ruined coat over his arm.

And Bunter was left alone in the study, shorn of his feathers, and looking in a decidedly moulted state. He looked at his reflection in the glass again, and grunted.

"Jealousy!" he murmured. "All jealousy of a chap's good looks! I'm blessed if I know how I stand the Remove!"

It did not occur to Bunter that it was a little surprising, too, how the Remove stood him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Caught!

HARRY WHARTON looked into No. 1 Study an hour later, and found Billy Bunter hard at work at his prep. Bunter always left that late, and sometimes left it altogether; and then he had painful explanations with Mr. Quelch, the Form-master, in the morning. There had been rather too many of these explanations of late, and Mr. Quelch had introduced a cane into them; hence Bunter's unwonted industry this particular evening. The fat junior blinked round with an indignant expression as Wharton came in.

"Nearly finished?" asked Harry sympathetically.

"Oh, I don't think I shall ever finish!" grunted Bunter.

"I have too much to do. I have told Quelch that I'm not strong, and oughtn't to have as much to do as the others. But he takes no notice."

"Hallo! What's that?"

The glitter of a diamond in the gaslight attracted Harry's attention. The diamond that had gleamed in Bunter's borrowed shirt-front was lying on the table.

Harry looked at it in surprise. He had noticed it when Bunter was wearing it, and now it lay on the table, he could see that it was a handsome diamond, and a valuable one.

"Oh, that," said Bunter—"that's Ionides' diamond!"

"Ionides!"

"Yes, I borrowed it of him to try the effect of a diamond in my shirt," explained Bunter.

"Without asking him, of course?"

"Yes."

"Why haven't you taken it back, then?"

"Well, I was going to, but I thought he might be in his study, and then very likely he would be waxy with me for having borrowed it without permission," explained Bunter.

"I should think he would, you young ass!"

"Well, I'm not going to have that Greek beast bullying me."

"You shouldn't have taken his diamond."

"What's the good of saying that now?" demanded Bunter.

"I didn't expect a chap of your sense to begin croaking out, I told you so!"

Wharton made a gesture of impatience.

"But you must take it back," he exclaimed. "If Ionides misses it, he may think that it has been stolen, and make a row."

"I'll take it back sometime."

"You'll take it back now!" said Wharton sternly. "I'm not going to have the cad of the Sixth make a charge of theft against somebody in this study. You know he's up against No. 1 Study all the time, and he'd be glad to make capital against us."

"Oh, all right, I'll take it back presently."

"Now—at once!" said Harry firmly.

"But I'm busy."

The captain of the Lower Fourth grasped Bunter by the collar, and jerked him out of his chair. Bunter left it with a grunt of protest.

"I—I say, Wharton, you know, you are a beast!"

"Take that diamond back to Ionides' study and put it where you found it, you young duffer. How would you like to be had up before the Head for stealing?"

"But I haven't stolen it."

"Ionides might think you had."

"Well, if I go presently—"

Wharton picked up the ruler, and Bunter bolted from the study. Harry waited with knitted brows for his return. Bunter's carelessness, to call it by no worse name, in money matters, had often caused trouble, but when he began borrowing valuable diamonds without mentioning the matter to the owners, it was likely to become serious. Ionides of the Sixth was about the last person at Greyfriars to take liberties of that kind patiently; and he was an enemy of Harry Wharton & Co., anyway.

In two minutes Bunter was back. He came in without saying a word, and sat in his chair and went on with his work. Wharton tapped him on the shoulder.

"Have you taken the diamond back, Billy?"

"You saw me go, didn't you?" demanded Bunter.

That would have been a sufficient answer from anyone else, but Harry Wharton knew the Owl of the Remove too well to be satisfied with it.

"Did you put the diamond exactly where you found it?" he asked.

Bunter went on writing. He did not appear to hear the question. Harry shook him, and a shower of blots went over the paper. Bunter gave a howl.

"You ass! See what you've done!"

"Never mind that—"

"But I do mind. I—"

"Have you put that diamond where you found it, Billy?" demanded Wharton, shaking the fat junior angrily.

"Well, no, not exactly."

"Where did you put it?"

"Well, you—er—see—"

"Where is it now?"

"You see, I heard somebody coming along the passage, and I thought I had better wait till the coast was clear," said Bunter. "So—so I came back."

"And where is the diamond now?"

"It's—er—in my waistcoat pocket."

"Take it out."

Bunter laid the diamond on the table. Wharton was very near jerking him out of his chair and laying the ruler about him. Bunter's invincible stupidity and obstinacy were very exasperating at times.

"Billy, won't you understand? That stud must be replaced, or Ionides may think it has been stolen. If he made a row about it you would find it very difficult to make the

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Head believe that you took it innocently. You might be expelled from Greyfriars for stealing."

"Oh, really, Wharton, I don't think you ought to call me a thief."

"I'm not calling you a thief. I said—"

"You can't say I've ever stolen anything. I borrow money sometimes, but I always pay it back—at least, when I'm not disappointed about a postal order. If you're thinking about that five shillings I owe you—"

"I'm not, idiot!"

"I'll settle that next week—"

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Harry angrily. "I don't believe you're as stupid as you pretend to be. This diamond must be taken back."

"Well, why can't you take it yourself if you're so anxious about it?" demanded Bunter. "There's nothing to stop you."

"I don't want to get mixed up in the matter."

"Well, then, mind your own business, and don't get mixed up in it," said Bunter. "I didn't ask you to bother your head about the blessed diamond."

"I will take it back," said Harry quietly.

He felt that there was nothing else to be done. He might kick Bunter out of the study, with strict injunctions to go to the Greek senior's room with the diamond, but Bunter would not go. It was like taking a horse to the water, without being able to make him drink. Harry picked up the diamond, slipped it into his pocket, and left Study No. 1. Bunter grunted irritably, and went on with his work.

Harry went quickly to the Sixth-Form passage, and tapped at the door of Ionides' study. If the Greek were there, he intended to hand him the diamond, and explain the matter concisely. Of course, he hoped that Ionides would not be there. In that case, he could put the stone on the dressing-table, and save all the difficulty of an explanation to the sneering, bullying Greek.

There was no reply to Harry's tap, neither was there a glimmer of light under the door. The study was evidently empty.

Harry Wharton opened the door and looked into the gloom.

"Are you here, Ionides?"

There was no reply.

Wharton entered the study. There was a glimmer from the window, where the rain glistened on the panes—only a glimmer, but sufficient to guide him. He felt his way cautiously towards the dressing-table. He had been in the study on several occasions, and knew the lay of it. He was within a couple of steps of the table under the window when there was a step in the doorway, and a strident, disagreeable voice rang out.

"Wharton, what are you doing here?"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Under Suspicion.

A MATCH flared out, glimmering through the gloom of the study. Ionides of the Sixth, with Carberry, the prefect, strode into the study. In a moment the Greek had turned on the gas and lighted it, and the room was ablaze with light. Harry Wharton blinked in the sudden illumination, and stood facing the seniors with a startled face, as was natural enough under the circumstances.

Ionides and Carberry stared at him. There was a savage sneer on the Greek's face, and Carberry looked puzzled. Carberry was on the worst of terms with Harry Wharton, with whom he had had many a rub. More than once he had sought to catch the junior tripping, and had failed, and had been twice spoken to severely by Dr. Locke on that very subject.

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That had made him very careful of how he accused Wharton of anything. Carberry disliked the junior intensely, but he was not yet thinking as Ionides thought—his look was simply puzzled, and did not betray the sneering suspicion of the Greek.

"What are you doing here?" repeated Ionides.
"A jape, I suppose?" said Carberry unpleasantly. "We saw you as we came up the passage, Wharton. You were mighty careful to make sure that nobody was in the study before you entered."

"I did not. I——"
"Well, what are you here for?"
"I will see if there is anything missing from my dressing-table," said Ionides, with a bitter sneer.

"Oh, stuff!" said Carberry. "Wharton's not a thief! And, hang it, the less you talk like that the better, Ionides, I tell you! We're English here, not Greeks!"

"Bah! Why is he here, then?"
Wharton flushed crimson.
"Only a dirty cad would allow such a suspicion to enter his mind at all!" he exclaimed.

"What! I——"
"Hold on!" said Carberry, pulling the angry Greek back.
"Hold on!"

"Am I to be called——"
"Well, let's see what he was up to. If he's here for a jape he's booked for a licking, and he's going to have it," said Carberry, with relish.

"I tell you I will see if there is anything missing."
"Oh, rats——"

Harry Wharton's heart beat painfully as the Greek strode towards the table. The diamond stud was in his pocket. To produce it at that moment would be terribly suspicious—it would look as if he had taken it, and his explanation would seem incredible. Yet—— But before he could think it out the Greek gave a yell.

"My diamond!"
"Eh? What's that?" exclaimed the prefect.
"My diamond is gone!"
"Your diamond?"

"My diamond stud. You have seen me wear it. It cost twenty-five pounds," the Greek exclaimed. "It was in this little ivory box, with my other stud. It is a dress stud. It has been taken."

"Oh, rot——"
"I tell you it has been taken!"
Harry Wharton slipped his fingers into his waistcoat pocket and drew out the stud. There was no help for it now. He knew that he would not leave that room without being searched now, and then the stud would be discovered upon him.

The Greek gave a sneering laugh at the sight of the stud, and Carberry's eyes seemed almost to start from his head.

"What?"
"I did not take it!" said Harry fiercely. "I was bringing it back to the study when you found me here."

The Greek laughed.
"Do you expect us to believe that?"
"Yes, I do, you confounded foreign cad!"

"Hold on!" said Carberry, whose eyes were glittering now. "You say that you were bringing back the stud to this room, Wharton?"

"Yes," said Harry.
"Then you had taken it before?"
"No, I had not."

"You imply that somebody else had taken it?"
"Yes."

"Stolen it, in fact?"
"Certainly not! It was taken by the person, I mean, simply to try on in a dress-shirt, and he was afraid to bring it back himself in case Ionides should see him and be brutal towards him, as he always is towards the juniors."

"Oh! And who was it that took it to try on in a dress-shirt?" said Carberry, his manner now as suspicious as the Greek's.

Wharton hesitated a moment. He did not want to get Bunter into a scrape, but it was a question now of clearing himself from a charge of attempted theft, and Bunter would have to take the consequences of his folly.

"It was Bunter," said Harry, after a pause.
"Oh! In that case, the only thing is to question Bunter," said Carberry. "If he admits having taken the stud, Ionides, you must own that Wharton is cleared."

"Then he shall be questioned without Wharton being present," exclaimed the Greek. "He will be afraid to tell the truth with Wharton looking on, and making signs to him."

"I should not do so——"
"I do not trust you."

"You can remain here, Wharton," said Carberry. "Where is Bunter now?"
"In my study."

"Good! Stay here, and we will go and question Bunter at once. Don't leave this room till we come back."

"Very well," said Harry.

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NEXT WEEK: "THE DISAPPEARANCE OF WUN LUNG."

Carberry was only acting within his authority as a prefect. He was very grave and quiet, though his eyes were glittering with malicious anticipation. The two seniors left the study, and Harry stood alone there, waiting for their return.

"What do you think of it, Carberry?" asked the Greek, as they hurried towards the Remove passage.

Carberry shook his head.
"I hardly know. I don't like Wharton, as you know, and I would give a term's pocket-money to see him kicked out of Greyfriars, but——"

"He stole the diamond."
"But——"

"He would have gone with it in a few minutes if we had not discovered him. He had just taken it up from the table, I am certain, when we entered."

"Well, we shall see what Bunter says."
Carberry opened the door of No. 1 Study. Billy Bunter did not look up. He thought it was Wharton returning, and he was busy. He looked up, however, with a yell as the prefect clapped him on the shoulder.

"Ow! Oh, really, Wharton——"
"Bunter!"

"Oh, is it you, Carberry? You've made me make a lot of blots. Ow!"

"Stand up!"
"What for? Ow! Oh, all right!"

"Did you take a diamond from Ionides' study, Bunter?"
Carberry asked the question sternly, with his eyes fixed upon the junior's fat face. It was an unfortunate way of questioning Bunter, for as soon as he was frightened, his wits went wool-gathering at once, and, untruthful as he always was, he became a very Munchausen or Rougemont when he was scared.

"I—I—I—— Certainly not," he stammered.

"Now, Bunter, answer quietly and calmly. Did you, or did you not, take a diamond from Ionides' study?"

"If you think I'm a thief, Carberry——" began Bunter, remembering that Wharton had said that he might be suspected. "If you want to get me kicked out of Greyfriars on a charge like that, you'll jolly well be disappointed."

"Will you answer me?"
"I've heard a chap say that Ionides' diamonds were paste, too, so it doesn't matter so jolly much if they are stolen."

"You young hound!" cried the Greek. "I——"
"Hold on, Ionides. We've got to go into this quietly. It's a question of a chap being expelled from the school."

Bunter's eyes dilated with fright.
"Wh-wh-what!"

"Whoever took that diamond from Ionides' study is a thief," said Carberry, "and there's no room at Greyfriars for a thief. Wharton says that you took it, and that he was taking it back."

"Oh, really, Carberry——"
"He says you wanted to try it on in a dress-shirt. If it's true, you'll be licked for your cheek, and there the matter ends."

"I believe Wharton took it," said the Greek.
"Let Bunter speak."

"I—I say, you fellows——" began Bunter feebly.
"Now, Bunter, answer me directly. Did you take a diamond from Ionides' room?"

"If Wharton says——"
"Never mind what he says. Did you, or did you not?"

"I haven't been in his room this evening."
"Come to the point. Give me a direct answer. Did you take the diamond?"

"No," said Bunter, driven into a corner at last, and telling the lie direct. "No, I didn't."

"Sure?"
"I suppose I'm sure. Really, you fellows——"

"That settles it," said Carberry. "Come on!"
The seniors strode away. Billy Bunter stood quaking.

What would follow he had no idea. He had saved himself, but what about Wharton? Billy Bunter had not a very tender conscience. But certainly at that moment he felt decidedly uncomfortable.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Terrible Accusation.

HARRY WHARTON waited in Ionides' study impatiently. He was feeling annoyed and insulted. The mere suspicion that he might have taken the diamond dishonestly was wounding and humiliating. His anger was rising every minute as he waited. As for any danger that the charge would be persisted in, he never thought of that. It did not even occur to him that Bunter would deny the truth.

Carberry and Ionides re-entered, after about five minutes that seemed an age to the captain of the Lower Fourth.

Wharton glanced at them angrily.

"Well, are you satisfied?" he asked.

"Yes," said Carberry.

"Good. You may think twice next time before suspecting a chap of being a thief. As for you, Ionides, you may be in the Sixth, but I tell you to your face that you are a low cad, and you can make the best of it."

The Greek flushed with rage, but Carberry restrained him.

"You don't seem to understand, Wharton," said Carberry coldly. "Bunter has satisfied us that he had nothing to do with the matter."

"What!"

"Your attempt to put it upon him has failed."

Wharton stared dazedly at the prefect.

"What do you mean, Carberry? Bunter does not deny having taken the diamond from this room, I suppose?"

"He does."

"He does? He denies it?"

"Yes."

"But—but he can't!" said Wharton, in amazement. "He took it to try on in a dress-shirt. I told him he might be suspected of stealing it if it wasn't returned, and he asked me to bring it back."

"Well, Bunter doesn't bear you out!"

"The young cad! I'll make him—"

"No, you won't," said Carberry, barring Wharton's passage to the door. "You won't speak a word to Bunter before the matter is settled with. I'm not going to have you frightening him into eating his own words."

"More likely you have frightened him into accusing me!" exclaimed Harry fiercely.

Carberry flushed. He had acted in an unwise and bullying manner, in dealing with Bunter; but he had meant to be quite fair. He had had the lesson of two failures in attempting to injure Wharton, to make him careful.

"That's enough, Wharton. If you have any accusations of that kind to make, you can make them to the doctor."

Harry Wharton started.

"You are going to take this foolery before the Head?"

"Yes."

"Very well, have your way. You have twice tried to fix a disgraceful charge upon me, to get me expelled from Greyfriars. You have failed each time. You will fail this time, too."

"If you are innocent—"

"I won't discuss that with you!" exclaimed Harry. "I have nothing to say to anyone that is cad enough to suspect me of being a thief. Have I ever done anything to make it possible to suspect me? You know I haven't. If there were any amount of evidence, you have no right to entertain a suspicion for a moment. A decent chap can't be a thief, and you know I've always been decent—more than you have been, or Ionides, either."

"I will not endure his insolence!" shouted Ionides. "Let me go, Carberry!"

"Hold on!"

"Yes, let him go!" cried Harry, whose blood was up. "I am not afraid of an alien rotter, if he were twice as big!"

Ionides, with an exclamation of rage, broke away from Carberry, and fairly flung himself upon the Remove lad.

Harry Wharton did not shrink from the contest. He faced the senior with clenched fists and flashing eyes.

Ionides struck out at him savagely, and reeled back from a crashing blow under the chin, which sent him spinning towards Carberry.

The prefect caught him in time to save him from crashing upon the floor.

It had been a terrible blow, with all Wharton's strength behind it, and the Greek's head was ringing and singing from the shock.

"I—I will kill him!" he muttered.

"Let him alone," said Carberry, in a low voice. "There's enough against him now to get him expelled from Greyfriars—you're making matters worse for us."

But the Greek did not heed. His savage, passionate nature was fully aroused, and he would have gone to almost any length for revenge upon the lad who had struck him back.

He sprang upon Harry Wharton like a tiger, and his long, sinuous arms closed round the sturdy form.

Wharton fought him gamely.

Lad as he was, years younger and inches shorter than the Greek, he was no mean antagonist for Ionides.

They reeled backwards and forwards savagely, till Harry went staggering against the table with the weight of the Greek upon him.

His back was forced over the edge of the table, and the bully forced him further and further back, till the pain seemed more than the boy could bear.

Still he struggled, and still no sound left his tight, hard lips. His eyes, gleaming with defiance, met the eyes of the

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Greek steadily. And now the bully freed his right hand to strike.

Carberry sprang forward. Bully as he was, he would not see that.

"Stop, Ionides!"

Ionides only gave a savage laugh, and struck. Harry's senses seemed to reel as the heavy blow crashed upon his defenceless face.

Carberry dragged the brute off.

"Stop it, Ionides. Are you mad?"

"I will—"

Harry Wharton tore himself loose. But he was not thinking of escape. He sprang at the Greek, hitting out right and left.

"Take that, you coward, and that!"

Ionides gave a roar as a fist crashed into his eye, then upon his nose. He leaped upon Wharton again.

But at that moment a sharp, clear voice spoke in the open doorway of the study.

"What does this disgraceful scene mean?"

The two seniors swung round.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was looking in. His eyes were glinting as he looked at the two bullies.

"Kindly explain this, Carberry. You are a prefect."

"I—I—"

"Ionides seems to be using Wharton most brutally."

"Well, I tried to stop him," said Carberry. "Ionides lost his temper. Still, Wharton had stolen something belonging to him, and checked him into the bargain, so it's not to be wondered at."

Mr. Quelch started.

"Wharton—a thief!"

"Yes, sir."

"Impossible."

"Thank you, sir," said Harry quietly. "I was sure you would not believe it, sir."

"I should certainly not believe it without the strongest evidence," said Mr. Quelch. "If you seriously make this accusation, Carberry—"

"I do not make it," said the prefect hastily. "It is Ionides. I was only looking into the matter as a prefect; but Wharton's guilt is clear."

"I do accuse him!" exclaimed Ionides fiercely. "He was caught in the very act of stealing my diamond stud. It was in his pocket."

"I can explain it, sir," said Harry, meeting Mr. Quelch's surprised glance.

"I hope you can, Wharton. I am sure you can. But this will have to go before the Head. I was about to go and see him on another matter. This must be attended to at once. Follow me."

"If you please, sir, will you send for Bunter, as he is my witness."

"Certainly."

Five minutes later the two seniors, Mr. Quelch, and Wharton were in the Head's study, and Billy Bunter, trembling in every inch of his fat carcase, joined them there.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Found Guilty.

DR. LOCKE'S face was very grave. Mr. Quelch had, in a few words, informed him of what was the matter, and the Head showed very plainly by his look that he had little faith in the accusation against the captain of the Remove. He had observed Wharton a great deal since he had joined Greyfriars, and he was about the last boy whom the doctor would have suspected of dishonesty. But it was the Head's duty to sift the matter thoroughly.

"You accuse Wharton, Ionides?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said the Greek, with a venomous tightening of the lips.

"Explain the grounds you have for your suspicion."

"Carberry and I were coming along to my study, when we saw Wharton stop at the door. He made sure that there was no one in the study—"

"How do you know that?"

"Well, he knocked, and then asked if anyone was there."

"Well, go on."

"Then he went in. Carberry and I followed him, and found him standing by my dressing-table. The diamond was gone, and he had it in his pocket."

"Are you sure?"

"He produced it himself, after I had missed it, with a cock-and-bull story about bringing it back to the study after another fellow had taken it."

"You bear out this statement, Carberry?"

"Yes, sir."

"You think that Wharton stole the diamond?" asked the Head, fixing a cold, clear glance upon the prefect.

"Yes, sir. I said it was impossible, at first, as Wharton will testify."

"It is true," said Harry. "He did say so."

"But when Bunter failed to bear out Wharton's explanation, Wharton having called him for a witness, I had to agree with Ionides."

"Very good! I cannot help remembering, Carberry, that you have twice been strangely deceived into believing unfounded charges against Wharton."

The prefect flushed.

"I do not make this charge, sir. Ionides makes it, and I am simply a witness as to what passed in my presence."

"Very good! Now, Wharton, I am ready for your explanation. I must say first that I have very little doubt that your explanation will be satisfactory. If you should be guilty, you will be expelled from Greyfriars. That goes without saying. But only the strongest evidence will make me believe you capable of such an act."

"Thank you, sir!" said Harry gratefully. "I am innocent."

The Greek shrugged his shoulders disdainfully.

"Innocent!" he exclaimed. "When—"

"Enough, Ionides! It is Wharton's turn to speak now."

The Greek bit his lip.

"Go on, Wharton!"

"I hope, sir, that the fact that a fellow took the diamond from Ionides's study, not for the purpose of keeping it, will be overlooked, as I am compelled to mention his name to clear myself."

"Certainly, Wharton! Though, why else should the diamond be taken?"

"A silly young ass, sir, wanted to try the effect of a diamond in his shirt-front."

"Oh, really Wharton—"

"Silence, Bunter!"

"It was Bunter, sir. He has been borrowing fellows' clothes right and left to try on, to make himself dressy enough for the party at Cliff House. He borrowed Ionides's diamond among other things. Then he was afraid to take it back to the study, in case Ionides should catch him, and lick him for having borrowed it. I took it back, because I knew that if it were left in our study, and Ionides missed it and made a row, it might be serious for all of us in Study No. 1."

"Quite right. Bunter, I suppose this is true."

"He told us it was not true, sir," said Carberry. "If he had borne out Wharton's statement, I should have been satisfied."

"We will hear Bunter's own account. Bunter, did you take the diamond from Ionides's study first of all?"

"No, sir," said Billy promptly.

"You are sure you did not take it?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"Why!" exclaimed Wharton. "You—"

"Silence, Wharton! You must not interrupt Bunter," said the Head, his face growing a little more stern.

"Very well, sir," said Harry.

Bunter blinked round with a frightened look. His intelligence was not very extensive, but he felt that having told one story, he had better stick to it. Of the consequences to Harry Wharton he was not thinking at all; all his concern at present was for his own skin.

"You did not ask Wharton to take the stud back to Ionides's room, Bunter?"

"No, sir."

"You never removed it from Ionides's study yourself?"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Answer my question!"

"No, sir," said Billy desperately.

The Head's face seemed to set like iron.

"This is very strange, Wharton. Bunter, your own witness, does not bear out your statements in the slightest degree."

Harry's face was almost haggard now. He understood clearly how much Bunter's cowardice and untruthfulness might mean to him.

"I don't understand it, sir," he said. "I can only think that Carberry and Ionides have frightened Bunter into telling this untruth."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"I am afraid that is no explanation, Wharton. You called Bunter as a witness of your own accord, and he denies your statements entirely. What am I to conclude?"

"Not that I am a thief, sir," said Harry firmly. "No one has a right to conclude that."

"Wharton!"

"I repeat it, sir!" Harry's eyes were flashing. "Ask Mr. Quelch whether I am the sort of fellow to steal. He is my Form-master, and ought to know me."

"Mr. Quelch's opinion of you is high, and so has mine been; but this is a matter of fact, Wharton, not of opinion. Have you any other evidence to adduce beside Bunter's. Did anyone hear you talking to him about returning the diamond to Ionides's study?"

"We were alone in No. 1, sir."

The Head knitted his brows.

"There was a painful silence in the study for a full

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minute. Wharton was white now, his handsome face marked with lines. Bunter was palpitating. Carberry and Ionides exchanged glances of hardly-concealed triumph. They were sure of their victim now. The boy they hated was doomed to quit Greyfriars in ignominy that would cling to him all his life. It was a full repayment of all the little scores the bullies of the Sixth owed him.

Mr. Quelch was gloomy and thoughtful.

Harry Wharton was one of his favourite pupils, as he fully deserved to be, and black as the evidence was against him, the Remove-master simply could not believe that he was guilty.

But if he were innocent, there must be some loophole in the evidence. What was it? Where was it? Mr. Quelch tried to think.

The Head broke the silence.

"This is a most painful matter," he said. "On the evidence, Wharton's guilt seems to be established. He is discovered in Ionides's study, with Ionides's diamond in his pocket. His explanation is repudiated by the very boy whom he calls as a witness. I can only come to one conclusion. Yet I am loth to do so. It seems to me that there must be some mistake—that Wharton may clear himself yet. At all events, I shall not decide in a hurry. The matter shall rest—"

"One moment!" said Mr. Quelch. "May I speak, sir?"

The Head glanced at him.

"Certainly, Mr. Quelch. If you can throw any light on this matter, I shall be only too grateful."

"I think I can do so, sir; at all events, sufficient to prove whether Wharton has stated the facts with regard to Bunter."

"Good, indeed! Go on, please!"

Wharton's heart beat high with hope; and Billy Bunter quaked in his boots. What was the Remove-master about to say?

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Witnesses!

"WHARTON, you have declared that Bunter was dressing himself in other boys' clothes, to make a good appearance for the Cliff House party?" asked the Remove-master.

"Yes, sir," said Harry, who did not yet see the Form-master's drift. "It is quite true, sir. He took clothes and things from a lot of fellows, and Ionides's diamond was among the things he borrowed to try on."

"You deny this, Bunter?"

"Yes, sir," said Billy promptly.

"Did the boys whose clothes he borrowed make any complaint, Wharton?"

Harry could not help smiling, even at that moment, at the recollection of the scene in No. 1 Study.

"Yes, sir, rather! They came to the study in a gang, and stripped Bunter, and left him in his pants and undervest."

"Ah! My point is this, sir!" said Mr. Quelch, turning to the Head. "That if it can be proved that Bunter took things from the other boys without asking permission, that it is very probable he borrowed Ionides's diamond also."

"Quite so, Mr. Quelch," said the Head, with a nod of approval.

"I have also another point to make, which I will come to later. May we send for the boys whom Wharton alleges stripped Bunter of his borrowed feathers?"

"Decidedly!"

"Give me a list of the names, Wharton."

"Certainly, sir! There were Nugent, Cherry, Ogilvy, Bulstrode, and Linley, of ours, and Blundell, of the Fifth. There were a good many others, too."

"Those will be sufficient," said Dr. Locke, with a slight smile. "Will you summon them to the room, Mr. Quelch?"

The Remove-master stepped outside, and sent a fag to call the juniors mentioned. In a few minutes they came crowding to the study, with Blundell, of the Fifth, all of them looking very much astonished, and somewhat alarmed. It was generally a serious matter for a junior to be called into that room; and each of them probably had some little delinquency on his mind which he half expected he was to be called to account for.

They looked more astonished as they saw Wharton and Bunter in the room, and read in their faces that something serious was on foot.

ANSWERS

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Mr. Quelch closed the door after the boys had filed in.

"Will you question them, sir?" he asked.

"Yes. Blundell first. Blundell, has Bunter borrowed any article of personal attire of yours to-day?"

The Fifth-Former hesitated to reply.

"You may speak freely, Blundell. A serious charge has been made, and only by ascertaining the facts can I sift it to the bottom. You need not be afraid of injuring Bunter by speaking out. I do not intend to punish the action in question, though if he has spoken falsely it will be a different matter."

"Very well, sir. He borrowed my sleeve-links. I didn't really mind, sir, only he's such a careless young ass, that he might have lost them, and then he would have told lies about it, or tried to throw the blame on someone else."

"Oh, really, Blundell—"

"Silence, Bunter! That is sufficient, Blundell. You may go."

The Fifth-Former, still greatly wondering, left the study.

"Linley, was anything of yours borrowed by Bunter?"

"Yes, sir, my evening shoes."

"Oh, really, Linley—"

"And of yours, Bulstrode—"

"A dress-tie, sir," said Bulstrode.

"Oh, really, Bulstrode—"

"Silence, Bunter! And of yours, Ogilvy?"

"My evening coat, sir—and it was jolly well burst on him, sir! Of course, it wasn't wide enough for him by half."

"Anything of yours, Cherry?"

"My trucks, sir," said Bob.

"Eh? I said any article of clothing," said the doctor. Bob Cherry coloured.

"I mean my trousers, sir."

"Oh! And of yours, Nugent?"

"A dress-shirt, sir."

"Then it seems to be clear that Bunter did borrow things on all sides, sir," said Mr. Quelch, with a glint in his eyes. "Why not Ionides's diamond among the others? He has denied it, but I am sorry to say that I know Bunter to be a most untruthful boy."

"Oh, really, sir—" said Bunter feebly.

"But now for the other point I mentioned. It seems that Bunter borrowed a dress-shirt belonging to you, Nugent?"

"Yes, sir," said Nugent wonderingly.

"If he took the stud also, it must have been for the purpose of trying the effect in a shirt-front," said Mr. Quelch. "Now when you boys found Bunter in his borrowed clothes, did any of you observe whether he was wearing a diamond in his shirt-front?"

"Yes, sir," said several voices.

"You are certain?" asked Mr. Quelch.

"I am," said Nugent. "I took it out of my shirt, you see, when I took the shirt, and I laid it on the study table. I didn't know who it belonged to. I suppose I forgot all about it."

"I saw it there," said Ogilvy. "I remember thinking it was some paste diamond belonging to Bunter."

"Would you know it again?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said the Scottish junior. "It was a big diamond, set in gold—too jolly big for a chap to wear in his shirt-front, unless he wanted to show it off as being expensive. I thought it was paste."

The Head and Mr. Quelch could not help smiling, and Ionides turned red with rage.

"You are sure you would know it again, Ogilvy—and you, Nugent?"

"Yes, sir," said both juniors at once.

"Pray produce the diamond in question, Ionides."

The Greek, who was looking grim now, drew out the diamond, and laid it sullenly upon the Head's table.

"Is that the diamond, Nugent?"

"Yes, sir," said Frank, looking at it.

"Do you recognise it also, Ogilvy?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are both certain that you saw Bunter with this diamond, trying it on in a dress-shirt, in his study?"

"Quite certain, sir."

Billy Bunter was trembling. He had reason to tremble, for it was now clear to all—even to Carberry and Ionides—that Bunter had lied, and that Wharton's story of the diamond was exactly accurate.

Harry Wharton drew a deep, deep breath.

Mr. Quelch had cleared him—it seemed to Harry as if the Form-master's hand had been stretched out to save him from a deep and terrible gulf, upon the verge of which he had been stumbling!

Every eye was fixed now upon Bunter.

He was trembling—and he had reason to tremble. The Head's brow was black as thunder, and his eyes seemed almost to pierce the wretched junior.

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THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Explains.

"BUNTER!"

The Head rapped out the name as if it were a pistol-shot. Bunter gave a jump.

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Bunter, you have told an untruth."

"Oh, sir!"

"You have spoken falsely, and in the most serious possible manner. Wharton might have been expelled from Greyfriars on the charge of stealing the diamond."

"Stealing the diamond!" cried Nugent.

"Yes, my boys. The diamond was discovered in Wharton's possession, and Ionides accused him of stealing it."

"The cad!" shouted Bob Cherry, forgetting where he was for the moment. "The rotten cad!"

"Silence, sir!"

"Yes, sir, but to accuse Wharton! Why, the beast ought to be kicked out of the school, sir. You can glare at me, you worm!" yelled Bob, glaring at Ionides in his turn. "By Jove, you're a rotten cad and a sneaking worm!"

"You forget yourself, Cherry!" said the Head sternly.

"I—I—I'm sorry, sir," stammered Bob, "but—"

"I excuse you, but you must control yourself, Cherry. Ionides has acted hastily, in my opinion. I should like to see him with a better opinion of his schoolfellows. One should always be slow to suspect another person of so horrible a thing as stealing."

"I hope you do not blame me, sir," said Carberry. "I was bound to look into it as a prefect, and I laughed at the idea till Bunter failed to back up Wharton's statement."

"No, I do not blame you, Carberry. But it is all most unfortunate. If Bunter had told the truth, this wretched affair might have been wholly avoided. I cannot help thinking that you must have been injudicious in the way you questioned Bunter in the first place. You must have frightened him, or he would not have told these astounding falsehoods, I think. I do not say that you intended to do so. But there is no excuse for Bunter. He has deliberately lied his Form-fellow's honour away."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Bunter! You did take the diamond from Ionides's study?"

"Well, you see, sir—"

"Yes or no?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"You told me you did not."

"You—you didn't put it like that, sir!" said Bunter eagerly. "You asked me if first of all I took the diamond from Ionides study!"

"Well, then—"

"Well, sir, I didn't. I took Nugent's shirt first of all, and Ionides's diamond second."

The Head almost gasped.

Whether Bunter was really as stupid as he appeared to be was a question. The fat junior was certainly very dense, but he had a way of affecting to be denser than he really was when it was a question of getting out of a scrape.

"Bunter, you knew perfectly well that I wished to know whether you had taken the diamond at all."

"Well, I didn't exactly take it, either, sir. I borrowed it."

"Why did you not tell Carberry so when he questioned you?"

"Well, I—I thought he was going to lick me," said Bunter. "I—I only borrowed the diamond, and then Wharton said I should be accused of stealing it, and expelled from Greyfriars. I—I thought I'd better say nothing about it."

"But you denied having taken the diamond?"

"That—that was only—only a figure of speech, sir."

"Bunter!"

"Yes, sir. I'm sorry I was misunderstood. It places me in the position of having failed to back up a chap I know," said Bunter. "Of course, that's very painful to me. Wharton knows that I should always stand by him, through thick and thin."

Wharton could not help smiling. He could afford to smile now.

"Bunter!" said the Head. "Are you not aware that you have committed a most serious act in refusing to clear Wharton by stating the truth?"

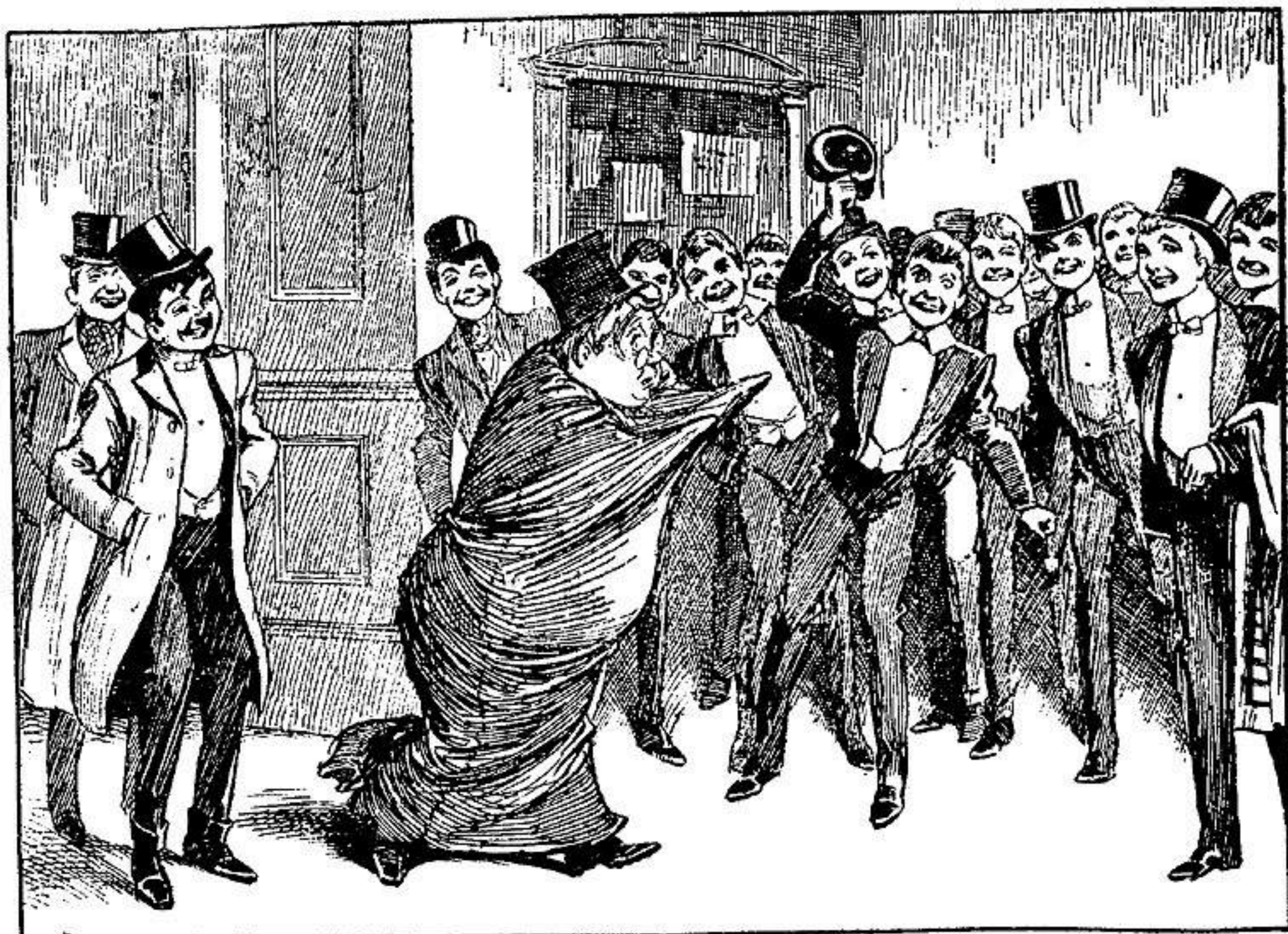
"But he is cleared, sir."

"Not through you, however."

"What does it matter, sir, so long as he is cleared?"

"But for Mr. Quelch, Wharton would still lie under the imputation of having taken Ionides's diamond with dishonest intentions."

"Yes, sir, I knew I could rely upon Mr. Quelch to bring out the facts," said Billy Bunter triumphantly. "He's an awfully clever man, sir, and we all admire him ever so much."



The fellows simply doubled up and roared and roared as Billy Bunter came staggering into Greyfriars.

in the Remove. I knew all the time that he would settle the matter all right, and—and that was why I didn't bother, sir."

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry; while Mr. Quelch and the doctor could only stare silently at the veracious Billy.

"You see, sir, it was better to leave a thing of this sort in a master's hands," said Billy, encouraged by the silence. "They can manage it ever so much better than a junior. You see how easily Mr. Quelch settled it when he once started."

The Head drew a deep breath.

"Bunter, you have told deliberate falsehoods!"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"What else do you call it?"

"Well, perhaps I was a little diplomatic, sir," said Bunter thoughtfully. "A little diplomacy is necessary at times—especially in dealing with a chap like Ionides. If I had said that I borrowed the diamond, sir, he would have thought I had taken it to keep. Wharton said he would, and Wharton knows him. So I—I temporised."

"You lied!"

"Oh, no, sir! I hope you don't think I would tell a lie, sir?"

"What! You stated the direct contrary of the truth!"

"Well, yes, sir, in a way, perhaps, but—but I wouldn't tell a lie. I promised my mother when I first came to school, sir, never to tell lies or bear tales. I'd no sooner tell a lie than I'd tell you that Bob Cherry was in your garden last evening. One would be as bad as the other."

"What! Cherry! In my garden!"

"I—I only went to fetch a ball that had gone over, sir," said Bob, looking daggers at the Owl of the Remove.

"Bunter," said the Head, "I am afraid you are incorrigible. You are densely stupid, but that I can pardon; but you are the most untruthful boy in the school—I might say in the world. You have almost succeeded in ruining a

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Form-fellow by your untruthfulness, and I do not know what punishment is adequate for your conduct."

"I'm willing to let it stand over for the present, sir," said Bunter eagerly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry; and then he turned the colour of a beetroot. "I—I beg your pardon, sir!"

"I will think how I shall deal with you, Bunter," said Dr. Locke at last. "You may go. Ionides, I hope you will be a little less suspicious in the future. You can see what a serious matter it is to bring a charge like this against a boy. Wharton, I am sorry this occurred. I need not say that you leave this study with your honour unstained. I wish I could say as much of Bunter. You may go, boys."

The juniors left the study. Carberry and Ionides followed. The prefect walked quickly away—Ionides, after closing the Head's door, paused to give the juniors a venomous look.

"I shall make you sorry for this, all the same," he muttered savagely.

"Cad!"

It was a chorus from the juniors.

The Greek clenched his fists with rage. He looked as if he would rush upon the Removites for a moment, and Harry Wharton & Co. lined up to receive him. They would have been glad enough to bump the Greek just then. But Ionides thought better of it.

He strode away, followed by a prolonged hiss, up the passage.

"The worm!" said Bob Cherry. "He ought to be kicked out of the school! As for Bunter—Come here, Bunter."

"Excuse me, you fellows, I've got to see a chap—"

"You've got to stay here!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, grasping the fat junior by the arm and marching him along. "We haven't done with you yet!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"I don't know what's bad enough to do to him," said Bob. "I believe the Head is going to let him off. We're jolly well not going to!"

"Not half!"

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Collar him!"

"I—I— Help! Ow! Oh!"

Billy Bunter was collared. The Removites were wrathful. As Bob Cherry had said, Bunter frequently approached "the limit," and this time he had passed it. The fat junior required a lesson, and the Removites were prepared to give him one.

They took Bunter back to the junior common-room by the delightful process known as the frog's-march.

About every fourth step they stopped to bump him on the floor, every bump being followed by a gasp and a howl from Billy Bunter.

He was red and flustered and breathless by the time they dumped him down in the common-room. He lay on the floor with his collar torn out, his face the colour of a beet-root, gasping for breath.

The juniors surrounded him, grinning and chuckling.

"Now," said Bob Cherry, with a wave of the hand, "let that be a lesson to you, both to let other fellows' property alone, and to tell the truth sometimes."

"Yes, rather! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Bunter was left to recover himself. As a matter of fact, he had got off very lightly, and he knew it. But he was not thinking of his delinquencies. Another matter, more important to Bunter, was occupying his mind. He put his collar straight, and brushed his hair, and laid in wait for Mr. Quelch when the Remove-master should leave the Head's study. Mr. Quelch came out at last, and Bunter came sidling up to him.

"If you please, sir——" he began.

The Form-master looked at him sternly.

"Ah, Bunter, it is you! I trust you have reflected over this matter, and have reached a proper state of repentance."

"Oh, yes, sir; I'm sincerely sorry. But——"

"There is no excuse for your conduct, Bunter."

"No, sir; but——"

"Well, what is it?"

"I haven't had time to get my prep. done, sir, owing to all this," said Bunter. "I—I hope you will excuse me in the morning, sir, as this really wasn't my fault, was it?"

Mr. Quelch looked at him steadily.

"I shall certainly not excuse you, Bunter."

"But, sir——"

"Enough!"

And the Remove-master strode away, leaving Billy in an angry and discontented frame of mind. He turned his steps towards the study; but it was bedtime now, and he had to go to the dormitory. And he went to bed with the conviction that the Remove-master would cane him in the morning, and would be glad of the opportunity—a conviction that was fully realised in the Remove Form-room the next day.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Raid.

DURING the next few days the Removites thought of little but the Cliff House party. Even Bunter's rascality was forgotten, in the great interest excited by that invitation to Cliff House. Practically all the Remove and the Upper Fourth were going, so the party would be a large one. And the juniors were racking their brains to decide upon ways and means. Those who were wealthy, or had generous uncles and aunts, were likely to do very well. The others had to make the best show they could. Evening clothes were indispensable, but, as Bob Cherry said, things a chap had knocked about in for three terms wouldn't do. Something had to be done for appearances. So there was knitting of brows and counting of cash among the dandies of the Remove. The most anxious fellow of all was Billy Bunter.

Bunter, with his usual coolness, had fully decided that he would raid all the wardrobes within reach, and take what he wanted. His essay in that direction had had such disastrous results, however, that it seemed risky to repeat it. Even Bunter did not feel inclined to borrow jewellery any more. But as for clothes, he had to have some from somewhere; and where were they to come from?

Bunter was careless with his clothes, as he was with everything. He was certainly not well provided. Bob Cherry told him that he would pass in the crowd; but passing in the crowd was not to Bunter's taste. He wanted to attract attention, to excite general admiration by his dressy elegance.

He couldn't do that in clothes that showed grease-stains, and were baggy at the knees and soiled at the elbows. That was certain.

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A MOTOR-CYCLE!

Given
away.

"PLUCK" 1st.

Given
away.

ROLLER SKATES!

What was to be done?

Billy Bunter was a systematic borrower, and he set out now upon a borrowing campaign, with more than his usual nerve and persistence.

But he had much less than his usual success. For money was tight in the Remove; every fellow wanted all he could raise for his own expenses.

And Billy Bunter, after an afternoon spent in trying to raise the wind, having realised the sum of sixpence—which sixpence proved on examination to be a bad one—gave up the attempt. He reproachfully asked the chums of No. 1 Study what was to be done.

"Better not go," suggested Nugent.

"Stay at home," said Harry. "After the caddish way you've acted lately, Bunter, I must say I should be glad to be rid of you for an evening."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"The ridiculous would be the great and boonful blessing," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Oh, really, Inky——"

"Anyway, don't bother me," said Wharton shortly.

"But what am I to do?"

"Ask the Head."

"The Head?" repeated Billy Bunter, in surprise.

"Yes; you might as well ask him as ask me."

Bunter grunted discontentedly. There was evidently no help to be had from the chums of the Remove.

Bunter thought it over carefully. It was certain that he could not raise money by the date of the Cliff House party. His only resource was to borrow the clothes, taking an article here and an article there as he could. But even that was not easy. The fellows wanted their things for themselves, and Bunter's round of borrowing was as unsuccessful in the case of clothes as in the case of money.

Bulstrode offered him an old pair of football boots, and Ogilvy said he could have a pair of gaiters. These were the only offers Bunter had, and he did not accept them.

"I'm jolly well going, all the same," the fat junior said to himself. "They're all jealous of me; that's what the matter really is. They know jolly well that I shall cut them out with the girls. That's why they're trying to keep me away from the party. But I'll jolly well go all the same."

And Bunter thought it over till he came upon a scheme.

The night of the party arrived, and it found the Remove and the Upper Fourth in a state of suppressed excitement.

Temple, Dabney & Co., of the Upper Fourth, were greatly pleased with themselves, having not the slightest doubt that they would outshine the Remove.

The Removites, however, were in fine feather, excepting Billy Bunter.

The juniors were to leave Greyfriars in two large brakes at seven o'clock, and for hours before that they were busy and excited.

Bunter was excited, too, though he tried not to show it. He did not wish to awaken suspicion. The Remove were suspicious already, as a matter of fact. Bunter had heard Wharton say that when the time came to dress for the party, every fellow had better keep his eyes open to see that Billy did not purloin any part of his wardrobe. And Billy knew that his Form-fellows would be on the watch.

The clothes were laid out in the Remove dormitory ready, and Bunter looked into the dormitory about an hour and a half before the time fixed for starting. The juniors were not likely to come up and change for a good half-hour yet. The slowest of them could not require more than an hour for changing.

Bunter turned up the light in the dormitory, and looked at the clothes. The juniors were not anxious about them so far, as if Bunter had taken anything, he would have been compelled to disgorge before they started.

But there was a scheme in the fat junior's mind.

Instead of going over in the brake with the others, it had occurred to him to start first, and walk the distance. It was a short walk to Cliff House, and he could take his shoes in his overcoat pockets.

By that means he would be off the scene in his borrowed plumes before the Remove could get on his track, and then it would be too late for them to trouble him; they would not be able to make a row at Cliff House. As for what might happen later, Bunter did not consider that. He never did look far into the future.

The fat junior's eyes glistened behind his spectacles as he looked into the dorm.

He listened in the passage for a moment; then he stepped into the room.

His selection of articles of attire was soon made.

He took a coat here, a vest there, a shirt and a set of studs from one place, a collar and tie from another, and so on.

As soon as he was well provided, he beat a retreat from

the dormitory. In case of anyone coming up, he did not intend to change there.

He carried his prizes away to the box-room, and there, lighting the gas, he changed into evening attire.

He had selected the likeliest things to fit him, and though his fat limbs put rather a strain upon the garments, the fit was not so very bad.

He had taken a looking-glass into the box-room, and he surveyed the result of the change as well as he could in it. His fat face beamed with satisfied conceit.

"Jolly good!" he remarked. "A chap with a good figure always looks so jolly well in evening-dress. This opera-hat suits me down to the ground. Lemme see, where are Nugent's shoes? Oh, here they are! Good! Now I'd better be off."

And Bunter, resplendent in Elliott's trousers, and Ogilvy's waistcoat, and Nugent's shirt and coat, and Bulstrode's collar and tie, and Wharton's hat, thrust Nugent's shoes into the pockets of Bob Cherry's overcoat, turned out the gas, and left the box-room.

He descended the back stairs, to make sure of meeting no one in the Remove, and left the house by a back door. He cut across the dark gardens, and reached the Close by a roundabout path, and hurried out of the gates.

He paused to look back at Greyfriars for a moment. There was not a movement, not a sound. He was not even suspected yet. Bunter chuckled, and continued on his way to Cliff House.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

At Cliff House.

"TIME we changed!" remarked Harry Wharton.

He rose from the chess-table in the common-room. It was a quarter past six, and it was advisable to allow themselves plenty of time. Some of the juniors had already gone up. Harry Wharton & Co. ascended the stairs.

They passed the open door of the Upper Fourth dormitory. All the burners were alight there, and they could see the Fourth-Formers busy within. Temple, Dabney & Co. were getting ready.

"Hallo!" called out Temple. "Are you kids coming?"

"Coming?" said Harry Wharton. "Yes, rather!"

"Oh! I suppose you know that evening-dress and washing one's neck are de rigueur this evening?" said Temple.

"Any fellow without a clean collar, too, is barred."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

"You see, as you'll be with a senior Form, you'll have to be careful," said Temple. "You mustn't make things awkward for us."

"You'll probably be awkward enough yourselves," remarked Nugent. "Are you going to take both your feet, Dabney?"

"Look here——"

"Well, I was thinking that we shall be crowded in the brakes, anyway, and you oughtn't to be allowed twice as much room as anybody else."

A pillow whirling through the air caused Nugent to dodge out into the passage again, and the Removites went on their way laughing. But they ceased to laugh as they reached their own dormitory. From within that dormitory came the sounds of surprise and wrath.

"Where's my waistcoat?"

"Where's my collar?"

"Where's my bags?"

"Where's my gloves?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as they went in. "What's the matter now? Surely Bunter hasn't been raiding again."

"Bunter! Of course," howled Bulstrode, "I remember now that my collars fit him, and he asked me to lend him one. He's taken it."

"He's taken my gloves, too."

"And my trucks."

"And my——"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "I can hardly imagine his having the cheek to take them. He must know that we shall strip him of them. Hallo! Where's my hat? I left it there in the case."

"It it gone?"

"Yes, rather."

"Then it's Bunter."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "My coat's gone!"

"And my shoes."

Loud was the wrath of the Removites. Half the fellows missed some article or other, and there could be little doubt as to who the raider was.

"Where is Bunter?"

That was the vengeful question that was asked on all sides. Fellows took up belts and cricket-stumps and went to look for Bunter.

Bunter, however, was not to be found.

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NEXT WEEK: "THE DISAPPEARANCE OF WUN LUNG."

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They hunted for him in the studies, they hunted in the passages and the deserted class-rooms, they hunted high and they hunted low, and they found him not.

There was no sign of Billy Bunter.

It became clear at last that he was not in the house. He had left Greyfriars; and they could guess that he had started early for Cliff House, in order to save painful explanations.

"We ought to have thought of this," said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "We might have guessed that he would be up to some dodge of this kind."

"The oughtfulness is terrific," agreed the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Well, it's too late now," Nugent remarked. "What's to be done?"

Harry Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"There's only one thing to be done—we must manage without the things he has taken, and scalp him for it later. Some of you have old things to replace what he's taken—or you can borrow them."

"Fancy going in old things while that fat bounder goes in our new ones!"

"Yes, it's hard cheese."

"It will be harder for Bunter—afterwards!" said Bob Cherry darkly. "We can't kick up a row at Cliff House, but I'll be on his neck the moment we've left."

"Good!" exclaimed Tom Brown. "As soon as we've left Cliff House, we'll strip him of the things, and let him come home in a sack or something."

"Good egg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And somewhat comforted by the prospect of Bunter's condign punishment, the Removites recommenced their preparations for the visit to Cliff House. They had lost a great deal of time in looking for Bunter, and they had to hurry. Many of the fellows were now quite ready. The juniors whose things Bunter had taken managed to supply the deficiency, from older garments, or by borrowing of the other fellows. They were not quite so satisfied with their appearance as they had hoped to be, but that could not be helped.

The whole Form was ready by the time the brakes arrived to take them to Cliff House. Hazeldene was looking out of the window, and he called out as soon as he saw the lights gleaming upon the drive.

"Here they are!"

The juniors got into their coats. There were two brakes, one for the Upper Fourth and the other for the Remove. The juniors clambered in, pretty well cramming the two vehicles, large as they were.

The brakes rolled off down the dark road.

It was a short drive to Cliff House. Ere long the lights of the girls' school came into sight, shining out over the sands of Pegg Bay.

The great iron gates were open, and rows of Chinese lanterns lighted the drive up to the house.

The brakes rolled in, and stopped before the wide stone steps, and the juniors clambered down. As they did so, a fat form glided out of the shrubbery, and joined them.

It was Billy Bunter.

The fat junior was grinning. The Removites looked at him, and Harry Wharton was greatly inclined to send him rolling into the shrubbery again.

But that was impossible. Miss Penelope Primrose was standing in the lighted hall to receive her youthful visitors, and all had to be harmony and sweet smiles.

Bunter knew that perfectly well. He intended to go in with the others, but he had not joined them until it was quite safe to do so.

"You young villain!" whispered Elliott, as they went up the steps. "You wait a bit!"

"Eh?" said Bunter, aloud.

"You've got my trousers on."

"What did you say, Elliott?" asked Bunter, in a loud voice, for they were within hearing of Miss Penelope now.

Elliott snapped his teeth and was silent. Bunter was safe from vengeance at the present moment, and knew he could be defiant.

The juniors entered the wide, lighted hall, and Miss Penelope received them in her kind and gracious way. Billy Bunter's face wore a perpetual grin, as if he were greatly tickled by the way he had done the Remove. The grin was changed a little when the juniors went into a big room to take their coats off. Bunter blinked round at the fellows a little nervously, and kept near the door.

Ferocious glances were turned upon him.

"You worm!" said Bob Cherry. "That's my overcoat!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"That's my hat."

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"You've got my best socks," said Hazeldene wrathfully.

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"Oh, really, Vaseline—"

"You—you worm! You mongrel!" said a dozen voices.

"I—I say, you fellows—"

"Shall we bump him now?" asked Tom Brown.

Billy Bunter skipped to the door.

"I say, you fellows, don't play the giddy ox, you know. I had to borrow some things to come in. If you touch me I'll yell. You ought to have lent me some things. I have been treated with rotten meanness by the fellows in my own study."

"Oh, shut up!" said Nugent.

Billy Bunter blinked doubtfully at the other fellows, and slipped off his coat, hat, gloves, and boots. He donned white gloves and shoes, and parted his hair once more with a comb, and put his dress tie—or, rather Bulstrode's dress tie—straight. He looked at his reflection in the glass, and was eminently satisfied. Perhaps that was on account of his short sight.

"I say, you fellows," he exclaimed, turning round from the glass, "don't you think I really look rather nice?"

"You look a perfect picture," said Bob Cherry solemnly.

"You really think so, Cherry?"

"You do, Bunter—a regular picture—one of those comic picture postcards, you know."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

And they went in to the dance.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Dance.

MARJORIE HAZELDENE was looking her best. Her sweet face was lighted up with animation now, and the chums of the Remove thought they had never seen her look so charming. Hazeldene gave her a brotherly grin of appreciation.

"You look stunning, sis!" he exclaimed.

Marjorie laughed.

"Thank you!" she said. "I suppose if you notice it, I must."

"Well, look at Bob Cherry, then. He's looking at you as if he couldn't take his eyes off you, and he's got his mouth wide open like a codfish."

"Ha, ha!"

Hazeldene's unflattering description of Bob Cherry was not quite just; but certainly Bob was gazing in great admiration at the vision of girlish beauty. Bob Cherry had an immense admiration for Marjorie; which he showed—boyishly—by being silent and awkward as a rule when he was with her, and doing clumsy things. Marjorie would sometimes take the trouble to draw him out of his shell, so to speak, and make him transcendently happy; which she effected simply by being not at all shy herself—though, girl-like, she was shy enough when the boy was not shy.

The gaily-lighted and decorated room looked very cheerful and almost every face was bright and happy. The orchestra from Friardale discoursed sweet music, and the boys and girls were soon "tripping the light fantastic toe."

Everybody, of course, wanted to dance with Marjorie, and equally, of course, it was impossible for her to dance with everybody; but sweet smiles and kind words compensated those who were left out.

Among the left-out ones was Bunter, and Bunter was the one person whom Marjorie rejected without caring much whether he liked it or not.

Billy Bunter sailed into the room in the first place with a smile of conscious fascination upon his fat face. Billy's opinion of himself was always a good one, and he suffered from a curious delusion that he looked particularly killing in evening clothes. That every girl in the room was dying to dance with him, that every girl would give almost anything to be seen sitting out a dance with him, that in short he was monarch of all he surveyed, and had only to pick and choose—all that Billy Bunter took for granted.

And if there had been a scarcity of boys at the dance, he might never have been undeceived, for a girl naturally prefers anything to being left without a partner, and on more than one occasion Bunter had been made much of by girls, simply because he could dance, and there was a run on the boys.

But on the present occasion the boys outnumbered the girls, owing to the excellent management of Miss Primrose and her assistant Miss Locke, and few girls were really inclined to take Bunter except as a last resource.

Bunter sailed down upon Miss Hazeldene first of all, with the kind thought of making the Famous Four jealous by dancing with her a great deal.

To his surprise he found that Marjorie had no room on her card, and declined to let him put his name down.

"But you're not booked right up already!" exclaimed Bunter.

"I'm afraid I can't give you a dance," said Marjorie.

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who resented very much the manner with which Bunter asked for one.

"But really, Miss Marjorie—"

Harry Wharton took Marjorie away at that moment, and Bunter was left stranded. He had the pleasure of being a wallflower for a time, and he blinked indignantly at the circling couples through his big spectacles.

He returned to the attack again, however, at the first opportunity, selecting Miss Clara, Marjorie's best chum.

Miss Clara received him very coolly.

"You're going to give me three, ain't you, Miss Clara?" asked Bunter, with a killing look.

"Sorry," said Miss Clara, "I can't."

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Dear me," said Miss Clara, looking over her card, "I'm afraid I haven't any room for you at all."

"Oh, really—"

"My dance, Miss Clara," said Bob Cherry, coming up.

And they glided away, leaving the indignant Owl of the Remove stranded again.

Billy Bunter thought he had better adjourn to the refreshment department. He was sure of some consolation there, at all events.

He found some fellows there already; fellows who did not care for dancing, or did not dance. But he found not a friendly look from them. The whole Form was down on Bunter to-night. Elliott, whose trousers Bunter was wearing at that very moment, was there, sipping lemon-squash. Bulstrode, whose collar and tie he had appropriated, was fizzing some soda-water into a glass of lemonade. Bulstrode had plenty of collars and ties, and did not care much for the loss of them; but he was quite as angry as the others at Bunter's raid. The fat junior smiled an ingratiating smile as he came into the room.

"You fellows resting?" he asked.

No one replied.

"I say, you fellows, I'm sincerely sorry about those things—the trousers, you know, and the tie, and so on. What was I to do?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Bulstrode.

"I'm hungry," said Bunter; "after all, the best part of a dance is the refreshments. There are such a lot of girls want to dance with me, too, that I don't know which to choose. You can't choose one without making the others jealous, when they're all set on a fellow."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Ogilvy.

"I think I'll have some cheese-cakes to begin with," remarked Bunter, helping himself liberally. "I will say this for Miss Primrose, she does feed her visitors well."

"Pig!"

"Oh, really, Bulstrode! I suppose there's no harm in a chap getting hungry," said Bunter. "I'm thirsty, too. Do you recommend ginger-beer or lemonade?"

"Rats!"

"I'll try the lemonade. Hand over that siphon, too, if you've done with it, will you?"

Bulstrode's eyes glimmered for a moment.

He lifted over the soda-siphon to the table where Bunter had seated himself, and at the same moment, as if by accident pressed it.

Fizz!

A stream of soda-water shot out, and caught the fat junior full on the chest.

"Ow!" yelled Bunter, springing to his feet.

The table went over with a crash of plates and cups and glasses.

The soda-water was still streaming.

Fiz-z-z-z-z!

The stream sopped through Bunter's beautiful shirt-front, and then turned upward and swept his face.

"Ow! Oh! Gerrooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Elliott and Ogilvy, in wild delight.

"Groo! Gerrooh! Yaroo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dear me!" said Bulstrode, setting down the siphon. "I wonder how that happened?"

"Yaroo! Ugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter was streaming with soda-water. His shirt-front was reduced to a limp rag. His collar was hanging softly about his neck. His fat face was streaming. His spectacles were opaque with dampness.

He blinked furiously at Bulstrode.

"You—you beast! You did that on purpose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry," said Bulstrode. "Quite an accident."

"Beast!"

"Rough," said Ogilvy, wiping his eyes—"almost as rough as collaring a chap's clothes just before he's going to a dance. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Elliott.

A MOTOR-CYCLE!

Given away.

"PLUCK" 1st.

Given away.

ROLLER SKATES!

"I—I say, you fellows, I'm soaked! Ow! I shall catch cold. Yow!"

"Better go and get a rub down," suggested Bulstrode. "Awfully clumsy of you to get into the way of the syphon. You always were clumsy, Bunter."

"Ow! Beast!"

And Billy Bunter ambled away to get the suggested rub down.

He did not appear in view again for about an hour, and then he had a freshly-rubbed and beetrooty appearance, and his shirt-front was a deplorable sight.

He did not venture to appear in the ball-room again. He knew very well that it would cause merriment, and he was not fond of looking ridiculous, though he very often succeeded in doing so without intending it.

But he found a companion to share his exile to the supper-room at last.

It was Miss Wilhelmina Limburger, the German girl, who agreed with Bunter in thinking that the supper-room was the most attractive spot. Bunter was kept busy for a long time helping her and helping himself. The strains of music from the ball-room did not disturb them.

Bunter was quite surprised when a crowd poured into the room at last, and he learned that the dance was over. He had been sitting there ever since the interval, eating all the time, and he was not quite finished yet. He kept it up till it was high time to go.

The chums of the Remove bade farewell to their girl friends, and put on hats and coats, and then the brakes came round. Bunter thought he saw vengeance gleam in many eyes that were turned upon him, and he decided not to go in the brake.

Without stopping to take his leave of Miss Primrose, who was not likely to miss one in such a crowd, Billy Bunter put on Bob Cherry's overcoat and slipped away.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Gets the Sack.

BILLY BUNTER paused to listen. There was a sound of wheels on the road behind him.

The hour was somewhat late, and the night was dark. Billy Bunter was tramping on towards Greyfriars. He hoped to get in before the others arrived, and get his borrowed plumes off. Then he would have to make his peace as best he could.

But the sound of wheels and hoofs on the road behind him showed him that he would not succeed in doing so.

The brakes from Cliff House were coming.

Billy Bunter paused and looked back, and saw the lights of the big vehicles gleaming through the deep gloom of the night.

He stepped out of the lane, and drew under the shadow of a bunch of trees, deciding to wait for the brakes to go by. He had a very strong feeling that if he was found on the road by the juniors there would be trouble for him. It was better to face the angry Remove at the school, where, at all events, matters could not be taken too far. He waited for the brakes to go by.

The Upper Fourth brake came first, with Temple, Dabney & Co. in it. It rolled on past the trees where the fat junior stood.

Then came the Remove brake. The juniors were crammed in it, and some of them were singing, in the exuberance of their youthful hearts. Harry Wharton & Co. were talking about Bunter.

"The fat worm must have started first!" said Bob Cherry. "It stands to reason that he didn't remain behind."

"The reasonfulness is terrific, my worthy chum!"

"And he's not in the brake," said Nugent.

"That's certain."

"He's walking home; may be there by this time," remarked Harry, with a nod.

"Not half!" said Bob Cherry emphatically. "He can't have got off much sooner than we did, and after the tremendous supper he ate he couldn't walk fast."

"Very likely."

"Keep an eye open for him. We shall most likely pass him on the road."

"Got the sack all right?" asked Nugent.

"I've got it here," said Tom Brown. "I slipped round and asked Miss Primrose's gardener for it, and he gave it me like a shot!"

"Good!"

"The goodness is terrific!"

"Keep an eye open for the fat burglar."

"What-ho!"

Bob Cherry uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

The brake was passing a clump of trees. Bob Cherry was staring into the black shadows under the leafless branches.

"Did you see him?"

"Was it Bunter?"

"Yes."

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NEXT
WEEK:

"THE DISAPPEARANCE OF WUN LUNG."

EVERY
TUESDAY, The "Magnet" ONE
LIBRARY. HALFPENNY.

"Sure?" said Nugent doubtfully. "I don't see how you could see him in this blessed blackness. It's as dark as the inside of a hat under those trees!"

"His glasses, my son! I saw two round points of light. I've seen him with the light reflected on his specs before. It was Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The brake rolled on, the juniors consulted eagerly. A hundred yards further on, Harry Wharton & Co. quietly dropped out of the vehicle behind, and it rolled on to Greyfriars without them.

Meanwhile, Bunter chuckled under the trees, and tramped out into the road again. He was quite unconscious of the fact that the reflection of the brake lamps had caught his glasses and betrayed him to Bob Cherry's keen eyes.

"My word!" he murmured. "I'll take it easy, and get in late. They won't make a row about a chap getting in late on the night of a dance. The Remove will be gone to bed, and they won't get up to go for me. It may all blow over by the morning. I—Oh!"

Bunter broke off suddenly. Half a dozen shadowy figures started out of the gloom and surrounded him. Billy Bunter started back.

They did not speak.

They collared the fat junior, and two or three of them held him in a firm grasp, while the others stripped his borrowed plumes from him.

His coat and his waistcoat and his dress-coat, his gibus hat and his collar and tie, his gloves and the limp dress-shirt—all were jerked off in solemn silence.

Bunter struggled and wriggled in vain. Then a sack was thrown over his head. The open end of the sack descended to his ankles. In the bottom of the sack was a hole, which fitted round his neck when it was drawn down over his head.

Bunter blinked and wriggled in the sack.

"Ow! Really—yow!—I say, you fellows——"

Still they did not speak.

Taking his clothes with them, they left him in the lane, and hurried away after the brake.

Bunter stood dumbfounded. He had not expected anything like this.

They had left him his underclothing, trousers, and his boots, but very little else. He began to drag the sack off, and then reflected, and stopped.

The night was cold, and the sack was a better protection than nothing. It occurred to him, too, that he could not present himself at Greyfriars in trousers and undervest. The sack was a necessity.

Bunter groaned.

"Oh, dear! The beasts! The rotters! Ow! I will make them sit up for this! This is all because they're jealous of a chap's good looks! A fellow can't be looked at by the girls without a lot of rotters starting on him like this!"

Bunter looked up and down the lane. What was he to do?

He could not return to Cliff House for help; better to look ridiculous at Greyfriars than in the eyes of Marjorie & Co. It would be a long tramp to the village of Friardale; and even then the shops would be closed, and he would be unable to get clothes. There was nothing for it but to tramp on to Greyfriars.

And the fat junior realised that the sooner he did so the better, for the night was cold, and the sack was not quite as warm as Bob Cherry's overcoat.

With a groan, Bunter tramped on.

The brakes were a long way ahead, and the road was lonely before him. The few lamps shed a dim glimmer for a yard or two here and there.

Bunter passed a countryman in the lane, as he came within the dim radius of light from one of the lamps.

The man stared at him, and gave a yell of affright. The sight of a fellow walking about late at night, with his head through the bottom of a sack, was startling enough. The man took to his heels and pattered down the lane.

Bunter grunted, and continued on his way. Greyfriars came in sight at last.

Billy Bunter hesitated at the gate, but there was no use in hesitating. He had to enter, and enter as he was, and the sooner it was over the better.

He rang a peal at the bell.

Gosling came grunting to the gate. The school porter stared blankly at Bunter as he let him in.

"Who—who are you? Wot is it?" he gasped.

"What——"

"I'm Bunter!" growled Billy. "I've been japed, that's all."

"Haw, haw, haw!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!"

"Haw, haw, haw! Wot I says is this 'ere—you'd better

not let the 'Ead see you in that there rig!" chuckled Gosling.

"I've been put into this sack!" said Bunter, blinking angrily at the school porter. "Do you think I've done it on purpose?"

"Haw, haw, haw! Wot I says is this 'ere—that you may get the sack in earnest if the 'Ead sees you, that's all."

Bunter snorted, and tramped off towards the house. Gosling's chuckles followed him across the Close.

The door was wide open, and the hall lighted up. As he approached the house, Bunter could see a crowd in the hall and on the steps.

His heart sank. He knew that the juniors had passed the word round, and that half the school had gathered there to see him enter. He thought of dodging round to the back of the house, but there were scouts out in the Close, and he had been already seen.

There was a shout:

"Here he is!"

"Here's Bunter!"

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"Here he is! Come on, Bunter!"

"I—I say——"

"Ha, ha! Here he is!"

A crowd of juniors gathered round Bunter, and he had to march right up to the steps, and mount them into the light streaming from the door.

The hall was full of juniors and seniors, too. At the sight of Bunter there was a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fat junior, with his head sticking out of the bottom of the sack, and only his boots showing below it, made up an irresistible picture.

The fellows simply doubled up, and roared and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Bunter!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

Billy Bunter, blinking indignantly, marched in. The juniors were rocking to and fro with merriment, yelling themselves hoarse.

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Isn't he a picture? Isn't he a bute? Wouldn't he take first prize in a monkey show? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"What on earth's this row about?" exclaimed Wingate, coming out of the seniors' room. He caught sight of Bunter, and stopped dead. "What—why—what——"

"I—I say, Wingate——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the captain of Greyfriars. "It's Bunter!"

"Yes, I——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Quelch looked out of his study with a frown. The roars of laughter in the hall, at that time of night, disturbed and annoyed him; but as he caught sight of Bunter, the frown died from his face. He tried not to smile, but he simply could not help it. He smiled, he laughed, he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, sir——"

"Ha, ha! What is the meaning of this—this masquerade, Bunter?"

"It's a jape."

"What has happened?"

"I was collared on the road, and shoved into this sack, and my clothes taken away, sir!" growled Bunter. "It's a rotten jape!"

"Your clothes taken away?" asked Bob Cherry. "Yours—or somebody else's?"

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"I think I understand," he remarked. "I suppose you have been borrowing clothes without permission again, Bunter?"

"I—I really, sir——"

"I hope your punishment will be a lesson to you. Go and take that sack off at once, and go to bed. You are a most troublesome and absurd boy."

And Mr. Quelch retreated into his study, closed the door, and had his laugh out.

The fat junior blinked round upon the yelling crowd, and tramped angrily upstairs.

The sack was on the floor, and Bunter had got into bed, when the Remove came up. They gave a fresh yell at the sight of his fat, angry face, blinking at them over the edge of the bedclothes.

"Enjoyed your walk home, Bunt?" asked Bob Cherry blandly.

Bunter grunted.

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all through your rotten jealousy of a chap's good looks——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter snorted, and turned over to go to sleep, but it was a long time before the Remove slept. At intervals for an hour or more a gust of chuckling would sweep through the dormitory.

The Remove had thoroughly enjoyed their evening at Cliff House, but certainly one of the most enjoyable incidents had been the retribution of Bunter. It would probably be some time before the fat junior raided other fellows' wardrobes, in order to shine among the dandies of the Remove.

THE END.

NEXT TUESDAY

"THE DISAPPEARANCE OF WUN LUNG."

A grand long, complete school tale of

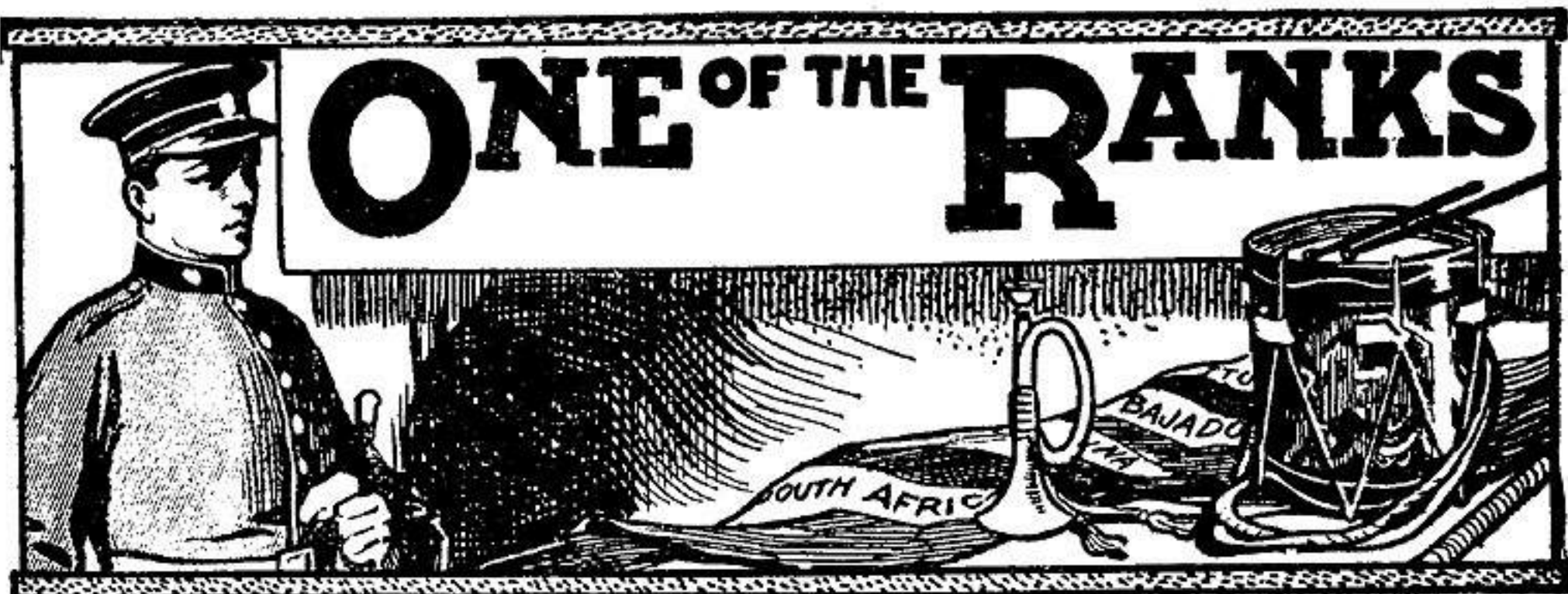
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A BRIEF RESUMÉ OF THE EARLIER CHAPTERS.

Ronald Chenys is forced to leave Sandhurst through the treachery of his stepbrother Ian, and enlists in the Wessex Regiment under the name of Chester. Unfortunately for Ronald, Ian joins the Wessex as a subaltern, and, assisted by Sergeant Bagot and Private Foxey Williams, does his best to further disgrace Ronald. The unscrupulous Bagot, however, gets caught in his own toils, and is publicly degraded to the ranks. Foxey Williams meets his death mysteriously in a burning barn. The Royal Wessex are forming the garrison of Eastguard Forts, near Plymport, during manoeuvres. After some nights' weary vigilance, the enemy make an attack, and Ronald is told off with a party of men to help in the magazine. Bagot, the ex-sergeant, attempts to blow the place up, and when Ronald captures him the two fall into the sea. They are, however, rescued by one of the enemy's torpedo boats, and are eventually put ashore. From that moment the two men disappear, so Gussie, one of Ronald's comrades, persuades Mouldy Mills, another friend of Ronald's, to stay behind when the Wessex leave Plymport, and make a search for the missing men. They trace Ronald to a disreputable inn in Castle Gate, and, in pursuing their search further, are captured by the landlord and his villainous complices, who send the two chums adrift in a boat. Lieutenant Bob Fairly and Cosgrave, while in a motor launch, catch sight of them.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Attack on Castle Gate—Ronald's Fate—The Rising of the Tide.

Determined to investigate the meaning of this strange manoeuvre, Bob gave the signal to the engineer to reduce his speed to "dead slow." Thus they crawled on, gaining stealthily on the drifting boat.

By and by as the distance was reduced, they saw that the craft had a crew after all; for two men crouched low behind the gunwale, paddling in redskin fashion.

"That's rummy," whispered Bob Fairly. "They've no oars, and yet they're heading straight to sea. I vote we run down alongside and see what their game is."

Cosgrave agreed, and the engine being set to full-speed again, the motor-launch forged ahead, and in a few minutes rounded up with a rush across the dinghy's bows. To their surprise, at the sound of their coming her mysterious crew promptly ducked out of sight.

"Ahoy, there! Heave-to! What's your game?" demanded Lieutenant Bob, catching at the gunwale and fending the little boat off, just in time to save her from being driven under.

Two startled faces peered up at the sound of his hail, and a voice which was Private Mouldy Mill's gasped:

"Why, bust me sideways, if it ain't Mr. Fairly!"

"Quite right, Mills," answered Lieutenant Bob. "And now, perhaps, you'll explain why you're fooling about here in a boat at this time of night."

"Fooling!" exclaimed Mouldy, obviously half-scared to death. "You wouldn't call it fooling, sir, if you was trying to row three miles in twenty minutes, with boards no bigger'n penny rulers for oars. But, thank 'Eaven, sir, you've come to give us a leg up! In you get, Gussie, out of this leaky old Noah's Ark."

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NEXT
WEEK,

"THE DISAPPEARANCE OF WUN LUNG"

A Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton
& Co. By FRANK RICHARDS.

"But where have you two been?" persisted Lieutenant Bob, unable to restrain a smile.

"After Lance-corporal Chester, sir," replied Gussie.

"And we've tracked him, too."

"The dickens you have!" cried the two officers simultaneously.

"Yes, and only escaped ourselves by the skin of our teeth. We're supposed to be drugged and drowned by this time; but we played foxy, and we were making as hard as we knew how for Fort Eastguard to get help when you overhauled us. We thought at first the villains had spotted our escape, and had returned to cut us under."

What with questions and answers flying at the rate of twenty to the minute, it did not take long for Gussie to tell their story and Bob Fairly and Cosgrave to grasp it.

Bob was for heading back to Lee's Wharf there and then, but Cosgrave's cooler counsel prevailed.

"We've three hours yet, at the very least. This Eastguard Fort of yours can't be more than two miles now, at the most, by the look of it. Let us carry on, turn out an armed picquet, and make the rescue in style. Four of us might make a botch of it; fourteen armed with rifle and bayonet can take on a hundred toughs like those and cut their way anywhere."

"You're right," answered Bob Fairly, curbing his impatience to be at the villains' throats; "but we'll make for Chequer Fort; Colonel Conger is there. Get those engines going top speed, but don't ask too much of them. We can't afford to risk a breakdown when a comrade's life is at stake."

The engineer had heard enough already to realise how much now depended on his care. Steadily the boat cleft its way through the short, choppy waves, until at last it ran beneath the grim shadows of the Chequer Fort.

A challenge from the parapet, answered by a halloo of "friend!" from Bob Fairly, and then the launch wheeled round and ran alongside the landing-stage.

Leaving the others to follow, Bob sprang up the gangway and made for Colonel Conger's quarters. The colonel had been in bed for the last half-hour, but this was no time for ceremony. Colonel Conger was awakened out of his dreams by a thunderous knocking at his door, and sprang out of his bed half-expecting to find a Frenchman or German outside demanding his surrender and his sword. Nor was he visibly relieved in mind or smoothed in temper to see that it was only Lieutenant Bob Fairly, somewhat drenched and breathless after his passage, but dapper and correct as usual, even to the monocle in his eye.

Bob gave the great man no time to explode the mines of his wrath, but sailed in with the story of the night's work, finishing with a request for a dozen men, armed with rifle, bayonet, and ball cartridge.

Primed already for surprises by his conversation of the previous night with Lieutenant Bob, Colonel Conger gave permission at once and grabbed for his clothes.

"See you wait for me, you young dog!" he roared after Bob, as the latter hastened off to collect his landing-party. "If you cut off without me, I'll have you blown out of the water first and cashiered afterwards!"

In ten minutes a party of a sergeant, corporal, and twelve men were dressed and under arms, waiting to embark. As the launch was obviously unsafe with such a load, half the

men were shipped into one of the fort's whalers and taken in tow.

"Now, Fairly, you're in command," said Colonel Conger, dropping into the stern-sheets, still fumbling with sundry buttons, and trying to disguise the fact that he had forgotten to put on a collar. "I'll look on until you make a mess of the job, when I'll 'Stellenbosch' you on the spot. Take my revolver—I suppose you've no weapon of your own."

"But how about yourself, sir?"

"Oh, I've got my old sjambok! I carried nothing else in South Africa, so I guess it's good enough for hunting harbour rats. Besides, I'm just going to stand about and look on. I'm leaving all the fighting to you, remember."

Bob smiled at the mere thought of this little fire-eating warrior taking a back seat while there was a hand-to-hand encounter going forward.

"And now that you've got time to talk a little more sensibly," said the colonel, lighting a cigar and making himself comfortable under the protecting canvas hood, "perhaps you'll sit down here and spin this extraordinary yarn of yours all over again from the beginning. So far, I tell you frankly, I can't make head nor tail of it."

So while Bob Fairly and Cosgrave, with Gussie and Mouldy as chief witnesses, unfolded the story of a brother-officer's base villainy, the motor-launch with the loaded whaler in tow flew back to Plymport Harbour. As they neared the crumbling wharves and waterside rookeries of Castle Gate, Bob gave the order "Dead slow!" and, passing the word to keep absolute silence, steered close in under the shadow of the quays.

The strong young flood had now set in, sweeping them up the harbour, so the engine was stopped for fear that its beat should be heard on land, and the boat left to drift silently on the tide.

It was a moment of intense excitement for all on board. Gussie and Mouldy craned forward over the bows, trying to recognise some landmark to guide them to the wharf from which they had been so rudely embarked. Suddenly a splashing in the mud of the foreshore and a faint whimper sent every heart thumping. It was like the cry of a lost soul. But Gussie threw up his hand.

"That's Rough come to meet us. This must be the place, sir," he whispered. "See, there is the shed they carried us out from."

"Good!" murmured Bob Fairly.

"We won't risk restarting the engine. Punt us in with a boathook. We must be almost on the mud."

Steadily, stealthily the launch was punted in until it grounded, when Bob stepped calmly down over the side, and led the way by wading up the shallow foreshore.

A scraggy morsel on four legs, black with ooze, came floundering joyously towards him. It was the faithful Rough, whose lone vigil had come to an end at last. Day and night, without sleep or food, he had roamed the long mile and half of dock and quay for a sign of his master.

Happening upon Gussie and Mouldy, in their expedition to the Spyglass, he had kept to their heels until he had been booted out at closing time. But he had only found his friends to lose them again, so he resumed his mournful quest up street and down alley, until he came to Lee's Wharf, where a fresh surprise awaited him.

This was the arrival of Ian Chenys and his escort, the man with the twisted face. He watched the two disappear into the shed, and taught by some instinct that he had found Ronald's hiding-place at last, he took up his guard there and waited.

Nor had his devotion gone for nothing. Help had come at last. He would like to have barked until his brave little heart burst his stalwart ribs at the sight of the old uniform and familiar faces; but he knew better than that.

So he squirmed and wriggled and ran up the foreshore, and whined, as much as to say: "Quick! This way, or you'll be too late!"

The men came wading up the mud, and fell in at a sign, facing the mouldering timbers of the wharf. Then they slung their rifles, and prepared to mount. Half the number climbed on their comrades' shoulders, and hoisted themselves up on to the quay. Then the other half were dragged up. When all was ready, Bob gave the signal to fix bayonets, and the locking springs closed with a vicious snap.

"Forward!" said Bob, in a gruff whisper. And away flew Rough as their guide.

But the ancient fortress from which Castle Gate took its name, though shorn of its bastions and ramparts, was still not to be captured without a struggle.

After Ronald had felt those mighty arms twined around him, and Pushoffski's exultant cry, as he gathered himself to wreak his long-delayed vengeance, he knew no more.

When he awoke to consciousness he found himself bound tightly, hand and foot, lying in pitchy darkness. How long he had remained insensible he could not tell. His head ached, and the slightest movement caused him excruciating agony.

For what seemed like years he lay on a rough flagged floor, damp and foul with slimy fungus. He would have given a kingdom for a teaspoonful of water to cool his swollen tongue, but no one came near to offer him even this small mercy.

At last a door was opened, and a man entered bearing a lamp. Ronald eyed him dazedly. It was the landlord of the Spyglass.

"Oh, you have come round at last, then!" he sneered. "I was hoping that you'd save us having to make two bites at a cherry by croaking where you lay. Perhaps later on you'll be sorry you didn't."

Ronald offered no reply to this brutal jibe, but lay still, his cheek on the stone floor, and looked aslant at him. His contemptuous silence seemed to exasperate his captor, for he came forward and kicked at him savagely, making Ronald wince in spite of himself.

"Hang you! Is that all you've to say?" stormed the landlord. "You're quite happy where you are—eh? You don't want to know anything, do you?"

"Nothing," answered Ronald. "I know enough already—that you are the landlord of the Spyglass, that Pushoffski

is in this dastardly plot, and that there is another behind his back who is striking through him at me."

"Oh! And who may that be?" sneered the man, who so far had been at a loss to fathom the reason of the wrestler's ferocious hatred of this redcoat.

"My half-brother!" answered Ronald, watching him with a steady gaze.

"Oh, so that's who the gent is as is calling this little tune! You'll be quite a nice little family party when he arrives."

"So he is coming?"

"The gent I mean is sent for to come to-night, and I just looked in to see about moving you into the best droring-room ready for him."

The man rolled his eyes round the dismal cellar in which Ronald lay.

"Nice little place this, ain't it?" he asked pleasantly. "Dampish, p'raps, but not so damp as the room you're going into. I'll leave you now," he continued; "but I'll send your valet along with a bite and a sup, so that you can't go telling people I starved you while you was stopping with me."

(Another long instalment of this thrilling serial next Tuesday.)

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