

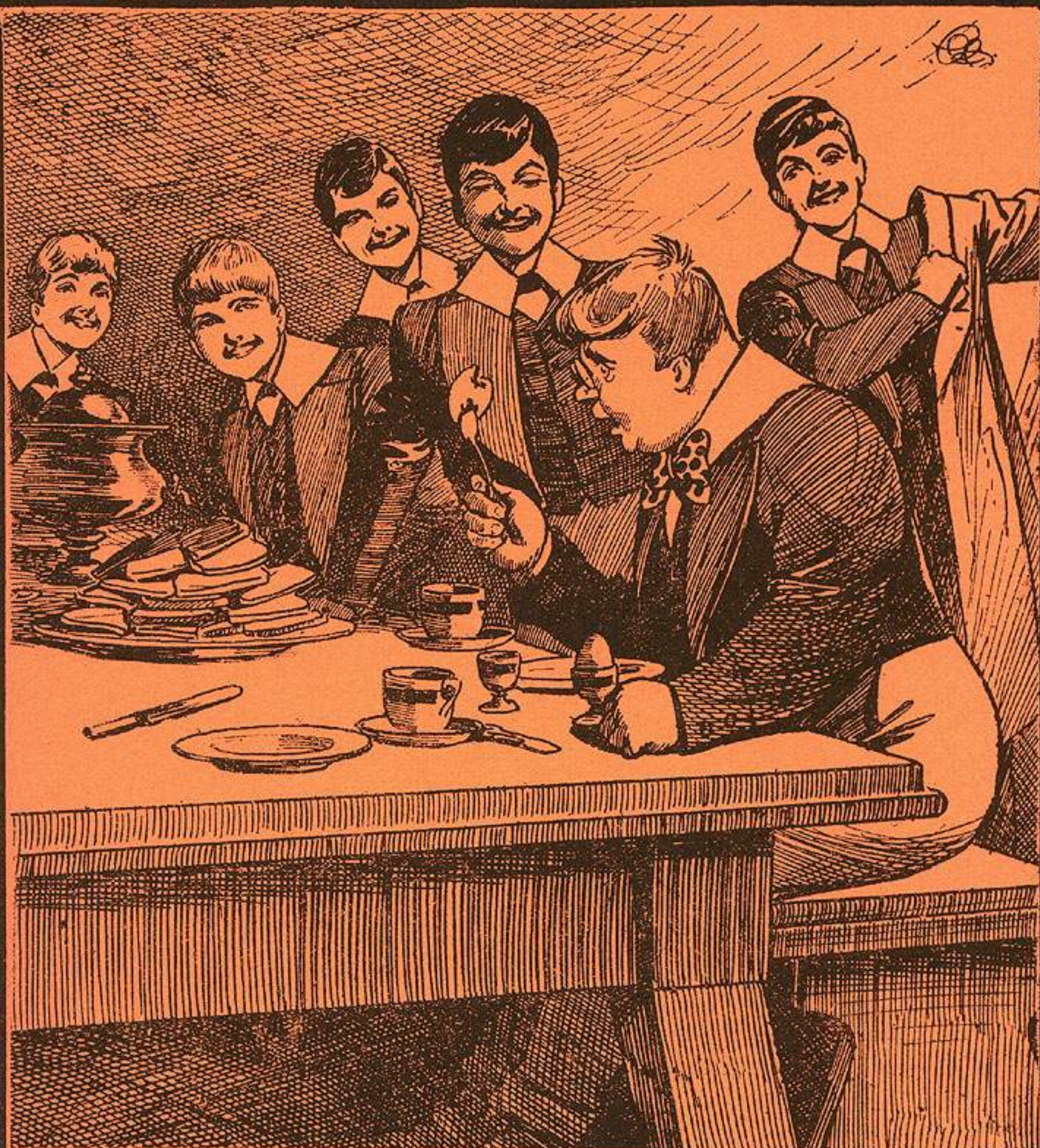
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# The Magnet 1<sup>st</sup>

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VOL. 4.

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THE FIRST CHAPTER.  
All Together.

"LOOK out!"  
"Are they coming?"  
"Yes, rather—look out!"  
"The look-outfulness is terrific."  
"Quiet!"

Harry Wharton whispered the word. The group of Greyfriars juniors were looking very red and nervous. Even Wharton himself, the captain of the Remove, and generally one of the coolest and most resolute fellows at Greyfriars, was red and flustered. And Nugent, and Bob Cherry, and Tom

# Friends or Foes?

A Splendid, Long,  
Complete School Tale of  
Harry Wharton & Co.

— BY —

FRANK RICHARDS.

Brown, and Hurree Jamsot Ram Singh, were all looking decidedly awkward. They were all very red, excepting Hurree Singh, and he was as pink as his dusky complexion would allow him to be.

The five juniors were waiting under a big oak in Friardale Lane, on the way from the village to the sea. The big, thick trunk of the oak, and the adjacent bushes, bursting into the green of spring, completely screened them from the road. The Greyfriars chums were in cover—waiting!

They were waiting, not for an enemy, but for friends—or, rather, that, too, was a doubtful point, because they did not know whether they were still regarded as friends by the girls of Cliff House.

There had been trouble, due to a prank played by Billy Bunter of the Remove, on the First of April.

Marjorie Hazeldene had been offended, and the former friends had not spoken since—and it weighed very much on the minds of the Greyfriars chums.

Bunter had been stupid and inconsiderate, but it was very hard that the other fellows should have to suffer for it, but they often did. Bunter had been duly ragged for his stupid prank, and that had been some satisfaction, but how to make their peace with Cliff House was a puzzle.

A personal interview and an apology was the only way, Harry Wharton thought. True, he had not been in fault, and



an apology from him was not called for, but Harry did not want to stand particular upon a point like that. But how to meet Marjorie & Co. was a difficulty. Under the circumstances, the juniors did not feel inclined to pay an unasked visit to Cliff House.

Now the difficulty had solved itself. Marjorie and Clara were coming up the lane, and they could not avoid the interview very well.

If they saw the juniors ahead of them, it was quite possible that they might turn into one of the footpaths through the wood. Hence the Removeites had taken cover, and they were all ready to step forth blushing and smiling as soon as the girls came by.

"The beatfulness of my honourable heart is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, loosening his silk hat on his perspiring brow, to be quite ready.

"Shut up, Inky!"

"Can you see them, Harry?" asked Bob Cherry nervously. Bob had been trying to get his necktie straight for the past five minutes, with the result that it was almost under his left ear by this time.

"I can't see through this oak-tree," said Harry. "I'll look, though."

He put his head past the big trunk of the tree, and looked out into the dusty lane, very sunny in the April afternoon.

There was no one in sight yet, but just beyond the tree the lane made a sudden bend, and a big black fence shut off the view. The girls would come suddenly round that corner, and then there would not be a moment to waste. It would not take them more than a minute or two to walk from the corner to the spot where the juniors were in ambush, and then the boys had to be quite ready.

"Not yet," said Harry, drawing back, "but I can hear somebody coming."

There was a very audible sound of footsteps in the distance. "Good!" said Nugent. "I was beginning to be afraid that they had taken some other path. They might have turned into the wood since we sighted them."

"No, I think they're coming."

The juniors waited and listened. Bob Cherry gave another desperate wrench to his necktie, and looked appealingly at Harry.

"Is that straight?" he asked.

"Hardly," said Harry, laughing. "It's under your right ear now."

"Do give it a shove for me."

Wharton did so. Bob Cherry loosened his straw hat. Bob was wearing the first straw hat of the season at Greyfriars.

"I—I'm feeling rather nervous, you know," he murmured.

"Nothing to feel nervous about."

"You're looking rather pink yourself."

"Oh, rot!" said Harry uneasily. "Why should I? Marjorie and Clara won't eat us, I suppose. After all, there's no real reason why they should be offended with us. It was Bunter wrote that stupid letter that brought them over to Greyfriars on a wild-goose chase, and we only tried to make the best of things."

"Exactly," said Tom Brown. "Perhaps they think we ought to keep Bunter on a chain. I really think we ought."

"Speaking of Bunter, he's not far away," said Frank Nugent. "He was following us in the lane. I believe he had an idea we were going to the tuckshop."

"Listen!"

The sound of a movement in the lane was distinctly to be heard.

"They'll be round the corner in a minute," said Harry Wharton hurriedly. "Mind, you must all be ready."

"The readiness is terrific."

"As soon as we hear them coming, we're to step out all together, all of us raising our hats at once," said Harry. "They can hardly help stopping when we do that—especially as we shall be standing in their path."

"Yes, rather."

"Then one of us can pitch them a formal apology, and explain that Bunter has been ragged for playing the giddy goat. That ought to set matters right."

"I should think so."

"Perhaps Bob had better make the speech," said Wharton. "I—"

"Eh? What's that?" said Bob Cherry, starting.

"I think you had better pitch it to them, Bob. You're the biggest chap here—"

"Stuff! You're the eldest."

"Well, Brown, then," said Wharton hastily. "As a Colonial chap, he's really more fitted to take the lead on an occasion like this—"

"Blessed if I can see it," said Tom Brown promptly. "Anyway, I know I'm jolly well not going to make the speech."

"It isn't exactly a speech," said Wharton, "it's an apology. You just step out in advance of us and make a—a—utter a few graceful words, you know."

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"I don't know."

"Suppose you do it, Nugent?"

"Suppose I don't!" was Nugent's counter suggestion.

"Well, you made a speech the time we welcomed the Cliff House girls to their school, when the place was opened, and—"

"So it's your turn now," said Nugent.

Wharton grinned ruefully.

"Oh, all right! If I must, I must."

"Of course you must!" said Bob Cherry. "Hark! They're coming!"

The sound of feet was close at hand now. The approaching footsteps were turning the corner of the lane, and the juniors even heard a sound as of something brushing against the fence.

"Ready?" whispered Wharton.

"Ye-es."

"Mind, all hats off at the same time as you step out."

"Right-ho!"

"Say 'Good-afternoon' at the same time."

"All right."

"Now, then!"

Wharton drew a deep breath and stepped out from the cover of the big oak into the lane, and faced the new-comer. The Greyfriars juniors followed him instantly, their hats coming off as if by clockwork.

"Good-afternoon!" said five voices in unison.

And then came the astounding reply:

Hee-haw—hee-hee-haw!

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### A Slight Mistake.

HEE-HEE-HAW!

The juniors gasped.

The footsteps in the lane had deceived them. The Cliff House girls were not so near as they had thought. It was Farmer Keen's donkey that had wandered out into the lane and was trotting along contentedly when the five juniors stepped out with hats off and a polite "Good-afternoon!"

Hee-hee-haw!

The juniors stared at the donkey, and the donkey stared at the juniors. They seemed equally surprised by the sudden meeting.

For several seconds the Remove chums stood, hat in hand, gazing blankly at the new-comer, who sent forth a sonorous bray that echoed down the lane.

Then Harry Wharton burst into a laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

To which the donkey genially responded:

Hee-haw-hee-haw!

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It's not Marjorie. What is that blessed donkey doing here?"

"Looking for his relations, perhaps," grinned Tom Brown, "and it seems to me that he's found 'em!"

"Well, you are an ass, Wharton!"

"It's not my fault. I thought it was Marjorie—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush, you beast!" said Wharton, waving his hand. "Get off! Buzz!"

The donkey threw up its head, and went down the lane at a trot. The juniors looked at one another with very red faces.

"The stupid ass!" said Nugent.

"He's not the only stupid ass in the collection," remarked Tom Brown.

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"But where are the girls?" exclaimed Nugent. "They ought to be here by this time. They must have taken another road."

"Phew! And we've been waiting—"

"For nothing!"

"That's because we've got such a blessed good leader!" said Bob Cherry aggressively. "I think we'd better pick a captain for the Remove out of the Second Form."

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Well, where's Marjorie, then?"

"Better look."

The juniors, giving up concealment now—for it was pretty clear that the Cliff House girls would not pass that way—hurried up the lane and looked round the corner of the black fence.

They caught a glimpse in the distance of two bright dresses and pretty hats. Marjorie and Clara had stopped, and were feeding the ducks on a pond by the wayside.

"There they are!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! They've seen us!"

The two girls were seen to look in the direction of the juniors, and then they suddenly left the duck-pond. They stepped into the footpath through the wood, and disappeared among the trees in a moment.

Wharton's face fell.

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"I think you are very rude," said Miss Clara. "Fancy telling us that we cannot consider the matter sensibly!"  
"I—I didn't mean that!" stammered Wharton.

"My word! That's the cut direct!"

"The cutfulness is terrific."

Bob Cherry shook his head.

"Perhaps they didn't see us."

"Oh, they saw us right enough!"

"But perhaps they think we don't want to speak to them, after what happened on the First of April," urged Bob Cherry. "We ought to see."

Wharton laughed in a rueful way.

"Oh, all right, let's see!"

"Come on, then, and sharp!"

The juniors were about to break into a run, when a fat, breathless voice was heard behind them, from the direction of Greyfriars School.

"Hold on! I say, you fellows, hold on!"

Wharton glanced round. A fat junior, whose plump limbs seemed to be bursting through his tight Etons, and whose fat face was adorned with a huge pair of spectacles, was trotting towards the group as fast as he could trot, which was not very fast. He did not get over the ground very quickly, but his exertions told upon him just the same; his fat face was flaming red, and dripping with perspiration. He waved a fat hand frantically to the juniors.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, you can buzz off, Bunter!"

"But I say—"

"Scat!"

The juniors started running towards the opening of the footpath, where the girls had vanished into the wood. Bunter pounded on after them breathlessly.

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NEXT WEEK: **"BILLY BUNTER'S TRIALS."**

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

"I—I say, you fellows, stop!" he yelled desperately. "I know jolly well you've sneaked off to get a feed on the quiet, and I'm jolly well not going to be left out of it, so I tell you. Stop!"

Harry Wharton & Co. did not even turn their heads. Billy Bunter had caused too much trouble between them and the Cliff House girls already, and they did not want to be bothered with him now. Besides, there was no time to lose.

They ran swiftly on.

The fat junior laboured after them, gasping and blowing. When Billy Bunter tried to run, he paid the penalty of eating so many tarts and buns.

His breath came short and thick, and his heart thumped, and his ribs ached; but the thought that he was risking losing a feed spurred him on. He waved his fat hand despairingly at the backs of the runners.

"I say, you fellows, hold on!"

Not a head was turned.

"Stop! I—I shall be ill if I run like this! You know I'm a delicate chap. Ow! I say, you fellows—"

But the fellows had now reached the footpath at the side of the lane, and turned into it, and the trees hid them from the sight of the fat junior.

Billy Bunter gave a snort of wrath.

"Beasts!"

In spite of himself he slackened pace, and dropped into a walk. His wind was gone. He did not give up the pursuit, however. He pounded on, still in a faint hope of overtaking the Removites, and entered the wood.



## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

## Unforgiven!

"MISS MARJORIE!"

"Miss Clara!"

"Stop, please!"

"The stopfulness is terrific."

The panting juniors had overtaken the two girls of Cliff House on the footpath through the wood. Marjorie and Clara could not affect not to hear their names called, and they stopped.

Both of them were looking very cold and stately.

A little unreasonably, perhaps, they refused to forgive the Greyfriars juniors for the unfortunate happenings of April the First, and they were still strongly entrenched upon their dignity.

They stopped in the path, and looked at the juniors frigidly.

Harry Wharton & Co. had overtaken them, and accomplished their object so far. But now that they were overtaken, the next step was not clear.

The cool and steady look of the two girls disconcerted the juniors, already sufficiently disconcerted by the absurd contretemps with the donkey, and the hard run following it.

"Good-afternoon!" gasped Harry.

"Good-afternoon!" said Marjorie primly.

"Good-afternoon!" said Miss Clara, with a voice like ice.

"It's a jolly fine April day, isn't it?" murmured Bob Cherry.

Marjorie and Clara coloured. The mention of April brought back the First of that month to their minds, of course. Bob had put his foot in it, as usual.

"Indeed!" said Marjorie.

The other fellows looked daggers at Bob. They felt that he had made matters worse. Bob blushed the colour of a beetroot, and retired a little to hide his confusion.

"We—we saw you in the lane," said Nugent lamely.

"Yes?"

"We—we wanted to explain," said Harry desperately.

"Yes?"

"We're sorry."

"Oh!"

"Of course, we weren't to blame for what happened," said Harry. "We——"

"Oh, weren't you!" said Miss Clara. "I suppose you mean that we were to blame."

"Oh, no, not at all! You see——"

"I suppose we were very silly."

"Oh, no, not at all!"

"Stupid, then?"

"No," said Harry; "only a little unreasonable."

"Eh?"

"Well, perhaps not unreasonable," said Harry, beginning to flounder hopelessly. "What I mean is, if you consider the matter sensibly——"

"Oh, then we are not sensible?"

"Yes—yes—yes, you are."

"But we have not considered the matter sensibly, I suppose. Is that it?"

"Yes, that's it," said Wharton, greatly relieved at being so well understood. "That's just what I mean. Now——"

"I think you are very rude."

"Eh?"

Miss Clara tossed her golden curls. Marjorie kept her eyes upon the ground. A gleam of fun was stealing into them, as a matter of fact. Wharton's hopeless attempts at making himself understood were comic enough, though not to him. And he was getting deeper into the mire at every word.

"Very rude indeed!" said Miss Clara. "Fancy telling us we cannot consider the matter sensibly!"

"I didn't mean you couldn't," stammered Wharton; "I—I only meant that you wouldn't, you see. There's a difference."

"The difference is terrific."

"You see, if you look at it reasonably——"

"Really——"

"Look at it reasonably, and——"

"I was never spoken to so rudely before," said Miss Clara, addressing space. "I don't know why I stand here and listen to it. Marjorie, we ought to be home by now."

"Stop a minute!" stammered Wharton. "I—I didn't mean exactly that. Of—of course, I shouldn't expect you to look at it reasonably, really, you know. It would be expecting too much——"

"Shut up, you ass!" said Nugent, in a stage whisper.

"Look here, Frank——"

"You're making matters worse."

"I'm explaining——"

"Then chuck it! Your explanations are rotten. Leave it to me——"

"I'll jolly well——"

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"Cheese it! I say, Marjorie, you know, Wharton can't help being an ass."

"Nugent——"

"What he means to say is this——"

"You see, Marjorie——"

"It wasn't really our fault. You wouldn't allow us to explain——"

"We were unreasonable, I suppose," said Miss Clara.

"Not exactly, but——"

"You see——"

"The matter stands like this——"

"Bunter——"

"Yes, it was Bunter!" said Tom Brown. "You see, he's had a jolly good ragging, and that ought to make matters all right, I should think."

"The thankfulness is terrific."

"You see, we ducked him in the ditch," said Nugent eagerly. "He was smothered with mud when he came out, and it took him an awfully long time to get clean—as clean as he ever gets, I mean. You see——"

"How cruel!" said Miss Clara.

"Eh? What?"

"Poor Bunter!"

The juniors gasped. Sometimes they had flattered themselves that they understood girls, especially Marjorie and Clara. But at other times they realised that feminine nature was a deep mystery to which they possessed no clue. And this was evidently one of the "other times."

That the girls did not like Bunter, that they regarded him—rightly—as a fat, selfish, and conceited bounder, they knew. That they resented the trick he had played upon them, the boys also knew. And now here they were feeling sorry for Bunter because he had been ragged—about a tenth part as much as he deserved.

"Poor Bunter! Was he hurt?"

"Eh?"

"I hope he did not catch cold."

"What?"

"His clothes must have been spoiled."

"Poor Bunter!"

"Well, if you feel so jolly sorry for Bunter, I don't see what you've got up against us, then," blurted out Nugent. "It was Bunter who did all the mischief. Why——"

"I say, you fellows!"

The fat junior came up panting. He raised his cap to the girls with his greasy smile.

"Fancy meeting you!" he said. "I suppose that's what you fellows came out for. Where's the feed?"

"The what?"

"The feed. I've hurried like anything to overtake you, so as not to be left out," said Bunter. "I knew, of course, that if Marjorie was here she would be so disappointed if I didn't turn up."

"It is time we went home, Clara," said Marjorie, without even a glance at the fat junior, but with a curl of the lip that the Owl of the Remove could not see.

"Oh, don't go yet!" said Billy Bunter. "I don't see you so very often, you know. Where's the feed, you fellows?"

"There isn't any feed."

Billy Bunter blinked at them indignantly.

"Do you mean to say that you've dragged me all this way for nothing?" he exclaimed.

"Oh, ring off!" said Harry impatiently. "I say, Marjorie——"

But Marjorie and Clara were already going up the path. They had championed Bunter in talking to Harry Wharton & Co. But now that he had come, they were anxious to get out of his presence as quickly as possible.

"Marjorie——"

"Clara——"

"We have to hurry in," said Miss Clara coldly. "Good-bye!"

And the juniors stood looking after them in dismay as they walked away. They made no further attempt to follow. There was a silence under the trees. It was broken by Billy Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, they seem to be offended about something. What have you been doing?"

"Ass!"

"But what have you been——"

"Shut up!"

"I'm jolly well not going to shut up," said Bunter, blinking round at the juniors. "If you've been treating the girls with any incivility, I——"

"Will you hold your tongue, you dummy?" said Harry angrily.

"No, I won't! I think I'd better go after the girls, and see what it is. Of course, they will be confidential with me. Marjorie is always very chummy with me when you fellows aren't by—— Ow!"

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Billy Bunter found himself suddenly rolling in the grass. Half a dozen boots rolled him over and over there, and then the Remove chums walked away, leaving the Owl of the Remove sprawling in the grass, gasping for breath, and wondering whether an earthquake had happened.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Harry Wharton Has an Idea.

"HAZELDENE!"

"Vaseline, old man!"

"I say, Hazel!"

Hazeldene, of the Remove, looked round. It was some hours after the affair in the wood, and the chums of the Remove were standing at the gates of Greyfriars. Hazeldene had just dashed up on his bicycle, and was wheeling the machine in, when he was hailed.

Hazeldene grinned. As Marjorie's brother, he enjoyed a certain amount of popularity which otherwise would not have fallen to his share.

"Hallo!" he said, stopping. "What's the trouble?"

"You've been over to Cliff House?"

"Yes."

"To tea, I suppose?"

"Yes; Marjorie asked me."

"Any news?"

"No."

"The girls all right?"

"Quite all right."

Hazeldene wheeled on his machine again. He was suddenly caught in two pairs of hands and whirled back, and his machine ran on and curled up, falling with a crash. Hazeldene gave a yell.

"You duffers! Look at that!"

"It's your own fault," said Harry Wharton grimly.

"You know jolly well what we want to know, and—"

"Leggo my collar!"

"Then be sensible," said Nugent. "Now then, are Marjorie & Co. still on the warpath, or have they forgiven us for what we didn't do?"

Hazeldene chuckled.

"They haven't," he said. "They won't hear the subject mentioned. But it's all right. Leave 'em alone, and they'll get tired of feeling indignant in the long run. That's a jolly good way."

"But they think we've acted badly," said Wharton.

"Let 'em think so."

"Ass!" said Bob Cherry. "Blessed if I can understand how such a clever girl as Marjorie can have such a fat-headed brother!"

"It's a mystery," said Tom Brown. "But if matters are as bad as ever, the question is, what's going to be done? It's no good trying to get any sense out of that ass Hazeldene."

"Oh, rats!" grinned Hazeldene. "They'll come round all right. But I forgot. There is a little item of news. They're expecting visitors at Cliff House on Wednesday afternoon."

"Visitors to Miss Primrose, do you mean?"

"Ha, ha! No. Marjorie has asked Ethel Cleveland, and she is coming, and her Cousin D'Arcy is coming with her, and a couple of his friends—fellows belonging to St. Jim's School."

Wharton wrinkled his brows a little.

"Hang it!" he said. "This is rotten! We all like D'Arcy, and we should like to see him, and now we sha'n't get asked over to Cliff House."

"Beastly!" said Nugent.

"Never mind," said Hazeldene consolingly. "I shall go over, you know, and I'll tell you all about it afterwards."

"Oh, shut up, you ass!"

"I hear that they're going to have a garden feed," said Hazeldene. "I think they're bothering their heads over ways and means now, so they won't have much time to waste on you. Better lie low till afterwards, and then it will be all right."

"Rats!"

"Well, that's my advice."

And Hazeldene picked up his cycle and straightened it out, and wheeled it away towards the bicycle shed.

The juniors slowly walked on to the house. They were all looking troubled. The dispute with the Cliff House girls was a painful break in the amicable relations that had previously existed.

They had frequently spent half-holidays together, and they had many tastes and occupations in common. All that was interrupted now.

And the worst of it was, that if the breach was not healed, it would have a tendency to grow wider, like all disputes.

What was only a trifle to begin with, might become a serious division, and a little annoyance might lead to a total estrangement.

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ONE  
PENNY.

The question was, how it could be bridged over before it became serious.

To that subject Harry Wharton gave a great deal of thought. He would have been very pleased to meet the fellows from St. Jim's, especially D'Arcy, who had more than once visited Greyfriars, and was greatly liked there.

How was the trouble to be healed up by Wednesday?

"Blessed if I can see any way," said Bob Cherry. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here's Bunter again!"

The Owl of the Remove was waiting for them in the doorway. He plucked at Wharton's sleeve as the juniors went in.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Oh, let go!" said Wharton, shaking his hand off.

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Don't bother!" growled Bob Cherry. "You've caused trouble enough, in all conscience. We're on bad terms with Cliff House, through you. Buzz off."

"I was going to make a suggestion," said Bunter, with an air of injured dignity. "If you don't want to make friends with Marjorie, however, it doesn't matter."

The juniors stopped.

"What's that?" said Bob Cherry. "If you've got any suggestion to make, make it. I don't suppose you have anything sensible to say, though. You can only cause trouble; you can't cure it."

"It's a jolly good idea. You know what a softening effect it has upon a chap to feed him—"

"Well, you're soft enough," said Nugent, "and you're always feeding. I suppose you're right. But what has that to do with the matter?"

"I didn't mean that way. What I meant is, that if you're on bad terms with a fellow, you can generally make it up by standing him a feed. I couldn't ever dislike a chap who stood me a good feed."

"You needn't tell us that. But—"

"Well, my idea is to ask Marjorie & Co. to a really stunning feed," said Bunter, blinking through his big glasses. "You see, I should be willing to help in any way, in the shopping and cooking, and anything of that sort. All you fellows would have to do would be to find the cash."

"Ass!"

"Oh, really, Brown! You see, I should really be willing to find the cash, too, but I've been disappointed about a postal-order. However, as you're so mean, I'm willing to find the money, too. I've a postal-order coming on Wednesday for certain. You fellows need simply advance me the money, and take the postal-order when it comes. I suppose that will be quite satisfactory."

"Your supposer's out of order, then," said Bob Cherry. "Buzz off!"

"But, I say—"

Bunter was left to discourse to the desert air. The chums of the Remove went up to their study. Nugent jammed the kettle on the fire in a thoughtful way. Harry Wharton's brows were wrinkled as if he were thinking deeply. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation.

"By Jove!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"I've got it!"

"Got what?"

"A wheeze!"

The juniors looked at him eagerly. When Billy Bunter had a wheeze, it was generally greeted by a chorus of groans. But Harry Wharton's ideas were generally good, and generally practicable.

"Well what's the wheeze?" demanded two or three voices at once.

"Bunter's bosh suggested it to me. Marjorie & Co. are receiving visitors on Wednesday afternoon—the half-holiday—Hazel says. They're raising the wind to stand them some decent things. Now, suppose we—"

Wharton paused for a moment.

"Well?" said four anxious voices.

"Suppose we stood the feed?"

"Eh?"

"My idea is, to lay in a really ripping feed, and send it over to Cliff House, by post or carrier or something, as a peace-offering," said Harry. "It would come in mighty handy for the girls—of course, girls don't know how to stand a feed, and it would help them out, you see—as well as saving them the trouble of shopping."

"Good!"

"And then they couldn't hold out and keep up this dignity business afterwards, very well. I'm sure Marjorie would accept the olive-branch."

Bob Cherry gave the captain of the Remove an appreciative slap on the shoulder, with so much admiring energy that Wharton staggered across the study. He caught his foot in the rug, and sat down in the fender, quite unintentionally.

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The back of his head banged on the kettle, and there was a wild fizzing as it was overturned upon the fire.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

He sprang up like a Jack-in-the-box.

"You ass!" he roared. "What did you do that for?"

"Sorry!"

"You dangerous duffer——"

"I—I didn't mean to floor you! Ha, ha, ha! I'm awfully sorry! Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton rushed at him. Bob Cherry retreated from the study, almost doubled up with laughter.

"You utter ass——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton slammed the door. Then he turned his wrathful face on his chums. Nugent was rescuing the upset kettle; blacks were settling in thick clouds on the room and on everything it contained.

"You ass!" said Nugent. "Nice state the room's in!"

"Do you think I fell there on purpose?" roared the exasperated Wharton.

"Well, you might have fallen somewhere else."

"Ass!"

"Duffer!"

"Chump!"

"Fathead!"

"Look here——"

"Look here——"

The Nabob of Bhanipur and Tom Brown, of New Zealand, pushed between the excited juniors just in time. Hurree Singh waved a dusky hand.

"Peace," he said softly. "Let there be peacefulness between my worthy chummy friends. Let the angry jawfulness cease."

"Shut up, you dummies!" said Tom Brown, in more forcible language. "Chuck it!"

Bob Cherry opened the door and looked in.

"I think it's a good dodge," he said. Wharton grabbed up a cricket-stump and sprang towards the door, and Bob slammed it and fled.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### And Bunter Has Another.

**B**ILLY BUNTER came slowly upstairs a little later. It was getting near tea-time, and Bunter had to be very much distracted if he forgot it was tea-time. Bunter might miss lessons, and miss opportunities, and miss payment of any little loans, but he never missed meals unless there was something decidedly wrong. There was a buzz of eager talk in No. 1 Study as the fat junior reached it.

Bunter lowered his head a little to catch the words at the keyhole. The meanest junior at Greyfriars had no objection to gathering information that way. Bunter generally knew another fellow's business as well as he knew his own, or better; but his methods of acquiring the knowledge did not make him popular.

"Two pounds!"

He distinctly caught those words in Harry Wharton's voice. Then the short-sighted junior knocked his head against the handle of the door, and in a moment the door was slung open from the inside.

"Bunter!" exclaimed Wharton, with a look of contempt. "Listening again!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I—I wasn't listening," said Bunter, stammering. "I—I was stooping down to—to tie my shoe-lace."

"Your shoe-lace isn't untied."

"I—I thought it might be, you know."

"Oh, don't roll out lies like that!" said Wharton impatiently. "And you've come to the wrong place for a feed this time. We're going to have tea in Hall."

Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, I say, Wharton, you know what we get in Hall—bread and scrape and weak tea. I suppose you don't think I can live on that, do you?"

Wharton shrugged his shoulders.

"If it's good enough for me, Bunter, it's good enough for you. As a matter of fact, it's too good."

"Oh, really."

"About time we went down, too," said Harry, looking at his watch. "We don't want to be late and find all the radishes gone."

"I say, you fellows, I—I think you ought to have tea in the study, you know. It's ever so much nicer, and I shouldn't mind cooking anything. Besides, I'm hungry. Look here, I don't want to have tea in Hall. I'll stand a feed here if you like."

"Oh, that alters the case," said Nugent, with a grin.

"Have you got the feed about you, by any chance?"

"I'm expecting a postal-order to-night."

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" growled the fat junior. "If you fellows like to advance me the money for the feed now, you can have the postal-order when it comes. I shall make it straight over to you."

"Sorry, but I don't believe in ghosts," said Nugent blandly.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Come down to tea, you kids."

Billy Bunter followed the chums of the Remove out of the study.

"I say, you fellows, what are you so jolly mean about all of a sudden?" he exclaimed. "I know very well you're not stony. I'm sincerely sorry to see you growing mean like this. I hate a selfish chap."

"How do you manage to stand yourself, then, Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Nugent! You see, I'm in delicate health, and I want keeping up with good food, and plenty of it. I'm not what you would call a greedy chap, but I admit that I like a lot. I've a good appetite."

"Go hon!"

"I've got an idea, too. You fellows don't want to see me become seriously ill, I suppose. I don't see why you shouldn't have tea in Hall if you like, and save money by it; but it's a different matter with me. I need keeping up. Now, suppose you were to raise a subscription—so much a head—it wouldn't come to much for each chap, but it would mean a series of really decent feeds for me."

The juniors stared at him. The sublime coolness of the suggestion rendered them dumb for some moments. Bunter seemed quite unconscious that he had suggested anything of a remarkable nature. He blinked at the juniors, encouraged by their silence.

"I really regard it as a sort of duty on your part," he went on. "You know what a delicate chap I am. Of course, I shall refund it all out of my postal-order next—next week."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really."

The juniors went downstairs. Billy Bunter trotted after them.

"Look here, are you going to raise a subscription or are you not?"

"Not!"

"I think you might do the decent thing. I know you've got plenty of tin. Wharton was talking about two pounds just now——"

"Then you were listening!"

"I wasn't!"

"Then how do you know I was talking about two pounds?" said Wharton.

"You—you see, I—I guessed. It was—was intuition," said Bunter. "Of course, I wouldn't listen at a door. I should scorn such an action. But if you've got two pounds, as you said——"

"I didn't say so."

"Why, I heard you, I—I mean—I——"

"You were listening, and you heard me say two pounds, you worm! But I didn't say I had two pounds, and I haven't. And if I had, I wouldn't give you twopence out of it!"

"Oh, really, Wharton!"

The chums of the Remove went into the dining-room. Bunter followed them in with a snort of angry discontent. Although he never by chance contributed anything to the study funds, he always considered that he had an inalienable right to feed there, and to feed on the fat of the land.

The Remove table was about half surrounded by juniors. Most of the fellows had tea in their own studies when they could afford it. The appearance of Harry Wharton & Co. at the tea-table excited some surprise. It was very seldom that they were so low down in funds as to be under the necessity of having tea in Hall, and partaking of the provisions supplied by the school.

Those provisions were good and plain, but certainly not as appetising as the cosy little meals the juniors arranged in their own quarters when the money ran to it.

"Hallo! Stony?" said Ogilvy sympathetically, as the chums of the Remove came to the table.

Wharton shook his head.

"Not this time," he said.

"Faith, and why are ye havin' tea here, thin?" asked Micky Desmond. "The watercress is all gone, and there's only the doorsteps left, intirely."

"Then we'll manage with the doorsteps."

And Harry Wharton & Co. helped themselves from the very liberal supply of thick bread and butter, which Micky rather disrespectfully alluded to under the title of doorsteps.

"And you're not stony?" said Russell.

"No."

"Then you'd better stand jam all round, as you're having tea here."

"Good," said half a dozen voices.





The Greyfriars juniors stepped from under the cover of the big oak and raised their hats. "Good-afternoon," said five voices in unison. "Hee-haw, hee-hee-haw," came the astounding reply.

Harry Wharton laughed and shook his head.

"Can't be did?"

"And why not, intirely?"

"We're economising," explained Wharton.

"Rats!"

"Fact!"

Faith, and what are ye going to do with the tin when ye've saved it?"

"Spend it," said Wharton cheerfully.

"But where?"

"In a shop."

"Ye omadhaun, I mane what are ye going to buy with it?" exclaimed Micky Desmond.

"Goods."

"What sort of goods, ye gossoon?"

"The sort we need."

"And what sort are they?"

"The sort we are going to buy."

Micky gave it up. There was evidently no information to be got out of Harry Wharton & Co. Whatever they were saving money for, they did not intend to confide it to the whole Greyfriars Remove.

Billy Bunter came in and plumped his fat person down at the table with a sulky air. He ate the thick bread and butter with a discontented face, blinking with silent indignation at the chums of No. 1 Study as he did so.

"Anything wrong?" asked Bulstrode sympathetically.

"Been disappointed about a postal order?"

"Yes," grunted Bunter.

"Short of tin?"

"Yes. I've got a postal-order coming to-night," said Bunter, with a gleam of hope. "If you like to advance me a few bob off it, Bulstrode—"

"Can't be did! But if you're really hungry—"

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"I'm simply famished."

"Well, I've been having eggs," said Bulstrode. "You can have a couple of these if you like. I don't want them."

Bulstrode pushed towards the junior two egg-cups, containing eggs, or, at all events, egg-shells. As a matter of fact, Bulstrode had placed the empty egg-shells upside down in the egg-cups, so that they had the appearance of new eggs; in this case, appearances being very deceitful indeed.

Bunter stretched out his fat hand eagerly across the table.

"Thanks awfully, Bulstrode. I say, this is very decent of you."

"Not at all," said Bulstrode, with a princely wave of the hand. "You're welcome to them."

"Good."

The juniors were grinning gleefully as they watched Bunter's face, and waited. Everybody but the Owl of the Remove had seen Bulstrode invert the empty egg-shells in the cups.

But Bunter had no suspicion till he tried the eggs.

"Shove one of them along here, Billy," said Bob Cherry.

"Share out, you know. Halves!"

Bunter blinked at him.

"Nothing of the sort, Cherry. I'm surprised at you. Of course, I should be only too glad to give you one, but I'm bound to consider my constitution. I have to keep it up—"

While Bunter was speaking, he plunged a spoon into one of the egg-shells. It cracked to pieces, and revealed the emptiness within.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bulstrode.

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!"

Bunter pushed the egg-shells away, and went on eating bread-and-butter, with feelings too deep for words.

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## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

## Micky's Contribution.

"TWO pounds!"

Billy Bunter pricked up his ears.

Bunter had been the last to leave the tea-table. There was only bread-and-butter there, but when there was nothing else, Bunter could make a great deal of bread-and-butter disappear. He was satisfied at last, however, and he came out of the dining-room, and found the chums of the Remove talking together in the hall.

"Two pounds!"

Bunter paused, and appeared to be greatly interested in the school notice-board; blinking up at it through his spectacles without seeing a word there. He wanted to know something more about those two pounds.

The juniors did not observe him for the moment. They were very much interested in their discussion.

"Two pounds will be enough," said Nugent.

"Oh, yes. I think we could manage it at that figure."

"It means a whip round, of course."

"Yes. My idea is that every chap who was at the First of April feed should contribute according to his means, and we ought to be able to raise a decent sum that way. We're not quite so stony as we were last week, and, besides, we can be economical."

"The economy is terrific."

"I like the idea of a subscription," said Bob Cherry. "If every chap shoves in what he can raise—"

"I say, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter came up blinking, with a most friendly grin upon his fat face. He was looking so amiable that the chums of the Remove could not help staring at him in surprise. They had rather expected Bunter to sulk for a considerable time after a tea of bread-and-butter. But the fat junior was beaming.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "What's the matter with you? Have you lost a tanner and found a bob?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Has your postal-order come?"

"Not yet. I—"

"Then what are you grinning about like a blessed hyena or a Cheshire cat?"

"I think it's awfully decent of you chaps—"

"Of course it is," said Nugent. "Extremely decent. Jolly good! Ripping! But what are you talking about, by the way?"

"I mean about the subscription—"

"So you've been listening again!"

"Well, you see, I—I couldn't help hearing what you said, as I was standing here. I say, I think it's awfully decent of you, and—"

"Thanks awfully! Now buzz off."

"Hold on," said Bunter. "I should imagine that I'm going to have a voice in the matter."

"Quite a mistake; you're not."

"But I suppose you're going to ask me what I'd like to eat."

"You—to eat!"

"Yes. It's not much good raising a subscription to stand me a feed, if you don't consult my taste in the matter."

The juniors stared at him. Then there was a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He thinks we're raising a subscription to stand him a feed. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Great Scott!"

"Ha, ha!"

Bunter blinked at them in amazement.

"Well, wasn't that what you were saying?" he demanded.

"I suggested that you should raise a subscription for the purpose—"

"My dear ass, we're raising a subscription, but it's not for the purpose of seeing a porpoise feed," said Nugent.

"You're not on in this act at all. Buzz off!"

"But really—"

"It's for something else," said Wharton, laughing.

"You're dead in this scene, Bunter. Do run away and play."

"You're raising a subscription?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Is it for a feed?"

"Well, yes, it is."

"And it's not for me?" demanded Bunter indignantly.

"Certainly not."

"The certainfulness is terrific."

"I suppose I'm going to be asked, though?"

"You suppose right off the mark, then—you're not."

"Well, of all the beasts—"

"Cut off, do!"

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"If you think I'm going to be left out like this—"

"Buzz off!"

"I'll jolly well take care that I do come to the feed!"

"Dry up!"

"Look here, you fellows—"

Bob Cherry made a rush at the fat junior, brandishing his fists, and Billy Bunter fled. He disappeared out of the big doorway into the Close, and Bob returned to his comrades, laughing.

"The cool nerve of that bounder!" said Nugent. "Why on earth should anybody raise tin to stand him a feed? Blessed if I see!"

"Oh, that's Bunter all over!"

"The Bunterfulness is terrific!"

"Well, now about that subscription," said Harry. "One of us had better be appointed collector, and he can go round with a book and take down the names and the amounts. Nugent can be collector, and I will be treasurer."

"Good!"

"We'll begin with ourselves. We can stand five bob each; that will make the subscription list look decent for a beginning, and encourage the others."

"Shove it down!" said Nugent.

He took out his pocket-book, and each of the Famous Four wrote down his name, with the sum of five shillings placed against it.

"That's a pound for a start," said Wharton. "I'm expecting a postal-order—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh? What's the cackle about?"

"Ha, ha! It sounded so like Bunter, that's all."

Harry Wharton laughed too.

"Well, mine is a real postal-order," he said. "My aunt, Miss Wharton, is sending me an extra pound; and if it comes to-day I'll add it to the subscription, the lot of it. We must all shove in what he can, and make the thing go."

"The go-fulness will be terrific."

"Well, I'll go round and get the subscriptions," said Nugent. "I'll bring the loot to you in the study, Harry."

"Right you are!"

"You chaps can do my Latin imposition between you, while I'm collecting; that will make an equal division of labour."

And this excellent suggestion being agreed to, Wharton and Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh went to the study to write out Nugent's Latin impot. in three equal parts; and Frank himself started on his rounds as a collector.

He sighted Micky Desmond in the Close, and bore down upon him. Micky looked at him as he was hailed, and bestowed a glance of considerable curiosity upon the open pocket-book and pencil in Nugent's hand.

"Faith, and what are ye afther now?" he inquired.

"Money," said Nugent laconically.

"Sure, and I don't owe ye anything," said Micky, scratching his head. "I owe Snoop ninepence, but I've paid ye the fourpence-halfpenny."

"I'm not collecting debts, fathead! It's a subscription."

"Faith, and I don't belave in subscriptions," said Micky, with a shake of the head. "Sure, I subscribed to a fund for presenting meself with a testimonial wanse, but I never got the testimonial."

"Ass! This is a fund for standing a feed to Cliff House, to make up for the rotten joke that was played on them on the First of April."

"Begorra, that's betther. That's a good idea."

"Good! We're putting up five bob each, and very likely Wharton will bung in an extra pound," said Frank. "How much shall I put you down for?"

"Faith, I'd subscribe all I'd got for such a jolly good scheme!"

"Right-ho; ladle it out!"

Micky Desmond went through his pockets. He turned out a length of string, embedded in toffee, a chunk of sealing-wax, a penknife with a broken blade, and a half-penny. Nugent stared at the curious collection. Micky made another desperate grope through his pockets, and added a pencil and a chestnut to the heap.

"Well?" said Nugent.

"Faith, and I—"

Nugent snorted.

"So that's what you meant when you said you would subscribe all you've got," he remarked. "Well, you can shove that sticky lot back into your pockets."

"Faith, and I—"

"If you think that's any good towards standing a tea-fight for young ladies, you're making a big mistake."

Micky eyed the collection ruefully.

"Faith, it's not much," he agreed. "You'd better take the halfpenny, though."

"Shouldn't be able to carry so much money at once," said



Nugent, with a sniff. "I don't want to go about loaded up with money. Rats!"

And Nugent walked off in search of another victim, and Micky Desmond returned his curious collection to his pockets, halfpenny and all.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### The Subscription.

**O**GILVY!

The Scottish junior stopped as Nugent called him. He glanced at the pocket-book and pencil, as Micky Desmond had done.

"Hallo!" he said.

"You were at the First of April feed," said Frank. "We're raising a subscription from all the fellows who were there, to stand a feed to Cliff House—to make it up to the girls, you know, for Bunter's rotten trick."

"Good!" said Ogilvy.

"How much shall I put you down for?"

"Oh, something decent!" said Ogilvy generously. "I think it's a ripping good idea, and I shouldn't like to be mean in a matter of this kind."

Nugent looked gratified.

"Well, that's all right," he said. "We've fixed a minimum of two pounds for the cost of the feed, and we want to raise at least that. Four of us have raised the first pound among us, and we may be able to shove in some more. What will you dub up?"

Ogilvy reflected.

"Well, I'd like to shove in a pound," he remarked. "Is there any objection to a chap shoving in as much as he likes?"

"Not at all. That's the idea of the thing—every chap subscribes as much or as little as he likes," said Nugent. "Small contributions thankfully received, you know, and larger ones in proportion."

"Good! I'd like to subscribe a pound——"

"Here you are; sign your name here!"

"Wait a tick! I'd like to subscribe a pound——"

"There's no objection! Wharton's very likely going to do the same! This is where you sign your name, Ogilvy!"

"Yes; but——"

"Take this pencil!"

"Just a moment! I'd like to subscribe a pound, but——"

"It's all right; you can! Sign here!"

"But I haven't one, you know!" said Ogilvy cheerfully.

"Eh?"

"I'd like to subscribe a pound, but I haven't one," explained Ogilvy; "otherwise, I should shove it in with pleasure!"

"You ass!"

"But you say a chap can subscribe as little as he likes?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, here's my little bit! Where do I sign?"

"Here—on this line!"

"Give me the pencil!"

Ogilvy wrote down his name and the amount carefully, returned the book to Nugent, and pressed a coin into the junior's hand. Then he walked quickly away.

Nugent opened his hand to see what Ogilvy's contribution was, and found a farthing in his palm.

"Hold on!" he called out. "You've made a mistake!"

Ogilvy did not hold on. Nugent glanced at the book, and saw the entry, "J. Ogilvy, 4d."

"The—the rotter!" ejaculated Nugent. "Ogilvy! Hold on!"

But Ogilvy was gone. A faint chuckle floated back to Nugent, but that was all. Nugent glared wrathfully at the farthing, and at the entry in the book.

His collecting was not panning out very well, so far. However, there were more victims to be found yet.

Nugent walked into the gym. Hazeldene was disporting himself on the parallel bars, and Nugent called to him. The junior dropped to the floor.

"Anything wanted?" he asked.

"Yes; cash!"

Hazeldene grinned.

"Then you've come to the wrong shop," he remarked.

"I haven't any. What's the idea?"

"It's a subscription for a feed to Cliff House——"

"Good egg! I shall get an invite! Marjorie never leaves me out," said Hazeldene. "Go ahead! I hope you'll raise a lot!"

"Look here! Aren't you going to subscribe?"

"How much?" asked Hazeldene, feeling in his pockets.

"Five bob!"

"Five rats!"

"Well, half-a-crown would do!"

"Sorry—— But look here," exclaimed Hazeldene brightly, "it's all right; I'll borrow it off Marjorie!"

"What!"

"I'll borrow half-a-crown off Marjorie. She always lends me money, you know."

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"You ass!" shouted Nugent. "If you mention the matter to Marjorie, we'll jump on you! You frabjous ass!"

"Well——"

"If you're stony, I suppose you can't contribute!" grunted Nugent. "You're the third dummy who's turned out no good!"

And Nugent went on. He had caught eight of Tom Brown, and he had no doubt that the junior from New Zealand would turn up trumps.

And he was right. Tom Brown dived into his pocket at once as soon as he heard of the subscription and its object.

"How much are you fellows putting up?" he asked.

"Five bob each."

"I've had a decent tip from my pater in Taranaki," said Tom Brown. "Any objection to a bigger contribution?"

"No," said Nugent suspiciously, remembering Ogilvy and the pound he would have contributed if he had possessed it.

"No larks, you know!"

"Look here!"

Tom Brown fished out a half-sovereign.

"There you are!"

"Jolly good!" said Nugent. "You're the only chap that's panned out at all, so far. Sign your name here—T. Brown, 10s."

And Tom wrote down his name and the amount, and Nugent went on his way rejoicing. He had made a start, at all events. He left the gym, and met Mark Linley, the lad from Lancashire, as he went towards the House.

Nugent stopped, and hesitated. Linley had been at the feed on the First of April, and so he was one of those who were to be called upon to contribute to this fund. But the Lancashire lad was, as Nugent well knew, the poorest lad in Greyfriars, where he had come upon a scholarship. Nugent paused a moment, and then passed on; but Linley tapped him on the arm.

"You are raising a subscription, I hear," he remarked.

"Yes," said Nugent.

"What's the idea? I'm not rich, you know," said Mark, with a smile; "but—— You know the story of the widow's mite."

Nugent explained. Mark Linley nodded.

"Have you got much, so far?"

"Total thirty bob—five subscribers as yet," he said.

Linley coloured.

"I can't put up anything like that, of course," he said.

"But I could put a shilling down on the list——"

"Tanners are welcome," said Nugent. "Micky Desmond offered a ha'penny, but I couldn't carry it all. Bobs are all right."

"Here you are, then!"

"Good! Sign your name here!"

Mark Linley put down his initials and the sum he subscribed, and passed on. Nugent entered the House, and was immediately buttonholed by Billy Bunter.

"I say, Nugent, I suppose you fellows were joking just now," said the fat junior. "Of course you are really raising that subscription to stand me a feed?"

"Rather not! Let go my jacket!"

"But, really——"

"Leggo, ass!"

"But don't you want me to subscribe?" asked Bunter, convinced at last that the fund was not for him, and very curious to know who it could be for.

Nugent eyed him doubtfully.

"Well, you ought to as you were at the First of April feed, and you put away about ten times as much as anybody else!" he remarked. "But you never hand out anything!"

"I don't think I ought to be left out——"

"I don't suppose you've got any tin, anyway."

"Well, if five bob would be any good——"

"Of course it would!" said Nugent immediately. "That's as much as I've subscribed myself. Five bob would be all right."

"I want to know what it's for, of course," said Bunter.

"You can't expect a chap to subscribe to a fund he doesn't know anything about."

"Well, that's reasonable, too. It's a feed to Cliff House——"

"Oh!"

"We're going to lay in a really ripping feed, and send it over to Miss Hazeldene by the carrier on Wednesday afternoon," explained Nugent. "You see, they're having visitors at Cliff House—D'Arcy and some of the fellows from St Jim's, and Miss Ethel—and the feed would come in handy. It's a sort of peace-offering, to make up for the silly rotten trick you played on Marjorie and Clara."

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"You really ought to stand a bigger whack than anybody else," said Frank. "But if you put up five bob, it will be all O.K. Hand it over!"

"You see——"

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"Come on; I've no time to waste!"

"You see, I've been disappointed about a postal-order. I am expecting one this afternoon, but there's been a delay in the post. However, it can't be later than to-morrow morning—"

"You young ass!" roared Nugent. "Have you kept me here jawing when you don't mean to make a contribution at all?"

"But I do mean it!" exclaimed Bunter. "You see, my postal-order will be for ten shillings. I want to subscribe five. If you hand me five bob now, you can have the whole of the postal-order when it comes!"

Nugent took the fat junior by the shoulders and shook him till he gasped for breath, and his spectacles slid down his fat little nose.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Leggo! Are you dotty? Leggo! You ass! D-d-d-don't shake me like that; you may make my spectacles fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them! Ow!"

Nugent walked on, and left him gasping. The name of William George Bunter was not put down in the subscription list.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter Finds an Ally.

HARRY WHARTON pushed a closely-written sheet away from him as Frank Nugent came into the study.

"Just finished," he said. "Now we can do our prep., and all start fair. I hope Quelch won't notice that the hands are different; but we've tried to keep them alike."

"Oh, that's all right! He hardly ever reads the impots," said Nugent. "I should think he would be in want of something to occupy his time if he did."

"How has the subscription panned out?"

"That's the lot!"

Nugent threw the half-sovereign and the shilling and the farthing on the table.

"Eleven bob," said Harry. "With our quidlet that makes thirty-one shillings. It's not even the two pounds."

"We shall have to make it up."

"The makeitupfulness of the honourable cash will be a pleasure to me," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "If my worthy chums will allow me to contribute the honourable sovereign in esteemed extra addition—"

"What-ho!" said Nugent. "This is a case of all hands to the mill, and a giddy prince ought to shell out to a better tune than common or garden chaps like ourselves. Fork out the sov.!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh smiled affably, and added a golden coin to the little pile.

"That's better!" said Bob Cherry. "Two pounds eleven shillings."

"And mine when it comes," said Harry. "That will make three pounds eleven."

"Too much!"

"Well, we want to do the thing decently."

"Yes, rather!" said Nugent. "No good sending over a consignment of second-rate stuff. My idea is that we get leave to-morrow, and go down to the village and order most of it at Uncle Clegg's. We'll get some of it here at the school shop, too, to support home industries, you know. Then we'll lay in a hamper, and send it over to Cliff House by Chucks, the carrier."

"We can get a hamper out of the box-room," said Harry. "There's a good many empty ones there. We'll get one down this evening and dust it out, and put the stuff in, and send it off to-morrow."

"Good! Enough!"

And the chums of the Remove fell to their preparation. Billy Bunter came into the study a little later; but he had not come there to work.

"I say, you fellows—" he began.

"Don't interrupt!" growled Nugent.

"But it's about the subscription."

"Well, what is it—quick?"

"I've been thinking that it's a ripping idea to stand the Cliff House girls a feed, just as you suggest, but why not invite them and their friends over here? Then we should have our whack, too!"

"Shut up!"

"I think that's a really ripping idea, you fellows."

"If Bunter's going to talk, I think I'll take my prep. to my own study to do," said Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"It's all right," said Wharton. "He's not going to talk. If you say another word, Bunter, you go out of the study on your neck."

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

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Billy Bunter had no time for more. Wharton kept his word. The fat junior was whirled out of the study, and the door was slammed behind him.

He reeled against the wall of the passage, and gasped for breath, but he did not venture to open the study door again.

"Beast!" he murmured. "They're all beasts! I say, Skinner."

"Hallo, bat!" said Bulstrode's voice.

"Oh, is that you, Bulstrode? I say, you know, those rotters in there are going to stand a feed, and it would be a jolly good joke up against them to raid it," said Bunter.

Bulstrode's eyes gleamed. He was "up against" No. 1 Study all the time.

"Something in that," he remarked. "Where's the feed?"

"They're getting it in to-morrow," said Bunter, gratified at finding an ally in the bully of the Remove. "We could easily raid it on the road, I should think—"

"On the road!" repeated Bulstrode.

"Yes; it's a sort of present they're sending to the girls at Cliff House," Bunter explained. "It would be a good joke to raid it—"

Bulstrode took the fat junior by the ear.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter. "Ow! What are you doing? Leggo!"

"You worm!"

"Ow! Oh! Ow!"

"You've played enough of your rotten jokes on Cliff House," said Bulstrode. "If I catch you up to anything of the sort, I'll squash you, you toad!"

"Ow, ow!"

And Bulstrode walked on, leaving Billy Bunter ruefully rubbing his ear, and grunting with indignation and rage. Bunter went slowly down the passage in a state of mind bordering on fury.

Snoop was coming upstairs, and Bunter stopped as he saw him. Snoop, the sneak of the Remove, was a fellow quite after his own heart in many respects, and certainly he would not be above raiding a Cliff House spread if he had the chance.

"I say, Snoop—"

"No, I haven't any," said Snoop.

"Eh?"

"I haven't any."

"Any what?"

"Money to give away," said Snoop, with a grin.

Bunter snorted.

"I wasn't going to ask you for any money."

"Weren't you?" said Snoop, with an air of great astonishment. "What's the matter with you, then? Are you ill?"

"Look here—"

"Sorry. I'm going to find something prettier to look at," said Snoop, passing on.

Billy Bunter caught him by the sleeve.

"I can put you up to a good thing," he said. "What do you think of raiding a feed that cost two pounds or more?"

Snoop's eyes glistened.

"Jolly good," he said. "Where is it? And is it safe?"

"Safe as houses. Wharton's sending a consignment of grub over to Cliff House, for the girls to stand a treat to their visitors on Wednesday afternoon. Wicked waste of good grub, I call it. They don't care if I perish of hunger under their eyes. My idea is to collar the grub on the way somehow. We should be quite justified—"

"Oh, never mind about being justified, if we can collar the grub," said Snoop, less hypocritically. "No gammon, you know."

"Oh, really, Snoop—"

"Where is the tommy?"

"They haven't got it in yet. They—"

"Oh, rats! I expect they've been stuffing you," said Snoop, in disgust. "I'm off!"

Billy Bunter hurried after him along the Remove passage.

"I tell you—"

"Oh, don't bother!"

"But—"

"Bosh!"

The door of No. 1 Study opened. Bob Cherry's voice was heard.

"I'll go up and fetch the hamper down now, you chaps."

"Right-ho!" said Wharton's voice, within the study.

"Bring a good-sized one—we shall want it."

"Right you are!"

Snoop gave a soft whistle. Bob Cherry strode away towards the box-room stairs. Billy Bunter blinked triumphantly at the sneak of the Remove.

"Well, what do you say now?" he demanded.

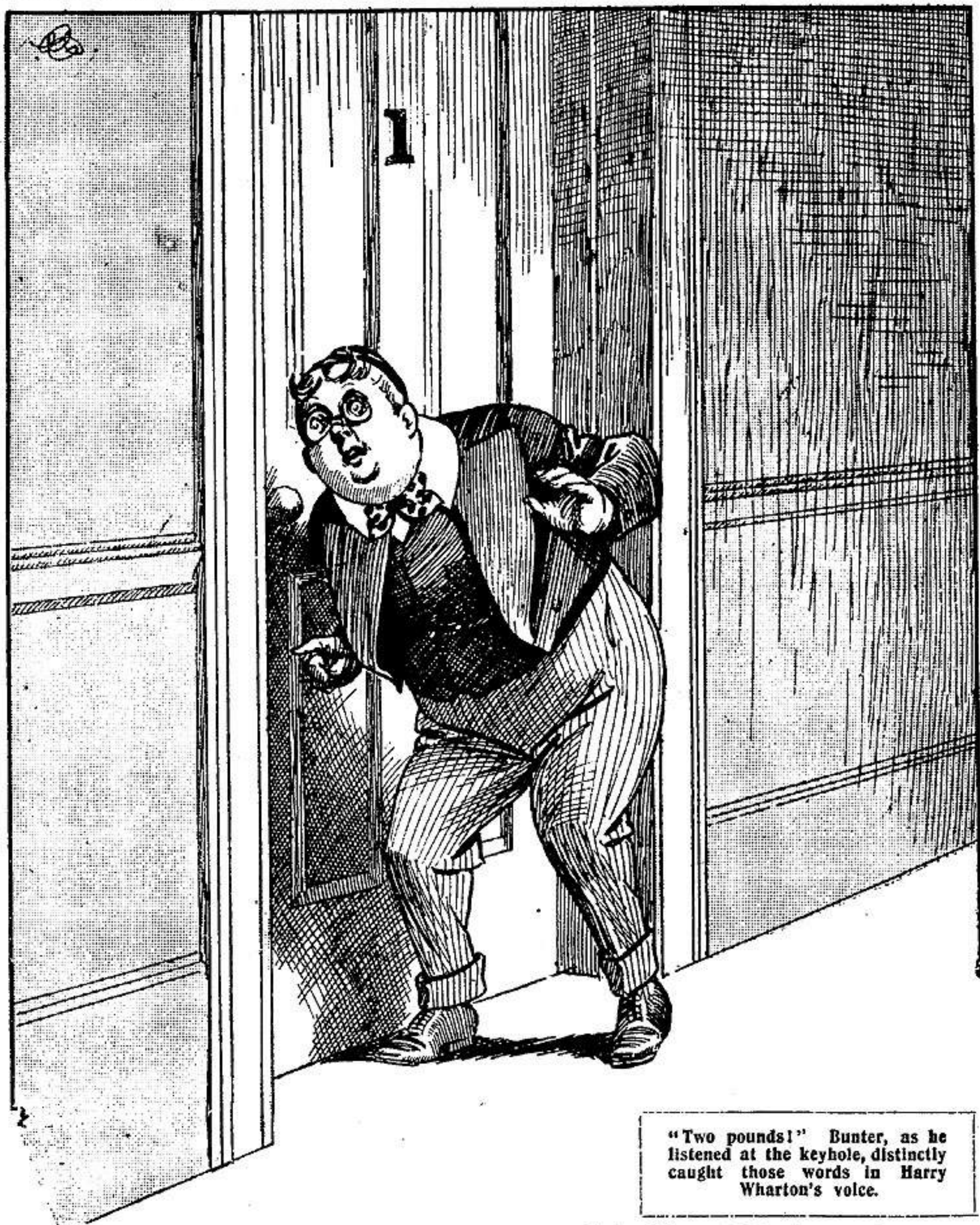
"I think it's all right."

"You'll help me raid the tommy?"

"What-ho! Mind, mum's the word!"

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"Two pounds!" Bunter, as he listened at the keyhole, distinctly caught those words in Harry Wharton's voice.

#### THE NINTH CHAPTER.

##### The Hamper for Cliff House.

THE following morning Harry Wharton showed an unusual keenness in looking for the postman. The expected letter came, and it contained the postal order from Miss Wharton. Harry gave a nod of satisfaction as he opened it.

"Here it is," he said. "Now we've only got to get permission to go down to the village after morning school, and lay it out."

"Jolly good," said Bob Cherry. "The funds are ample."

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now, which is a jolly good thing for us, and a rare occurrence that ought to be celebrated somehow. By the way, wouldn't it be a good idea to let Marjorie know something in advance? The girls may be trying in a feed before Wednesday, you know. They may get the stuff in to-night. The chaps from St. Jim's will be hungry."

"That's so. But if we write and tell them what's coming, we may get a note telling us not to bother."

"H'm! That would muck it up!"

"Rather!"

"Let's put it to Hazeldene. He can talk to Marjorie. He needn't tell her the facts, but just explain to her that

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there's a peace-offering coming, you see, and advise her not to lay in any grub for the occasion."

Wharton nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes, that's not a bad dodge."

"Hazeldene can buzz over to Cliff House on his bike, while we're gone down to the village."

"I'll ask him."

Hazeldene, on being approached on the subject, willingly agreed. He was quite ready to do anything he could to heal the breach between the two schools, and as he was certain to be asked over to Cliff House on Wednesday afternoon, he had a natural interest in helping to arrange for a really good feed.

"Of course, you'll put it delicately," said Wharton anxiously.

"That's all right," said Hazeldene. "You can trust me."

"Of course, you won't say too much?"

"Certainly not."

"Or—or too little?"

"Right you are. I'll hit the medium."

"And mind you don't put your foot in it," said Nugent distrustfully. "You know what an ass you are!"

"Look here—"

"Well, I didn't mean exactly that, but be diplomatic."

"I'll be as diplomatic as an ambassador," promised Hazeldene. "I want the thing to come off all right. Don't forget some meringues—I like meringues."

"Blow what you like! You—"

"I shall be there," grinned Hazeldene. "I'll tell you all about it afterwards."

"Oh, rats!"

"Mind, Marjorie isn't to be told everything, or she may refuse to have the stuff," said Wharton; "at the same time, she's to know enough to prevent her from getting in a lot of grub that won't be wanted."

Hazeldene promised to be very careful to convey the exact amount of information requisite—a somewhat difficult task, but he seemed to be confident about it.

After morning school, the chums of the Remove left Greyfriars, and while Hazeldene pedalled over to Cliff House, Harry Wharton & Co. walked down to the village. Bunter and Snoop watched them go.

"They're gone to get the grub," said Bunter.

Snoop nodded, with a grin.

"That's so."

"The hamper's in No. 1 Study," went on Bunter.

"They'll pack it in that when they get it here, and the carrier will call for it—this evening, I expect, to be delivered at Cliff House to-morrow."

"That's it."

"But it jolly well won't be there when they want it," said Bunter. "My idea is to get out of the class-room early this afternoon, on some excuse, and get the hamper of grub out of the study while Wharton and the others are still in class."

Snoop grinned a little uneasily.

"That's all right," he said. "But they'll suspect, as sure as a gun, and then—you see, we don't want a good hiding apiece."

"We'll hide the hamper, and play possum," said Bunter.

"We can go back to the class-room, and say nothing. I don't see why they should suspect us. We'll hide the hamper in the upper box-room, and feed on the things later when it's quite safe."

"Good!"

The two intended raiders watched for Harry Wharton & Co. to come in. The chums of the Remove were nearly an hour absent. When they returned to Greyfriars, each of them carried a big bag, and the bags were full.

Bunter watched them with glistening eyes as they went up to the study. Somewhat to their surprise, he did not follow them in.

They had fully expected him to make an attempt to get at the provisions, but Bunter seemed to have forgotten the whole matter. He really avoided the chums, apparently oblivious of their existence and of their doings, which was a great relief to Harry Wharton & Co. They generally had too much of Bunter.

They went into the study and deposited the bags on the table.

"Jolly good," said Nugent. "Look here, I'll start packing the stuff in the hamper, while you chaps go and get the rest of the things at Mrs. Mumble's."

"Right you are."

"We've told the carrier to call at six," went on Nugent.

"It's best to get the hamper packed at once—we mayn't have time after school."

And he began the packing, while Harry and the others went down to the school shop to complete the purchases.

There was a great deal of packing to be done, and Nugent had plenty to do. He was busily engaged when a pair of

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large spectacles blinked in at the doorway. Billy Bunter had hoped that all the chums were gone and the provisions left unguarded, and in that case he would have departed from the arrangement he had made with Snoop for the purpose of immediately possessing himself of the treasure.

Nugent's presence in the study quite baffled him. He sniffed discontentedly, and was about to steal silently away when a hand grasped his shoulder, and he was run headlong into the study.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh, really, Wharton—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Is it you, Vaseline, you beast? Leggo!"

Nugent looked up from his packing.

"Hallo, Hazeldene!"

"I found this blessed oyster peeping in," said Hazeldene, grinning. "I suppose the grub was making his mouth water."

"Nothing of the sort!" said Billy Bunter indignantly. "After the way I've been treated I should refuse to touch any of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Vaseline—"

"You jolly well won't touch any of it, anyway!" said Nugent. "Get out!"

"I—I was just looking in to see if I could be of any use—"

"Well, you can't—or ornament either!" said Nugent. "Travel!"

"You see—"

Kick him out, Hazel!"

"Certainly!"

"Oh, really, I—I— Oh!"

Billy Bunter disappeared into the passage, helped out of the study by the end of Hazeldene's boot. Harry Wharton came in with his companions, all of them laden with the supplies from the school shop.

"My hat!" said Hazeldene, looking on in great admiration.

"You're doing this thing in style, and no mistake!"

"Oh, so you're back?" said Harry. "Have you seen Marjorie?"

"Yes, of course!"

"Well?"

"Yes, she's quite well, thank you!" said Hazeldene imperturbably.

"You ass! You know I don't mean that! I mean, is it all right?"

Hazeldene chuckled.

"Yes, I think it's all right. I just gave some judicious hints, you know, that's all. I think Marjorie understands what the surprise is she's to receive on Wednesday. You see, I impressed upon her particularly not to lay in any grub for the visitors."

"I hope she understood," said Bob Cherry uneasily.

"I think she must have, you know, because I told her particularly that there would be meringues."

"You ass! You've been talking too much!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Well, I didn't say there was a hamper coming."

"You ass! You haven't spoken plainly enough!" said Nugent.

"Oh, yes, I made it quite clear. I said there would be a surprise for them, you see, and threw out a lot of hints."

"You ass! You've been too ambiguous!" said Wharton.

Hazeldene snorted.

"Hang it all, there's no pleasing the lot of you!" he exclaimed. "Anyway, it will be all right, so there's an end."

"Well, I suppose we must let it go at that," said Harry. "Anyway, here's the hamper, and the carrier's calling for it at six, so that's all serene."

"There's just about room in the hamper," said Nugent. "Those tarts will just fill up this corner. I'll shove plenty of paper in to make padding; we don't want everything to be smashed. Now, where's the cord?"

"Here you are!"

"Shove your finger on this knot."

Nugent corded up the hamper, and then a label was fastened upon it, with the name and address of Marjorie Hazeldene very carefully written.

"There!" said Nugent, getting up at last. "That's all right!"

## THE TENTH CHAPTER.

### The Raiders.

**B**ILLY BUNTER was looking somewhat pale as he went into the Remove Form-room with the rest of the Lower Fourth that afternoon. As a rule, Bunter had a high colour, due principally to overfeeding, but now his ruddy cheeks were pale, and the fact could not fail to attract some attention.

To inquiries as to whether he was ill, the fat junior replied



with grunts and with remarks concerning the meanness of fellows who didn't allow him to have enough to eat in his own study. But Bob Cherry looked at the fat junior closely as he sat down, and uttered a suppressed exclamation.

"You blessed young fraud!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Mr. Quelch, the Form-master, had just come in, and he looked round.

"Silence in class, please!" he said.

Bob relapsed into silence. But he continued to stare at Bunter, and Harry followed his glance. And then the captain of the Remove made the same discovery that Bob had made. Bunter's unusual pallor was caused by chalk having been rubbed over his fat face.

"The fraud!" muttered Harry.

Mr. Quelch glanced at Bunter once or twice. He saw that he was pale, but the chalk had been rubbed on too carefully for the truth to be seen except at a close inspection.

Bunter gave a groan presently, and the Form-master fixed his eyes upon him.

Bunter!

"Yes, sir!" moaned Billy.

"Why are you making that noise?"

"I—I feel a pain, sir."

"Do you mean that you are ill?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"You do not look very well," said Mr. Quelch, not unkindly. "If you would care to, you may go and lie down for a little while, Bunter."

"Thank you, sir!"

Billy Bunter rose with alacrity.

"Return when you feel more fit," said Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir."

Bunter left his place and staggered in his walk, and Snoop rose and lent him a hand. The fat junior turned a pathetic look upon the Form-master.

"M-m-may Snoop help me up to the dorm., sir?" he asked.

"Certainly!"

And Bunter left the Form-room leaning heavily upon Snoop's arm. The chums of the Remove looked at one another in deep disgust.

The deception was apparent enough to them, although Mr. Quelch had no suspicion. They could not give Bunter away, but their looks showed very plainly what they thought of him.

"The miserable worm!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Fancy telling barefaced lies like that to get off class!"

"Regular worm!" agreed Nugent. "I think we'd better lick him after school. This isn't the first time he's malingered, either."

But Billy Bunter was quite impervious to glances of scorn. He did not even see them; but it would have made no difference if he had.

He breathed more freely when he was out in the passage with Snoop, however. Mr. Quelch was usually hard to deceive, and Bunter had felt uneasy all the time the Form-master's eyes were upon him.

"All serene now!" he said, with a low chuckle.

Snoop grinned.

"Right as rain!"

"You've got to get back to the Form-room, Snoopey, but there'll be time to help me get the hamper into the box-room first."

"Right-ho!"

Without any appearance of being ill now, Billy Bunter hurried upstairs, with Snoop at his heels. The stairs and the upper passages were deserted; all the boys of Greyfriars were in the class-rooms now.

The two juniors reached No. 1 Study in the Remove passage. There lay the hamper, corded and labelled ready for the carrier.

Billy Bunter grinned with satisfaction.

"Here you are!" he said.

"Good! Lend a hand!"

The two juniors took hold of the hamper by the cords and essayed to lift it. It was very heavy, and they panted, and allowed it to sink to the floor again.

"Phew!" said Snoop. "It won't be an easy job getting this blessed hamper up to the box-room."

"N-n-n-no, it won't!"

"We could drag it along the passage, but getting it up the stairs is another matter."

Bunter nodded thoughtfully.

"Look here, Snoopey, you can leave it to me if you like. You go back to the Form-room—Quelch will be expecting you, and—"

"Oh, come off!" said Snoop roughly. "You can't take me in like that!"

"I fail to understand you!" said Billy Bunter, with a great deal of dignity.

"Liar!" said Snoop unceremoniously. "You want to get rid of me while you collar the grub!"

"Oh, really, Snoop—"

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THE EDITOR.

P.S.—You will understand why I say you will be compensated for your time and trouble when you have read the tale of Gordon Gay.

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"You're jolly well not going to open the hamper till I'm with you!" said Snoop emphatically.

"I—I thought I might have a snack——"

"Then I'll have a snack, too!"

"But Mr. Quelch will miss you. He may send a fellow to look for you if you don't go back to the class-room," urged Bunter.

"I'm not going back without you."

"But I'm ill—I mean, I've got permission to lie down."

"You're coming back with me, all the same!" said Snoop unpleasantly. "It's halves with us over this hamper, or nothing."

"But——"

"Shut up! The question is, how we're to hide it?"

"But I can't go back to the Form-room!" expostulated Bunter. "I'm ill—I've got permission to lie down. Quelch will be surprised to see me."

"You can have a sudden recovery."

"Look here, I won't come!"

"Do you want me to tell Quelch you were malingering?" demanded Snoop. "Because I jolly well will if you try to stay out of the class-room after I've gone back!"

"Oh, really——"

"That's final! Now, about this hamper!"

Bunter groaned. It was pretty clear that it would be very difficult for the two juniors—neither strong nor fit—to get the heavy hamper up the narrow box-room stairs. Other hiding-places near at hand there seemed none. Bunter would have been well content to be left alone with the hamper there—to open it and feast to his heart's content. But that did not suit Snoop. He did not intend to run half the risk for the sake of about a tenth part of the plunder.

"I've got an idea!" he exclaimed suddenly, glancing in at the open door of the cupboard. "Let's hide it there!"

"Eh?" said Bunter, staring at him in astonishment.

"There?"

"Yes. It's about the last place they'll think of looking in," said Snoop, with a chuckle.

The lower half of the cupboard was mostly filled with lumber—cricket stumps and bats, a broken chair, a travelling-rug belonging to Wharton, and other articles of the same sort. Snoop began to clear the lumber out.

"But——" began Bunter.

"Oh, do as I tell you!" exclaimed Snoop impatiently. "They'll never think of looking for it in their own cupboard. Then while they're in the gym. this evening we can nip in here, and either get the hamper away or open it and carry away the stuff in bags."

"We mayn't get a chance."

"Then we'll come down from the dormitory after lights out," said Snoop. "We should have plenty of time then."

"Look here, it would be much better for you to go back to the Form-room, and——"

"Well, I'm not going."

"Oh, really, Snoop——"

"Lend a hand with the hamper."

Billy Bunter grumbled and obeyed. The hamper was pushed into the bottom of the cupboard, and the lumber piled on it, the travelling-rug covering it up from view, and the cricket stumps being laid on top. The appearance of the lumber was not much different from what it had been before.

Snoop closed the cupboard door.

"Now, that's all right," he said. "Come on!"

"I—I think I feel rather faint," said Bunter feebly. "I—I think I'll take advantage of Mr. Quelch's permission and go and lie down for a bit."

Snoop grasped him by the arm.

"No, you jolly well won't," he remarked. "You'll come back to the Form-room with me."

"I—I shall have to wash this chalk off my face, anyhow."

"I'll come to the bath-room with you."

"Look here, Snoop——"

"Oh, shut up, and come along!"

Billy Bunter gave in. There was nothing else he could do; for Snoop was determined, and he was not to be hood-winked. The fat junior washed the chalk off his face,

and went unwillingly back to the class-room with the Remove sneak.

Mr. Quelch glanced round as he heard them come in. He seemed surprised to see Bunter.

"Ah! You are feeling better, Bunter?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. I—I think the—the fresh air revived me, sir," said Bunter.

"You are certainly looking less pale," said the Form-master.

"I—I feel much better, sir. I—I thought I ought to come back to lessons as I felt better, sir."

Mr. Quelch gave him a sharp glance. It was a very proper sentiment; but it did not fit in very well with what the Form-master knew of Bunter's character.

"Very well, Bunter; go to your place."

And the lesson was resumed.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Gone!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were considerably surprised. Billy Bunter's return to the Form-room when he had permission to stay out was surprising enough. The fat junior was the laziest as well as the greediest fellow at Greyfriars, and his return to work was nothing short of astonishing. What was the meaning of it?

"What blessed tricks has he been up to now?" muttered Bob Cherry. "It was only an excuse to get out of the Form-room, I know."

"I'm sure of that."

"Snoop's in it, too."

"Yes, rather!"

"Silence!"

And further comment upon the curious occurrence had to be postponed until after the lessons were over for the day. When half-past four rang out from the clock tower, Mr. Quelch made the welcome sign of dismissal, and the Lower Fourth poured out into the wide passage.

Bob Cherry gave Bunter a sounding slap on the shoulder. "Hallo, hallo, hallo, Bunt! Feeling all right now?"

"Ow!"

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, you ass! You've nearly dislocated my shoulder," yelled Bunter.

"Oh, stuff! Come here, and I'll give you one on the other shoulder, and make it level," suggested Bob Cherry.

But the fat junior took care not to come near. Harry Wharton went towards the stairs, and Nugent called after him.

"Aren't you coming out, Harry?"

"Yes; but I'm going up to the study first. It's occurred to me that Bunter's leaving the class-room may have had some connection with the hamper," said Wharton.

"Phew! I never thought of that."

"May as well have a look anyway."

"What-ho!"

Wharton and Nugent and Bob Cherry ran quickly upstairs. The thought that Billy Bunter might have been at the hamper was a dismaying one. They knew how unscrupulous the fat junior was, and any mischance with the hamper now would be simply terrible. For the Cliff House girls would be expecting it, and if the feed were raided, the juniors had no means of replacing it, for their cash was now at a very low ebb. Nearly all the ready money in the possession of Harry Wharton & Co., including extra tips, had been expended on the contents of the hamper. The loss would be absolutely irreparable.

They ran into the study. Then there was a shout of indignation from three voices at once.

"Gone!"

The hamper was certainly not to be seen.

The chums of the Remove stared at the vacant spot, and then at one another's wrathful faces, in silence for a moment.

"The young sweep!" exclaimed Harry, at last. "That's why he was malingering. That's why he pretended to be ill, the lying young rascal!"

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"I—I say, you fellows, stop!" yelled Billy Bunter desperately. "I know jolly well you've sneaked off to get a feed on the quiet, and I'm jolly well not going to be left out of it! Stop!"

"That's why!"

"He's scooped the hamper."

"He's wolfed the grub!"

"Hallo! What's the matter?" asked Tom Brown, looking in.

"Bunter's collared the hamper."

"Plew!"

Tom Brown looked round the study. He had seen the hamper corded up ready for the carrier. There was no sign of it now. But the junior from New Zealand shook his head.

"He hadn't time to get it open," he exclaimed. "Nugent put on as many cords as there are bandages round an Egyptian mummy. He wasn't away long enough to do much gorging, either. The hamper's been hidden."

"Well, I didn't think he'd eaten the hamper," said Harry.

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"Even Bunter would stop at that. His moving it shows, I suppose, that he hasn't opened it—if he had taken out the grub, he wouldn't want the hamper. It's put away in a safe place for a feed later, I imagine."

"It's a feed that won't come off, then," said Bob Cherry wrathfully. "But he couldn't have moved the hamper alone. Snoop must have helped him."

"Certain."

"Let's look for them," said Tom Brown.

"Yes, rather. And when we find them, we'll bump them till we bump the truth out of them and get the hamper back," said Harry.

"Come on!"

The four juniors dashed downstairs again in search of Bunter and Snoop. Snoop was wisely keeping out of sight, but Billy Bunter was discerned in the Close. The chums



ran straight towards him. They did not stand upon ceremony. They collared the fat junior as soon as they reached him, and Bunter found himself whirled off his feet in a twinkling.

He gave a startled yell as he was whirled into the air, and brought down upon the ground with a bump that shook all the breath out of his body.

"O-w-w-w-w-w!"

"Where's the hamper?"

"You fat worm! Where's the hamper?"

"I—I say, you fellows——"

"What have you done with the hamper?"

"Oh, really——"

"Bump him again!"

"Go it! Bump!"

Bunter was bumped, again, and again. He let out a terrific yell each time. After the third bump he struggled to his feet.

"Oh!" he roared. "Lemme alone, you beasts! I—I——"

"What's the row here?" exclaimed Wingate, of the Sixth, coming up. "Draw it mild, you kids! What are you bumping Bunter for?"

Bunter scuttled towards the stalwart captain of Greyfriars.

"Ow! Keep them off, Wingate! You oughtn't to let them bully me! Ow! I'm hurt! Yow!"

"I dare say you deserve it," said the big Sixth-Former, who knew Bunter's character pretty well. "But what's the matter, Wharton?"

"That blessed worm knows what's the matter, well enough," said Harry, panting. "He's taken a hamper of grub from our study—a hamper the carrier's calling for at six, to take it over to Cliff House."

"I—I haven't."

Wingate shook the fat junior by the shoulder.

"Now, then, Bunter, if you've taken the hamper——"

"I—I haven't! If it's been moved from the study I don't know anything about it," gasped Bunter. "I swear I haven't taken it away."

"Phew! What a whopper!" said Bob Cherry. "Blessed if I can see how the fat rotter can roll out lies like that!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him.

"Oh, really, Cherry, if you doubt my word——"

"I jolly well do," said Bob bluntly.

"Then I think this discussion had better cease——"

"Not till we know where the hamper is," said Nugent.

"What have you done with it?"

"I tell you I haven't taken it. I——"

"Not good enough! Where is it?"

"Where's the hamper, you young bounder?"

"Explain!"

"Expound!"

"Buck up!"

"Oh, really, you fellows——"

"Collar him!"

Billy Bunter clung to Wingate. The captain of Greyfriars was looking puzzled and undecided.

"Hold on, you kids!" he exclaimed.

"He's got our hamper."

"I—I haven't——"

"You young Ananias——"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"The hamper's been taken from our study," said Wharton. "Bunter sneaked out of the Form-room this afternoon on a lying excuse. He must have taken it."

"Keep them off, Wingate."

The Greyfriars' captain shook the fat junior roughly.

"Have you taken the hamper, Bunter?"

"N-n-n-no."

"Do you know anything about its being removed from the study?"

"N-n-no."

"Mind, if you're telling lies, you'll hear of it later," said Wingate sharply. "Tell me the truth. Have you taken the hamper out of Wharton's study?"

"No, Wingate—honour bright."

The Greyfriars' captain released him.

"It looks to me as if he's telling the truth, Wharton. You'd better look further."

"Well, I suppose a chap wouldn't say honour bright unless he was putting it straight," said Harry. "I believe the young cad knows something about it, though. Never mind, we'll find the hamper without him."

And the chums of the Remove walked away. Bunter scuttled off in the opposite direction. He had, indeed, told the truth; the hamper had not been removed from No. 1 Study to his knowledge. But he had not told the whole truth, and the chums of the Remove had no suspicion, of course, that the missing article had been hidden under their very noses. Harry Wharton & Co. went to look for Snoop, but they did not find him.

Snoop took good care of that. He carefully kept out of

the way of the Remove chums for the rest of that afternoon. And at six o'clock Chucks, the carrier, called for the hamper and the chums of the Remove, raging, had to let him go again without it. The hamper was not found, and there was nothing else to be done. Chucks promised to call on his round the next day, and with that the juniors had to be content.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

### On the Track of the Hamper.

"SNOOP?"

"Yes, Snoop! Have you seen him?"

Harry Wharton & Co. were inquiring right and left for Snoop. But Snoop was invisible. It was not till the Removites met at the supper-table that Snoop was to be seen. He sat down opposite Wharton with a quite unconscious expression upon his face, as if he did not know that anything was wrong.

Wharton said nothing till the juniors were going up to bed. When they went into the Remove dormitory, Harry tapped the sneak of the Lower Fourth on the arm.

"Where's the hamper, Snoop?" he asked.

Snoop stared at him.

"Eh! What hamper?"

"The hamper you and Bunter took out of our study."

"You're dreaming!" said Snoop, with a stare of amazement. "I haven't taken any hamper out of your study. If Bunter has, I don't know anything about it!"

Harry looked at him searchingly.

In the face of a straightforward denial like this, he did not know what to believe. He knew that Snoop was not truthful, yet——

"Blessed if I've taken any hamper out of your room," went on Snoop. "Have you, Bunter?"

"No," growled Billy Bunter.

"Perhaps there's been a raid of some fellows in another Form," suggested Snoop. "It might be Temple, Dabney & Co."

Wharton nodded. The same thought had occurred to him. Mutual raids between the Upper Fourth and the Remove were not uncommon at Greyfriars.

"I hope you're telling the truth, Snoop," he said quietly.

"I don't know, but I shall jolly well find out, and if you've lied to me, you will hear of it."

And the Removites went to bed.

But Harry Wharton did not go to sleep. Bunter's and Snoop's denials had staggered him a little, but he was still strongly of opinion that they knew what had become of the hamper.

If Bunter knew where it was, one thing was quite certain—he would not allow the night to pass without visiting it and sampling its contents.

That was why Harry Wharton stayed awake.

If Bunter left the dormitory, he would know what it was for, and it would simply be a question of following the fat junior to the hiding-place of the hamper.

Wharton did not confide his intention to any of his chums. He simply remained awake after lights were turned out, and Loder had closed the door.

About ten minutes had elapsed, and the buzz of talk had died away into silence, when a still small voice was heard from Bunter's bed.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"Oh, is that you, Cherry?"

"Yes. What's the matter with you?"

"N-n-nothing."

"Then shut up and go to sleep."

"Oh, really, Cherry!"

"Dry up."

There was silence in the dormitory again. The hour of ten rang out on the night air from the clock tower.

"I say, you fellows!"

It was Billy Bunter's voice again.

"Hallo!" said Nugent drowsily. "Who's that jawing?"

"Oh, all right! I thought you might be asleep, that's all," stammered Bunter.

"So I might be, ass, if you left off jabbering, duffer!"

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Do be quiet!"

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Snoop fiercely. "Do you want to keep the fellows awake all night?"

"Oh, really, Snoop——"

"Be quiet, you fool!"

Billy Bunter relapsed into silence. Harry Wharton smiled in the darkness. Bunter's anxiety to ascertain whether his Form-fellows were asleep could have only one explanation—the fat junior intended to quit the dormitory as soon as they were.

There was silence for some time, and it was Snoop who



broke it at last. He whispered cautiously in the still air of the dormitory:

"You fellows asleep?"

There was no reply this time. Harry Wharton was wide awake and watchful, but he did not choose to speak. Snoop sat up in bed.

"Bunter!"

"Don't make a row, Snoop!"

"I'm not making a row, ass. Get up—the coast's clear now."

Bunter squirmed out of bed. Snoop stepped out, and quickly donned his clothes. The two juniors cautiously groped their way towards the door.

The darkness was intense in the long dormitory; hardly a light glimmered in the sky, and only a stray beam or two found its way into the high windows.

Bunter held out his hands before him to feel his way as he moved towards the door.

Harry Wharton sat up in bed. In the darkness he could see nothing, but he could hear the faint sounds made by the intended raiders.

Bunter groped on blindly towards the door. Suddenly he started with a gasp of pain as his head crashed against something in the darkness.

"Ow!"

"Oh!"

The "oh!" came like an echo. It was Snoop's head that Bunter had crashed against—they had met as they groped towards the door from different points.

"Oh, you ass!" groaned Snoop, rubbing his head. "Oh, you frabjous idiot!"

"Ow! You've hurt my head!"

"Shut up—hush!"

"But I'm hurt!"

"Hold your silly tongue!"

"But I'm—"

Snoop groped to the door and passed quietly out. He rubbed his aching head as he went down the passage. Bunter followed him in silence, rubbing his head, too. The door closed quietly.

Harry Wharton was out of bed in a moment. He shook Nugent by the shoulder, and Frank started out of slumber.

"Oh! Whoozat? Wharrer marrer?"

"Get up!"

"Eh? 'Tain't rising-bell!"

"They're after the hamper."

"Oh, the hamper!" said Nugent, rubbing his eyes. "All right! Leave off shaking me! No need to dislocate my shoulder!"

"Buck up, then!"

"But where—"

"Come on—quick!"

Nugent tumbled out of bed and reached for his clothes. Wharton dragged him towards the door.

"No time to dress," he said. "They're after the hamper, and we may lose sight of them."

"They—who?"

"Bunter and Snoop."

Nugent whistled.

"Are they gone down?"

"They've gone out of the dormitory."

"Good! Let's follow."

And with bare feet, in their pyjamas, the two chums quitted the dormitory. A faint sound from below caught their ears in the stillness as they descended the first staircase, and as they stepped into the Remove passage the glimmer of a light in No. 1 Study caught their eyes.

Harry Wharton uttered a suppressed exclamation.

"They're there!"

"In our study!"

"Yes. Come on."

And they hurried on towards No. 1 Study. That the hamper was there seemed impossible, but there was no doubt that the raiders were there.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Jam Tarts for Bunter and Snoop.

**B**ILLY BUNTER and Snoop, quite unconscious of the fact that there were avengers on the track, had reached No. 1 Study, and Snoop struck a vesta and lighted the gas. He carefully closed the door of the study. The gleam of the light under the door was quite visible in the passage, if anyone had come along to see it—but Snoop, of course, did not expect anyone to come along.

Billy Bunter hurried straight to the cupboard. No one had been there, as a matter of fact, since the hamper was hidden away among the lumber—all was exactly as the raiders had left it.

Bunter pitched the cricket-stumps and bats and other lumber aside, and dragged off the travelling-rug, and laid hands upon the hamper.

"Lend a hand, Snoopey!" he exclaimed.

"What-ho!" said Snoop.

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They dragged the hamper out of its hiding-place. Snoop took out his penknife.

"I'll jolly soon have it open," he remarked, as he began to slit the cords. "My hat! They've tied it up enough!"

"Buck up!" said Bunter. "I'm fearfully hungry—I'm simply famished! I had next to nothing for supper!"

"I saw you polish off at least six slices of bread-and-butter, and half a pound of cheese," said Snoop, slashing away at the cords.

Bunter grunted.

"What's that to a fellow like me? I'm not greedy, but I like a lot. I'm a delicate chap, and my constitution needs keeping up with constant nourishment. I think we'd better have a feed here as soon as we get the hamper open, and carry away what's left of the stuff and hide it in the box-room. Then we can leave the hamper for them to find in the morning."

"Good egg!" said Snoop, with a chuckle.

"Buck up with that penknife!"

"It's done."

Snoop jerked the lid of the hamper free of the cut cords and raised it. Bunter dragged aside the stuffing of old newspapers and magazines within, and then the carefully-packed provisions were disclosed to view.

Bunter's mouth watered at the sight.

"Splendid!" he remarked.

"Ripping!" said Snoop. "Why, there's enough for two dozen chaps here!"

"I'll begin with the cold fowl—"

"I think I'll have tarts for a start—"

"I'll have a ham patty to go on with while I'm carving the fowl!" said Bunter. "No good wasting time! I wonder what Wharton would say if he could see us now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And if he knew that the hamper had been in the study all the time! He, he, he!"

"He, he, he!" echoed Snoop.

The two raiders had their backs to the door, and they did not hear it silently open. It swung back, and two figures in pyjamas appeared, and two wrathful faces looked at the raiders.

Wharton and Nugent stared in astonishment at the sight of the hamper. The open cupboard and the displaced lumber showed them at once where it had been—in their own study—all the time they were hunting for it unsuccessfully.

"I say, these tarts are ripping," said Snoop, cramming one into his mouth as he dragged them out.

"Gimme one."

"Here you are: there's plenty."

"Good. I think I'll have a few tarts first, after all, as an appetiser," said Bunter thoughtfully.

"He, he, he! You don't need appetisers, as a rule."

"They're good. If Wharton could see us—"

"You young scoundrel!"

It was Wharton's voice. Billy Bunter gave a gasp of affright, and dropped the tarts. Snoop whirled round so quickly that he caught his head on the table, and gave a howl of pain.

Wharton and Nugent strode towards them.

"So you took the hamper, after all, and lied about it!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, with angry scorn.

"Oh—oh, really, Wharton—"

"You cads!"

"I—I told you the truth," stammered Snoop. "You asked me if I had taken the hamper from the study. It never was taken from the study."

"Of course it wasn't," said Bunter. "We—wo just hid it here for a lark, didn't we, Snoop?"

"Ye-e-es."

"And you came down to-night to feed on the things in it for a lark, too, I suppose," said Nugent sarcastically.

"Oh—oh, really, Nugent—"

"You cads," said Wharton angrily. "It wouldn't be so rotten to raid another chap's Tommy, but you knew this was intended as a present for Cliff House. If you're so fond of tarts that don't belong to you, you shall have some more. Collar them, Frank."

"Right-ho!"

In a moment the two raiders were wriggling in powerful grips. They struggled feebly; without much avail against the athletic chums of the Remove.

Wharton dipped his hand into the bag of tarts, and brought out a fat, juicy one. He slammed it upon Snoop's face, and the sneak of the Remove gave a howl.

"Ow—ow—ow! Groo!"

Another and another tart was slammed in the same place, and well rubbed there with no gentle hand, and Snoop's countenance was quickly transformed into a strange, sickly mass, a considerable amount of the jam adhering to his hair.

He squirmed and struggled under the infliction, but he was as an infant in the grasp of the sturdy captain of the Remove.



"Now, then, you worm," said Wharton. "I'd give you some more, only it's a pity to waste good grub. Get out."

"Ow—ow—ooch!"

"Out you go!"

Wharton ran the sneak of the Remove to the door, and bestowed a hearty kick upon him that sent him whirling into the passage.

Snoop rolled over on the linoleum, but picked himself up in a twinkling, and ran, never pausing for a second till he was in the Remove dormitory again.

Billy Bunter had watched the punishment of Snoop with a sickly grin. When Harry turned to him, he tried to work up an ingratiating smile.

"I—I say, Wharton, don't be waxy, you know," he stammered. "I—I only hid the hamper for a lark, you know. I—I'm sincerely sorry that fellow Snoop opened it. It was quite against my will, of course—"

"Stop lying!" exclaimed Wharton, in disgust.

"Oh, really, Wharton, I hope you don't doubt my word—"

"Yank him here, Nugent."

"Right you are."

"Ow! ow! I—I don't want any tarts. I—I—ooooch! Groo—yow!"

The struggling Owl of the Remove was soon plastered with jam and fragments of tarts. He struggled and gasped and grunted in vain.

"Now kick him out."

"What-ho!"

"Oh—oh—oh, really, Nugent—"

"Outside."

And Billy Bunter was promptly kicked out of the study. He sat on the linoleum for some minutes before he could recover sufficient breath to stagger up and limp away. Nugent closed the door after him.

"Now we'll cord up the hamper again," said Harry, with a grin. "We'll lock the study door, too, to keep it safe. There hasn't been much loss, only a few tarts for Snoop and Bunter—"

"Ha, ha! And they haven't enjoyed them, either."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The hamper was corded up once more. Harry locked the study-door on the outside, and took away the key when he left. The chums of the Remove returned to the dormitory: Bunter and Snoop were washing their faces by candle-light, with many a gasp and snort. They did not speak a word to the chums of the Remove, who chuckled and turned in, leaving the unfortunate raiders still mopping the jam off their faces.

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Bunter Does Not Give In.

THE hamper had been recovered, and the chums of the Remove did not run any further risk with it. In the morning it was locked up in the cupboard in No. 1 Study, and Harry Wharton gave the key to the house-keeper, with instructions to let the carrier have the hamper when he called in the morning, which Mrs. Kebble promised to do. Then Harry felt easy in his mind. Billy Bunter prowled round the locked cupboard until the bell summoned him to morning school, and then, with a sigh, he left the fascinating spot.

Chucks, the carrier, had promised to call again that morning for the hamper to collect it, and Harry had no doubt he would come. As it happened, he came just before eleven o'clock, and the juniors, on leaving the class-room for the morning recess, found Chucks carrying it downstairs.

The carrier rested the hamper on the stairs, and grinned at the chums of the Remove.

"Eavy weight, Master Wharton," he remarked.

"You'll be careful, won't you," said Harry anxiously.

"The things inside that hamper might be easily damaged, you know."

"I'll be werry careful, Master Wharton."

"Mrs. Kebble has paid the carriage, I think?"

"Yes."

Harry slipped a shilling into the carrier's hand.

"Thanky kindly, Master Wharton. I'll be werry careful."

If there was heggs in it, they shouldn't be cracked."

"Thank you. When will it be delivered at Cliff House?"

The carrier scratched his head.

"You see, Master Wharton, if I 'ad 'ad it last night, it might have been delivered this morning. As it is, I don't see how it's to be sent hover to Cliff 'Ouse before this evening."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "That won't do."

"Rather not," said Nugent.

"You see, young gents—"

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"It must get there by two o'clock, or half-past, at the latest," said Harry anxiously.

Chucks rubbed his nose.

"You see, I send the van over for the round," he remarked; "but I'll tell you what, Master Wharton, I'll send my lad over in the trap with the hamper specially, as soon as I get back to Friardale. I've got to finish my round first to collect, but I can send it over to get to Cliff 'Ouse at half-past two by the trap."

"That will be ripping."

"My boy Peter will take it hover all right," said the carrier. "I shall 'ave to charge you another shilling."

"That's all right: here it is, and here's one for Peter, too."

"Thank you kindly."

"There goes the last of the fund," said Harry. "It's worth it to get the hamper over there in time."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Let me give you a hand up with it, Chucks."

"Hold on, Wharton. I say, wouldn't it be a good idea for us to hire a trap and take it over ourselves?"

"Oh, dry up!"

"But, really—"

But no one listened to Bunter. Wharton helped the carrier lift the hamper to his shoulder again, and Chucks carried it off to his cart. Bunter blinked at the juniors with angry eyes behind his glasses.

"You silly asses!" he exclaimed. "If we took it over ourselves we should certainly be asked to stay to the feed. They couldn't very well get out of it."

"Shut up, Bunter."

"Look here—"

The juniors walked away. Bunter blinked after them wrathfully, and then he scuttled to the door to take a last look at the precious hamper. The carrier was just driving off in his cart.

"Beasts!" murmured Bunter. "Duffers! Idiots! The idea of sending away a feed like that. They must be mad."

"Well, it's gone," said Snoop, at his elbow.

The fat junior blinked round.

"Yes, it's gone, Snoop. I say, though, are you game to have another try?" went on Bunter, lowering his voice eagerly.

Snoop stared.

"It's too late now," he said. "The hamper's gone. I suppose we can't hold up the carrier on the road like a blessed pair of highwaymen."

"The carrier isn't going to take the hamper to Cliff House. It's got to go early. He's going to send his boy Peter over with it, to get to Cliff House at half-past two, in the trap."

"Oh!" said Snoop thoughtfully.

"Suppose we were on the road," muttered Bunter. "You remember the time Wharton and his lot laid in wait for the footballers going to Cliff House. Well, something of that sort, you know. We could easily manago Peter Chucks between us. I should think. Then we could collar the hamper."

"Good," said Snoop.

"I think it would work all right, Snoop."

"There might be a row afterwards."

"Well, Wharton wouldn't sneak about us. He's not that sort, though he's a beast—he's not a sneaking beast, you know."

"They would jolly well lick us."

"They wouldn't know who it was. We could black our faces with soot or something, and Peter wouldn't recognise us. That's a jolly good idea."

"I'm game," said Snoop.

"Then we'll get out immediately after dinner."

"That's settled."

And Billy Bunter returned to the class-room, when the bell rang, in a satisfied mood. Two Greyfriars juniors between them certainly ought to be able to handle the carrier's boy, who would be alone in charge of the hamper, and then all would be plain sailing. Bunter's imagination dwelt upon the gorgeous feast that would follow somewhat to the detriment of his lessons.

When Mr. Quelch asked him what was the chief product of Lancashire, and the fat junior answered "jam tarts," he received fifty lines on the spot.

But Bunter cared little for lines that morning.

The welcome hour of dismissal came at last, and the Remove crowded out of the class-room. It was a half-holiday, and they were free for the rest of the day.

Harry Wharton & Co. looked cheerful enough.

The hamper was safely off, and they had no suspicion of the plot hatched by Bunter and Snoop. Their consignment of good things would arrive at Cliff House in time for the visitors, and Marjorie & Co. could not fail to return to chummy terms after that. The chums of the Remove would very willingly have visited Cliff House themselves, to meet Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Jack Blake and Tom Merry.

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But, after all, if they succeeded in making their peace with Marjorie & Co., that was a great deal.

Billy Bunter left the dinner-table with a mysterious expression on his fat face, and left the House with such extreme caution that he attracted at least half a dozen glances in his direction.

"That young ass is up to something," said Bob Cherry, looking after Bunter as he went out of the schoolhouse.

Bunter looked back two or three times, but he was too short-sighted to see the group of juniors standing in the doorway staring after him.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Perhaps his postal-order's come, and he's going to have a feed all on his lonesome," he remarked.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Snoop going with him."

The cad of the Remove had joined Bunter near the gates. The two of them went out together.

"Well, we sha'n't be bothered by Bunter this afternoon," said Nugent. "That's one comfort. What do you fellows say to having a boat out?"

"Good idea!"

And the chums of the Remove soon forgot Bunter and his mysterious looks, though they were to remember them afterwards. They would not have been quite so easy in their minds if they had known the scheme that was in the mind of the fat junior.

## THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Amateur Highwaymen.

"HOW does that look?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really Snoop—"

"You look like a Chris'y Minstrel," chuckled Snoop.

"Well, you don't look much different."

The two raiders were hidden in the thick bushes at the loneliest spot on the lane that led from Friardale towards the sea. It ran round the lower slopes of the Black Pike, and the road was rough and lonely. Bunter and Snoop had chosen the most favourable spot for their ambush.

They were now engaged in blacking their faces, from a bag of soot which they had brought with them for the purpose.

They had wrapped thick mufflers round their necks, to protect their collars and waistcoats. They rubbed the soot upon their faces, and the change it made in their appearance was startling.

Snoop chuckled at the sight of Bunter, and Bunter grinned at Snoop. There was no doubt that they were both unrecognisable.

"You wouldn't know me?" asked Snoop.

Bunter shook his head.

"Not in the least, Snorpey. Would you know me?"

"Only from your width," said Snoop. "I shouldn't know your chivvy. I could only guess it was you because you're double-width."

"Oh, really, Snoop—"

"It's all right. Peter Chuck won't know us. We might be chaps from Herr Rosenblum's Academy, or a couple of the Boy Scouts of Pegg, or village lads," said Snoop. "It's all right; we're safe as houses."

The two juniors had been careful not to come in Etons, and there was nothing about them to betray the fact that they belonged to Greyfriars.

Bunter looked in a pocket-glass, and started at the sight of his black reflection.

"By George," he said, "it's horrid!"

Snoop chuckled.

"It will startle Peter."

"He, he, he!"

"I shouldn't wonder if he has a fit," said Snoop. "All the better. Mind, you're to back me up. None of your shirking, and leaving me to fight Peter alone."

"Oh, really Snoop, you know me—"

"Yes, I do; that's what I'm anxious about."

"Of course I shall back you up!" said Bunter, with dignity. "I'm a jolly brave chap, as a matter of fact. You'll see."

"I hope I shall," said Snoop distrustfully.

The village church sent musical chimes over the woods.

"Hallo, it's turned half-past now!" said Snoop. "The carrier was to be at Cliff House by that time. He's late."

"He can't have passed."

"No; we were here before two."

"Well, the carrier's always late, you know, and Peter's a lazy rotter. He'll be along presently."

The two juniors waited and watched the road. There was nothing surprising in the carrier being late. No one in Friardale had ever heard of the strenuous life, or thought of living it. They took things easily.

There was a clatter on the rough road at last.

"Here he comes!"

"Good!" said Bunter. "I—I—I'll back you up!"

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ONE  
PENNY.

"You'll jump out when I do," said Snoop savagely. "None of your humbug, you coward!"

"Look here, Snoop—"

"Mind, if you don't back me up, I'll let him pass."

"I shall back you up, of course. But I—I've got a touch of cramp—"

"Don't tell lies!"

"Oh, really, Snoop—"

"Ready; he's here!"

The trap came into sight. It was a loose, ramshackle little vehicle. It contained only a large hamper, which the juniors knew at once, and a long, loose-jointed youth of about fifteen, whom they recognised as Peter, the promising son of the local carrier. Peter was sitting on a corner of the hamper, with the reins in his hand, and a straw in his mouth. He seemed to be half asleep—his usual state—and he certainly had no idea of danger.

"Now, then!" muttered Snoop.

"I—I—I—I'm r-r-ready."

"Jump!"

Snoop leaped out into the lane, and threw up his hands, and the pony started, shied, and stopped. Bunter followed Snoop out more slowly. His heart was beating wildly, and he was shaking in every limb. Bunter was not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

The sudden shying of the pony and the stopping of the trap sent Peter rolling back over the hamper. He gave a yell and started up, and saw the two black faces, and let out another yell wilder than the first one.

"Oh! Oh! W-w-w-w-what—"

"Quick!" muttered Snoop.

The evident terror of Peter was encouraging to both his assailants. They clambered desperately into the trap.

Peter, with a gasp of wild affright, rolled out into the road, and lay for some moments gasping where he bumped down.

"The hamper—quick!" parted Snoop.

"Right-ho!"

They grasped the hamper, and dragged it out of the trap, and it bumped on the road within a few feet of Peter. Peter sat up, still gasping. The pony began to crop the grass along the road.

"Oh!" gasped Peter.

Bunter and Snoop dragged the hamper towards the bushes. They only wanted to get clear away with it. But Peter was on his feet now, and Peter looked as if he meant business.

## THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Baffled Raiders.

"STOP!"

They did not stop. They dragged on the hamper desperately. But Peter was in earnest. The sudden apparition of the black faces had startled him out of his sleepy wits; but he had recovered himself now. He saw that he had only two lads like himself to deal with, and not two imps or demons, and Peter was far bigger and stronger than either Snoop or Bunter. And Peter was no coward, when his wit had time to work.

"Stop, you thieves!" he roared.

"Quick!"

"Stop! Highway robbery, by George!" gasped Peter. "I'll show you!"

And he rushed at the raiders.

Bunter and Snoop had to let go the hamper to defend themselves, for Peter was landing out with right and left, and his blows were heavy ones.

Snoop gave a yelp as he received a terrific clump on the side of the head, which sent him sprawling across the hamper.

Then Peter devoted his attention to Bunter.

Billy Bunter would as soon have fought a wild lion as a boy who was not afraid of him. He backed away rapidly down the lane, his hands sawing the air in a curious attempt at defence.

"Oh! Oh, I say!" he gasped. "Keep off, you know! Don't you hit me, you know. You might break my glasses; and if you did, you'd have to pay for them, you know."

"Go for him!" gasped Snoop, scrambling up.

"Help!"

"Collar him!"

"You collar him!"

Peter began to laugh. It was so evident that the two raiders were terribly afraid of him, that the carrier's lad felt like a lion in consequence. He gave Bunter a tap on the chest that laid him in the road. Snoop ran desperately at Peter, and caught him from behind, and tried to drag him down.



"Help me, Bunter!" he yelled.

"Ow!"

"Help!"

"Yow!"

"Get up, you coward!" roared Snoop, struggling with the carrier's lad, who was rapidly getting the better of the tussle. "Get up!"

"I c-c-can't!"

"Help!"

"I've got the—the cramp!" gasped Bunter. "I—I c-c-can't get up. I'm sincerely sorry. Go for him, Snoop!"

"Ow!"

"I'll show ye!" grunted Peter; and he got Snoop's head in chancery, and began to pommel. "Now, then, ye thief!"

"Ow! Oh! Yow! Stop! Yah!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Ow! Ow! Help! Yarhooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peter, punching away.

"Ow! Help! Bunter!"

The fat junior groaned.

"I—I c-c-can't move! I've sustained an internal injury. Ow!"

Peter let Snoop go at last.

Snoop staggered away to the roadside and sat down in the grass, dazed and bewildered. His nose was streaming red, and one of his eyes was closing. He blinked dazedly at Peter, who was roaring with laughter.

The aspect of the two juniors, with their blackened faces stained with crimson from their noses, was comic in the extreme.

"Highway robbers!" roared Peter Chucks. "Why, you couldn't rob a white rabbit! He, he, he!"

"Ow! I—I say, Snoopey—"

"Oh!" groaned Snoop.

"I know you!" said Peter. "You belong to Greyfriars. I know you!"

"Oh, really—"

"I know you. You can get along," said Peter, taking his whip out of the trap. "Now then! Trot!"

The whip cracked, and sang round Bunter's fat legs. In spite of his cramp and his internal injuries, the fat junior jumped up quickly enough.

"Ow!" he roared. "Stop! Chuck it! Yah!"

"Get off, then."

"Oh! Ow! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Chucks lashed away with the whip, and the fat junior ran wildly, with the lash singing round his fat legs.

He went pounding breathlessly down the road, yelling and gasping; and Snoop followed him, and Peter ran after Snoop, lashing with the whip.

Snoop yelled and roared as loudly as Bunter, but he did not venture to turn upon the carrier's lad.

Peter stopped at last, gasping for breath, and with tears of laughter running down his cheeks.

The two unfortunate raiders disappeared up the lane.

Peter, still chuckling, returned to the trap, and exerted himself to lift the hamper back into it. Then he mounted into the trap, and with some difficulty getting the pony away from the herbage, drove cheerily down the lane at a walking pace.

Bunter and Snoop ran on and on, long after Peter had left off pursuing; in their terrified imagination still hearing the crack of the carrier's whip.

Billy Bunter rounded a bend in the lane, and ran right into someone who was coming towards him, and gave a wild yell.

"Ow! Leggo! It was only a joke! Ow!"

"Bai Jove!"

Bunter sat down in the road, and the lad he had run into stared at him through an eyeglass. Snoop came breathlessly up the next moment, and stopped. He recognised the juniors of St. Jim's—the intended visitors at Cliff House.

Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were walking from the station. Cousin Ethel had gone in the trap, with Marjorie and Clara, who had met her at the station.

"The—the St. Jim's fellows!" gasped Snoop.

"Oh!" murmured Bunter.

He staggered to his feet. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy he had run into, and the swell of St. Jim's was looking rather ruefully at his gloves. In pushing Bunter off, he had stained the lavender kid with soot.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, again.

"Oh, really, you fellows—"

Tom Merry was staring at them blankly.

"What on earth—" he began.

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat!" said Jack Blake, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. "What are they? Who are they? Where did they get those chivvies?"

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"I wegard this as an extwaordinawy occuence," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, gazing at the two juniors through his eyeglass. "Is it a jape, deah boys, or are you a couple of niggah minstwels?"

"It's—it's a jape," said Snoop.

"You belong to Greyfriars?" asked Tom Merry, looking at Bunter. In spite of the black face, Tom Merry thought he recognised the fat cheeks and the big glasses.

"Ye-es. I—I say, you fellows!" A brilliant idea had rushed into the mind of Billy Bunter. He had found allies, if he worked it carefully. "I—I say, will you help us? It's a jape, you know—a first-class jape, but it's gone wrong."

"Yes; you look as if it had," agreed Blake.

Snoop was staring at Bunter. As the hamper they had tried to raid was intended to provide for the St. Jim's juniors, those juniors were hardly the proper persons for the jape to be explained to. But Billy Bunter knew what he was about.

"It's a raid," he said. "But I—I had the cramp, and the chap knocked us out. Snoop didn't put up much of a fight, either—"

"You didn't put up any," said Snoop.

"Well, I had the cramp—"

"Oh, bosh!"

"Well, never mind that," said Bunter hurriedly. "We got the worst of it, but it's not too late, if you chaps will help us."

"What can we do?" asked Tom Merry.

"You see, you ought to help us, for old acquaintance sake," said Bunter. "We'd stand by you, you know, any time."

Tom Merry laughed. It struck him that Billy Bunter's standing by him would never be of much use. But he was too polite to say so.

"You're right," he said. "We're only too willing to help, especially if it's a jape. Is Wharton in it?"

"Well, in a way," said Bunter. "But he's staying behind at the school. You fellows can make it all right, if you choose."

"Of course, we'll do anything we can," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, rubbing his gloves ruefully. "I am already in a wathah wumpled and dilapidated state, and a little more won't hurt."

"You've been licked?" asked Tom Merry.

"Well, not exactly licked. I had the cramp, and Snoop didn't back me up very well."

"Look here—" began Snoop.

"Oh, don't interrupt! There's no time to waste. Chucks will have got off with the hamper if we don't buck up."

"A-hampah—oh?" said D'Arcy.

"Yes; a jolly big hamper, full of grub," said Bunter eagerly. "You chaps shall have some of the tommy if we get it back."

"We're going to tea at Cliff House," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "Thanks all the same. Where's the hamper?"

"It's in the carrier's cart, and he's taking it away to—to Pegg," said Billy Bunter. "You see, it's going to—to another school, and we're raiding it. It's a jape, you know."

Blake chuckled.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "This reminds me of our raids on the Grammar School at Rylcombe. I didn't know you Greyfriars chaps did anything of the sort. We'll help you, rather!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry. "Rely on us."

Bunter's eyes glistened behind his spectacles. All was plain sailing now. What the St. Jim's fellows would say when they learned that it was their own feed they had helped Bunter to raid, was another matter.

"Right you are!" exclaimed Bunter. "The trap is only crawling along, and we can easily catch it up if we hurry."

"Good!"

And the fat junior led the way.

"Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! Wun like anythin', deah boys!"

And the dear boys ran like anything.

## THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Quite a Success.

"I—I say, you fellows, there he is!"

Billy Bunter gasped out the words.

He had been hard put to it to keep up with the juniors of St. Jim's. They covered the ground as if they were on the cinder-path. Fortunately for Billy Bunter, the run was a short one; Peter Chucks and his sleepy old horse had proceeded only at a walking-pace, and they were not far away.



"There he is!"  
"Yaas, wathah! There he is, deah boys!"  
"Put on a spurt," said Blake. "We'll have him in another minute."

"Buck up, kids."  
"Who are you calling kids, Tom Merry?"  
"Oh, come on!"  
"I'll beat you, anyway," said Blake.  
And he ran harder. Tom Merry kept level, however. D'Arcy fell a little behind, as his silk hat was in danger of blowing off, and he had to slacken.

Snoop and Billy Bunter slackened, too. They were not in the same condition as the St. Jim's juniors, and they were quite willing to keep out of the fight, if fight there should be.

Tom Merry and Blake reached the carrier's trap at the same moment.

Blake ran on and caught the horse's head, and drew him to a stop, while Tom Merry jumped into the trap from behind.

It was done in a moment, before Peter Chucks fairly knew what was happening. The carrier's lad stared at Tom Merry in amazement.

"You—you—who be you?" he stuttered.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Dick Turpin, junior," he explained. "I'm after that hamper!"

"Hey?"

"I want that hamper!"

"Oh, you be another of the Greyfriars lot, be you?" said Peter Chucks. "You woan't have the 'amper, then!"

"Collar him, Merry!" shouted Billy Bunter, coming panting up. "You collar the beast while I get out the hamper."

"Right you are!"

"Pway call on me for assistance if you wequire any, Tom Mewwy. Othahwise, I should pwefer not to wumple my clothes, as we are goin' to call on ladies this aftahnoon."

"Ha, ha! I sha'n't want any assistance."

Tom Merry had already closed with Peter Chucks. It was certainly a little reckless of Tom Merry to take the part he was taking; but he took it for granted that it was a jape in which Harry Wharton was concerned, and that it was therefore all right. He imagined it to be something like his own raids on the rival Grammar School at Rylcombe, and never dreamed that the school to which the hamper was consigned was a girls' school, and that it was sent by Harry Wharton & Co. Had he known it, it would have made a great difference, of course; but he did not.

He wrestled with Peter Chucks in the trap, with a result that they rolled out. They might have been hurt—but fortunately they fell upon Billy Bunter.

Billy Bunter did not regard it as fortunate.

He gave a wild yell, and rolled in the dust, gasping.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Go it!"

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry and Peter Chucks struggled desperately in the dust. Peter was a strong and sturdy youth, but he was not quite a match for Tom Merry of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy stood looking on. He was quite willing to help if Tom needed his help, but he didn't want to dust and disarrange his clothes for nothing. Blake held the horse and looked on too, shouting encouragement to his chum.

"Go it, Tommy! Squash him."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, watching the struggle through his eyeglass. "Squash him, deah boy. You're gottin' the bettah of it."

Tom Merry rolled Peter on his back at last, and sat on his chest. Peter gasped, and gave in.

"Now then!" panted Tom Merry.

"Ow! I give in!"

"Good! It's time you did, you ass. Why couldn't you give in at first?"

"Hold him, Merry!" said Bunter. "Hold him while we get the hamper out!"

"All serene!"

Snoop and Bunter, grinning with delight, dragged the hamper out of the trap, and dragged it into the bushes beside the road. Billy grabbed the label off it, in case the St. Jim's juniors should catch a glimpse of it. He didn't want the three to discover by any chance that they had raided their own feast.

Then Tom Merry allowed Peter Chucks to rise.

"Hope I haven't hurt you," he said, in his frank way. "Jump into your trap, and be off."

Peter gasped for breath.

"Oh, oh!"

"Here, take this shillin', deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, groping in his pocket. "You have had a wathah wuff time, you know."

"Thank you kindly, sir," said Peter Chucks, his brow clearing wonderfully.

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D'Arcy fumbled in his pocket, and produced a five-shilling piece.

"Bai Jove! Have you any small silvah, Tom Mewwy?"

"No, I haven't."

"Can you change a owown piece, Blake?"

"No, ass!"

"Vewy well. I suppose this will do as well as a shillin'," said Arthur Augustus, handing the five-shilling piece to Peter.

Peter chuckled.

"Thanky, sir!"

"Now pway buzz off, deah boy."

Peter stepped into the trap, gathered up the reins, and turned the pony round in the road.

"You've took my 'amper," he said. "I ain't responsible. I shall 'ave to tell my governor. I'm goin' back."

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" said Blake.

And Peter Chucks, very dusty and astonished, but very pleased with the five-shilling piece, drove back the way he had come.

Billy Bunter blinked at the St. Jim's juniors.

"Won't you have some of the grub?" he asked hospitably.

"We'll soon have the hamper open, you know."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't stop, thanks. We're expected at Cliff House."

"Sorry," said Bunter, not very sincerely. "But if you must go, you must. Thanks awfully for having helped us out with this jape."

"Yes, rather!" said Snoop.

"Not at all."

"Wathah not," said D'Arcy. "We were only too pleased. Good-bye, deah boys!"

"Good-bye!"

And the three juniors of St. Jim's walked on towards Cliff House; Tom Merry dusting down his clothes with his handkerchief as he went.

Billy Bunter chuckled softly as they disappeared round a bend in the lane.

"How's that for high?" he demanded.

Snoop giggled.

"It's ripping," he said. "I should never have thought of it. I wonder what they'll say when they discover what they've really done?"

"He, he, he! I don't care!"

"They might come back," said Snoop uneasily. "Better get clear. We can take the hamper away from here before we open it."

"Better have a snack first. There's plenty of time, and —"

"Don't be an ass! Suppose Wharton should come along and meet them. I heard that they were going down to the bay this afternoon—Wharton and his lot."

"H'm! Perhaps you're right. The hamper's jolly heavy, though."

"We can take one of these fence-rails, and slip it through the cords, and carry it between us," suggested Snoop.

"Good! Come on."

A slim, strong rail was detached from the fence, and Snoop squeezed it along the lid of the hamper under the cords. Taking each one end of the rail, the juniors found that they could lift and carry the hamper with ease. With the hamper swinging between them, they started off by the footpath through the wood, as fast as they could go.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

### "Down with Them!"

"W H O A!"

Bob Cherry rapped out the word. The chums of the Remove were coming down the lane towards the bay, and they met the returning carrier's trap just outside the village. Bob Cherry waved his hand to Peter Chucks at once, and stopped the trap.

Peter pulled his pony in.

"Whoa it is," he responded.

"You've been down to Cliff House, Peter?" asked Harry Wharton, glad enough of the meeting, to assure himself of the safe delivery of the hamper.

"Yes, Master Wharton, but —"

"You've delivered the hamper?" asked Nugent.

"You see, Master Nugent —"

"It's all right if the hamper's delivered," said Tom Brown. "You didn't smash up everything inside it, I hope, Peter."

"I —"

"Nothing wrong with it, is there, Peter?" asked Mark Linley, in his turn, gathering from the carrier's expression that he had an unpleasant communication to make.

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



"You see," stammered Peter.  
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's wrong?"  
 "It's been taken."  
 "What!"  
 "It—it wasn't my fault," stammered Peter. "Two chaps with sooty faces came at me, and tried to take the hamper, and I drove 'em off. I thrashed 'em, I did, and they ran away."  
 "Bravo, Peter!"  
 "What a giddy hero!"  
 "Were they Greyfriars chaps, Peter?"  
 "Yes, Master Wharton, and one of them wore big glasses."  
 "Bunter, for a ducat!"  
 "And the other one Snoop, of course," said Nugent.  
 "But if you drove them off, and they didn't get the hamper, Peter, what's the matter?"  
 "Why, they came back again with three more," said Peter ruefully. "I couldn't fight five of them, could I?"  
 "I suppose not. But—"  
 "Three more Greyfriars chaps?" asked Bob Cherry.  
 "No; the other three weren't belonging to your school, Master Cherry. I didn't know them. But they collared the hamper, and one of them gave me a five-shilling piece for because I was knocked about."  
 "My hat!"  
 "Who on earth could they be?"  
 "Then they've got the hamper?"  
 "Yes, Master Wharton."  
 Harry's eyes gleamed.  
 "We're jolly well going to get it back, then!" he exclaimed. "How long ago did it happen, Peter?"  
 "Not more than five minutes, Master Wharton."  
 "Which way did they go?"  
 "I don't know, but—"  
 "We'll soon see!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We'll jolly well have that hamper back, or burst something!"  
 "Yes, rather!"  
 "The ratherfulness is terrific!"  
 "Good-bye, Peter! You're an ass, but I suppose you can't help it."  
 Peter grinned, and the juniors ran on down the lane. If so short a time had elapsed since the raid, there was an excellent chance of catching the raiders, for the hamper was too heavy to be removed quickly.  
 The chums of the Remove dashed down the road.  
 If the raiders had taken to the woods with the hamper, the pursuit would be a difficult one, and all their skill as Boy Scouts would be called into requisition. But they decided to search the road as far as the bay first. If the lane were drawn blank, it would then be time to take to the woods.  
 The juniors were frowning as they ran on. They had been going down to the bay to spend the afternoon on the water. They little cared for that, however; what exasperated them was the raiding of the Cliff House hamper.  
 After all the trouble they had taken, the hamper was gone—and matters were worse than ever now, for Marjorie was expecting it. The guests would arrive at Cliff House, and if Marjorie had relied on the hamper, there would be nothing ready for them—a state of affairs that made the juniors feel extremely uncomfortable.  
 They mentally promised Bunter a variety of tortures, as they raced along the dusty road. The fat junior was at the bottom of it all, whoever the three strangers were.  
 There were seven Greyfriars juniors in the party, so there were plenty of them to handle the raiders when they met them. But if there had been only two or three, they would have taken up the chase just as keenly.  
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly.  
 "What is it?"  
 "Look?"  
 The lane made a curve ahead. Bob Cherry pointed. Over the hedge could be seen a silk hat, evidently belonging to someone who was in advance, and strolling down towards the bay. Two other heads bobbed into view for a moment.  
 "Three of them!" gasped Nugent.  
 "That's right!"  
 "They're our game."  
 "But Bunter and Snoop!" exclaimed Hazeldene. "Where are they?"  
 "Somewhere with the hamper," said Harry Wharton, guessing at once. "These are the three chaps who helped them, as sure as a gun. We'll make them tell us where Bunter and Snoop are with the hamper."  
 "Good!"  
 "The goodness is terrific."  
 "Now, then—a rush does it—they'll be down before they know what's happening, and mind they don't get up again," said Harry, in a hurried whisper.  
 "Right you are!"  
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The juniors rounded the bend in the lane at top speed. Cliff House, in the distance towards the sea, loomed into view. But the Greyfriars juniors had eyes only for the backs of three youths ahead of them.  
 "Collar them!"  
 Down went the three strangers, with the Greyfriars chums sprawling over them.  
 There was a yell of surprise and alarm.  
 "Oh!"  
 "Ow!"  
 "Gweat Scott!"  
 "Down with them!" roared Bob Cherry. "Sit on them!"  
 "Hurray!"  
 "Ow! I wefuse to be sat upon; I absolutely wefuse to submit to anythin' of the sort."  
 "Squash them!"  
 "Now, then, you rotters—"  
 "Oh! Ow!"  
 "Bai Jove!"  
 "Where are the other cads?"  
 "Where's the hamper?"  
 "Oh!"  
 "Pway wefuse me—"  
 "My only hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, suddenly recognising the youth who was struggling underneath him.  
 "Tom Merry!"  
 "Hallo! Wharton! You ass!"  
 "Jack Blake!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.  
 "Phew! D'Arcy!"  
 "Bai Jove! Is that you, Bwown? I must wemark that you have acted in a howwidly wude and wuff mannah."  
 "Gussy, by George!"  
 "Pway wefuse me, deah boys!"  
 "My goodness!" said a familiar voice.  
 "Oh, dear!" said another.  
 The juniors simply jumped.  
 Dusty and dishevelled, they sprang to their feet.  
 Three girls stood looking at them with severe countenances—Marjorie, Clara, and Cousin Ethel. One after another the juniors picked themselves up, and stood before the Cliff House girls like culprits before their judges.

## THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER. The Three.

MARJORIE was looking very severe, but there was a glimmer of a twinkle in her eyes. Miss Clara was beginning to smile. Cousin Ethel looked astounded.  
 "Oh!" said Tom Merry.  
 "Ah!" remarked Blake.  
 "H'm!" said Nugent.  
 "Bai Jove!"  
 "The by jovefulness is terrific!"  
 "Ahem!" said Bob Cherry.  
 "We came to meet you, Arthur," said Cousin Ethel. "We have been at Cliff House ever so long. You said that you would walk by the lane as fast as the trap could go by the road."  
 "Yaas; but—"  
 "You are late," said Marjorie.  
 "You see—" began Tom Merry.  
 "Of course we didn't know that you had met friends on the road," said Miss Clara, with a demure look.  
 "Bai Jove, I feel an awful ass, you know!" said Arthur Augustus, groping for his eyeglass. "You see, Ethel—"  
 "You see, Clara—"  
 "You see, Marjorie—"  
 "So sorry to have interrupted you!" said Miss Clara.  
 "It is a curious place to choose for gymnastics. But do pray go on. I should like to watch you."  
 "Oh, Clara!"  
 "Weally, Miss Clawah—"  
 "You see, it was a mistake," said Tom Merry. "We—"  
 "Quite a mistake," Harry hastened to explain. "The fact is, the—the hamper has been raided by some rotten sweeps—"  
 "Eh?" said Tom Merry.  
 "The hamper?" repeated Marjorie.  
 "Yes," said Hazeldene; "the hamper. It's been collared by Bunter and Snoop, helped by three rotters we don't know."  
 "Three absolute beasts!" said Bob Cherry. "We rushed on those chaps, without knowing them, thinking they were the beasts we were looking for. We're awfully sorry, Merry."  
 "Don't mention it!" said Tom.  
 "Oh dear!" said Marjorie. "So the hamper's lost?"  
 "Yes; but—"

(Continued on page 24.)





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"Well, never mind—"

"Oh, we're going to get it back!" said Harry quickly. "It can't be far away, you know. The rotters have taken it into the wood, I expect, but we'll soon find them."

"Bai Jove!"

"We'll come and help you," said Tom Merry, "if Miss Marjorie will excuse us for a little while. Gussy, here, is great on tracking."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It won't take long," said Harry. "We'll have it back in next to no time!"

Marjorie hesitated.

"You—you must not get into a fight," she said. "It would be better to lose the hamper."

Wharton laughed.

"There are ten of us here, and only five of those rotters," he said. "It won't be a fight; it's only a question of finding them, and making them disgorge."

"Bai Jove!"

"Very well, then. And, Harry—" Marjorie hesitated. "Harry!"

"Yes, Marjorie?"

"I—I was sending you a message," faltered Marjorie; "but now I—I hope you and your friends will come to tea at Cliff House!"

"Yes, do, please!" said Miss Clara.

Wharton coloured.

"If you really want us, Marjorie," he said, in a low voice.

"Of course we do, Harry! And—and I am sorry we—were offended! You were not really to blame; it was all Bunter's doing."

"Thank you, Marjorie! We'll come, gladly!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then we shall expect you."

"Right! If we can't find the hamper—"

"Come without it; it will be all right!"

"Good! But we'll allow half-an-hour to look for it before giving in," said Harry. "Au revoir! You fellows, coming?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors raised their caps, and the girls walked away towards Cliff House. Tom Merry, Jack Blake, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were wearing somewhat queer expressions. They realised now that they had been taken in by Bunter, and there was a rather awkward explanation to come with Harry Wharton & Co.

"This way!" said Tom Merry.

Wharton glanced at him.

"Did you see anything of the affair?" he asked.

Tom Merry laughed ruefully.

"Yes, rather! You see—"

"Exactly!" said Blake. "You see—"

"Yaas, wathah! You see—"

"You say that three chaps helped Bunter and Snoop to raid the hamper?" said Tom Merry awkwardly.

"Yes; three strangers—three blessed rotters, who seem to be badly in want of a thick ear apiece!" said Bob Cherry.

"They'll get it jolly soon!" remarked Tom Brown.

"What-ho!"

"The three beasts!" said Wharton. "I expect they're gorging on the hamper now. We'll give 'em gorge!"

"You see—"

"Weally, Wharton—"

"Don't be in too great a hurry to go for them," said Tom Merry. "You see, we know the chaps!"

"Oh! Who were they?"

"Us!"

"Eh?"

"Us!"

The Greyfriars juniors stared at the St. Jim's fellows. For the moment they did not understand Tom Merry.

"We were the chaps!" Tom Merry explained. "Bunter called on us to help him, and said it was a jape against another school. Of course we hadn't the faintest idea that the school was Cliff House."

"My hat!"

"So we helped Bunter—"

"Great Scott!"

"And waided the hampah, deah boys—"

"My only aunt!"

"Sowwy; but we'll soon have it back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Wharton.

"Eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, I fail to see any particular cause for mewwiment!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You've raided the grub that was intended for you!" gasped Wharton. "And you've passed it on to Bunter. That's all. Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry laughed, too.

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"It is funny, if you look at it in that way," he remarked; "but it won't be funny if Bunter clears up the tommy!"

"Wathah not!"

"No, by Jove! Where did you leave them?" asked Harry.

"Here you are!" said Tom Merry, halting at the spot where the raid had taken place. "This was where they collared the hamper. They went into the wood here."

"Good! Then we'll soon have the rotters!"

The juniors crossed the belt of grass, and entered the wood. There were a good many paths that they had the choice of following, and the grass and thickets gave no visible sign of the raiders.

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass tighter into his eye.

"Bai Jove, it is fortunate that I'm with you, deah boys!" he exclaimed. "I shall be able to twack the wascals down like anythin'!"

"No time for that, Gussy—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You see, we're in a hurry—"

"I twust you will not waste valuable time by arguin', Blake! I shall now pwocceed to twack down the waidahs!"

D'Arcy took off his silk hat and handed it to Bob Cherry.

"Pway hold my hat, deah boy! Now, all you fellows stand back, and give me plenty of woom to work in! Sherlock Holmes nevah allowed himself to be cowed!"

The grinning juniors stood back. Wharton was making an examination of his own, but Arthur Augustus received the most attention.

The elegant junior of St. Jim's, for once forgetful of his trousers, knelt on the grass, and carefully examined it for footprints.

"Bai Jove! Look here!"

"What have you found—twopence?" asked Blake.

"Certainly not! It's a footpwint!"

"Go hon!"

"Do you happen to have one of Buntah's or Snoop's old boots with you, deah boys?" asked D'Arcy, looking up. "I could then compare it with the footpwint, and ascertain—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry.

"Weally, Chewwy—"

"Well, we don't usually take a walk in the afternoon with a fellow's old boots in our pockets!" explained Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No, I suppose not," admitted D'Arcy. "It is most unfortunate, howevah. Still, I am a wemarkably good twackah, and I have had a gweat deal of expewience as a Boy Scout and an amateur detective, so I think I shall manage all wight. Pway stand back and don't cwowd, deah boys! Aha!"

"What is it now?"

"I am formin' a mental picture of the person who made this footpwint. It was Buntah!"

"How do you know?"

"The footpwint is impwessed so deeply that it was evidently made by a vewy heavy person," said D'Arcy. "It is a large boot, too. Bunter has large feet. Then he was a short person."

Blake stared, and so did the others.

"He was short, was he?" demanded Bob Cherry. "You can tell that from the footprint?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"How?"

"On Sherlock Holmes pwinciples. Look at that footpwint."

"Well?"

"What does it imply to you?"

"That somebody made it by walking there!"

"Yaas—that is wathah obvious—but I suppose I could not expect more than that fwom your untwained intellect. You see, that the footpwint is undah this twee—undah a bwanch that extends fwom the twink at a height of only about five feet fwom the gwound?"

"Yes."

"Vewy well. The fellow who made it was therefore not more than five feet high, or he could not have walked undah that bwanch," said D'Arcy triumphantly.

"But he may have stooped his head," said Tom Brown.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the New Zealand junior.

"Weally, Bwown, if you are goin' to cwent difficulties, it is not of much use twyin' to follow a twack," he said.

"There is always a possible answah to ewerythin'. I wegard this as bein' Buntah's twack beyond a doubt."

"Go hon!"

"I think we ought to follow it," said D'Arcy. "Where are you goin', Wharton?"

"I can't see any trace of them," said Harry. "But I think they would go deep into the wood to open the hamper, in case they were followed."

"That's so."

"The twack is here—"



"Oh, heaps of people follow that footpath! It leads through the wood," said Harry. "They wouldn't be likely to go that way."

"But I have found the twack."

"Oh, that might be anybody's track!"

"Weally, Wharton—"

"Well, let's separate," said Harry. "You follow that track, and we'll go this way. Meet at this place in half an hour, whatever happens."

"Wight-ho! You come with me, Blake."

"If you like."

And D'Arcy and Blake followed the footpath, while Harry Wharton & Co. plunged into the depths of the wood.

## THE TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

### The Raiders Raided.

"O H, really! It's heavy!"

Billy Bunter made that remark as he plodded along with the weight of the hamper on him. Snoop was panting at the other end of the fence-rail. The hamper had not seemed so heavy at first, but the further the two raiders carried it, the heavier it seemed to become.

Snoop panted for breath.

"I think we've carried it far enough now," he said.

"Yes, rather!" gasped Bunter.

"Let it down!"

The hamper plumped upon the grass.

Bunter and Snoop had brought it right into the wood, far from sight and sound of the road, and even Snoop felt secure at last. He feared an explanation between the St. Jim's fellows and Harry Wharton, and pursuit; but he felt that he was secure now.

He sat down on a big root to rest.

"It's jolly heavy!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," gasped Bunter. "It won't be so heavy when we've finished with it, though. He, he, he!"

"No, it won't!"

"I wonder what Tom Merry will say when he finds out?"

"It's more important what Wharton will say," said Snoop.

"Merry knew us, you know, and he may tell Wharton all about it."

"Well, it can't be helped. We've got the grub, anyway," said Bunter. "Lend me your penknife, and I'll soon have the hamper open."

"Here you are."

Bunter cut the cords of the hamper.

He raised the lid, and his little round eyes glistened behind his spectacles as he gazed upon the contents of the hamper.

"We've done them!" he exclaimed. "Done them brown! And now for a jolly good feed! Are you hungry, Snoop?"

"Yes, rather."

"So am I—simply famished. I've got a splendid appetite to-day," said Bunter. "Lucky, isn't it? I'm rather a delicate chap as a rule, and I don't really eat much. The chaps in my study keep me very short of grub, too. Will you open the ginger-beer while I get out the other things?"

"Right you are!"

Pop, pop, pop!

The corks popped merrily, and the thirsty juniors drank from the bottles, there being no glasses to be had. His thirst quenched, Bunter turned to the more solid articles. He was quickly busy upon the ham and tongue. As he had neglected to provide himself with knife and fork, the cold fowl was beyond his powers. Even Bunter did not feel inclined to tackle it with his hands and teeth.

"This is ripping," said Bunter, in a momentary pause.

"Jolly," said Snoop, who was bolting meringues as fast as he could. "I say, these things are simply gorgeous."

"And there's a heap of them, too—that's the best of it."

"Oh, it's lovely!"

"What-ho!"

"More ginger-beer."

"Here you are."

"Try these jam-tarts."

"Thanks."

For ten minutes or more the two juniors steadily feasted. But the supplies in the hamper were seemingly inexhaustible. The two successful raiders were too deeply occupied to see that they were being observed. From the trees close at hand a shaggy face with a pair of keen eyes looked out.

It belonged to a tramp who had been taking his afternoon nap in the grass, and had been awakened by the popping of the corks and the sound of voices. Mr. Barker had awakened hungry, too. The sight of the feast under the trees made his eyes glisten. He stood watching the juniors for some time in silence, wondering whether they had any companions at hand. But at length he was satisfied that they were alone there, and then he came out into view.

The two feasters started at the sound of a footstep.

Billy Bunter blinked up in alarm at the form advancing

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from the shadowy trees. He was too short-sighted to make it out clearly.

"Oh, I—I say, Wharton—"

"It isn't Wharton," muttered Snoop, in alarm. "It's a blessed tramp."

"Oh!"

"You're 'avin' a nice feed 'ere," said Mr. Barker, stopping and looking down on the alarmed juniors.

"Ye-e-es," stammered Snoop.

"You was going to ask me to jine you, wasn't you?"

"N-n-n-no."

"Wot!" said Mr. Barker, with a threatening look. "Wot did you say?"

"Ye-e-es," stammered Snoop. "I—I mean yes, of course. We—we should be very pleased if you would join us."

"Of c-c-c-course," stammered Bunter.

"Werry good," said Mr. Barker, sitting down upon an elm bole. "You youngsters 'ave 'ad enough. I don't 'old with youngsters overeating themselves."

"Oh, really—" began Bunter.

"Hey!" said Mr. Barker threateningly.

"Oh, really, you know, I—"

"You've 'ad enough," said Mr. Barker, with a shake of the head. "I don't 'old with hover-eating. Be off!"

"But—"

"Be haff!" roared Mr. Barker. "Do you want me to get hup to you?"

Bunter and Snoop shrank back in dismay. This was a more dangerous enemy than Peter Chucks, and they had been no match for Peter. They would never have dreamed of tackling the ragged, bearded, stubbly tramp. But to leave the hamper—

"I say, you know," said Bunter, "we—we want you to join us, you know, and—and we're very much honoured. But—but we haven't finished yet."

"Har you goin'?"

"I'm a rather delicate chap, you know, and I can only keep up my strength by taking constant nourishment," pleaded Bunter. "I fear I shall be ill if I don't have a good meal now. You don't want me to be ill—"

Mr. Barker did not reply verbally. He started to his feet with such a ferocious expression upon his face, that even Billy Bunter forgot the hamper, and took to his heels. Snoop followed him fast, and they tore away through the wood in terror. Mr. Barker grinned, and sat down beside the hamper again.

He took out the cold fowl and extracted a big pocket-knife from his rags. Then he began to eat.

Bunter and Snoop ran on and on, crashing through the thickets, too terrified to look back. They came out into a footpath at last, and there Snoop reeled breathless against a tree, and Bunter collapsed into the grass.

"Oh!" gasped Snoop.

"Ow!" moaned Bunter.

"I c-c-can't run any further!"

"Is he after us?"

"I—I don't know—I think not."

"Ow! All the grub gone!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat!"

"We've found them, deah boy!"

## THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER.

### Tracked.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY and Jack Blake stopped in the footpath, regarding Bunter and Snoop as they gasped and gasped. D'Arcy smiled the smile of success, and Jack Blake stared in blank amazement. Blake had consented to come with his chum on the "twack," but he had not had the faintest expectation of finding Bunter, Snoop, or the hamper. But here were Bunter and Snoop.

"My hat!" said Blake again.

"We've found them, deah boy."

"Looks like it," said Blake, still greatly astonished.

"Blessed if I understand it, though."

"We were bound to find them, deah boy, by followin' the twack."

"You haven't found the hamper."

"We will soon have that. We have found the waidahs, and that is the chief thing. They can tell us where the hampah is."

"Blessed if I understand it," repeated Blake. "I never expected to see them."

"Weally, Blake—"

"As for your following the track, it's all rot!"

"Pway do not scoff at what you do not undahstand,



Blake," said D'Arcy loftily. "There is a sayin' that nothin' succeeds like success, you know. I must point out the fact that I have succeeded. I do not want to triumph ovah you in any way, or to say 'I told you so,' but the fact wemains that I have succeeded."

"Well, where's the hamper?"

D'Arcy gently stirred Bunter with the toe of his boot. Bunter gasped and sat up.

"Oh!"

"Where is the hampah, deah boy?"

"We—we've been robbed," gasped Bunter.

"Wobbed!"

"Yes—a beastly tramp."

"But we have seen no twamp," said D'Arcy, puzzled.

"We have followed your twack all along the footpath fwom the lane——"

"Eh? We didn't come along the footpath."

"You—you didn't come along the footpath?"

"No."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Pway don't make that feahful wow, Blake. It disturbs my nerves, and thwows me into quite a fluttah. Do you mean to sewiously say, Buntah, that you did not come along this footpath fwom the lane?"

"Certainly not."

"Then how did you make these twacks in the gwass?"

"Eh? I didn't make any tracks!"

"But we followed your twacks here."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Pway dwy up, Blake!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"You've followed somebody else's tracks!" roared Blake.

"And you've come on these chaps by sheer chance! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you do not stop that obstwepewous cacklin', Blake, I shall have no wesource but to administah a feahful thwashin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah ass!"

"Halla, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, bursting out of the wood, followed by Nugent and Tom Brown. "What's the row? Have you found them?"

"We heard your blessed cackling a mile off," said Nugent, rather exaggeratively. "Have you got the hamper?"

"No, I've found the wottahs."

"Where's the hamper?"

"I don't know yet. I have twacked down these boundahs, but the hampah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake.

"Blake, will you cease that widiculous noise?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But what's the joke?" exclaimed Nugent, in wonder.

"There is no joke. Blake is makin' a silly ass of himself, that is all."

"Oh!" gasped Blake, with the tears running down his cheeks. "You see, Gussy has been following the track along the footpath, and he's found Bunter—only Bunter came a different way, and it wasn't his footprint at all. Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys, it's quite evident that Buntah is labouwin' undah a mistake, and that he has forgotten that he came along the footpath," said Arthur Augustus. "In any case, I have found the wottahs."

"Yes, they're found," said Nugent. "Where's the hamper, Bunter?"

"Ow! Don't shake me like that, Nugent! You—you may make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them, you know."

"Where's the hamper? Hallo! Stop that cad!"

But it was too late. Snoop had suddenly taken to his heels, and he had vanished into the thickets before a hand could be raised to stop him. Bunter made an attempt to follow suit, but Frank Nugent's grasp tightened on his collar.

"No, you don't," he said grimly.

"Oh, really, Nugent——"

"Where is the hamper, you porpoise?"

"A beastly tramp's taken it," said Bunter. "I—he——"

"Where is he?"

"In the wood. He——"

"Show us the way."

The fat junior gave a gasp of terror.

"He's—he's dangerous!" he gasped. "I believe he would have murdered Snoop and me if we hadn't rushed off! I showed great presence of mind in——"

"And now you can show us the way."

"I—I—e—can't! I—I——"

Nugent bestowed a kick upon the fat junior.

"Ow! Yow!"

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"You'll have some more of that if you don't show us the way," said Nugent savagely. "Do you think we're going to let a tramp eat up all our tommy because you're a rotten coward?"

"Oh, really—— Ow! Ow! Yaroooh!"

"Get on, then!"

"I—I can't! I—I mean that I will at once. I—I will! Don't kick me, you beast! You know I've got a delicate constitution!"

"Buck up!" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Billy Bunter, very unwillingly, led the way. When he showed any sign of hesitating, or slackening down, Nugent's boot came forcibly into play again, and he bucked up. Even the terror of the tramp was not so great as his dread of Nugent's boot. Frank might have been kicking goals by the force he put into it.

Blake chuckled two or three times as they went through the wood. D'Arcy glanced at him scornfully. Whether he had followed the right tracks or not, he had certainly found the raiders, and, after all, that was what he had started out to do. D'Arcy could see nothing to laugh at, but his chum still chuckled.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "Hark!"

The juniors stopped and listened.

From the depths of the wood ahead of them came shouting and scuffling—the sounds of a desperate struggle.

"Come on!" shouted Nugent.

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors dashed on. In his excitement Nugent let go Billy Bunter, and the fat junior did not neglect the opportunity. He scuttled away through the wood in another direction as fast as his fat little legs could carry him.

The juniors, forgetting Bunter, dashed on at top speed. They could distinguish Wharton's voice, and they had no doubt that the captain of the Remove had found the tramp—and he might be very much in need of help at that moment.

"Rescue!"

The cry rang through the woods.

"Buck up, deah boys! Wun like anythin'!"

"Come on!"

And the juniors burst upon the scene.

## THE TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER

### All Serene!

WHARTON was indeed in need of help.

The Greyfriars juniors had separated in their search for the raiders of the hamper, and Harry Wharton had found the tramp. The popping of a gingerbeer cork had caught his keen ear, and he had dashed up in the full expectation of finding Bunter and Snoop. Instead of them, he found Mr. Barker guzzling gingerbeer over the remains of a cold fowl. But the hamper was there, and Wharton meant to have it—tramp or no tramp.

Mr. Barker dropped the gingerbeer-bottle and jumped up as Wharton came panting up.

"That's my hamper!" exclaimed Harry. "Get out!"

"Sha'n't!" said Mr. Barker. "It's mine! I'll brain yer if yer come 'ere!" And he clenched his fists in a businesslike way, and advanced upon the junior.

Wharton closed with him, and then there was a tussle.

Harry was the best athlete in the lower school at Greyfriars, but he was no match for the powerful tramp.

But he put up a splendid fight.

He shouted for help as he struggled. The tramp threw him heavily down, but Wharton clung to his bulky antagonist, and Mr. Barker went down too.

They rolled in the grass, struggling furiously.

It would have gone hard with Wharton if the others had not arrived, for the tramp was in a furious temper, and he was hitting out savagely.

But D'Arcy and Blake, Bob Cherry and Nugent and Tom Brown, burst upon the scene, and then the tables were turned.

They saw at a glance what was going on, and, without waiting for words, they hurled themselves upon the tramp.

Five pairs of strong hands grasped him, and he was whisked away from Harry Wharton in a twinkling, and bumped on the ground.

"Oh!" roared Mr. Barker. "Oh!"

Bump!

"Yah!"

Bump! Bump!

"Yaroooh!"

# ANSWERS

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"I think that will do," said Harry, laughing breathlessly. "Let him go. You'd better clear out, my friend, and thank your luck that you're not given in charge."

And Mr. Barker did clear out—without stopping to say a word, or cast a backward glance. He had had quite enough of the juniors at close quarters.

The noise of the scuffle had brought in the other fellows from all sides. Tom Merry and Hurree Singh and Mark Linley came up, too late to join in the tussle. But their help was not needed—Mr. Barker was departing at express speed.

"Here's the hamper!" exclaimed Bob Cherry triumphantly. "Wharton's found it!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The lid of the hamper was fastened, and the rail was put through the cords. A couple of juniors took each end of the rail, and then the weight of the hamper was nothing to them.

"Now, then, off you go!"

And the juniors carried the hamper to the lane, and set out at a brisk pace for Cliff House. Miss Penelope Primrose's School for Girls was soon reached. Marjorie and Clara and Cousin Ethel were standing at the garden gate, waiting for them.

They greeted the juniors with cheery smiles.

"You've done jolly well!" said Miss Clara. "The tea will be a little later than we intended, but better late than never."

And the hamper was carried in.

Then the hands of the girls went deftly to work at preparing the tea under the trees, and the contents of the hamper—the amount of which made the girls open their eyes—were taken out and displayed to the best advantage.

And when the juniors of Greyfriars and St. Jim's and the girls of Cliff House sat down to tea, it was a very merry party.

The tea was going on swimmingly when there came an interruption. The garden gate was heard to click, and then a fat figure was seen coming through the trees.

"I say, you fellows——"

The Greyfriars fellows simply gasped.

"Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove was known to possess the coolest cheek ever possessed by anybody, but his nerve in presenting himself at Cliff House after what had happened was a surprise, even to those who knew him best.

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Bunter had washed the soot off his fat face, and made himself as presentable as possible, and he stood blinking at the tea-party in his most ingratiating way.

Bob Cherry rose to his feet.

"Which way are you going out?" he asked. "You can go through the gate, or over the wall. You can take your choice."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Oh, let him stay to tea!" said Marjorie, laughing. "Come and sit down, Bunter."

"Oh, all right!" said Bob Cherry. "He's an absolute beast, you know, but let him stay, if you don't mind."

Billy Bunter blinked wrathfully for a moment, but Marjorie pushed the cake over towards him, and he shut up willingly enough. Bunter would rather have eaten than have talked, any time.

Bunter did his best to make things go, as he would have expressed it—and certainly things did go when the Owl of the Remove turned his attention to them. But Bunter was not much regarded.

The tea-party was quite a success, and the hamper was so inexhaustible that there was not only an ample supply of good things for all—even including Bunter—but a great amount remained untouched at the finish.

And after tea the juniors spent some very pleasant hours at Cliff House before it was time to go, and during that time all the clouds that had arisen between the Greyfriars juniors and their girl-chums completely vanished.

When the time came to part, Harry Wharton & Co. parted with Marjorie on the best of terms, and they were in so good a humour as they walked homeward that they forebore even to rag Billy Bunter for his many sins.

(Another splendid, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. next Tuesday, entitled "Billy Bunter's Trials," by Frank Richards. Order your "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

## The First Chapters of a New Serial.



# STANLEY DARE

## The Boy Detective

### INTRODUCTION.

Stanley Dare, the Boy Detective, having rescued a lad named Tom Winfield from the Thames, into which he had been flung by would-be assassins, becomes interested in the case. He journeys from London to Launceston, Tasmania, where Tom Winfield lives, and there meets his old friend, Professor MacAndrew, who offers to assist him to trace young Winfield's unknown assailants. The three are travelling in the bush together when Tom Winfield is kidnapped. Stanley Dare traces the hand of a rascally lawyer named Silas Warner in the business, and leaving their black tracker, Watoonga, to follow the trail of the kidnappers, the young detective and his friend, the professor, return to Launceston to search out Warner.

### A Plan of Action.

"I don't imagine Silas Warner will show himself during the day-time," said the young detective. "We must patrol the streets to-night and keep a sharp look-out for him. It is a haphazard sort of business, but as he is such a slippery customer, it is our only chance of finding him."

At about nine o'clock that night they were making their way along a street not far from the railway-station when a man crossed the road from a side turning a short distance ahead of them. He wore a long grey overcoat with the collar turned up, a soft felt hat with the brim turned down, and a broad bandage covered both sides of his face, as though he had been severely injured about the head.

His features were practically invisible, but as he passed underneath a lamp Stanley Dare pulled the professor into the shadow of a house.

"He hasn't seen us!" he exclaimed.

"Who hasn't seen us?" asked MacAndrew, in some astonishment.

"Silas Warner!"

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 113.

NEXT WEEK: "BILLY BUNTER'S TRIALS."

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



through a window at the side of the house on the first floor. Presently the lawyer came to the window and peered out. They guessed it was him by the general shape of the head and shoulders, but it was quite impossible to see him clearly, for the window was so grimed with dirt.

"Ma conscience!" muttered the professor. "It's mony a lang day sin' that window was cleaned."

"The dirtiest window in Launceston, I should say," observed Dare.

Silas Warner pulled down a yellow blind, on which his shadow showed for a moment, then disappeared. The young detective drew a leather case from his pocket, and opening it, disclosed four skeleton keys. He selected one, and then returned the case to his pocket.

"I am going to interview Silas Warner," he said to the professor; "or, if he jibs at the interview, I shall take the liberty of going through his papers. There can only be one reason that a man of his stamp has for putting Winfield out of the way, and that is to gain money—"

"I winna believe that Tom Winfield is dead yet," interposed MacAndrew; "although matters look black enough, I'll allow."

"Nor will I believe the worst," pursued Dare. "It is for that reason only that I refrain from handing Warner over to the police at once. Tom's life is to be considered before all things; the property, which I am convinced this rascally lawyer is endeavouring to deprive him of, can be recovered afterwards."

"It maun be a large amount for sic a man tae run all these risks in order to obtain," observed the professor.

"It will run into hundreds of thousands of pounds, I dare say," replied Dare; "but to find that out will be the least difficult of my tasks. Will you remain here on watch, Mac, in case Warner manages to give the slip. If he comes out of the house alone, detain him until you can communicate with me."

"I'll dae that," said MacAndrew, clenching and unclenching his great bony hands. "I was a guid boxer and wrastler in my day, and I've no forgotten yet hoo tae use my arms."

Stanley Dare laughed, as he stepped quietly to the street door of the tenement house. A moment later he was in the passage, and the door closed softly behind him.

#### A Dastardly Act—The Black Oak Wardrobe—An Unexpected Meeting.

Silas Warner bent over an open desk, and as he turned over a heap of papers within it he kept muttering disjointed sentences about various matters that had connection with his nefarious business.

"I thought that Luke Bastable never failed!" he exclaimed savagely. "I know he has succeeded in other cases which he has undertaken; it isn't that he shirks it—the lust of killing is soaked into his blood—he would commit murder without hesitation for half the sum which I have—Curse it! Where have I put those bonds? Ah! Here they are! But Luke has bungled this business; and then that spying hound Jim the Tracker discovered my secret and levied blackmail on me. I wanted Bastable to put him out of the way, but he doesn't seem to catch on to the idea. Can it be—Bah! It can't be that he is afraid of him. He fears neither man nor devil. Things are not working smoothly—they're not working smoothly at all. If I miss this big coup—But I will not miss it. Two hundred thousand pounds! It's worth running a bit of risk for. Once in my clutches—But now there is this accursed young detective to be reckoned with—this Stanley Dare!"

"That is my name—be careful how you use it!"

The voice came from behind him, and, swinging round in his chair, he saw the young detective standing in the room with his keen eyes fixed upon him.

"You—you! How did you get in here?" gasped the lawyer.

"The usual way," replied Dare easily, as he pointed to the door. "I might have tried the window, but it was so very dirty."

"But the door was locked!" howled the lawyer, who was trembling with fear and rage.

"Well, it is still locked," said Dare. "I have left it as I found it, knowing your objection to fresh air. I have come for a little talk with you; but, first of all, I must trouble you to hand over that bundle of papers you have in your hand."

"What for? These papers are private."

"Exactly. Hand them over."

"So you are no better than a common thief, after all!" sneered the lawyer. "You've broken into my rooms with the intention of committing burglary. I will soon settle your game, my friend, by calling for the police!"

"I will save you the trouble!" said Dare coolly. "I have a police-whistle! Shall I blow it?"

"Hang you!" hissed Silas Warner.

His bony hands clutched the papers he held more tightly; then, with a furious gesture, he flung them on to the floor.

"You have the advantage of me now!" he snarled. "But my turn will come! If you want the papers, pick them up!"

Dare glanced at him suspiciously. If he bent down to secure the bundle of papers, the lawyer would have him at a momentary disadvantage, and, if he possessed a weapon, might spring upon him and use it with effect.

Neither of them had a desire to use a revolver, though for far different reasons. The young detective, therefore, stepped forward to where the bundle was lying, kicked it with his heel to the other side of the room, then walked backwards, stooped down, and picked it up.

Silas Warner watched him with a curious expression in his foxy eyes.

"Perhaps you would like to come and search through my desk," he said, "in case there is some more of my property that would take your fancy?"

"These documents, which appear to be shares in a gold mine," replied Dare, "are not your property. They belong to Tom Winfield; but if he lives—you understand, if he lives, you will not be able to use them to your own benefit. Therefore, you have paid a bolder villain than yourself to murder!"

It was a bold shot at a venture, but it went home. The lawyer's wizened face turned a sickly green, his claw-like fingers moved nervously among the other papers in his desk.

"You've found a mare's nest!" he said, in a shaking voice. "But I'll admit you've cornered me in another way, for although those papers are not what you suppose them to be, I am very anxious that they should not get into the hands of other people. Let us talk the matter over in a—businesslike manner. Sit down, sit—Ah, I've got you!"

He had been fumbling his papers all the time he had been speaking, but suddenly, with a rapid movement, he flung out his hand. There was a sharp hissing noise, as a spray of some liquid shot out from a hidden syringe, and Stanley Dare, clapping his hands over his eyes, reeled back with a cry of pain.

He was half-blinded with the liquid which Silas Warner had squirted into his eyes, and the pain was horrible. It burnt like liquid-fire. There was a savage, murderous gleam in Silas Warner's eyes as he glanced round the apartment for a weapon with which to finish his dastardly work. A heavy ruler was on the desk. He snatched it up and dealt the young detective two smart blows on the head with it.

Stanley Dare dropped to the floor, and lay there white and motionless.

The lawyer flung the ruler down, and then he replaced the "sprayer"—which he had held in his left hand—among the papers in his desk.

"I am always prepared to meet unwelcome visitors," he croaked, as he gazed down on Dare's prostrate form; "but usually in a way they neither expect nor appreciate. I should like to kill you"—he kicked the unconscious young detective—"but although I have the will, I haven't the nerve to take a man's life when he is helpless. You are only stunned now, and you will probably recover in an hour or so. I must get you out of the way!" He paused abruptly and glanced round fearfully. But the noise he had heard was only a rat scuttling behind the old wooden wainscoting.

"The wardrobe is the place!" he went on. "It has hidden many a secret! Why not one more?"

Opening the door of a tall, black oak wardrobe that stood in one corner of the room, he next lifted Stanley Dare in his arms, and, with some difficulty, carried him over to the old-fashioned piece of furniture.

It was big enough to hold two men within it, and Silas Warner was in it for several minutes with his victim. There was a half-scared look in his eyes when he came out. The door closed with a spring-lock.

"If the atmosphere is too close for him in there," muttered the lawyer, "and he is suffocated, it—it will be a different matter—quite different to killing him with brutal blows or the stab of a knife."

Then, extinguishing the light, he quitted the room and descended the stairs to the street.

A different matter in name only, Silas Warner, but a black and foul murder just the same, if your victim dies!

Silas Warner was a cunning scoundrel, and, as a rule, was prepared for most contingencies, but he certainly was not prepared for the sudden appearance before him of the iron-nerved and iron-handed Scotsman as he turned the corner of the street.

(Another instalment of this exciting serial in next Tuesday's issue of the "Magnet" Library.)





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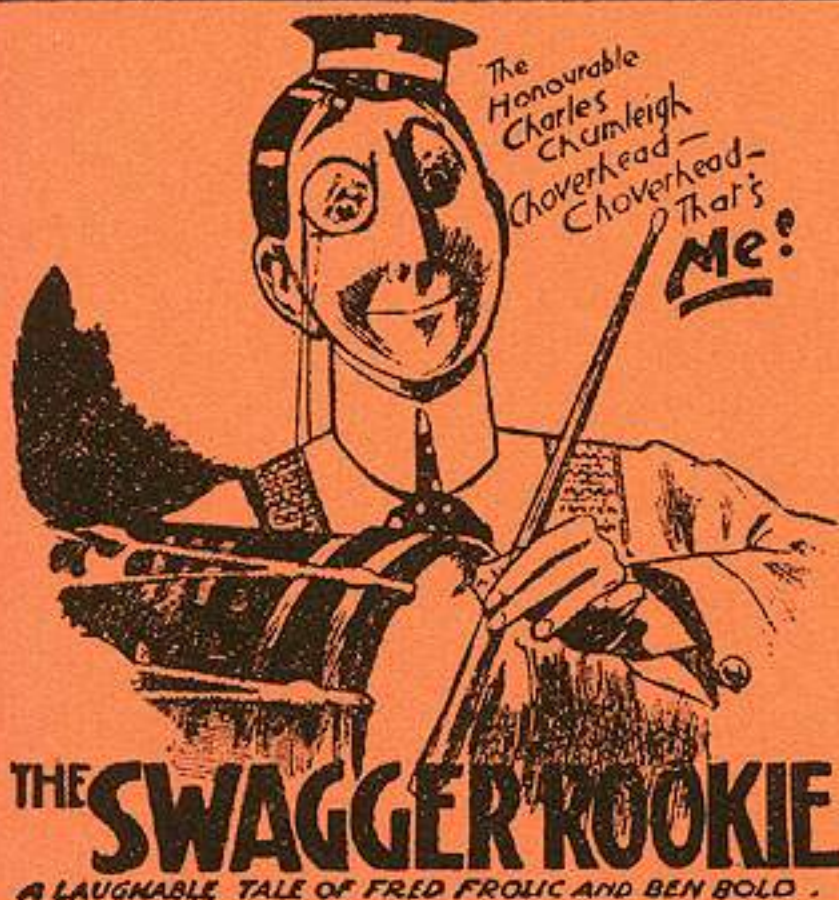
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