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# Cornered!

A Grand, New, Long; Com-  
plete School Story of Harry  
Wharton & Co., and Fisher  
T. Fish of the Remove Form  
at Greyfriars.  
By FRANK RICHARDS.

"M-m-my only hat!" stuttered Fisher T. Fish as he read the notice on the board. "M-m-my Uncle Jonathan! So's that what the packing-case was for! It's a rival show! Oh, by gum—I'm left this time!" (See Chapter 14.)

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Standing Treat!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were chatting outside the cricket pavilion, when Fisher T. Fish, the American junior in the Greyfriars Remove, bore down upon them. There was a gleam in Fisher T. Fish's cold grey eyes that meant business.

"I guess I've been looking for you galoots!" he remarked. "I've had a letter from my popper in Noo York, and there's something in it that will interest you just a few, I guess."

"Oh, good!" said Bob Cherry heartily. "I could just do with a ginger-pop. Your popper has sent a remittance just in time."

"I guess—"  
"Mine's lemonade," said Frank Nugent. "Mrs. Mimble's home-made lemonade is a treat! You are awfully good, Fishy!"

"I reckon—"  
"Ginger-beer for me," remarked Johnny Bull.  
"But—"

"Same here!" said Harry Wharton cordially. "You don't often stand treat, Fishy; but I must say you have

ambled along just in the nick of time now. We'll come with you to the tuckshop."

"Look here—"  
"The comefulness is terrific, my esteemed Fish," murmured Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "I also am dryfully thirsty this afternoon. The superb Fishy is as welcome as the flowers in the esteemed May."

"But I guess I was going—"  
"That's all right. We'll come with you," said Bob Cherry, taking Fish's arm. "This way! Kim on!"

"Look here!" roared Fisher T. Fish, as Bob marched him off towards the tuckshop. "I guess I was going to say—"

"That's all right, Fishy; we understand," said Nugent, taking the Yankee junior's other arm. "It was very thoughtful of your pater to time his remittance for a warm afternoon like this. Kim on!"

"You silly jay—"  
But Fisher T. Fish was not allowed to speak. The Famous Five rushed him off to the tuckshop in the corner of the old Close of Greyfriars at a speed that took his breath away. Fisher T. Fish was quite winded when he was rushed into the shop at last. Mrs. Mimble came out of her little parlour.

"Ginger-pop, please."

"And lemonade! It's Fishy's treat."  
"Will it run to doughnuts, too, Fishy?" asked Johnny Bull. Fisher T. Fish panted.

"You silly jays! I tell you—I—I—"

"Doughnuts, then," said Johnny Bull, unheeding.

"Thanks awfully, Fishy!"

"I guess—"

"Aren't you having anything yourself, Fishy?" interrupted Bob Cherry, as he started on his ginger-beer.

"I guess—"

"Try these doughnuts," said Johnny Bull. "They're jolly good; and you're paying for them, you know."

"I guess I'm not paying for them!" yelled Fisher T. Fish.

"I guess I'm not paying for anything! You won't let me explain. I haven't had a remittance."

"Not had a remittance?"

"Nope!"

"But you said there was something in the letter to interest us!" exclaimed Bob Cherry indignantly. "You said so distinctly. You don't think the blessed letter will interest us simply because it's written in a foreign language, do you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Too late now. It's up to you, Fishy," grinned Nugent.

"I'll have another lemonade, if it's all the same to you."

Fisher T. Fish snorted.

"I guess it's all the same to me, as I'm not footing the bill," he replied tartly. "I guess you're only spoofing, anyway. You jolly well didn't misunderstand me at all, I calculate."

The chums of the Remove grinned as they consumed their refreshments. As a matter of fact, they had not misunderstood the American junior. Fisher T. Fish was too remarkably careful with his money—when he had any—to waste it standing treat to anybody. The prospect of having to pay for the refreshments, liquid and solid, of five juniors with healthy appetites and powerful thirsts filled him with dismay. It amused the chums of the Remove to pull his Yankee leg in that gentle way.

"Too late to withdraw now, Fishy," said Harry Wharton, shaking his head solemnly. "If you have these generous impulses, you shouldn't repent of them when it's too late. I'll have some jam-tarts, please, Mrs. Mimble. Put it all on the same bill."

"I guess I never had any generous impulse, you jay!" howled Fisher T. Fish. "I guess I wasn't going to ask you to a feed."

"It's all right, Mrs. Mimble," said Wharton reassuringly. "We'll see that the bill's paid. Fishy isn't going to slide out of it like that."

"I guess—"  
"I'll have a cake," said Johnny Bull. "You don't mind if I have a whole cake, Fishy? You can have some of it. It will cost you two bob."

"It won't cost me anything," yelled Fish, crimson with alarm and excitement. "I tell you, I guess—"

"Oh, rats! This isn't a guessing competition," said Bob Cherry remonstratingly. "This is a treat—your treat, Fishy. Pass along those doughnuts. We may as well make a regular feed of it, as Fishy's standing treat for once."

"Certainly!" chuckled Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh. "It is superbly generous of the noble and ludicrous Fish."

"I guess I sha'n't pay—"

"Another ginger-pop, Mrs. Mimble."

"Same here!"

"The samfulness is terrific."

Fisher T. Fish glared at the Famous Five. Whether they were in earnest or not he could not be certain, but he had no intention whatever of paying for that extensive feed. He made a strategic movement towards the door, but Bob Cherry promptly took his arm and jerked him back towards the counter.

"Don't go yet, Fishy. You haven't paid."

"I guess I'm off—"

"No hurry to pay. We haven't finished yet," said Nugent. "I'll have a cake too. These cakes are jolly good, Fishy! Thanks!"

"You needn't thank me!" howled Fish. "I guess—"

"Well, I won't thank you, as you're so modest about it. Still, it's jolly good of you!" said Nugent, with his mouth full of cake. "It isn't everybody who'd stand a feed like this to five hungry chaps."

"I suggest a vote of thanks to Fishy, the founder of the feast," said Johnny Bull.

"Hear, hear!"

"Passed unanimously!"

"I guess I'm not founding any feast. I calculate—"

"Don't calculate the amount yet. We're not finished. I'll have some more doughnuts, please."

Fisher T. Fish made another break towards the door, but Bob Cherry held him fast. There was no escape for him. He watched the juniors eat and drink with glaring eyes. The terrible thought that they might make him pay for it all made him turn cold all over.

The feed was finished at last, and the Famous Five all thanked Fisher T. Fish in hearty tones, taking no notice of his disclaimers.

"Give Fishy the bill, Mrs. Mimble," said Harry Wharton cheerfully. "How much is it? Seven-and-sixpence, Fishy. Pay up!"

"Pay up, Fishy!"

"I guess—"

"Pay up!" chorused the juniors.

Fisher T. Fish jerked his arm away from Bob Cherry. He made one bound for the door, and disappeared into the Close.

"Come back!" roared Johnny Bull. "Yah! Welsher!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Fisher T. Fish did not come back. He was sprinting away towards the School House as fast as his long, thin legs could carry him. The chums of the Remove roared with laughter.

"Poor old Fishy!" chuckled Bob Cherry, wiping his eyes. "His face was worth a guinea a box while he was watching us feed. Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Removites roared again. Fisher T. Fish was a youth with great ideas, and he prided himself upon being a business man from the word go, as he expressed it in his native language. The schemes propounded by Fisher T. Fish were weird and wonderful, and he was seldom without a scheme, and the fact that they invariably ended in ghastly failure did not discourage him in the least, and did not diminish his self-satisfaction to any perceptible degree. The chums of the Remove knew very well that the letter from "Noo" York had put some fresh scheme into Fisher T. Fish's active brain, and that he had been about to plant it upon them—some wonderful scheme for making money hand-over-fist—with a request for the necessary capital to work the idea. And by the simple process of "rotting" the Yankee junior they had got rid of Fisher T. Fish and his precious scheme at the same time.

"I wonder what it was this time?" grinned Nugent. "Fisher T. Fish has tried moneylending, and an easy terms bizney, and keeping a tuckshop; and each time he has slipped up on it, as he says in his language. But he won't plant this scheme on us. Whenever we see him we'll ask him for the seven-and-six he owes us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five, having raised seven-and-six among them, and settled the little bill, strolled out of the tuckshop, and returned to the playing fields to watch the cricket; and the enterprising Yankee junior gave them a wide berth there.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Fish's Latest!

**S**TUDY NO. 7, in the Remove passage, were at tea. There were four juniors in the study—Peter Todd, and his cousin Alonzo, and Tom Dutton, the deaf junior, and Billy Bunter. Billy Bunter was grumbling. He generally was. The tea-table was spread frugally, for funds were low in No. 7, and Bunter, as he sat down to tea, blinked over the spread through his big spectacles, and grumbled. As Billy Bunter seldom or never made any contribution to the study funds, he really had the least right to grumble; but he did not look at it in that light.

"How many sardines, Toddy?" he asked, blinking at the dish.

"Four," said Peter Todd cheerfully. "Help yourself."

Bunter helped himself to the four sardines.

"What are you fellows going to have?" he asked.

The expression upon Peter Todd's face became almost terrific as the sardines were transferred to Bunter's plate.

"Pass the toast," said Bunter calmly. "There's enough toast for one. But what are you fellows going to do?"

"Us!" gasped Peter. "We're going to have toast and sardines, you—you porpoise."

"But there's hardly enough for me."

"Isn't one enough for you?"

"No good at all—simply no good."

"Right; then you won't have one," said Peter, reaching over and taking Bunter's plate away. "One each for Dutton and Alonzo, and two for me. Thanks."

"Oh, really, Todd—"

"Shut up!"

"I want my sardine!" roared Bunter.

Peter shook his head.

"You said distinctly that one was no good at all to you," he replied. "It's some good to me. Shut up!"

"Look here, what an I going to eat?"

"You can go and eat coke."

"You—you—you—"

"Indeed, my dear Bunter, you err upon the side of greediness," said Alonzo Todd gently. "My Uncle Benjamin would not approve—"

"Look here," howled Bunter, "I'm hungry! I—"

Peter Todd reached for a cricket-stump. Peter ruled with an iron hand in No. 7 Study. Billy Bunter relapsed into silence at sight of the cricket-stump, and sulkily attacked the toast. Peter smiled serenely as he polished off Bunter's

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As Fish came out into the Close, Harry Wharton wheeled his bicycle in, with a big bundle tied on the handle-bars. "Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Fish. "That's tuck!" said Harry Wharton cheerfully. "I've filled a dozen orders for the chaps for tea to-day!" (See Chapter 9.)

sardine. Peter Todd had often declared that he intended to make a decent chap of Bunter, in the long run, if he did not perish in the process. The odds were upon Bunter perishing.

There was a tap at the door, and it opened, and the thin, keen face of Fisher T. Fish looked in.

"I guess I've been looking for you fellows," he remarked, coming in. "I've had a letter from my popper in Noo York, and there's something in it to interest you. Are you chaps out to make some money?"

"Not on your lines," said Peter cheerfully. "We don't want anybody's money but our own. Thanks, all the same."

"I guess this is a ripping scheme I've got on now," said Fish. "It will simply scalp 'em. Of course, it's business—pure business. My popper's letter has put it into my head. He's making a corner in Noo York."

"Making a what?"

"A corner—a corner in sugar," explained Fish. "He's on Wall Street, you know, and he's out to make a corner in sugar."

"My hat!" said Peter, in astonishment. "I've heard a lot of queer things about the architecture in New York. But I never knew they made street corners of sugar."

"You jay!" said Fish. "You blessed jay! I mean, he's going to corner sugar. He's going to get the whole supply of sugar in the Yewnited States under his thumb, do you see? Corner the whole supply, and then he can charge what he likes for it. If he can control the market—and he's out to do it—nobody will be able to get any sugar excepting by paying his figure. I guess the popper will work the oracle."

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too. He's some business man, my popper is, and don't you forget it. And if he does, what do you think he will get?"

Peter Todd reflected.

"Ten years!" he suggested, after some thought.

Fisher T. Fish snorted.

"You jay! Don't you see this is business? Once he gets the sugar trade under his thumb, up goes the price—double, treble, quadruple—anything he likes. People must have sugar, and they'll have to pay! He will simply scalp the market. And he will get a million dollars, at least."

"Oh, that's business, is it?" said Todd.

"Yep!"

"Seems more like burglary to me."

"Oh, you don't understand business in this old country!" said Fish despairingly. "You want waking up. Why, there was a galoot in Chicawgo who cornered wheat—the food of the people, sir—that was a corker, and no mistake!"

"And didn't they hang him?" asked Peter.

"Hang him!" exclaimed Fish, in astonishment. "Oh, you jay!"

"Must be something wrong with your laws over there, if they didn't hang him," said Peter, with a shake of the head.

"Why didn't they hang him?"

"Oh, you don't understand business! Now, look here, this has put a new idea into my head, and I'm willing to take you fellows in!" said Fish impressively.

"I dare say you are, but you won't find it easy to take this study in."

"I mean I'm willing to take you into the scheme. It

requires a little capital, that's all—about twenty pounds will do it. You fellows can come into the Co. and help me raise the capital. Pawn your bikes and things, if you like. Why, sir, this hyer scheme is good enough to pawn your shirt for. We get all the money back in a few days; and then pile up the dollars, sir, hand over fist. I tell you, that if we get the capital to carry out this scheme, we shall skin the fellows right and left," said Fisher T. Fish enthusiastically. "What do you think of that? We'll have all their pocket-money off them before they can say 'no sugar in mine.' Straight!"

Peter Todd pointed to the door. Fisher T. Fish did not heed.

"I guess I'll explain the wheeze," he said. "Now, we've got a tuckshop in this school, run by an old woman. Well, my idea is to corner tuck."

"My hat!"

"We raise the capital, and buy up Mrs. Mimble's stock, lock stock and barrel," said Fish, his eyes glistening with excitement. "Of course, there'll be an understanding that she doesn't compete. She can go away on a holiday. As a matter of fact, I've heard that her father's ill, and she's thinking of going to stay with him. Well, she can go. We take over the tuckshop at a reasonable figure—see?"

"Not quite."

"You don't tumble? Well, see here! There isn't any other tuckshop nearer than the village, and the fellows don't have time to walk a mile every time they want a jam-tart or a ginger-pop. They simply have to deal at the school shop. If we corner the whole supply of tuck, what are they going to do? They have to buy of us! Well, we put up the price at once."

"Oh!"

"Penny tarts become twopenny ones, twopenny ones double too; ginger-pop the same—the whole giddy shoot, down to the last dough-nut!" said Fish eagerly. "Besides that, we can buy up stuff of an inferior quality, wholesale, and sell it off. The fellows will have to take it, when there's no alternative, or go without. Why, there's simply no end to the profit we can make."

"Great Scott!"

"Some of them may go off on their ears," said Fish. "They may make up their minds to go down to Uncle Clegg's in the village; but they'll soon get tired of that. Besides, with a further supply of capital, we can buy out Uncle Clegg, too, and shut up his shop so far as Greyfriars is concerned. The fellows couldn't go so far as Courtfield for their tuck. That's out of the question. We shall have them in the hollow of our hand, sir. And think of the trade we shall do. Every meal that isn't taken in Hall has to be bought at the tuckshop. From the Sixth down to the Second, we've got the customers, and all under our thumb. See? How long do you think it would take to get our twenty pounds back?"

"Well, my word," said Billy Bunter, "that's a splendid idea, Fishy. I'll go Co. with you with pleasure. I sha'n't be able to contribute any money, but—"

"Then you won't go Co.," sniffed Fisher T. Fish. "I'm not hunting for deadheads. No ornamental directors wanted in this hyer company. Now, I'm putting this to you, Todd, because you're a sensible chap, and I know you could raise some money if you tried. You could pawn your things, you know. It wouldn't be for long. In a week or two we shall command the whole financial resources of Greyfriars!" said Fish, quite grandly. "How does that strike you?"

Peter Todd rose to his feet.

"That's business, is it?" he asked.

"Yep."

"Sure you haven't got the wrong word? You don't mean stealing, thieving, burglary, or highway robbery?" asked Peter.

"Look here—"

"I only want to know, you know," said Peter sweetly. "Well, I'll tell you how it strikes me. It strikes me as a beastly swindle! And now I'll tell you how I'll strike you. I'll strike you on the nose!"

"Yaroooooh!" roared Fish, as Peter's bony knuckles rapped upon his prominent nose. "What the thunder— Ow! Ow! Yoooooop!"

Crash!

Fisher T. Fish fairly flew through the doorway, and descended in the passage with a concussion that made the floor ring. Then the door slammed.

Peter Todd calmly resumed his seat at the tea-table.

"A kinder guess and calculate that Fishy won't come in here to talk business any more—just a few!" he chuckled.

And Peter Todd guessed and calculated correctly—Fishy didn't!

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### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### A Golden Opportunity Wasted!

FISHER T. FISH was exasperated. He prided himself upon being a hustler, and when he had a brand-new idea he was anxious to strike the iron while it was hot. Since the scheme of making a "corner" in tuck had flashed into his fertile brain, he had hardly thought of anything else. It was too utterly rotten to be baulked at the very start for want of a few rascal counters, to put it in Shakespearean language; or a few greenbacks, as Fish expressed it in American.

But there it was. The scheme, novel and ripping as it was—a regular corker, in fact—could not be worked without money, and of money Fisher T. Fish had little. In his desperation, he came to the step of sending a wire to his "popper in Noo York," though the amount he had to pay for it made him groan in the post-office. Fish hated parting with money. His keen desire to "rope in" the money of others was only equalled by the keenness with which he clung on to his own dollars.

He confided to some of the fellows that he had wired to his popper for a cheque to carry out a big scheme, and the fellows chuckled. They had very little belief in a cheque for twenty pounds being forthcoming from Fisher senior. And the fellows to whom Fish told the scheme for "cornering" tuck persisted in regarding it as a swindle, in spite of the Yankee junior's almost frenzied explanations that it was business, pure business, as business was understood in "Noo York."

"Let me catch you cornering the tuck, that's all!" said Bolsover major, thrusting a huge fist under Fish's sharp nose. "See that?"

Fish admitted that he saw it.

"Well, you'll feel it, too, had, if you corner any tuck in this place!" said Bolsover major.

"I guess it's business," said Fish, "and I guess I'm going to do it some. My popper will squeeze out the durocks!"

"He'll what?" gasped the juniors.

Fish was always astonishing them with some new variety of the American language.

"He'll shell out the dust," said Fish.

"Which, being interpreted, means—"

"Which, being interpreted, means—"

"He'll send me the cash!" hooted Fish. "Don't you understand plain English? And you'll jolly well see me corner the tuck, too, I guess! Look here, Cherry, if you could raise—"

"You owe us seven-and-six," said Bob Cherry.

"I say, Wharton, your uncle's got gobs of rocks, I know. Suppose you write to him and ask—"

"You owe me seven-and-six, Fishy."

"Nugent, old man—"

"Seven-and-six, please!" said Nugent, holding out his hand.

And Fisher T. Fish gave it up in disgust. There was nothing to be extracted from the Famous Five. He did not think of trying Peter Todd again; Todd's refusal had been still more emphatic.

He tackled Vernon-Smith, the Bounder of Greyfriars, on the subject; but the Bounder was not taking any. All he took was the view that cornering anything to raise the price was swindling—a view the other fellows shared.

Fish had to settle down to wait for a remittance from his popper; but the prospect of waiting, with that splendid scheme all ready for execution, worried him. He regarded with a hungry eye the money the fellows spent at the tuckshop.

When once his ripping idea was fairly going, all that money would pass through his hands, and he dreamed blissful dreams of selling articles of steadily increasing inferiority in quality at prices steadily advancing.

That was business, from the Fish point of view. In his eagerness to get the business going, he tackled Coker of the Fifth. Coker heard him out, and then threw him out, and Fish did not try any of the seniors again.

Lord Mauleverer, the dandy of the Remove, was his last resource. Lord Mauleverer was a millionaire, and had as much money as he wanted, and he often made loans to needy fellows, and forgot about them afterwards, the debtors often forgetting all about them too.

But Lord Mauleverer seemed shy of Fisher T. Fish, somehow. Perhaps he knew what the enterprising Yankee wanted, or perhaps he was simply afraid of being bored. Lord Mauleverer lived in perpetual fear of being bored. For two days Fish hunted him in vain. The noble youth either locked himself in his study, or kept in company with Harry Wharton & Co., who gave him a generous protection. When he saw Fish coming, the schoolboy earl would wake out of his usual languid slackness, and bolt.

It was not till Saturday afternoon that Fish succeeded in running him down and getting him alone. The Remove were

playing cricket with the Upper Fourth, and Lord Maulverer's protectors were all busy on the pitch. Lord Maulverer had allowed Bob Cherry to persuade him to come and see the match.

Bob had persuaded him by the simple process of digging his knuckles into the schoolboy earl's noble neck, and marching him down to the pavilion by main force. Once there, Lord Maulverer was too lazy to walk away again, so he sat down outside the pavilion, and watched the cricket sleepily.

He was stretching himself there when Fisher T. Fish spotted him, and bore down on him in triumph. Lord Maulverer saw him coming, and half rose from his chair; but the effort was too much, and he sat down again and groaned.

"I guess I've been looking for you, Mauly, old man," said Fisher T. Fish, standing in front of the noble youth, and cutting off his escape.

"Yaas," murmured Lord Maulverer.

"Haven't had a chance to speak to you," said Fish confidentially. "Those jays in No. 1 Study have been trying to keep me off!"

"Yaas. Awfully good of them, begad!"

"The fact is, I want to talk to you, Mauly," said Fish. "I'm not bothering you, am I?"

"Yaas."

"I guess I've got a ripping wheeze on, Mauly. I'm going to corner the tuck!"

"Begad!"

"I guess I'm willing to let you into the scheme," said Fish. "All you've got to do is to find the capital. I'll find the brains and the experience and the business knowledge, and all that. That's a fair division. You can easily raise twenty pounds?"

"Yaas."

Fisher T. Fish rubbed his bony hands with satisfaction.

"Good enough!" he exclaimed. "Perhaps you've got as much as that about you?"

"Yaas."

"Well, just hand it over, and I'll give you a receipt for it, and you shall stand a fair whack in the profits of the company," said Fish eagerly. "I guess I'm going to make the fellows pay through the nose for their grub, once I've cornered it!"

"Yaas."

"In fact, if you like to make it thirty quid, instead of twenty, I'll corner the tuck in the village tuckshop too," said Fish, his eyes glistening. "That's the way we do business over there, you know. We buy up shops simply to keep 'em closed, so as to be able to raise prices. I'll give Uncle Clegg so much a day to refuse to serve Greyfriars fellows. That will work the riddle!"

"Begad!"

"Don't you think it a ripping wheeze, Mauly? And, mind, you get a quarter of the profits, in spot cash. I suppose you can make it thirty quid quite as easily as twenty, a blessed millionaire like you!"

"Yaas."

"Well, I'm waiting for the cash," hinted Fish. "Better get the transaction complete before those rotters come around! I can see Bob Cherry's got his eye on me, and he'll spoil the trade if he can. Can I make out a receipt for thirty pounds?"

"Yaas."

Fisher T. Fish wrote out the receipt on a leaf of his pocket-book with a fountain-pen, and a hand that almost trembled with eagerness. He tore out the leaf, and presented it to Lord Maulverer. Lord Maulverer's hands were in his pockets, so he could not take it.

It did not seem to occur to him to take his hands out of his pockets.

"There's your receipt, Mauly."

"Yaas."

"Well, take it."

"Can't."

"Why can't you take it, you jay?"

"Can't you see my hands are in my pockets?" said Lord Maulverer plaintively. "Don't be an ass, Fishy!"

There was a shout from the Fourth-Form fellows round the field, as Bob Cherry's wicket went down to Dabney's bowling. Bob Cherry came towards the pavilion with his bat under his arm. He came towards Lord Maulverer and the enterprising Yankee at once.

"Hallo—hallo—hallo! What's that?" he demanded, catching sight of the receipt.

"You steer clear!" growled Fisher T. Fish. "This is a little business deal I'm having with Mauly! He's going to come into the combine, and have twenty-five per cent. of the profits of the corner. This is his receipt for the capital advanced!"

"You're not lending that spoofer thirty quid, are you, Mauly?" Bob gasped.

"No, my dear fellow."

"What!" howled Fisher T. Fish. "Why, you said I could make out the receipt!"

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Lord Maulverer nodded lazily.

"So you can, if you want to, my dear fellow. You can make out as many receipts as you like. I don't mind."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

Fisher T. Fish glared at Lord Maulverer, his risen hopes dashed to the ground again.

"Look here, you jay, just you hand out the dibs, or I'll punch your nose!" he shouted. "You can't fool F. T. Fish like that!"

"Take him away, old chap!" said Lord Maulverer. "He makes me tired."

"I guess—hallo—ow—what are you doing with that bat, Bob Cherry, you jay?"

"Poking it in your ribs, Fishy. What a silly question!" said Bob calmly. "Get off the grass! Buzz!"

"Yaroo! Just you keep that bat away! Ow! Ow!"

Bump, bump bump! went the heavy end of Bob Cherry's bat on the Yankee junior's ribs. Fisher T. Fish, crimson with wrath and disappointment, beat a retreat. There was no arguing with the business end of a cricket-bat.

"Look here, you chuck it!" he shouted. "Do you want me to wipe up the ground with you, Bob Cherry? If I get my mad up I shall make potato-scrappings of you! You hear me?"

"I'm not deaf!" said Bob cheerfully, still prodding away with the bat. "Gee up!"

"Ow, ow! I'll slaughter you! I'll scalp you! I'll—"

Fisher T. Fish did not finish explaining what he would do. An extra hard lunge with the bat laid him in the grass, and he roared.

"Yow—ow! My hat! Yaroooh!"

But the bat was still active, and Fish jumped up like a jack-in-the-box and fled.

Bob Cherry returned to Lord Maulverer.

"Mauly, you silly ass—"

"Yaas!" yawned the slacker of the Remove. "Has he gone? Thanks!"

"If you lend Fishy any money to start his rotten schemes, Mauly, I'll bump you till your hair curls!" said Bob impressively.

"Yaas."

"Promise not to, or I'll bump you now!" added Bob, as an after-thought.

"Yaas."

"Good! You won't forget that?"

"Yaas."

"What?" roared Bob.

"I mean no," said Lord Maulverer hastily. "How you do tire a chap, begad! I feel quite exhausted."

"What you want is some exercise," said Bob genially; and he took Lord Maulverer's chair by the back and pitched him out bodily. "Now do you feel better?"

"Grooh!" groaned his lordship. "You're worse than Fishy, begad!"

"Why don't you get up, you fathead?" roared Bob.

"Thanks, I'm quite comfy here," said Lord Maulverer; and he leaned back against the pavilion and closed his eyes. And Bob, quite overcome, allowed him to rest.

Fisher T. Fish had not stopped before reaching the School House. There he slakened down, discovering that he was not pursued. He rubbed his ribs ruefully. Bob Cherry's prods had been emphatic.

"The silly jay!" groaned Fisher T. Fish. "I'd have screwed the durocks out of that mug if he hadn't chipped in! Now I shall have to wait till the popper's cheque comes; and it won't be along yet. And I'm losing all the money I might be making! I guess I've a jolly good mind to go back there and give Bob Cherry the licking of his life!"

But on second thoughts Fisher T. Fish decided to let Bob Cherry off, which was a very fortunate thing for Fisher T. Fish.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Great Preparations!

DURING the next few days nothing more was heard of the "corner." Fisher T. Fish was waiting for a cheque from "Noo" York, and, of course, it would take some time to arrive. Meanwhile, he lay low, and most of the Remove forgot his now scheme, excepting to chip him every now and then when he was discovered making word calculations with pencil and paper. Johnny Bull, who shared the Yankee junior's study, often saw him making tremendous calculations, covering sheets of paper, and when he inquired what it all meant, Fish explained that he was working out the profits of his now venture. Whereat Johnny Bull would snort scornfully.

But Fish, though he was usually blind to the fact that a still tongue shows a wise head, said very little more on the

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subject. Now that he realised that he couldn't possibly raise the required capital among his Form-fellows, he realised also that the less said about the scheme the better. When the "corner" was made, the Yankee junior intended to "spring" it upon Greyfriars suddenly.

Bolsover major's remarks on the subject troubled him a little. The prospect of being forcibly assailed in the midst of the cornered "tuck," and bumped and hammered, was very disconcerting to an enterprising business man. That was not business; but as Fish had already seen, the juniors did not understand business as he understood it. If he cornered the tuck in the school shop, and put up the prices, they were only too likely to raid and hammer him, whether it was business or not.

And so in these days of enforced waiting, while he was attending the arrival of the cheque—or the check, as he would have spelt it—from New York, Fisher T. Fish was carefully laying his plans in advance.

He had several talks with Mrs. Mimble, and that good dame, though very much surprised at first at the idea of a junior buying up her stock, came to regard it as a very good thing for her. She wanted very much to visit her invalid father, and she would have to stay away some time, and, as much of her stock was perishable, it would mean a heavy loss to her, for the school shop would have to close. The idea of a junior taking it over, paying cost-price for all the stock, startled her at first; but it was an attractive idea, as it gave her the freedom she wanted to visit her sick parent, without putting her to loss. So she made two conditions—that Fisher T. Fish should obtain the consent of his Form-master, and that he should pay spot cash.

Fish promised to fulfil both conditions—the former at once, the latter as soon as he received his popper's letter from New York. And he repaired to Mr. Quelch's study to put it diplomatically to his Form-master. Needless to say, he did not intend to tell Mr. Quelch anything about the scheme for the "corner."

"Can I speak to you for a few minutes, sir?" Fish asked respectfully, as the Form-master looked at him inquiringly.

Mr. Quelch laid down his book.

"Certainly, Fish! What is it?"

"It's come to my knowledge, sir, that Mrs. Mimble's father is ill, and she wants to go and stay with him a bit," explained Fish. "It's very sad, sir."

"I'm sorry to hear it," said Mr. Quelch, a little puzzled, however. He did not see why Fish should come and tell him about it, sad as it was.

"Well, sir, while Mrs. Mimble is away the school shop will have to be closed. Her husband is too busy with the gardening to be able to look after it, and she wouldn't trust him to sell things and keep accounts, either. It would be very awkward for the fellows to have to go down to the village for their tuck. I guess it might lead to breaking bounds after hours, too," said Fish virtuously. "That would be—ahem!—very wrong."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, I suppose there would be no objection to my taking the tuckshop over to oblige Mrs. Mimble?"

Mr. Quelch half rose in his astonishment.

"You, Fish?"

"Yep!"

"But I don't quite understand!"

"It's like this, sir," said Fish confidentially. "I guess I'm thinking of the fellows, and the trouble it would be to them to have to bike down to Friardale when they wanted any grub—I mean, tuck, sir. Also Mrs. Mimble. Of course, if she closes the shop, all the perishable stuff will, in fact, perish. I want to save her from that loss. We all respect Mrs. Mimble very much, sir. She is a good sort."

"Quite so. But—"

"Well, sir, Mrs. Mimble is willing to hand the tuckshop over to me, if you consent, and I'm going to pay cost price for the stock."

"But surely you have not the necessary money, Fish—a junior!"

"My popper's a millionaire in New York, sir!" said Fish cheerfully. "I'm going to have a remittance from him on purpose—if you consent, sir. Of course, it will be a good thing for Mrs. Mimble, and save her a heavy loss, and save the fellows a lot of inconvenience, as well as temptations to break bounds. Of course, I shouldn't ask you to let me off lessons to attend to the shop. It would only be opened out of school hours."

"It is a very odd idea," said Mr. Quelch. "Still, if Mrs. Mimble is willing to hand the shop over to you, Fish, I don't know that I see any objection. But have you reflected that taking charge of the shop will take up all your leisure time?"

"Yep! I don't mind that, sir, so long as I can make myself useful to the whole school in this way," said Fish modestly. "A fellow ought to be prepared to put in a little

self-sacrifice now and then for the sake of the others. Don't you think so, sir?"

"Ahem! Yes. If that is your object—"

"I guess it is, sir, as well as saving Mrs. Mimble a heavy loss."

"Very well, Fish, you have my permission."

"Thank you, sir!" said the delighted Fish. "Perhaps you will give me a note to show Mrs. Mimble, sir."

"Very well."

Mr. Quelch wrote a few lines and handed them to Fish. The Yankee junior received them with great satisfaction. His new departure was authorised by the Form-master now, and that would give it great weight.

"By the way, sir," added Fish, as if an after-thought had just occurred to him, and he turned back as he was leaving the study, "I guess it's just possible that some of the fellows might start rags in the tuckshop, sir, when it's run by a Lower Fourth chap like me. They might think of raiding the stock, or something like that. When I take over the shop, sir, perhaps you wouldn't mind speaking just a word to the fellows, sir, so that order will be kept."

"Certainly," said Mr. Quelch, with a nod. That appeared eminently reasonable to him.

"Thank you very much, sir," said the delighted Fish, and he left the Form-master's study highly elated.

He returned at once to the tuckshop to show Mr. Quelch's note to Mrs. Mimble. The note was brief, but it was quite plain and to the point.

"I grant permission to Master Fish to take over the school shop during the absence of Mrs. Mimble.—Signed, H. Quelch, Form-master."

"All O.K. I guess—what?" asked Fish.

"Yes, that is all right, Master Fish," said Mrs. Mimble. "I will go over the stock, and name the exact amount. Of course, I shall want ready money."

"You're a business woman," said Fish admiringly. "Spot cash is the word, you bet. I guess I'll help you go over the stock, in case you made the figures a little too elevated by accident—what?"

And Fisher T. Fish lent Mrs. Mimble his valuable aid in stocktaking, and he showed a marvellous aptitude for keeping prices down. The good lady was certainly not likely to make much profit out of the transaction with the enterprising Yankee. The figure was fixed at last, and it was not a high one—coming to exactly fifteen pounds eight shillings, and sixpence.

"Good!" said Fish. "I may get my cheque any day now, and as soon as it comes, I'll walk in and settle, and you hand the shop over. That's a deal?"

"Yes, Master Fish."

And Fisher T. Fish departed satisfied. The coast was clear now, as soon as his popper's cheque arrived, the school shop would be in his hands—and Mr. Quelch's authority would be interposed to prevent ragging. Then the corner would be made, and cash would flow into the American junior's coffers, and he chortled at the happy prospect of "skinning" his schoolfellows without mercy.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Fisher T. Fish Takes Charge!

"LETTER for you, Fishy!" said Billy Bunter, one morning a few weeks later.

Billy Bunter had taken the letter down from the rack, and was fingering it lovingly. It had an American stamp and postmark, and was evidently from Fish senior. All the Remove knew that Fisher T. Fish was expecting a cheque from his popper, and so that letter had a great attraction for Billy Bunter. The Owl of the Remove had no respect whatever for another fellow's correspondence. Whenever he had his hands on another fellow's letter, that letter was certain to come open—by accident, of course. Fish's letter had come open—by accident—and Bunter had blinked into the envelope, and spotted a cheque there. Then Fish came along.

"Hand it over, you fat jay!" growled Fish. "You've opened it."

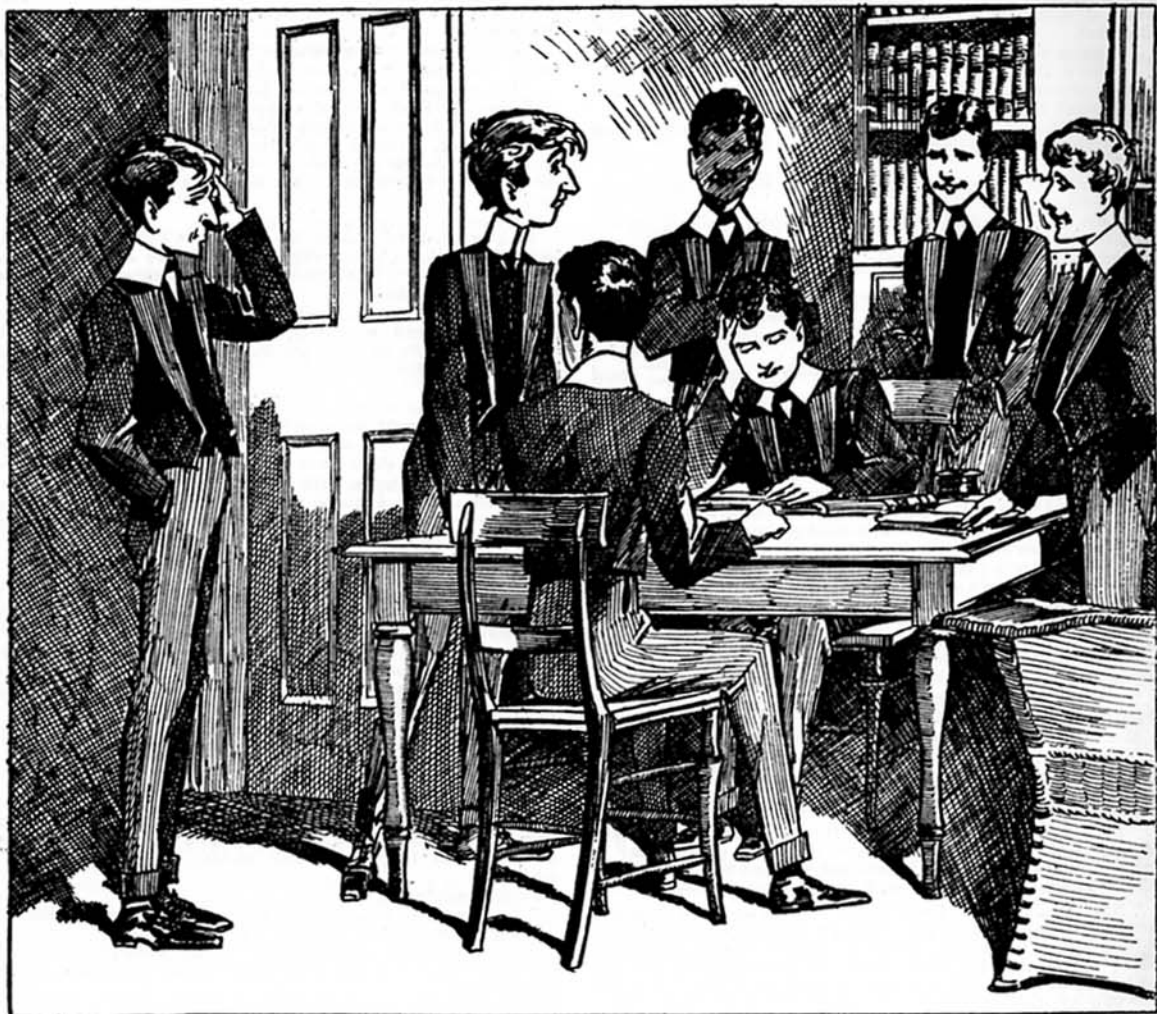
"The flap came open," explained Bunter. "Quite by accident, of course. I hope you don't think I'd open a fellow's letter, Fishy."

"I guess you would, and you'd bone what was in it, too!" snapped Fish. "By gum! It's all O.K. Hyer's the cheque."

He drew out the cheque with great satisfaction. Then he read the letter that accompanied it, and a shadow came over his thin, keen face. He thrust the letter hastily into his pocket. It did not seem to have afforded him so much satisfaction as the cheque had done.

"Have you read that letter, you spying beast?" he demanded.





There was a general grin from the juniors at the sight of Fish's face. "How's business?" asked Bob Cherry affably. "I guess you know I'm not doing any business!" groaned Fish. "I own up—you've knocked me out, you jays! It was a ripping scheme, but—" "But it was like all your other schemes—no good!" said Harry Wharton. (See Chapter 16.)

"Oh, really, Fishy, I didn't have time—I mean, I'd scorn to do such a thing!"

"That's all right, then," said Fisher T. Fish, greatly relieved. "That letter's private—very private."

"How much is the cheque for, Fishy?" asked Skinner. Quite a crowd of fellows were gathered round to see Fishy's cheque.

"Hundred dollars," said Fish carelessly.

"Hundred dollars! How much is that in real money?" inquired Skinner.

Fisher T. Fish snorted.

"I guess it's twenty pounds in your old-fashioned, fat-headed sort of money," he replied. "Twenty quidlets, my infants!"

"Rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Gammon!"

"Draw it mild!"

Evidently the Removites, by their exclamations, did not believe that Fish had received so handsome a remittance from his popper. Fish had often stated that the said popper was a millionaire, but it was observed that very few traces of the millions found their way as far as Greyfriars. Fish was certainly never rolling in money, either dollars or pounds. The scepticism of the juniors was natural, under the circumstances, but as it happened, it was ill-founded this time. Fisher T.

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Fish held up the cheque for all to see. There were exclamations of surprise as the juniors read it. Undoubtedly it was for a hundred dollars, and it was payable to Fisher Tarleton Fish.

"Well, that looks genuine enough," said Vernon-Smith. "Fishy's pater must have some money, after all!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I've told you often enough that my popper's a millionaire!" exclaimed Fisher T. Fish indignantly.

"Yes, you've told us," admitted the Bounder. "You've told us lots of things. Generally lies."

"Well, that cheque's genuine," said Fish, with a sniff. "A hundred dollars, my infants! Precious few of you get a hundred dollars at a time from your paters."

"Shows the advantage of having a popper instead of a pater," Bob Cherry remarked. "What are you going to do with it, Fishy? Stand a big treat to the whole Form?"

"Nope."

"I say, you fellows, I think Fishy ought to be made to stand treat, now he's got some money at last," said Billy Bunter.

"You owe us seven-and-sixpence, Fishy," reminded Nugent.

"Rats! I guess this hyer cheque is my capital for the business," said Fish. "I'm taking over the school shop to-day, and I guess I'm going to make things hum—just a few."

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"And put up the prices, eh?" said Bolsover major.

"Yep."

"We'll make you put them down again, then, fast enough. We'll all come in together, and wreck the blessed place," said Bolsover.

"I guess you won't."

"Who'll stop us?" demanded the bully of the Remove, with a contemptuous glance at the far from athletic American.

"I guess Mr. Quelch will."

"What!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "You don't mean to say you've told Quelch what you're going to do?"

"Yep!"

"Rats!" exclaimed the juniors. "He wouldn't allow you. Bosh! Gammon!"

"Look at that," said Fisher T. Fish airily, holding up the note the Remove-master had written for Mrs. Mimble to see.

"Looks like the genuine article—what?"

"Great Scott!"

"The Great Scottfulness is terrific!"

"Well, that's genuine," said Bob Cherry, scratching his nose thoughtfully. "I shouldn't have thought Quelch would have allowed it."

"He's spoofed that out of Quelch somehow," said Skinner.

Fisher T. Fish sniffed, and walked away. He went directly to the tuck-shop. Mrs. Mimble was glad to see him. She was very anxious to get away.

"I guess I've come to settle," said Fisher T. Fish, flourishing the cheque. "Look at that."

"I'm glad," said the good dame. "I want to get away to-day, if possible; but I can't change a cheque for that amount, Master Fish."

"I guess I know that, Mrs. Mimble. I'm only showing you the cheque to show you it's all right," Fish explained. "I'll ask Mr. Quelch to change the cheque. He will have to pass it through the bank before he hands me the money, but you can have it as soon as you come back. That's all the same to you."

"But I—I—"

"I'll leave it in Mr. Quelch's hands," Fish explained. "He'll keep the money for you."

Mrs. Mimble was satisfied.

"Well, that is all right, Master Fish. If you are sure that you want to take the shop over, and as Mr. Quelch has no objection—"

"Sure!"

"Then I shall be able to catch the afternoon train," said Mrs. Mimble, with great satisfaction. "My poor father is anxious to see me. I am very much obliged to you, Master Fish. This will save me a loss I could not well afford."

"Not at all," said Fish airily. "This is pure business with me—business from the word go, ma'am. I hope you'll have a pleasant journey. Good-afternoon! After lessons to-day I take possession here. You can give Gosling the key when you lock up, and tell him to bring it to me."

"Yes, Master Fish."

And Fish walked away as if he were treading on air. He was dreaming golden dreams. As the Remove came into the Form-room that afternoon, the enterprising Yankee junior stopped Mr. Quelch to speak to him.

"If you please, sir, Mrs. Mimble has handed the tuckshop over to me to-day," he said. "Perhaps you wouldn't mind saying a word to the fellows this afternoon, sir, in case of any disorder."

"Very well, Fish!"

Fish went to his place in the Form-room smiling. Before afternoon lessons commenced, the Remove-master spoke these few words to his Form.

"I understand that Mrs. Mimble has handed the school shop over to Fish during her absence," he said. "It is very kind of Fish to take so much trouble to save his school-fellows from inconvenience, in my opinion. It is to be understood that there is to be no disorder there because the place is in the hands of a junior boy. Any case of ragging, or anything of that kind will be severely punished."

The Remove listened in silence. Bolsover major looked daggers at Fisher T. Fish, but the latter only smiled. He had effectually checkmated the bully of the Remove. Other juniors, who were not at all inclined to bully, had thought of ragging the new owner of the tuckshop. But Mr. Quelch's warning knocked that idea on the head. There was to be no ragging.

After lessons were over, Gosling, the porter, met Fish in the passage, and in the presence of the Remove handed him the key of the tuckshop.

"I say, Fishy, when does the shop open?" inquired Billy Bunter.

"Five sharp," said Fish. "Don't come without your cash. No credit in my establishment!"

"Oh, really, Fishy; an old pal, you know—"

Fisher T. Fish walked away before Bunter could finish. He turned into the Sixth Form passage, and tapped at Loder's door. Gerald Loder, the bully of the Sixth, was very unpopular among the juniors. Fisher T. Fish had no liking for him, for that matter; but he had a use to put Loder to now.

"Come in!" rapped out Loder.

Fish entered the study. Loder's fag—Tubb of the Third—was making toast before the fire, and Loder was abusing him for burning it. The prefect looked at Fish with a far from amiable expression.

"Well, what do you want?" he growled.

"Just a word with you, Loder," said Fish cheerfully. "Mrs. Mimble's gone away, and I've taken over the tuckshop in her absence."

"My hat!"

"I've got the written permission of my Form-master, and I'm paying Mrs. Mimble cash for all her stock. Business will be run as usual, but with improvement under new management. I hope I shall have your custom, Loder. Prices are going to be put up a little to cover expenses in alterations, etc. But I guess that you being a prefect, Loder, prices will remain the same to you, if I have your custom. In point of fact, I'm willing to let you have articles at cost price—that will be a good thing for you. In return, you give me your patronage."

Loder's face cleared. He was a monied man, and he spent a good deal in the school shop. Fisher T. Fish's offer was certainly a good one. But the prefect was puzzled. He did not see why Fish should have made that generous offer. Generosity was not much in Fish's line.

"Well, that's good enough," he said. "I wish you success. But why—"

"The fact is, I want you to stand by me, Loder, in case any of the fellows cut up rusty," said Fish confidentially. "I'm going to corner tuck!"

"Great Scott!"

"But a few privileged customers will have anything they like at cost price—that's a good bit lower than shop price, you know. You're one of them. You patronise the show, and see that there isn't any trouble, in return. Is it a go?"

Loder laughed.

"You say you've got your Form-master's permission?"

"I guess so! Hyer it is, in black and white!"

"Good enough," said Loder. "Go ahead! I'll be a customer, and I'll see that your other customers behave themselves."

"Good!"

And Fish, quite satisfied in his mind now, repaired to his new establishment to open it to a rush of trade. Mr. Quelch's warning would keep the Remove in order—Gerald Loder's authority as a prefect would have the same effect on fellows of the other Forms. There was no danger of ragging or disorder now. All Fish had to do was to stand behind his counter and rake in cash—an occupation which was more pleasing than any other to the enterprising Yankee.

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER. High Prices!

THE door of the school shop stood wide open.

Behind the counter Fisher T. Fish stood in his shirt-sleeves, with an apron on. He looked very businesslike indeed.

As soon as the shop door was set open customers began to drop in.

At that time of the day it was usual for the school shop to do a brisk business. Most of the Greyfriars fellows, when their funds ran to it, had tea in their studies, instead of going into Hall, and meals in their studies had to be paid for by themselves. And the fags of the Third and Second, who had no studies, often "fed" at their own expense in their Form-rooms.

Fisher T. Fish had opened his shop at an hour when the fellows could hardly help coming there as customers. The alternative—walking a mile to the village and back—was not attractive.

A number of fellows, too, were curious to see how Fisher T. Fish would manage the business; and Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth made no secret of the fact that they intended to make purchases at the old prices, whatever Fisher T. Fish might demand.

# ANSWERS

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"You Remove chaps can please yourselves," said Temple loftily. "But we're not going to be done—no fear!"

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney emphatically.

"We can't wring his neck, you see," Bob Cherry explained.

"He's got round our Form-master to order us to behave ourselves there."

"He hasn't got round our Form-master!" chuckled Temple. "We'll pay him the same prices we used to pay Mrs. Mimble."

"Bet you won't take them!"

"Then we'll chuck the money on the counter and help ourselves. And if he makes too much fuss, we'll help ourselves without paying at all!"

"Wish you luck," said Bob. "But I fancy Fishy will be ready for you. He's awfully deep—as deep as they make 'em, even in New York."

Temple sniffed.

"I'll handle him all right," he said. "You watch!"

And Temple, Dabney & Co. marched into the tuckshop, looking very determined. The Famous Five followed them in. Tubb & Co. of the Third were already there, and Nugent minor, and a crowd of the Second.

"Walk in, gentlemen!" said Fisher T. Fish, with a grin of welcome. "Shop's now open, and we expect to do a roaring trade. What can I do for you, Temple?"

"Six twopenny tarts," said Temple, "to begin with."

"Hyer you are!"

Fish placed six penny tarts in a paper bag.

"One shilling, please!"

"They're penny tarts."

"They're twopenny now," said Fish calmly. "Prices have gone up. Owing to strikes and the Home Rule Bill and other things, prices are advancing. Penny tarts are out of date in this establishment."

"I want six of the other kind," said Temple.

"Oh! You mean the fourpenny ones?"

"I mean the ones we used to pay Mrs. Mimble twopenny each for," said Temple, exchanging a look with his chums.

"Right-ho! They're fourpenny each now." Fish whisked six of the tarts into a paper bag. "Two shillings, please!"

The other customers held back a little, to watch. They were curious to see how Temple of the Fourth would handle Fish. It was a duel between the two. Temple evidently meant business, and Fish equally evidently meant business.

"A shilling pie," said Temple.

"Yep. Two shillings now."

"That's all, thanks!"

"Four shillings, please!" said Fish, keeping his hand on the bags until the money should be passed over the counter.

"Two shillings that little lot," said Temple.

"Four shillings!" said Fish.

"You won't get more than two shillings out of me!"

"Then you won't get the stuff!" said Fish coolly, and he pulled the bags out of Temple's reach. "Next customer, please! If you're not going to purchase anything, Temple, would you mind getting out, and making room for my customers?"

Temple breathed hard through his nose. He laid a two-shilling piece on the counter.

"There's your money!" he said.

"Next customer!" said Fish, unheeding. "What can I do for you, Tubb?"

"Will you hand me over the things I've bought and paid for?" asked Temple.

"I guess you haven't bought anything! Clear off, absquatulate, levant, please!" said Fish. "Did you say a tin of sardines, Tubb?"

"I give you one minute to hand over my purchases!" said Temple, taking out his watch. "If you haven't handed them over by then, I'm coming over the counter!"

"Look here—"

"And if I have the trouble of coming across the counter, Fishy, I'll smother you with your own jam-tarts and douse you with your own ginger-beer!" said Temple, in measured tones. "You are not swindling me, old son—not if I know it!"

"This is business. I've bought up this stock, and I guess I can sell it off at what price I like!" said Fish indignantly.

"It's a corner in tuck!"

"Minute's nearly gone!" said Temple.

Fish cast an anxious glance towards the door. Loder had agreed to come in and make purchases—at cost price—and see that order was kept. But the prefect had not yet appeared.

Temple was beginning to look excited, and all the fellows were grinning in anticipation of trouble. Fish might be a tremendous business man, but he was not much of a fighting man, and it would not be difficult for the captain of the Fourth to handle him.

"I guess you chaps will see fair play!" exclaimed Fish, with an appealing glance at the Famous Five, who were ranged at the counter.

"Yes, rather!" said Bob Cherry heartily.

"You'll back me up?"

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FOR NEXT MONDAY—

"THE BOY FROM THE FARM!"

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"No fear! That wouldn't be seeing fair play; that would be seeing foul play! We'll back Temple up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The backupfulness will be terrific, my esteemed swindling Fish."

"Look hyer—"

Temple put his watch back into his pocket. The minute was well up. Temple placed his hands on the counter to leap over.

"Well, Fishy, what is it to be?" he asked. "You see, you can't swindle us. Are you going to take your money and hand over the goods?"

"Nope!" roared Fish. "I calculate I'm running this hyer business. I'm selling my stock at any price I choose. It's a free country, ain't it? If you don't like my prices, go down to the village."

"I'm not going to walk a mile to please a swindler," said Temple cheerfully. "It comes easier to hammer him."

"It's not a swindle, you chump. It's business."

"Last time!" said Temple ominously. "Are you going to hand over my goods?"

"They ain't your goods!"

"Will you hand them over?" yelled Temple.

"Nope!"

The captain of the Fourth wasted no more time in words. He made a spring over the counter, and landed right on Fisher T. Fish. His long legs swept several bottles of sweets from the counter as he vaulted over, and they went to the floor with a smash. Fisher T. Fish staggered back, with The Yankee junior made a fierce effort to rise, but Temple went down, too, but he was uppermost.

"Yaroo!" roared Fish. "Ow, ow! Help! Yaroo!"

Squash!

Temple dabbed a dishful of jam-puffs upon the furious face of the floored junior. Fish gasped and spluttered wildly, and the crowd of fellows in the shop roared with laughter. The Yankee junior made a fierce effort to rise, but Temple planted a boot on his chest and pinned him down.

"Keep where you are!" said Temple calmly. "If you try to get up, I'll empty the treacle-jar over you!"

"Groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm keeping this shop for a bit," said Temple. "I'll show you how to run a business. Walk up, gentlemen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hurrah!"

"All articles one penny each!" said Temple recklessly.

"Take anything you like at a penny! Unlimited credit, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help!" yelled Fish. "You—you thieves! You burglars! Let my goods alone! Yah! I won't have it! Hands off! Groogh!"

He struggled to rise again, and Temple jammed hard with his boot and pinned him down.

"You stay there!" said Temple, grinning. "I'll show you how to run a business on popular lines. Pile in, gentlemen! Anything you like, at any price you like, and credit as long as you like. No accounts kept! Pile in!"

There was a rush of fags to help themselves. Fisher T. Fish wriggled and groaned as he dabbed the jam away from his eyes, and saw his stock depleted by the young rascals of the Third and Second. A few of the Remove joined in the rush, and Billy Bunter was bolting jam-tarts as fast as his jaws could work. The tuckshop rang with laughter. Fisher T. Fish's business was doing a roaring trade undoubtedly, but it did not look as if there would be any extensive profits for Fishy.

Temple of the Fourth handed out things most generously, and the eager customers helped themselves to all the things within their reach. Never had such a roaring trade been done in the Greyfriars tuckshop.

The excitement was at its height when Gerald Loder of the Sixth strode in.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### Good Business!

L ODER stared round the crowded shop in amazement.

The hubbub died down a little at the sight of the prefect. Loder had a light walking-cane under his arm.

"Hallo! What's all this row about?" he demanded, in his most bullying tone.

"Help!" came in suffocating accents from Fisher T. Fish. Loder looked round for the vanished shopkeeper.

"Where's Fishy?"

"Ow! Help!"

"It's all right, Loder," said Temple. "I'm keeping the

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shop for Fishy for a bit. He made a slight mistake in the prices, and I'm running the show for him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! I'm hyer, Loder," groaned Fish. "They're ragging me and collaring my property."

Then Loder understood.

"Come out of there at once, Temple!" he said, raising his hand.

"Oh, I say—"

"Do you hear me?" thundered Loder.

Temple obeyed reluctantly. It was impossible to dispute the orders of a prefect of the Sixth.

"There's got to be order kept here," said Loder severely.

"You can't turn the shop into a bear-garden because a junior is in charge. Fish has the written permission of his Form-master to keep the shop."

"He's swindling us!" howled Tubb.

"He's doubled the prices!"

"He's a thief!"

"He's a rotter!"

"That's his busine'," said Loder. "He's bought all the stuff from Mrs. Mimble, and he can do as he likes with his own property. If you don't like to pay his prices, you can go elsewhere, can't you?"

"But Uncle Clegg's a mile away!" said Harry Wharton.

"That's your look out."

"Look here, Loder! Are you going to back Fishy up in his swindling?" demanded Bob Cherry hotly.

"I'm going to keep order, as is my duty as a prefect," said Loder loftily. The bully of the Sixth was by no means sorry for a chance to be down on his old enemies, the Famous Five. "Have you been taking part in this disorder, Wharton?"

"Find out!" said Harry laconically.

"Take fifty lines, Wharton, for impertinence! Fish, point out the juniors who have joined in this ragging."

Fisher T. Fish was on his feet now, his face crimson with rage and sticky with jam. His clothes were covered with dust, and he was panting for breath.

"Pretty nearly all of them," he hooted. "They've been helping themselves to my property. They've got to pay for it."

"Certainly they've got to pay for it," said Loder; "otherwise it would be robbery. Temple, you seem to have been the ringleader in this. Hold out your hand!"

"I—look here, Loder—"

"Hold out your hand!" rapped Loder.

Temple scowled furiously and held out his hand. Loder's cane came down with a sounding swish, and Temple gave a yell.

"Ow, ow!"

"Take that as a lesson!" said the prefect. "There's not going to be any ragging here. I'll keep order among you young rascals, if I have to thrash the lot of you. Now then, you kids who have been taking Fish's stuff, walk up and pay for it! Otherwise, I'll take your names and report you to your Form-masters for stealing!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Look here—"

"Fishy's swindling us!"

"That's enough!" said Loder. "I've got no time to waste on you. Pay for the stuff you've taken, or take the consequences."

There was blank dismay in the faces of all the raiders now. They had helped themselves very freely, and now they had to pay for the stuff—at Fish's new prices. Fish dabbed the jam away from his face with his handkerchief, and grinned. His good-humour was quite restored now. Loder was a friend in need. It was worth while to let the prefect have goods at cost price in return for this effectual protection.

There was no help for it. The fags had to pay up for the stuff they had consumed already, and to hand back the rest. Billy Bunter wasn't able to hand back the jam-tarts he had consumed, and neither was he able to pay. He was in his usual state of hopeless impecuniosity. Loder caned him, and the fat junior's yells rang through the tuckshop.

"You'll pay out of your next allowance," said Loder.

"Fish will report to me whether you've paid on Saturday, and if you haven't, I shall report you to your Form-master."

"Ow!" groaned Bunter.

"Now let's have some order," said Loder. "I'll stay in here a bit and see that there's no more rowing. You can give me some ginger-beer, Fishy."

"Certainly, Loder!"

Fish served his valuable customer with alacrity. He was only too glad to see the prefect remain in the tuckshop.

"Now, walk up, gentlemen!" he said. "Business going on as usual. No malice borne for a little joke; that's not business. Can I serve you, Temple?"

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"Go and eat coke!" snorted Temple, and he marched out of the tuckshop, followed by his friends. Temple, Dabney & Co. had come to the heroic resolution to go without tea rather than pay Fish's prices.

"Wharton, old man—"

"Old prices or new?" asked Wharton.

"New, of course."

"Then you can keep your stuff!" said Harry.

"What are you going to do for tea?" grinned Fisher T. Fish.

"I'd rather go without tea than be swindled."

"I guess this ain't swindling; this is business, you jay." But Wharton did not stay to listen.

The Famous Five walked out. A good many other fellows followed suit. Those who remained mostly wanted credit, or an argument about prices, and the business did not proceed very fast.

Some few, however, made purchases, and paid double for them, and departed, mentally promising Fisher T. Fish all sorts of things at some more favourable moment.

The crowd cleared off. Business had not been so brisk as Fish hoped, but he was not downhearted. The fellows might try doing without their tea, and they might try walking down to Friar-ale for supplies. But they would soon get tired of that, Fisher T. Fish was severely convinced. Sooner or later they would have to come to his establishment and pay his prices—probably sooner than later.

"I guess this hyer business is going to hum," Fisher T. Fish remarked, as the last customer departed, leaving Loder alone with the amateur shopkeeper. "Now, can I supply you with anything, Loder? Cost price to you."

"I'm standing a bit of a feed in my study," Loder remarked. "Carne and Walker and Vaience are coming, so I shall want rather a good spread."

Fisher T. Fish rubbed his hands in anticipation of a good order. He had promised Loder goods at cost price; but Loder did not know what the cost price was, and so Fish hoped to work in a margin of profit, all the same. He hadn't any scruples on that point. It was business, from the enterprising Yankee's point of view.

"Right-ho!" said Fish. "What can I get you? Will you try the bacon. It's first quality, and cost price to you."

"Certainly. A pound of the best," said Loder.

Fish cut off the rashers in quite an artistic way.

"A dozen eggs—best!" said Loder.

"Right!"

"A cake—one seed and one currant."

"Good!"

"Two dozen jam puffs."

"Hyer you are!"

"Lemme see," said Loder, running his eye over the stock.

"Yes, you can put in a couple of tins of sardines—a tin of salmon, two tins of pineapple. A pound of dough-nuts. Walker likes dough-nuts. A half-dozen of those rolls, and some butter—yes, and a cheese. Two pots of jam—raspberry and strawberry. Now, make that lot up into a bundle, will you?"

"Yep!"

Fisher T. Fish made a list of the articles on a fragment of sugar paper, and added up the total. Then he wrapped them up in brown-paper, and tied them together with string. The bundle was quite a large one. Loder stepped to the door of the tuckshop, and called:

"Fag!"

Tubb of the Third came in reluctantly. Loder pointed to the bundle on the counter.

"Take that to my study, Tubb. You can give Tubb a tart, Fish, and put it on my bill."

"Yep!"

"Oh, good!" said Tubb, surprised by Loder's generosity. "Thanks."

And Tubb took the bundle by the string in one hand, and the tart in the other, and proceeded to devour the tart as he walked away with the parcel. Fisher T. Fish presented his little bill.

"Cost price to you," he said. "That little lot comes to seventeen-and-six, cost price."

Loder nodded carelessly.

"Good," he said. "Sure you've got it right?"

"Oh, sure!"

"All serene. I can't bother about figures," said Loder.

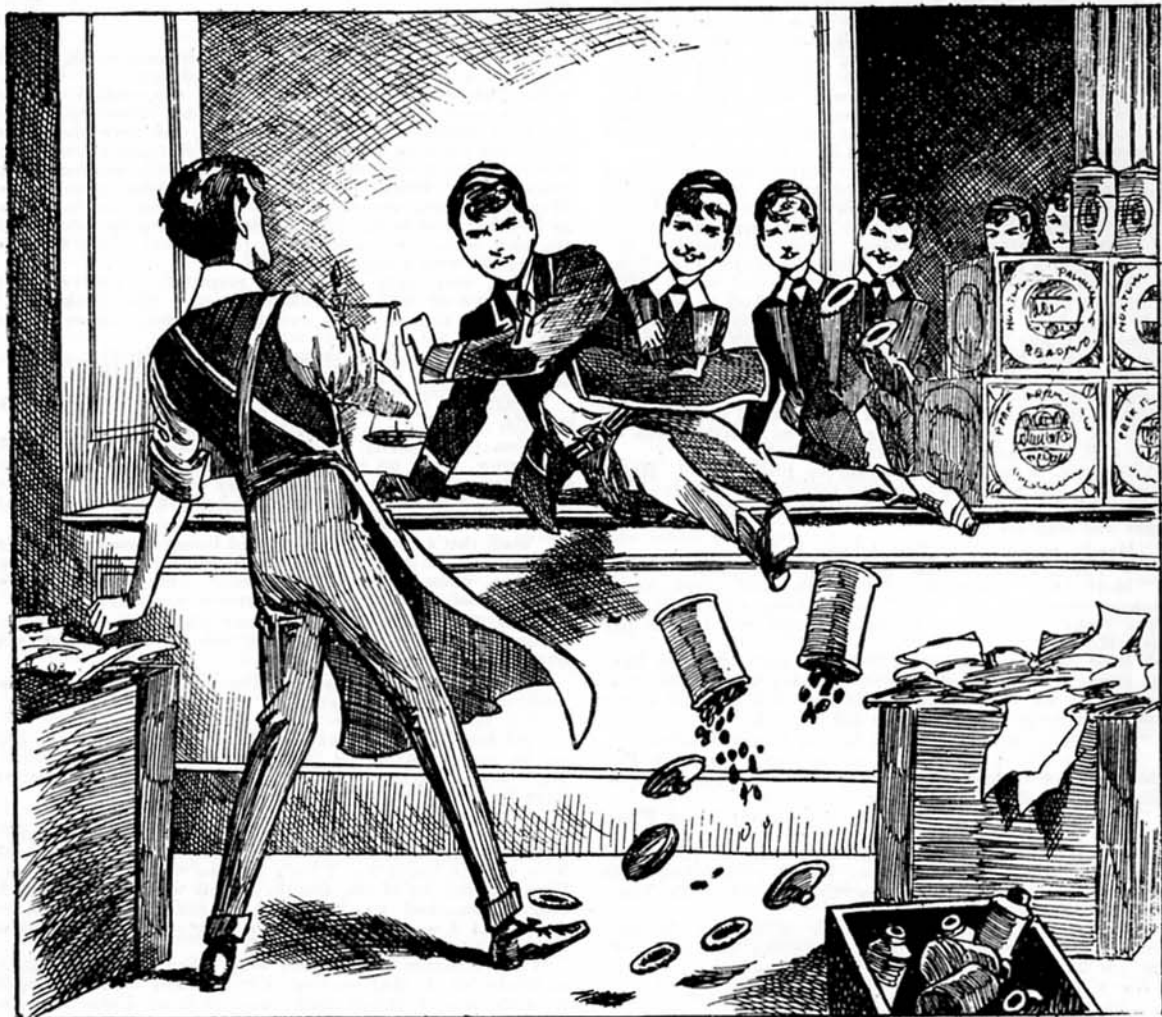
"I'll trust to you, Fish."

"You rely on me, and I'll see you through all right," said Fish. "I'm a galoot for figures, I am. Hallo! Seventeen-and-six, you know!" he exclaimed, as Loder turned towards the door.

The prefect glanced back.

"Yes, that's all right," he said. "Put it down to my account."

Fish jumped.



"Are you going to let me have tuck at the old prices?" demanded Temple. "Nope," said Fisher T. Fish. Temple made a spring over the counter, his long legs sweeping several bottles of sweets from it as he did so. "Oh, gum!" shrieked Fish. "I'll guess you'll have to pay for those sweets, you jay!" (See Chapter 6.)

"Your account!"

"Yes. Getting deaf?"

"I guess this shop doesn't run accounts. Our terms are strict cash!" exclaimed Fish, in dismay. He knew how much prospect he would have of ever gathering in that little account from Loder of the Sixth. "I say, Loder, I'm letting you have the goods at cost price, you know, as a specially favoured customer. I must have spot cash. I—I say, Loder," howled Fish, as the prefect walked out, "I—I'll give you a special discount for cash—I say—"

But Loder was gone.

Fisher T. Fish stared blankly at the doorway. Evidently he had no choice but to put that seventeen-and-six down to Loder's account, which would be exactly as useful as writing it off as a bad debt at once. No wonder Loder was "doing" himself remarkably well over that spread to his chums in the Sixth—no wonder he had generously presented his fag with a tart. It was all to be done at the expense of the enterprising shopkeeper.

"Waal, I swow!" gasped Fish. "The cool cheek! Waal, carry me home to die! I guess I won't stand it. I'm going to have my money, I reckon. The rotter—the spoofer; b-b-but I can't afford to quarrel with him, under the circs!" Fish groaned. "The blessed slabsided mugwump! He's got me up in a corner!"

There was no doubt about that. And the only consolation the enterprising Yankee junior had was the prospect of putting up prices a little higher, and making his unfortunate customers pay for the loss.

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FOR NEXT MONDAY—**"THE BOY FROM THE FARM!"**

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### Not Satisfactory!

**T**HE Remove fellows looked daggers at Fisher T. Fish when he came back to the School House after the closing of the tuckshop.

Fish had kept it open for two hours, from five to seven; and any fellows who didn't do their shopping in that space of time could, as Fish explained, go without. He intended to have it open for an hour in the middle of each day, also. But in the present mood of the juniors, it looked as if there would be a plentiful lack of customers. Micky Desmond had proposed a boycott of the tuckshop so long as it was run by Fisher T. Fish, and many of the fellows backed up that suggestion. The difficulty was, that they simply had to go to Mrs. Mible's shop for their tuck, or else submit to great inconvenience. That was where Fisher T. Fish had them, of course. But to pay Fish double prices was not to be thought of. The Remove fellows took every opportunity of telling Fish what they thought of him. They looked daggers, and they spoke daggers, but Fishy did not mind so long as, like Hamlet, they used none.

Fish was quite satisfied with himself. He was never tired of explaining to fellows who questioned his honesty, that this was business. Cornering commodities was a great modern development of business, invented in the Yew-nited States, where all the big things come from. The speculator who was lucky enough to rig the "corner" succeeded in scalping the market, and scalping the public, and it was all fair and above

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board. And Fish sniffed at the suggestion that those dealers in corners must be the direct descendants of Captain Kidd, carrying on the family business with a light variation of method. Fish declared that the Removites' utter want of perception as to what was business, made him tired.

Criticism of his methods, however, had no effect whatever upon him. Fisher T. Fish was blessed with a skin as thick as that of a rhinoceros, in some respects. He was perfectly self-satisfied and his self-satisfaction was an armour of proof that the spear of Ithuriel could not have penetrated.

The worst of it was, as Bolsover major complained, that they couldn't rag the beast. There was no convincing him by argument that a swindle was a swindle; but he might have been convinced that it wouldn't do, by an elaborate process of bumping, tossing in a blanket, running the gauntlet, and immersion in a bath, and so on. Bolsover major was willing to take any amount of trouble, as far as that went. But Loder the prefect was looking after Fish. And he had been cute enough to secure the support of the master of the Remove. Under the circumstances, the plan of ragging Fisher T. Fish bald-headed had to be reluctantly abandoned.

Only, as Bob Cherry declared emphatically in the junior common-room, something had to be done. They weren't going to be rooked by Fish, and they weren't going to give up feeds in their studies. Boycotting the tuckshop was all very well, but where was tuck to come from?

"Anyway, it would be a lesson to Fishy," said Harry Wharton. "It would be a ripping joke to leave all the stuff on his hands, when he's paid Mrs. Mimble fifteen pounds eight and sixpence for it."

"Has he paid her?" sniffed Johnny Bull.

"I—I suppose so. He had that cheque, you know."

"More likely shown her the cheque, and given her a promise instead of the cash," said Johnny sceptically. "I know Fishy! He expects to make enough out of us to pay Mrs. Mimble."

"Must have been an awful duffer, if she's let Fishy have the things on tick," said Nugent. "Fishy won't square unless it suits him, I know that. He'd work it out that it was business, somehow, to spoof the old lady."

"And, meanwhile, we haven't had tea," said Wharton.

"And we left it too late for tea in Hall," groaned Bob Cherry, "and we haven't time to go down to Friardale now. Gates are closed, or just closing."

"Well, there's bread and cheese in the study," said Wharton.

The chums of the Remove made grimaces. Bread and cheese was a healthy form of diet, but they happened to be in funds, and they wanted something a little more tasty. Bob Cherry reflected.

"Suppose we let the scoundrel rook us for once," he suggested. "To-morrow we'll think of dishing him somehow; but just for once, as a matter of fact, I'm hungry."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"What price the boycott?" he asked.

"Ahem! We can begin that to-morrow."

"Well, all right; here's Fishy."

The Famous Five marched over to Fisher T. Fish. The latter was sustaining an argument in a corner of the common-room, pointing out that, from the proper and sensible point of view, nothing could be fairer than cornering supplies and putting up prices. He declared that millionaires in the Yew-nited States thought nothing of it, apparently regarding that as saying the last word on the subject.

"Fishy, we're going to let you swindle us for once," said Bob Cherry, coming to the point in his direct way. "We must have something for tea."

"I guess it isn't a swindle—"

"Never mind the word—swindle, cheat, thieving, welshing, or business—whatever you like to call it," said Bob. "We won't argue about a word. We're going to let you rook us for once, so trot along to the tuckshop and hand out the tuck."

Fisher T. Fish shook his head coolly.

"Shop's closed!" he said.

"Well, open it, then!"

"Can't be did! Hours of business five to seven—can't keep the establishment open all the evening for the benefit of galoots who don't know their own minds. Open again to-morrow at quarter past twelve."

"Look here, we want something for tea!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I guess you should have thought of that before. The shop was open for two hours—and you were there. You could have made your purchases then."

"We hadn't made up our minds to be swindled then."

"I guess you can wait till to-morrow, then."

"Look here, Fishy—"

"Nuff said! You know this firm's hours of business," said Fish calmly. "If you don't like the way we run our busi-

ness, gentlemen, you're welcome to deal at another establishment."

"You—you rotter—"

"I guess the subject's closed!"

And Fisher T. Fish walked out of the common-room, to put an end to all further argument on the subject.

The chums of the Remove looked at one another. Their feelings were almost too deep for words. They had made up their minds to pay Fishy's prices, for once—but they had made them up a little too late. Fish could afford to be autocratic in his methods; he was already assuming the manner of a "Trust" in dealing with the unfortunate public. Having cornered the supplies, he could treat his customers as he liked, and he intended to do it. The proprietor of all the tuck within the walls of Greyfriars could afford to treat the fellows with a high hand.

"Well, that takes the cake!" gasped Bob Cherry. "It does prance off with the blessed biscuit! The check of it! We're only allowed to be swindled at certain times in the day!"

"It will be bread-and-cheese after all!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Never mind—I've got an idea!"

"Anything up against Fishy?" asked a dozen voices eagerly.

"Yes. Look here, all you fellows who want any tuck to-morrow, make up a list of the things you want, and one of us can cycle down to Uncle Clegg's to-morrow, and take the order, and bring the whole lot back in a basket. That will be one in the eye for Fishy!"

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Bolsover major. "Only a chap likes to drop into the tuckshop, and order anything he likes, when he's in the humour. And a chap doesn't always know when he's going to have any money."

"Yes, rather!" said Billy Bunter plaintively. "I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow, you know, but I'm not quite sure—"

"Oh, you can be quite sure about the postal-order," remarked Bob; "it won't come!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"All you fellows who want things from Uncle Clegg's, and can be sure of paying for them, let me have a list this evening," said Wharton. "I'll cycle down to the village after morning lessons to-morrow."

"Good!"

It was not a wholly satisfactory solution of the difficulty, but it was the best that could be thought of. The Famous Five went to Study No. 1 for a late tea of bread and cheese. They had run out of tea, and they drank water instead, which Nugent remarked was better for the health. There was no doubt that it was, but it seemed a little cold and comfortless all the same.

While Wharton and Nugent were doing their preparation in Study No. 1, that evening, a good many fellows dropped in with lists of things they required from Uncle Clegg's. Harry Wharton seemed likely to have a large consignment to bring back to Greyfriars on his bicycle. But Wharton made it a condition that the money was handed over with the list, and that had the effect of reducing the lists considerably.

"You see, I shall have to pay Uncle Clegg cash," he said. "He never gives credit. I've got to take the money with me."

"Oh, that's all right," said Skinner, who had laid quite a handsome order on the study table, "I shall have some money on Saturday, and then I'll settle with you."

"You'll settle now, or you won't get me to take the order," said Harry.

"It only comes to five shillings," urged Skinner.

"Hand over five shillings, then!"

"But I've only got tuppence!"

"Cut the order down to twopence, then!" said Harry, laughing. "I can't pay for all the things out of my own pocket, and trust to luck for getting the tin back. Besides, I haven't money enough."

Skinner cut the order down to twopence accordingly. Billy Bunter came into the study after him, and had a sheet of impot paper almost covered with the list of things he required.

"There you are, Wharton!" he said.

Wharton glanced at the list.

"Two pots of jam, three dozen tarts, pound of doughnuts, cold chicken, three tins of sardines— My hat! Got the tin?"

"I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow—"

"Take that list away, and bring it back when you can bring the postal-order along with it!" said the captain of the Remove tersely.

"Look here, Wharton, I want you to get these things. I'll settle immediately my postal-order comes. I'm backing you up in doing this," said Bunter, aggrieved. "I must say you

might be a little grateful to a chap for backing up your idea in this lavish way!"

"You will back it up with cash, or not at all!" said Wharton. "Are you going to take that list away, or shall I chuck it in the fire?"

Billy Bunter snorted indignantly, and took the list away. Bolsover major was the next fellow in the study. He had a list of goods written out, coming to half-a-crown, and he laid it on the table, and a half-crown along with it.

"There's the list, and there's the money," he said. "Let me have those things in time for tea to-morrow."

And he swung out of the study, leaving Wharton almost gasping. Nugent burst into a chuckle at the sight of his chum's face. Wharton had offered to take the orders down to Friardale, certainly—but that was no reason why Bolsover should coolly assume that it was his business to do it, and speak to him as if he were a servant specially engaged for the purpose.

"The cheeky rotter!" Wharton exclaimed, in great wrath.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wharton jumped up and looked out of the doorway.

"Bolsover!" he shouted.

The bully of the Remove was talking in the passage with Skinner. He turned his head carelessly.

"Hallo!" he said. "What's wanted?"

"Come and take your precious list and your half-crown."

"I want you to get those things to-morrow, Wharton!"

"You can want, then," said Harry angrily, "and the next time you ask a favour, you can ask it civilly. Here's your half-crown."

He rolled the half-crown up in the paper, and flung it along the passage to Bolsover. It caught the burly Removite on the chin, and he gave a howl.

Wharton went into his study and slammed the door. He was feeling decidedly exasperated. He had offered to take a great deal of trouble, in order to save his Form-fellows from being rooked by the enterprising Yankee, and the result was as he might have expected, if his knowledge of human nature had been a little more extensive.

"Doesn't seem to work well, does it?" grinned Nugent. "Offer to do anything, and everybody takes it for granted that you're bound to do it, and some of them will think you've got an axe to grind, anyway. Blessed if the chaps don't seem to think they're doing you a favour by giving you lists of things to carry home from Friardale."

Harry Wharton grunted discontentedly.

"Looks like it!" he growled. "Half of 'em seem to think I ought to be willing to pay for their things, because I've offered to carry 'em home—and the other half seem to look on me as a professional carrier, to be ordered about. Blessed if I shall try it again after this once. After this, the fellows who want things from Friardale can go and fetch 'em themselves, and be blowed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Wharton locked his door, and turned a deaf ear to other fellows who came along to the study—most of them with big lists and little money.

## THE NINTH CHAPTER.

### Coker Pays!

**H**ARRY WHARTON wheeled out his bicycle, after lessons the next morning, and rode down to Friardale. At the same time, Fisher T. Fish was opening the tuckshop. It was a warm day, and many of the fellows had gone down to the nets for practice, and naturally they dropped into the tuckshop for liquid refreshment in the form of lemonade or ginger-beer.

Fisher T. Fish was there in shirt-sleeves and apron, with an expansive smile upon his face.

"Tuppence!" said Coker of the Fifth, after disposing of a pennyworth of ginger-beer. "What do you mean, kid? I've had only one bottle!"

"Tuppence a bottle, Coker!"

"Oh, is that your little game?" asked Coker unpleasantly. "I've heard something about your style of doing business. I didn't think you'd have the cheek to work it off on the Fifth Form, though."

"Business is business," remarked Fish. "A business man can't be any respecter of persons. Tuppence, please!"

"When will you have it?" asked Coker. "Now, or when you can get it?"

"I guess I'll have it now, or I'll mention to your Form-master that you've been taking goods without paying for them," said Fish coolly. "I'm not going to be swindled!"

"Swindled!" yelled Coker. "It's you that's the swindler, you spoofing Yankee!"

"If you don't like my prices, you can go down to Friardale, or take the train to Courtfield," said Fish calmly. "I believe they run trains to Courtfield every hour or so. Tuppence, please!"

Coker slammed a penny on the counter.

"There's your money," he said.

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FOR NEXT MONDAY—**"THE BOY FROM THE FARM!"**

"Another penny, please!"

"Rats!"

And Coker strode out of the tuckshop. Fisher T. Fish dropped the penny into the till, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Done you that time, Fishy," remarked Vernon-Smith.

"I guess not."

"Going to make Coker pay?"

"Yep."

And when Fish closed the tuckshop, a short time before dinner, he proceeded to visit Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth. Fishy was a believer in the old maxim, "Resist the beginnings." If he allowed Coker's action to pass, there would soon be plenty of imitators. Fisher T. Fish meant to make it clear that business could not be done on those lines in his establishment. He found Mr. Prout in his study.

"Excuse me, sir," said Fish. "Just a word, if you have time. Thanks! Would you mind speaking to Coker?"

"You have come here to make some complaint of Coker?" asked Mr. Prout.

"Yep! As you are his Form-master, sir, I have come to you instead of going to the Head. Coker owes me a penny, and he declines to pay!"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Prout, staring at the Yankee junior over his spectacles. "That is very extraordinary! Do you mean to tell me that Coker, of my Form, has borrowed a penny of you, and declines to liquidate his debt?"

"Not exactly, sir. You may be aware that I am running the school shop now, sir—"

"Ah, I think I have heard something to that effect! A very extraordinary proceeding for a junior in the Lower Fourth, Fish!"

"Yep! But I have my Form-master's approval, sir, and his written permission. Of course, I have really taken it over to save the fellows inconvenience, and to save Mrs. Mimble from loss. I have been put to a lot of expense, and it has been necessary to re-arrange some of the prices. Coker objects to paying my price. Of course, he is not bound to deal with me if he doesn't choose; but if he does, he must pay!"

"Yes, that is quite right. Was Coker aware of the—ahem!—re-arrangement of prices when he made his purchase?"

"All goods marked in plain figures, sir."

"Very well; I will speak to Coker. In fact, I will send for him at once," said Mr. Prout.

And he rang, and sent Trotter for Coker of the Fifth. Horace Coker came into the study, wondering what he was wanted for; but he knew as soon as he caught sight of the American junior there.

"Ah! H'm! Coker," said Mr. Prout. "Fish informs me that you—ahem!—decline to pay for some article you have—ahem!—purchased!"

"I've paid for it, sir," said Coker, with a glare at Fish. "One penny, sir, for a penny bottle of ginger-beer."

"Price twopence," said Fish. "You owe me a penny Coker!"

"The young rotter is trying to swindle the fellows, sir," Coker explained. "He's put up the prices of the things!"

"That isn't swindling," Fish explained, in a tired voice. "That's business. They're my own things, and I've a right to charge what I like for them!"

"Fish explains that he has been put to expense, and therefore has had to raise the—ahem!—prices, Coker!"

"Oh, that's only a lie, sir!" said Coker, with beautiful frankness. "Fish couldn't tell the truth if he tried—not that he's ever tried, so far as I know!"

"I guess you'll pay my price, or you'll keep out of my shop, Coker!"

Mr. Prout looked worried. As Coker's Form-master, he had to see justice done, and he could only decide according to the letter of the law. The articles undoubtedly belonged to Fish, as he had bought and paid for them. If Coker purchased them of Fish, he had to pay what Fish asked—or let the things alone. Law and justice do not always coincide, but Fish had to be given his legal rights.

"Ahem! The best thing you can do is not to deal in the school shop so long as Fish retains possession of it, Coker, if you are not satisfied," said Mr. Prout at last.

"But I can't walk down to Friardale every time I want a ginger-pop, sir!"

"Ahem! That would certainly be a great inconvenience," agreed Mr. Prout. "I do not say that I approve of Fish's methods. I fail to see any adequate reason for raising the prices of all articles. If he belonged to my Form, I should forbid him to keep possession of the shop. But he does not belong to my Form, and he is under the authority of Mr. Quelch, who has given him full permission. The only resource you have, therefore, is to keep out of the place,

Coker. Meantime, I think I must request you to pay Fish the penny he claims."

Fish grinned with triumph.

"Of course, it isn't the penny, sir," said Coker, turning very red—"it's the principle of the thing. A chap doesn't like being swindled!"

"I sympathise with you, Coker. Fish appears to me to be very grasping. The best thing would be—ahem!—for the boys to refuse to deal with him. But if they choose to do so, I think they must pay what is charged!"

"Very well, sir."

"If, however, you called upon Mr. Queleh, and explained to him the lines upon which Fish is running this business, I have little doubt that he would rescind his permission!"

Coker grunted. He did not want to be put into the position of going to a master with complaints, especially about a junior.

"I'll pay the young cad, sir," he said.

"Very well."

Coker handed over a penny, and Fish slipped it into his pocket. He thanked Mr. Prout, and walked out of the study

rather quickly. He did not want an interview with Coker in the passage.

Coker followed him out, furious; but Fish was already at a safe distance. As the enterprising shopkeeper came out into the Close, Harry Wharton wheeled his bicycle in, with a big bundle tied on the handle-bars. Fisher T. Fish started, and glued his eyes on the bundle.

"Hallo! What's that?" he exclaimed.

"That's tuck!" said Harry Wharton cheerfully. "I've filled in a dozen orders for the fellows for tea to-day. You chaps come to my study and take your stuff," he added to the juniors who had been waiting for him.

"What-ho!" said Bulstrode. "How do you like that, Fishy? We shan't want any of your stuff for tea to-day!"

Fisher T. Fish snorted.

"Waal, I call that playing it rather low-down," he said. "It's up to you to support home industries, I reckon."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess I'll put a stopper on it, anyway!"

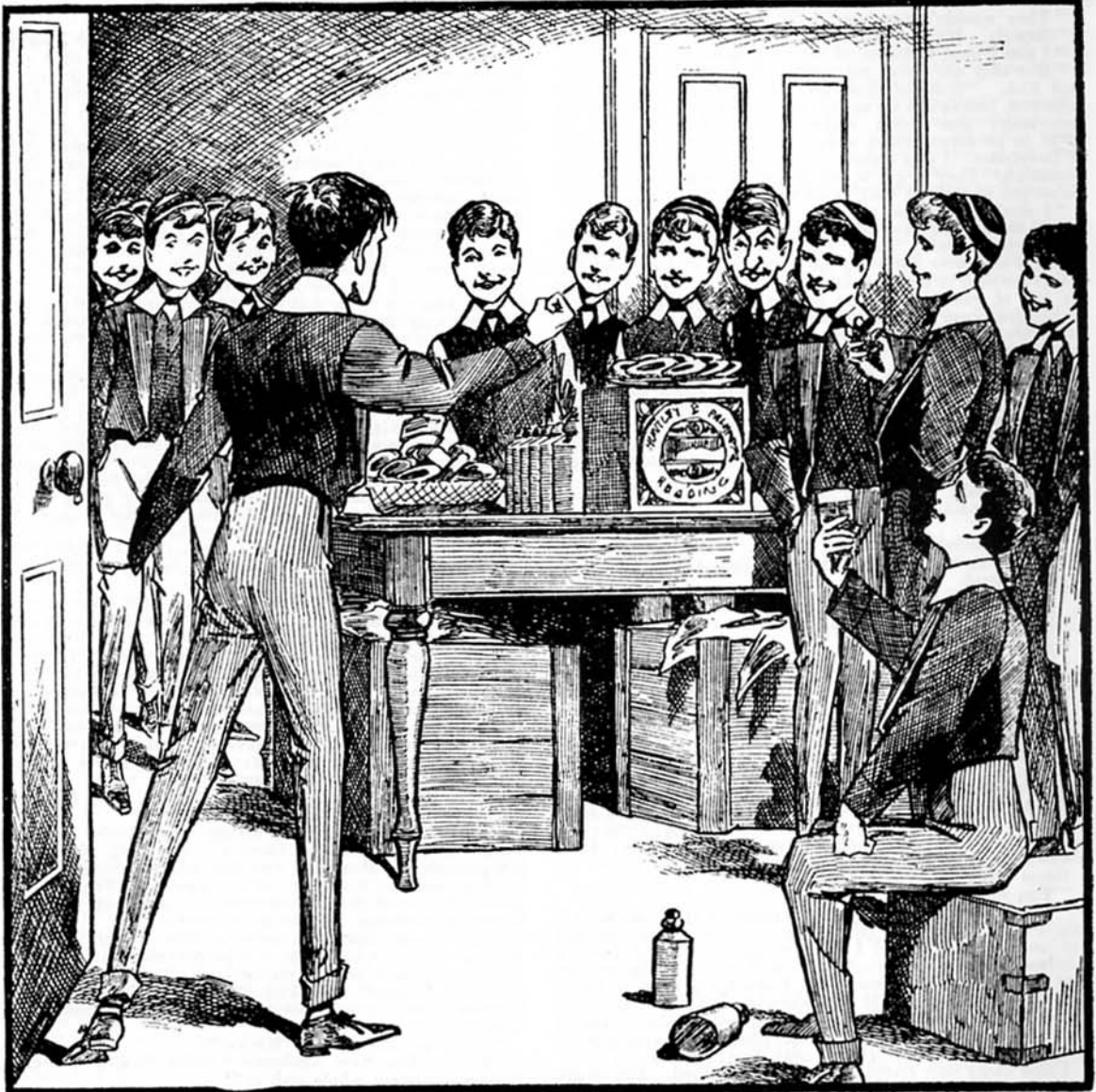
"How will you do that?" grinned Tom Brown, the New Zealand junior. "Half a dozen of us are going down to Friar-dale to-morrow to get a cargo."



AMBITIONS—No. 5.

The sight of a smart chauffeur at the wheel of a big touring-car stirs up the ambition of many a lad of a mechanical turn of mind; and he longs for the day when he, too, will sit behind the wheel, in full control of all the marvellous mechanism which goes to make up the modern motor-car.





Fisher T. Fish shook a bony fist in Bob Cherry's face, and Bob roared with laughter. "I guess this is a plant!" shrieked Fish. "Look hyer, I'm not going to stand this! You hear me?" But the juniors in the rival tuck-shop only laughed. (See Chapter 14.)

"And a lot of the Fourth are going to get their stuff on the same lines," remarked Bob Cherry. "Looks to me as if you'll have your stock left on your hands, Fishy!"

"Jevver get left?" sniffed Fish. "I never did! You fellows will be badly left, if that's your little game. You just watch out!"

"Rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You're done this time!"

"Did you make Coker pay up?" demanded Vernon-Smith. Fisher T. Fish exhibited a penny in the air.

"That's Coker's penny. I made Prout make him pay. I guess a galoot is entitled to his honest due—some! And I guess I'll put a spoke in your wheel, too, if you think you're going to freeze out my establishment. You watch out!"

But the juniors only grinned. So long as they were willing to take the trouble of going down to Uncle Clegg's, they did not see how the Yankee junior could interfere with them. But they did not know Fishy yet, and did not know the full inwardness of the weird operations of a "corner."

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## THE TENTH CHAPTER. A Business Deal!

FISHER T. FISH went out on his bicycle after dinner. His destination was the little tuckshop in Friardale. He left his machine outside, and walked in, and nodded cheerfully to Uncle Clegg. That old gentleman, who was not famous for good-humour, gave him a grumpy jerk of his head in response.

"Good-afternoon!" said Fish briskly. "I guess I've called to see you on a little matter of business, Mr. Clegg!"

"Wot can I get for you?" asked Uncle Clegg stolidly. "Nothing, I guess. I'm running a tuckshop myself now. I dare say you've heard?"

Uncle Clegg nodded, looking at him curiously. "Master Wharton told me to-day," he said. "You've bought Mrs. Mimbles' stock, and you are charging double prices, Master Fish."

"Well, prices have gone up; it's a fact. I guess the profits are not big enough in this hyer business," said Fish. "You don't make as much as you ought."

"That's so."

"Waal, I've got a little proposition to make to you," said Fish. "I guess I want you to charge Greyfriars fellows the same prices that I do!"

"They wouldn't pay 'em," said Mr. Clegg.

"Exactly. It's to freeze them off, you see."

"I don't want to freeze off my customers, Master Fish."

"But they ain't your customers; they're my customers!" said Fish. "Some of them are coming down here to deal with you, just as one up against me, that's all. And it won't last long; you won't make much. But I want to come to an arrangement with you. I've cornered the tuck at Greyfriars. I don't want you competing with me for my customers. They've got to pay my price, or go without. So we've got to make a deal. Got that?"

"I don't understand you."

"Of course, you naturally don't know much about business in this old country," said Fish tolerantly. "I'll explain. When a man over there—in the Yew-nit-ed States, I mean—makes a corner in any 'ene, he has to freeze out rivals. There are lots of ways—buyin' 'em out, or underselling them out, or burning them out, for that matter. In my own country, sir, a trust doesn't think twice about getting a man's premises burned down over his head if there's no other way. But don't be alarmed, I guess I'm not thinking of doing that hyer." And Fish chuckled. "I'm going to make a business arrangement with you. You agree to charge Greyfriars fellows same prices as I do, or not to serve them at all. On that condition I'll undertake to take a regular amount of tuck off your hands. I'll give you a standing order for ten bob a day. How's that?"

"That would be a good order, Master Fish. I should have to be paid along with the order," said Uncle Clegg stolidly.

"That's understood. Is it a go?"

Uncle Clegg considered for some minutes slowly, and then shook his head.

"I don't know as it would be honest to put the prices up," he said at last.

"It's business!" shrieked Fish.

"I don't know as—"

"Well, if you drive me into competing with you, I shall undersell you right out!" said Fish grimly. "If you are going to bag my customers, I guess I shall bag yours. I shall open a rival shop next door to you, and undersell you."

"Wot!"

"I guess it would be as easy as rolling off a log," said Fish coolly. "You don't do much business here. I could take the front room next door for a week, make a shop of it, stock it with the same things as you sell, and put a chap in charge of it, with orders to undersell you right out. It wouldn't cost me much, and I've cash in hand now. In a couple of weeks you'd have to shut up."

Uncle Clegg gazed at him blankly.

"You young villain!" he gasped.

"That's business—business on approved trust methods," said Fish. "I know a fellow out of work who'd take the job on willingly. And I can get the stuff down from a wholesale firm at bare cost price, and sell it again here at cost price—wholesale price, sir! I shouldn't want to make a profit, you see; I should only want to cut you out and take your customers away. And how long would they stick to you, do you think, with the same goods—jam and pickles, soap and candles—at half-price next door? What!"

Uncle Clegg only stared at him open-mouthed. The crusty old gentleman had seldom been outside Friardale in his long life, and to Friardale not the faintest echo of modern American business methods had ever penetrated. Uncle Clegg looked upon that business proposition very much as he would have looked upon a gunpowder plot or a case of highway robbery. The enterprising Yankee junior appeared to him simply as an audacious and unscrupulous young scoundrel.

"Well, my word!" gasped Uncle Clegg at last. "Why, your 'eadmaster wouldn't allow it! I'd go to 'im and complain about your taking the bread out of an honest man's mouth!"

Fish started a little. In the keenness of his business enterprise he had forgotten for the moment that he was a junior of Greyfriars, liable to be licked like any other junior. But he recovered at once.

"I guess a business chap is a bit hampered by being at school," he admitted; "but I'd work the raffle all right, you bet. I'd do the whole bizney in the name of the chap I put in charge of the shop. And, by gum, if you make me go as far as that I'll start him, and keep him going, and plant a permanent rival on you, Mr. Clegg!"

"You young rascal!"

"I guess I've got the dibs to do it now, and I've got the brains, too!" said Fisher T. Fish confidently. "You'll be ruined in a few weeks, my friend, if you buck up against my

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corner. I warn you of that. I'll strip you bare, my pippin! I'll make you glad there's such a place as a workhouse to crawl into in your old age. That's the latest and genuine American method of doing business!"

"Bless my 'eart!" said Uncle Clegg.

"Now, why not do the sensible thing," said Fish persuasively. "You don't make enough profit. I offer you a chance of coming into the combine and making more. I give you a standing order of ten bob a day, ordinary shop prices; you make half on that. So shall I, when I sell 'em again at double the price, so we're both in. Buck up against me, and I'll settle you. I tell you I've got the money, I've got the man ready, and I'll wade in and scalp you! As for my headmaster, if you came there to bother me, I guess I should simply have to deny knowing anything about the matter here. You see, in modern business one can't afford to understudy George Washington. I guess George was a bit out of date, even in his own time. Better make a deal of it, uncle." Fish looked at his watch. "I guess I've got to get back. I can give you ten minutes to think it over."

And Fish sat down and cracked nuts and ate them, while Uncle Clegg thought it out. Mr. Clegg was not a rapid thinker, but ten minutes were enough for him. On the one hand, he was offered a good order daily, which amounted to more than the amount he had been accustomed to receiving from the Greyfriars fellows. On the other hand there was Fish's threat of a rival shop next door—and even if the junior could not carry that out it would be easy enough for him to hire a man to do it, if he had the money—and evidently Fish had money now. Uncle Clegg's choice was forced upon him, and as it happened he was a very sharp man in a bargain himself, and rather given to overreaching when his small opportunities occurred to him. Fish finished eating nuts, and rose to his feet.

"Time's up!" he remarked. "What's the verdict?"

"Ten-shilling order a day, cash in advance?" asked Uncle Clegg.

"Yep! First order and cash now, and I'll take the things with me!" said Fisher T. Fish briskly. "Otherwise the rival shop next door to-morrow. Decided?"

"Yes. Arter all, I'm entitled to ask wot I like for my own goods," said Uncle Clegg, argumentatively.

"Right on the nail!" said Fish. "You're a business man. Ordinary prices to your own customers, double prices to Greyfriars fellows—or refuse to serve them at all. I guess I should recommend you to put up prices all round, as a matter of fact. The people here couldn't afford to go over to Courtfield for their things. It's a go!"

Fisher T. Fish paid over ten shillings, and fastened a bundle on his bike to ride home.

Uncle Clegg thought the matter over slowly that afternoon. About five o'clock there was a ringing of a bicycle-bell outside the shop, and two Greyfriars juniors came in—Tom Brown and Bulstrode, of the Remove. Temple, of the Fourth, followed them in, carrying a cricket-bag. Evidently, Temple's purchases were to be extensive.

Uncle Clegg looked at them a little guiltily. His conscience was not quite easy, but he covered that up with an additional grumpiness of manner.

"Hallo, uncle!" said Tom Brown cheerfully. "I've got a good order for you this time. I want two dozen penny tarts—"

"Ain't got any, Master Brown."

"Eh?" The New Zealander junior looked astonished.

"Why, there's a whole dishful!"

"They're tuppence each now."

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"Tuppence each!" said Uncle Clegg stolidly.

"They're a penny each!" exclaimed Tom Brown indignantly. "What are you talking about?"

"Tuppence each!"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Temple. "Blessed if he hasn't heard about Fishy, and imitated him! Do you mean to say that prices have gone up, old Clegg?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why, you old spoofer," exclaimed Bulstrode indignantly, "if you put your prices up we jolly well won't deal with you!"

"Taken to swindling in you old age—what?" demanded Temple.

Uncle Clegg frowned angrily.

"If you don't like my prices you get out of my shop!" he growled.

"We'll do that fast enough!" exclaimed Tom Brown. "Come on, Bulstrode, we may as well be swindled by Fishy as by old Clegg!"

And the disappointed juniors left the tuckshop, and on their way back to Greyfriars they met several other fellows on the way to Uncle Clegg's, who turned back when they learned the news. Uncle Clegg had followed Fishy's example, and put up his prices. And the Greyfriars juniors,

when they learned that, were simply furious with indignation; but there was nothing to be done. Fisher T. Fish had been one too many for them.

## THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER. Tricky Tubb!

THE Famous Five had tea in No. 1 Study in peace and plenty, untroubled by the corner in tuck. Fisher T. Fish was keeping shop in shirt-sleeves and high spirits. The tuckshop was the scene of many warm arguments. But all the arguments ended the same way. The schoolboy merchant remarked that customers who did not like his way of doing business could take their custom elsewhere. As there was nowhere else to take it to, the only alternative was to go without, and fellows who had funds were not inclined to go without. It ended in most of them paying Fish's prices, a proceeding that of course limited the amount of their purchases, without decreasing Fish's takings. Custom certainly fell off a good deal, in comparison with Mrs. Mible's time, but the profits were so large that that mattered little. And Fish gleefully anticipated that ere long the customers would fall into the habit of paying the new prices. Just as they had been used to paying a penny for a tart, they would get used to paying twopence—indeed, if all went well the price might go up to threepence some day. Fisher T. Fish was dreaming golden dreams, and his dreams seemed to be coming true.

There were little clouds on the horizon, certainly. Fisher T. Fish's conduct, careful as he was to explain that it was perfectly honest, was making him enemies throughout the school, and everyone's hand was against him. Mr. Prout, too, had mentioned the incident of Harry Coker's penny to Mr. Quelch, drily pointing out that Fish's methods of business were hardly above criticism. Fish had received a message that his Form-master wished to see him in his study after the shop was closed, and that looked like trouble.

Moreover, in time Mrs. Mible would return, and she would want the school shop again. No arrangement had been made on that point. Unless Fish could make it worth the good dame's while to let him keep the shop, he would be turned out when she came back. There was no doubt about that. Fortunately, however—that is, fortunately from Fish's point of view—Mrs. Mible's father was in a serious state, and the good dame was glad to be able to remain with him, and her return was still distant. Fish felt that he had time at least to make a good fistful of dollars, as he called it—and by the time Mrs. Mible returned, he might be able to come to some arrangement by which he could obtain possession of his shop; his stronghold, as it were, from which he levied blackmail on his schoolfellows like a mountain brigand of old.

Coker of the Fifth came frowning into the school shop about six. He had been down to the village, and had been astounded to learn that Uncle Clegg's prices had also gone up. Coker had spoken so plainly to Mr. Clegg, and called him by so many uncomplimentary names, that the crusty old gentleman had refused to serve him at any price, and Coker came back to Greyfriars empty-handed. As Coker was standing a feed to Potter and Greene and Fitzgerald of the Fifth, in his study that evening, he simply had to have supplies. He was fairly cornered by the "corner."

Fish seemed quite to have forgotten their disagreement when Coker came in with a black brow. Fish wore an expansive smile, and he rubbed his hands cheerfully.

"What can I do for you, Coker, old man?"

"You can swindle me," said Coker.

"Ah! I guess—"

"I want some things. Here's a list," said Coker, slamming a sheet of paper on the counter. "Buck up and let me get off; you make me ill!"

"New prices," said Fish calmly.

"Yes, you thief!"

"Hard words break no bones," was Fisher T. Fish's motto. He made up a parcel of the things required by Coker, and the Fifth-Former paid, and walked off with his purchases.

Fisher T. Fish smiled serenely. He had sold Coker six shilling-worth of stuff for twelve shillings in cash. He was thriving.

Tubb of the Third came in a little later. Tubb was Loder's fag, and Fish frowned a little as he saw him come in. He did not want any more orders from Loder. Seventeen-and-six was less enough. But Tubb brought an order.

"Two pots of jam for Loder," he said, "and half a pound of ham, and a seed-cake."

"Got the money?" asked Fish.

"You're to put it down to Loder's account."

"Nope!"

"Loder says that if you don't send the things at once, he's coming to fetch them," said Tubb.

There was a chuckle from Bolsover minor and Paget of the Third, in the doorway. Their custom had been refused by Fish, on the irritating grounds that they had no cash, and he did not run accounts. Fish glared at them.

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EVERY MONDAY, **The "Magnet"** LIBRARY, ONE PENNY.

"You fags clear out!" he exclaimed, exasperated. "If you don't want to buy anything, don't hang about my premises. Look here, Tubb—"

"I'm not going to wait long," said Tubb. "I warn you that Loder's got Walker and Carne in to tea, and he's not in a good temper. If he comes along for the things himself, there will be trouble. I give you that as a tip."

Fish grunted discontentedly. Loder's methods seemed to be about on a par with his own; but that resemblance did not recommend them to Fish in the least. However, he felt that it would not do to quarrel with Loder—yet, at all events—so he made up a parcel of two pots of jam, a half-pound of ham, and a cake, and handed the parcel over to Tubb, who received it with a grin.

Tubb vanished with the parcel, and Bolsover minor and Paget hurried off with him. They did not go to Loder's study. They dived into the cloisters, where the parcel was opened in company with half a dozen more grinning fags of the Third.

"Worked like a charm," chuckled Tubb. "Blessed if I ever found any use in being Loder's fag before! Fishy can put it down to Loder's account if he likes. Loder never pays, so it don't make any difference."

"Ho, ha, ha!"

And the heroes of the Third proceeded to feast.

Fisher T. Fish entered those items against Loder's name in his ledger, though with little hope of ever seeing the colour of the money. He had closed the ledger with an exasperated bang, when Loder himself walked into the shop. Loder nodded genially to Fish, who looked at him very sourly.

"Business going strong?" asked Loder.

"Oh, so-so!" said Fish.

"I haven't finished the things I bought yesterday, yet," Loder remarked. "But I'll take a couple of cakes now. I like your cakes, Fishy."

"I guess I've let you have enough on tick, Loder!" exclaimed Fishy. "Seventeen-and-six yesterday, and two pots of jam and a cake and half a pound of ham this afternoon."

The prefect stared.

"This afternoon! I've had nothing this afternoon!" he said.

"What! You sent Tubb for them!"

"I haven't sent Tubb for anything. My hat!" Loder burst into a laugh. "Ha, ha, ha! You don't mean to say that that young rascal has been using my name?"

"Didn't you send him?" howled Fish. "He came here ten minutes ago with an order from you—two pots of jam and a cake, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I guess it's no laughing matter," said Fish indignantly. "I shall be ruined at this rate. I've been spoofed!"

Loder roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! I'll lick the young rascal for using my name!" he said. "In future, don't you serve him on my account unless I give him a written order, Fishy. Then you'll be on the safe side. I must say you are green. Hand over those cakes, will you? I'm in rather a hurry."

Fisher T. Fish, with a brow like midnight, handed over the cakes, and the prefect walked off with them, whistling. Fisher T. Fish closed his shop in a very bad temper. Losses like this ate into his profits.

He was feeling decidedly ratty as he cleared out of his business premises, and went to keep his appointment with Mr. Quelch.

## THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. Todd to the Rescue!

MR. QUELCH was looking severe when Fisher T. Fish came into his study. The master of the Fifth had spoken very plainly to him, giving an opinion of F. T. Fish which was far from complimentary. Indeed, Mr. Prout's opinion seemed to be that Fish was out of place at Greyfriars, and that the right sphere for his abilities was a reformatory. Fish read in the Form-master's face that there was trouble in store, and he braced himself for the difficult task of getting round Mr. Quelch once more.

"Ah! I am glad to see you, Fish!" said Mr. Quelch, his brows contracting. "I have been spoken to by Mr. Prout concerning your new venture."

"Yep," said Fish.

"I understood that you had taken over this school shop from Mrs. Mible, to conduct it on the same lines."

"Sure, sir."

"But it appears that you have raised the prices of the goods," said Mr. Quelch severely. "In fact, you have doubled the prices."

"Prices are going up everywhere, sir," said Fish glibly.

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FOR NEXT MONDAY—**"THE BOY FROM THE FARM!"**

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

"Mr. Clegg, in the village, has also raised all his prices."  
"Dear me! Is that a fact?"

"You can ask any of the fellows, sir. Some of them have been down to Clegg's, but they came to me after all, as the cheaper place."

"Indeed! I was not aware of that. However, I certainly did not anticipate that you were intending to double Mrs. Mible's prices, Fish. What is your reason?"

"I've been put to great expense in taking the shop over, sir. I felt bound to deal generously with Mrs. Mible—a poor woman, sir."

"Ahem! That was quite right."

"Then, I'm entitled to some compensation for my time, sir. I put in three hours a day keeping the shop, simply for the benefit of the fellows. I guess I can't be expected to do that for nothing."

Fisher T. Fish very wisely did not mention the corner. So far from Mr. Quelch being able to understand it as business, he would probably have cabled the enterprising Yankee school-boy on the spot. Fish instinctively realised that the Form-master would have no understanding whatever of modern American business methods.

"There is a certain amount of justice in what you say, Fish," observed Mr. Quelch, after a pause. "Certainly you cannot be expected to sustain a loss. But—"

"And I haven't put up all the prices, sir. I supply the prefects at the old prices, as a special concession. And then I've got a lot of bad debts—some of the fellows don't pay, and I'm too tender-hearted to press them for the money. The first day I opened, a lot of the fellows simply helped themselves, and I sha'n't see the money. Bunter, for instance—he owes me eleven shillings—but he will never pay it. If I don't charge a bit extra, I shall lose money all along the line."

"Well, that certainly puts a different complexion on the matter," admitted Mr. Quelch, in a more kindly tone. "Mr. Prout did not know all this."

"Oh, he only heard Coker's version, sir. Coker wanted to run things with a high hand in my shop, because I'm only a junior," said Fish, in an injured tone.

Mr. Quelch nodded. He knew Coker, and he knew that that was very like the great man of the Fifth.

"However, Fish, I am not quite satisfied," he said. "I do not like this scheme of yours. I cannot very well order you to shut up the shop, and lose the money you have paid Mrs. Mible. That would hardly be just. But I think that as soon as you have recovered your expenses in the matter the shop had better be closed until Mrs. Mible's return."

"Oh!" said Fish.

"As soon, therefore, as you are indemnified for your expenditure, please let me know, and the enterprise will be at an end."

Fisher T. Fish concealed a grin. If it depended upon him to make known as soon as he had recovered his expenditure, all was plain sailing. He could choose his own moment, and his own moment would certainly not be before Mrs. Mible's return. He knew how to keep books in the way that suited him.

"Very well, sir," said Fish. "I guess I'm half sorry now that I took it on at all. It looks to me as if I shall have more loss than profit. I guess I sha'n't be sorry to get shut of it."

"Very well, Fish; that is settled, then."

"Yep!"

And Fisher T. Fish left the study, with his tongue in his cheek. As soon as he had closed the study door, he allowed a grin to overspread his keen face. Mr. Quelch's simplicity tickled him immensely. The master of the Remove was a keen scholar, and an experienced man; but in this particular line he was no match for the cute Yankee. Fisher T. Fish had more cunning in his little finger than Mr. Quelch had in a hand of him.

"Blessed joy!" murmured Fish disrespectfully. "I guess I'm running my own business on my own lines, and I'll shut up my shop when it suits me, not before. I kinder reckon I'm a match for any jay in this sleepy old country, old or young. I guess I'm keeping on, and I'm going to make things hum—just a few!"

Two or three juniors had spotted Fish's visit to Mr. Quelch, and they were keen to know the result.

"Quelch down on your swindling?" Bolsover major asked him.

"Wats!" said Fish. "I've had a talk with Quelch, and it's all right. He understands that I've a right to charge what I like for my own goods."

"He's going to let you go on charging double?" demanded Harry Wharton.

"Sure!"

"You must have spoofed him somehow," said Wharton suspiciously.

Fish shrugged his shoulders.

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As a matter of fact, his position was stronger since that interview with Mr. Quelch. He was no longer uneasy about the facts coming to the Form-master's knowledge; they had come to his knowledge, and Fish's explanation along with them. When the tuck-shop opened the next day, high prices ruled as usual. The fellows slanged Fishy without mercy, but he took all their remarks quite cheerfully, and their money at the same time.

Exasperation was growing, especially in the Remove. To be "done" by Fisher T. Fish was extremely irritating, for all the fellows knew that Fish, with all his boasted cuteness, was really a duffer of the first water. And as Bob Cherry said, in a most aggrieved tone, it was intensely annoying to be done by a duffer.

Yet what was to be done was hard to guess.

Fisher T. Fish had carried out his plan. He had "cornered" the tuck, and the corner in tuck was a great success. The Yankee junior was making money hand over fist. His stock was selling off—and he was renewing it at the rate of ten shillingsworth a day from Uncle Clegg's establishment. He bought at shop prices, it is true; but he sold at double shop prices, so his profit was handsome, and he was keeping a rival out of the field. And even without that cute stroke of business with Uncle Clegg, the fellows would soon have grown tired of going a mile to Uncle Clegg's shop for their supplies. As for going to Courtfield town, that was altogether too much of a good thing. Some of the fellows took the trouble to inquire of Mr. Mible, the Head's gardener, when Mrs. Mible was likely to return; but they received no comfort. Not for weeks, probably.

"It's simply rotten!" Harry Wharton exclaimed at tea in No. 1 Study one evening, at the end of the week. "We're right in the claws of the blessed Trust—might as well be living in America, and have done with it."

"Something's got to be done!" growled Frank Nugent.

"We've only got a little spread here, but it's run into four bob!"

"Instead of two," said Harry.

"And that howling cad is pocketing our dibs, and laughing up his sleeve," said Nugent, exasperated. "He's making a fortune out of Mauly, too. Mauly never counts his money, and he pays all that Fishy asks. I saw him handing two golden quids over the counter this afternoon."

"It's too rotten!"

Peter Todd looked into the study. He gave the chums a general nod and a grin.

"Discussing Fishy and his fishy methods, what?" he asked.

"Yes. How can we give that spoofing rotter one in the eye?" demanded Nugent. "You've always claimed that the ideas all came from No. 7 Study, Toddy. Haven't you an idea now? It's simply disgraceful for the whole form to be done in by that spoofer, with his blessed corner in tuck."

"Just what I called in to see you about," said Peter Todd cheerfully. "I've thought it out, and I've got an idea for nipping him in the bud."

"Hurrah!"

"Let's hear the scheme first," said Harry Wharton, less enthusiastically.

"It's a ripper," said Todd, "only, like Fishy's schemes, it will need money. I've spoken to Smyth about it, and I want you fellows to get Lord Mauleverer into it. It will cost money, but all the money will come back again, every red cent of it, and Fishy will be done blue and green."

"Pile in! What's the wheeze?"

"A rival tuck-shop!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Rather take your breath away—what?" said Peter, evidently very pleased at the impression his scheme made in No. 1 Study. "But it's perfectly simple, and I wonder we didn't think of it before. We put up a certain sum of money—say twenty quid. We can raise that from giddy millionaires like Mauly and Smyth and Inky, the rest of us putting up what we can raise. Then we can give an order to a wholesale house in Courtfield, and get a whole giddy consignment of tuck at wholesale prices. We set it out in the Rag, and open shop, and sell to all who want to buy. Our stuff will be as good as Fishy's, and we sell at Mrs. Mible's old prices. There will be a profit, and after working expenses are paid, and the original capital returned to the investors, any surplus will be devoted to the Remove Cricket Club. How does that strike you?"

"My only hat!"

"I'm willing to manage the concern," said Peter modestly. "It will require brains, of course. It will be a lot of trouble, and some of you fellows will have to put in time, minding the shop, and so on. But it's worth the trouble. The money will all come back, and most likely there will be a surplus for the cricket club. Of course, nobody in the concern is to make a profit personally, that's understood. We're not on to the make like Fishy."

"Good egg!" exclaimed Harry Wharton heartily. "It's a ripping idea."

"And we'll keep it dark from Fishy, and spring it on him on Saturday afternoon, opening the shop suddenly without warning!" chuckled Peter Todd. "We'll let all the fellows into the secret who can be trusted to keep it from Fishy—see? I want to see Fishy's face when the rival shop opens."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Nobody will deal with him, of course, after we've opened a shop to sell things at fair prices. He'll be left with all his stuff on his hands. His tarts and buns and cakes will go stale, and he won't be able to sell them at a farthing each—"

"Hurrah!"  
"In fact, I think he'll be jolly glad, in the long run, to crawl out of his speculation with less money than when he started it," said Peter Todd, with great satisfaction. "It will be a lesson to him—what?"

"It's a go! Hurrah!"  
And that evening the Co. were busy in discussing the details of Peter Todd's scheme, and raising the necessary capital for carrying it out.

## THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER. Not in the Know!

FISHER T. FISH was suspicious. That Friday there was something going on in the Remove that he could not fathom. Fellows talked in whispers, with many chuckles, and ceased the moment the Yankee junior was seen hovering near.

There was evidently some secret—it was equally evidently it was something up against the enterprising Yankee. But what it was Fish could not discover.

He tried pumping Billy Bunter; but Bunter was unable to reveal the secret, for the simple reason that he did not know it. Peter Todd knew better than to take the Owl of the Remove into his confidence. Bunter was very much exasperated at being left out of the secret; but Todd had been deaf to his importunities. Bunter had tried his usual system of keyhole investigation without success. The fellows who were "in the know" were too careful to give him a chance of playing the eavesdropper.

But when Fish tackled him, Bunter was far from admitting that he didn't know. He shook his head, and looked mysterious. Fish became keener than ever. That it was some plot to dish his corner he was certain, and he wanted to be put on his guard.

"Look here, Bunter, you know jolly well that the fellows are planning something," he exclaimed angrily.

Bunter nodded, and chuckled.  
"Tell me what it is!"  
"Don't you wish I would!" said Bunter, with another fat chuckle. "I warn you you'd better look out, Fishy, that's all. They're going to dish you. He, he, he!"

"I say, Bunter, old man, I guess you might tell an old pal," said Fish persuasively. "Come into the tuckshop when I open it, and I'll stand you some tarts."

"Not good enough," said Bunter, with a shake of the head. Fish's eagerness was so evident that the Owl of the Remove could afford to be coy.

"I guess I'll make it a dozen tarts," said Fish.  
"Well, I'll see," said Bunter loftily.

When Fisher T. Fish opened shop that afternoon not a single solitary customer appeared. By common agreement, the fellows who had no supplies on hand were going to have tea in Hall that day—so far as the juniors were concerned. Coker & Co. of the Fifth had been taken into the new wheeze, and they were so exasperated against Fish—especially Coker—that they entered into it heartily.

A few fags came into the shop later to fetch things for members of the Sixth, and that was all the business Fish did that afternoon. He was very perturbed and uneasy. He had his fresh consignment from Uncle Clegg untouched, and much of it was perishable. He was very glad when Bunter rolled into the shop, grinning.

"Hallo! Walk right in, Bunter, old man!" said Fish, with an affability he was far from feeling. "Glad to see you!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Bunter. "Look-out, Fishy! You're going to be done brown!"

"Is it a boycott?" asked Fish. "They tried that before, but it didn't last the first day. I guess I'm not afraid of a boycott. That cuts no ice with me."

"Worse than that!" said Bunter.  
"Well, what is it?"

"A dead secret, Fishy!"

Fish turned away to serve Tubb of the Third, who came in with an order from Loder—a written order this time. Four shillings worth of tuck vanished, to be put down to Loder's expanding account. Fish scowled as he made the entry in the ledger. He felt that he would have to refuse Loder's orders soon; but it would not do to break with the prefect while this unknown plot was being developed against

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FOR NEXT MONDAY—**"THE BOY FROM THE FARM!"**

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him and his "corner." He was keener than ever to know what it was.

"Try these tarts, Bunter!" he said invitingly.  
"Thanks; I will!"

Bunter tried the tarts, and found them so much to his taste that he polished off a dozen of them with hardly a pause to take breath. Fish watched that demolition of his stock with dismay, but he felt that he must have that secret out of Bunter.

"I say, I'm thirsty!" Bunter remarked. "Any ginger-beer going, Fishy?"

"Help yourself?" growled Fish.  
"You're really awfully good, Fishy. I really don't know why the fellows always think you a mean skunk, upon my word," said Bunter affably, as he helped himself. "Did you say I was to try that cake?"

"I guess you can try it!" said Fish reluctantly.  
"Thanks!"

"Now, look here, Bunter, what's the little game? I know you know it—you listen to everything that goes on. You're never left out of a secret so long as there's a keyhole to listen at."

"Oh, really, Fish—"  
"Tell me what it is before you scoff any more of that cake!" said Fish. "I've stood you quite enough, you guzzling jay! You can finish the cake if you tell me what the fellows have got on against me."

Bunter cudgelled his brains for a likely story. If he had known the secret, he would certainly have let it out for that bribe. But the trouble was that he did not know it.

"Well, pile in!" growled Fish.  
"Ahem! You—you won't mention that I've told you?" hesitated Bunter.

"Sure!"  
"And I can have the cake—and a few more tarts?"

"Yep!"  
"Well"—Bunter sank his voice to a mysterious whisper—"they're going to set fire to the tuckshop, Fishy!"

Fisher T. Fish jumped.  
"Waal, I swear!" he ejaculated. "Honest Injun?"

"Yes; hand over the cake!"  
"You let that cake alone!" snapped Fish, recovering himself. "You lying mugwump; you're trying to stuff me! I don't believe you know the secret at all!"

"I—I—I mean, they're going to raid the tuckshop!" said Bunter. "They're going to put on masks one night, and—"

and—  
"Ring off! I guess you don't know, after all!" grunted Fish. "Let that cake alone, or I'll come over the counter to you!"

Bunter snorted angrily.  
"Well, you're a rotten swindling spoofer, and you're going to be done in! I know that much, anyway!" he said. "And you can go and eat cake! Yah!"

And the Owl of the Remove rolled out of the tuckshop, leaving Fisher T. Fish no wiser, but the poorer by a dozen jam-tarts, a pound of cake, and a bottle of ginger-beer. The amateur speculator growled discontentedly.

"Might have known the fat galoot was talking out of his neck!" he grunted. "He doesn't know. They've kept it awfully dark if he can't spot it, the spying cad. What the dooce is it the silly jays are planning? I guess I've got to know! And why don't the customers come in, blow them?"

But the customers did not come in, and Fish closed his shop earlier than usual, in a very bad temper. When he returned to the School House chuckles and grins met him on all sides. The juniors were enjoying the joke, whatever it was.

In the common-room that evening Fisher T. Fish noticed the whispering and grinning more than ever. He had kept his eyes open, and observed that Peter Todd had been out on his bicycle. When Todd came in, he was surrounded by the juniors, and Fish heard his announcement:

"It's all serene!"  
"Good egg!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fish strode angrily towards the group.  
"What's all serene, Toddy?" he demanded.

"It!" replied Peter calmly.  
"You jays have got some scheme on!" said Fish. "I guess it's something up against me. Well, you won't find it easy to touch F. T. Fish when it comes to cold business! F. T. Fish never gets left!"

"You'll see to-morrow!" grinned Bob Cherry.  
And there was another roar of laughter.

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Dabney of the Fourth. "You'll see to-morrow, Fishy!"

"You'll see to-morrow, you swindler!" squeaked Tubb. Fish glared at the hilarious juniors. He was convinced of his own unusual cuteness and business abilities, and had

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

no doubt that he could keep his end up. Yet he was vaguely uneasy. There was a surprise preparing for him on the morrow, and all the juniors evidently believed that it would be a knock-down blow for the schoolboy speculator. But what could it be? Fisher T. Fish, in spite of his self-confidence, was on tenterhooks of anxiety by this time.

"What am I going to see to-morrow, then?" he demanded.

"You'll see what you will see!" said Bob Cherry oracularly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And that was all the information Fisher T. Fish could obtain. He went to the dormitory that night in a decidedly uneasy frame of mind, with many misgivings about the morrow, in spite of the eminent success, so far, of the "corner in tuck."

## THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

### Turning the Tables!

ON Saturday morning it might have been observed—and, as a mater of fact, was observed—that many of the Remove fellows were in hilarious spirits. Fisher T. Fish observed it.

It worried him.

So far as he could see, there was no flaw in his armour. He had placated Mr. Quelch, he was backed up by a prefect—at rather a high price, certainly—he had made terms with his only possible rival in business. Mrs. Mimbles' return was still very far off. All was serene; there was no cloud on the horizon—so far as Fisher T. Fish could see; and he prided himself upon being able to see as far as most people, if not a little further. And yet—

Was it possible that he was going to be "left," after all? What did that general hilarity on the part of the juniors mean? Why that whispering and chuckling? What was it that he was to "see" to-day?

Fisher T. Fish wore a worried look during morning lessons. He was making money hand-over-fist, true. He already had half the amount put by that he had agreed to pay Mrs. Mimbles for her business. In another week or two he would have all that sum in hand, without the need of using his popper's cheque; and after that sum was laid aside, all that came in would be sheer, clear profit, for his sole use. It was a beautiful prospect if—but there was an "if." What was it that Harry Wharton & Co. were plotting?

And it wasn't only Harry Wharton & Co.—Peter Todd was in it, and Vernon-Smith, and Lord Mauleverer—in fact, nearly all the Remove. Temple, Dabney, & Co. of the Fourth were participants, and Coker & Co. of the Fifth. Hobson of the Shell and his friends were in it, and so were Tubbs and his fags in the Third. Even Nugent minor of the Second was in the scheme. It seemed to embrace the whole Lower School, with the exception of a few fellows like Bunter and Snoop, who could not have been trusted to keep the secret. What was the little game?

What, indeed? All Fish's efforts at discovery had been in vain. After morning lessons he went, in a worried frame of mind, to open his shop. It being a half-holiday, the tuck-shop was to be open all the afternoon, and Fish had hoped to do a roaring trade. But he was beginning to have his doubts now. That afternoon, according to the plotters, he was to "see." What was he to see?

After dinner Peter Todd walked down to the porter's lodge, with a knowing grin on his face. Fish spotted him, and followed him there. Todd was asking Gosling about a box he was expecting.

"Tain't arrived yet, sir," said Gosling.

"It's coming by the carrier," said Peter. "It will be a jolly big box—a packing-case, in fact. I want it put into the Rag."

"Yessir."

"Hallo, Fishy!" said Peter, as he turned away from the porter's lodge. "Haven't you got your shop open yet?"

"I guess I'm just going there."

"Then go!" advised Peter. "By strict attention to business, you know, you will please your customers, and assure a continuance of past favours!"

"Oh, come off!" growled Fish. "What's this hyer packing-case you're expecting?"

"A wooden one," said Peter affably.

"I mean, what's in it?"

"The contents, of course!"

"But what are the contents?" howled Fish.

"They're what's inside the packing-case, Fishy!"

"You mean, you won't tell me, you jay!"

"Have you guessed that already?" asked Peter admiringly. "That shows what a really keen Yankee intellect can do, when it gets fairly going, Fishy."

"I guess I know you've got some rotten scheme on!"

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growled Fish. "Are you sending for tuck to stand a feed, or something like that?"

"Time your shop was open, Fishy."

"Will you answer me, you mugwump?"

"Your hungry customers will be hammering on the door, Fishy," said Peter imperturbably. "Better buzz off and attend to business. Business is your motto, you know—cold business from the word 'go.' I think that's how you put it in your native language."

Fish snorted and walked away. There was no getting anything out of Peter Todd. Todd could be as close as an oyster when he chose, and he chose now. Peter looked after him with a grin. Fish's state of mind afforded him considerable amusement. The tables were being turned at last upon the 'cute business man of the Remove."

The Yankee junior opened his shop, but few customers came in. Bunter rolled in to make another attempt to open an account, to be settled at some future date when a postal-order should arrive. He failed, and he rolled out again discontentedly. Tubbs came with an order from Loder, to be put down to the account, and Fish simply snarled as he handed over the goods. He was fed-up with Loder.

After that Fish was left alone in his glory. He was ready, in apron and shirt-sleeves, but the customers did not come. Was it a boycott? Boycott or not, the fellows would want tuck for their tea, and he was sure of a rush of custom then. Only he did not feel so sure now.

Where were all the fellows? He stepped out of the shop. The Close was almost deserted. He glanced towards the playing-fields. There were no juniors there. Some of the Sixth were at practice, and that was all.

Where were the Remove, where were the Fourth, and the fags?

What little game was on?

Fish thought of that packing-case Todd had been expecting, and felt more uneasy than ever. He slipped off his apron, and put on his jacket, and ran down to the porter's lodge.

"That packing-case come for Todd?" he asked.

"Yessir," said Gosling.

"Do you know what was in it?"

"Which I don't, Master Fish," said Gosling. "Master Todd says it's full of breakables, so a man was to be very careful with it. That's all I know. It was took into the 'Ouse hover a hower ago."

Fish went disconsolately back to his shop.

No customers had arrived. He caught sight of Skinner and Hazeldene in the Close. They were eating apples. Fish stared at them. Unless they had purloined those apples from his shop during his brief absence, where had they obtained them?

"Hallo!" called out Fish. "You been pinching my stock?"

The two juniors chuckled.

"Where did you get those apples?" demanded Fish angrily.

"Bought 'em and paid for 'em," said Skinner.

"At a fair price," said Hazeldene. "None of your new double prices for us, Fishy."

"Then where did you buy them?" howled Fish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hazel and Skinner walked away without satisfying Fish's curiosity. The Yankee junior hastily locked up his shop, and started for the School House. It was not of much use keeping the shop open, as no customers were coming; and he felt that he must penetrate this mystery.

There was a buzz of merry voices in the direction of the Rag. Fish turned his steps towards that apartment. Then he jumped. The Rag was crowded with fellows, and on the half-open door was a large notice, in capital letters, daubed with a brush. Fish read it, and simply gasped. He understood now.

## "NOTICE!

THE NEW TUCKSHOP IS NOW OPEN!

SUPPORT BRITISH INDUSTRIES AGAINST AMERICAN TRUSTS!

ALL GOODS FIRST QUALITY AND FAIR PRICES!  
ROLL UP!"

"M-m-my only hat!" stammered Fisher T. Fish. "M-m-my Uncle Jonathan! So that's what was in the packing-case? It's a rival show! Where did the jays get the money from? Where did they get the brains from? Oh, by gum! I'm left this time!"

He strode furiously into the Rag.

An animated scene met his gaze.

The big table was arranged as a counter, and it was piled from end to end with all sorts and conditions of good things.

Behind the improvised counter stood Peter Todd, Nugent, Bob Cherry, and Tom Brown, in their shirt-sleeves, acting as shopmen.

The Rag was crowded with fellows of all Forms. Evidently the new establishment was doing a roaring trade. Fisher T. Fish could see now where his customers had gone to.

There was a yell at the sight of the Yankee junior. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Here's Fishy! Walk up, Fishy! Are you going to be a customer?"

"Down with the Trusts!"  
"Down with corners in tuck!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Jever get left, Fishy?"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish strode up to the counter. He was in so great a rage that he could hardly stutter. He was simply overwhelmed at seeing his own little game turned against him in this manner. He shook a bony fist in Bob's face, and Bob roared with laughter.

"I guess this is a plant!" shrieked Fisher T. Fish. "Look hyer, I'm not going to stand this! You hear me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"I don't see how you're going to stop it!" grinned Harry Wharton. "If we have any of your cheek, we'll chuck you out! You bribe a prefect to keep order in your shop! We'll keep order ourselves!"

"Yes, rather!"  
"The ratherfulness is terrific, my esteemed swindling Fish! This is business!"

"Yaas, begad!" drawled Lord Mauleverer. "We've out-bussed you this time, my dear fellow! Take it smiling!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
Fisher T. Fish did not take it smiling. He choked with rage. But his rage only made the juniors howl the louder with merriment. Fisher T. Fish had had his innings, but he had come out at the little end of the horn at last, as he would have put it in his own expressive language. He had had the fellows on the hip, and now they had him by the short hairs.

#### THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. Climbing Down!

"JEVER get left, Fishy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Walk up, gentlemen!" said Peter Todd, rubbing his hands in imitation of Fisher T. Fish's manner behind the counter. "All goods best quality and fair prices! No double prices in this establishment! All American methods barred!"

"Look hyer, you guys!" shouted Fisher T. Fish, finding his voice at last. "You're jolly well not going to open a rival shop hyer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Kinder guess and reckon that it is open—just a few!" chuckled Johnny Bull. "This is where you get it in the neck, Fishy!"

"Right in the neck, I calculate," said Peter Todd. "Are you wanting anything, Fishy? We'll serve you at the same price as the others. None of your methods here, you know! I can supply you with penny tarts at one penny each—"

"I guess—"  
"Tuppenny tarts tuppence, not fourpence! None of your ninepence for fourpence here!" said Peter. "Will you have one of our special iced drinks? You look rather warm?"

"You—you slab-sided mugwump—"  
"If you are not a customer, Fishy, you will kindly step aside, and make room for customers. This isn't a fashionable lounge, you know!"

"I allow I'm not going to stand this!"  
"Must! No seats provided in this shop—too big a rush of customers!" said Todd. "Kindly step aside, and make room! What can I do for you, Temple?"

"Tarts and ginger-pop!" grinned Temple.

"Certainly!"

Fisher T. Fish brandished his bony fists.

"I tell you I won't have it!" he roared. "It's a swindle!"

"No, no!" said Peter soothingly. "You're thinking of your own business now! That's a swindle, Fishy!"

"You have no right to start a rival show, after I've started a tuckshop hyer at heavy loss!" stuttered Fish.

"Heavy loss to your customers, you mean!" grinned Coker of the Fifth.

"Push that fellow out, if he isn't going to buy anything!" said Peter. "He's keeping custom away!"

Fisher T. Fish had lost all his coolness now. His temper was at boiling-point, as he realised that this was the ruin

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of his new enterprise—that his "corner" in tuck was knocked completely on the head. He made a sprawling jump across the counter at Peter Todd and clasped him round the neck.

"You jay!" gasped Fish. "You mugwump! You slab-sided galoot from Galootsville! I guess I'll make sky-rockets of you, some!"

Peter Todd grinned, and grasped the Yankee junior in turn. The thin and far from athletic Fish was a child in Peter's powerful grasp. Todd whirled him over the counter, head first, and then whirled him back again, and he rolled on the floor of the Rag amid innumerable feet.

"Kick that hooligan out," said Peter calmly. "We can't have rows kicked up in this shop. This is an orderly establishment."

"Hear, hear!"  
"Boot him out!"  
"Shove that swindler out!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"  
"Corner him!"

Fisher T. Fish tried to spring up and run—but he hadn't a chance. Every fellow in the Rag was anxious to lend a hand at kicking him out—or, rather, a foot. Innumerable feet helped in the process—and the unfortunate cornerer of tuck was propelled towards the door at a great rate. He arrived there in a dusty and dishevelled and dazed condition, and a final application of a crowd of boots hurled him into the passage. A roar of laughter followed him.

"I guess that kinder settles Fishy's hash, some!" chuckled Bob Cherry.

"I guess it does," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Poor old Fishy! Always trying some new swindle, and always getting done! Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish picked himself up, feeling that life was hardly worth living. He crawled away down the passage, gasping.

"Waal, I swow!" he murmured, in dismay. "I guess this does me—right in the eye! The awful mugwumps—to plant a game like that on me—and I never saw it—never guessed it, by gum! That's what they were keeping dark. Oh, crumbs!"

Fisher T. Fish went back disconsolately to his shop.

He looked over his stock and groaned. So long as Peter Todd & Co. kept shop in the Rag, it was pretty certain that no customers would come to Fish's establishment and pay his prices. And what was to become of the perishable part of his stock? Tarts and cakes and buns would be hopelessly stale in a few days—eggs would become unsaleable—all sorts of things would be left useless on his hands.

His loss would be tremendous.

The corner was "done in" with a vengeance now.

That great financial operation of the American junior was a hopeless, horrible failure.

The schoolboy speculator had once more "run up against a snag," and "come out at the little end of the horn." He groaned as he realised it.

There was evidently only one thing to be done. It was no use crying over spilt milk. Unless his stock was to be left on his hands, he had to lower his prices. And, with many groans, he prepared a notice to that effect to post up outside the tuckshop.

During the afternoon a good many fellows looked in at the school shop—not to buy anything, but to ask Fishy, with many chuckles, how business was getting on.

It was not getting on at all, as a matter of fact.

There was a roar of laughter outside the tuckshop when Fish came out to post up his new notice. Harry Wharton & Co., when they came away from cricket practice, found the notice up, and they joined in the roar of merriment. Fisher T. Fish was "climbing down" now, with a vengeance. The notice ran:

"NOTICE!

"OLD PRICES.

"Notice is hereby given that from this date goods will be supplied by this establishment at the old prices.

"Signed, FISHER TABLETON FISH."

"Climbed down, and no mistake," grinned Bob Cherry. "Oh, what a falling-off was there, my countrymen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish looked out of the shop. He was in apron

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FOR NEXT MONDAY—

"THE BOY FROM THE FARM!"

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

and shirt-sleeves again, ready for business—for the business that was not likely to come.

"Walk in, gentlemen!" he said invitingly. "You want to do your shopping for tea now, I guess! Walk right in!"

"Will you walk into my parlour?" said the spider to the fly!" quoted Frank Nugent; and there was another roar.

"Gentlemen, I guess you can't do better than patronise the old firm. You will notice that old prices rule now—same as in Mrs. Mimble's time."

"Too late!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Nobody's going to deal with you any more, Fishy. All the fellows have agreed to support the new show."

"I guess you're not going to leave me in the lurch now," said Fisher T. Fish persuasively.

"I guess we are!"

"Just a few!" chortled Tom Brown.

"Some!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"You're up a tree, Fishy," said Harry Wharton. "You'd better let this be a warning to you, that honesty's the best policy."

"Let it be a lesson to you, my dear Fish!" said Alonzo Todd solemnly. "If you are put to some loss by this transaction, you may count it as a profit, if it impresses upon your mind the fact that dishonesty is never profitable in the long run."

"It wasn't dishonesty!" shrieked Fish. "It was business, you silly jay! And I don't get it if you don't want to deal with me, you can go and eat coke!"

"We've got plenty of other things to eat now," grinned Bob Cherry. "Fishy, old man, you'd better start operations on your stock yourself. No need to let it go to rack and ruin. Bunter will help you get rid of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fisher T. Fish retired into his shop and slammed the door. The laughing juniors cleared off, in a state of great enjoyment. All the fellows who required supplies for tea purchased them in the Rag. From the Second to the Sixth, the whole of Greyfriars dealt at the new establishment. Only one customer came along to Fish's shop at teatime. It was Tubb of the Third, with a written order from Loder. But Tubb found the shop closed. Under the circumstances, Loder's protection was no longer required by the unfortunate speculator, and he did not mean to supply the prefect for nothing any more. Tubb returned to Loder to report, and the prefect came down to the shop in an extremely bad temper. But the door was locked. He looked for Fisher T. Fish, and found him moodily walking in the Close, with his hands in his pockets, and a deep wrinkle in his brow.

"Why isn't your shop open, Fish?" the prefect demanded.

Fish groaned.

"I guess it's no good opening it. There's a rival show, and all my customers have given me the go-by."

"Serve you right for swindling them," said Loder unfeelingly. "I thought you were carrying it too far. You should have put up prices five or ten per cent., not a hundred per cent., and then you might have kept going."

"I guess I don't want teaching how to run a business, Loder," said Fish tartly.

"Well, you don't seem to have made much of a success of it," sneered Loder.

Fish grunted. He could not deny that.

"Anyway, you can serve me—any price you like," said Loder. "Go and open the shop at once, and give Tubb the things on his order."

Fisher T. Fish shook his head.

"I'm not running any more accounts," he said. "Can't afford it. You can have what you like for cash; old prices, too, Loder. Nothing more on the nod, I guess."

Loder clenched his hand.

"Are you asking for a licking?" he demanded.

"I guess if you touch me I'll speak to the Head, and tell him you're bullying me into supplying you with tuck for nothing," said Fish coolly. It was some solace for him, in his downfall, to disappoint Loder, and tell him what he thought of him.

Loder unclenched his hand. He felt that that would not do.

"You young rotter!" he said. "I've a good mind to knock you into the middle of next week. You've only got what you deserved for your swindling."

"It wasn't swindling, I tell you; it was business, latest American style. Look hyer, Loder, if you like to pay cash, I'll serve you at once—"

"If I'm going to pay cash I'll get the stuff at the other show," said Loder, with a grin. "I don't believe in supporting swindlers."

And he walked away to the Rag. Fish's last chance of a customer disappeared. The enterprising Yankee junior frowned darkly.

"Fairly done—done right in!" he murmured. "And how am I going to pay Mrs. Mimble, eh? Oh, my hat! I wish

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FRANK RICHARDS

Contributes a Splendid, Complete School Tale in our New Saturday Companion Paper—

"CHUCKLES," 1d.

I'd never thought of making a corner in tuck—I do! Oh, thunder!"

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

Not a Success!

FOR a couple of days Fisher T. Fish still hoped against hope, as it were. But it was in vain. Not a single customer came to the school shop.

Peter Todd's establishment in the Rag was well patronised. It had been a great success from the start. Assured of the support of the whole school, there had been no risk about it. In two or three days most of the stock was sold, and the capital provided by the founders of the concern was repaid. The profits were expended in ordering a new supply of tuck. The enterprise took up a great deal of the time of the juniors; but they were prepared to make that sacrifice, till Fish's business was fairly knocked out. Their usual occupations could be put aside for a time.

And there was no doubt that the schoolboy speculator was getting it "in the neck."

On Monday he had put up a notice that goods of a perishable nature could be had at half price, and then for a few hours he did some business. The offer was too good to be refused. But although that clearance saved Fishy from a dead loss on his perishable commodities, his loss was substantial, all the same. He was selling tarts, and cakes, and buns, and other things at less than he had paid for them, and he was glad to do even that. Normal prices ruled for the other articles; but the other articles, at normal prices, the fellows refused to touch.

On Wednesday Fish did not trouble to open his shop at all. He knew that it would be useless—nobody would come there.

His glum face caused shouts of laughter wherever it was seen. All Greyfriars was enjoying the joke. The keen and enterprising Yankee junior had bitten off more than he could chew, once more. Meanwhile, Fish's other rival in Friardale had reduced his prices once more. Fish had promptly stopped his order at Uncle Clegg's; he could not afford to buy goods that he could not sell. And Uncle Clegg, no longer bribed with that daily order, put his prices down to the old level. But the juniors did not bother about Uncle Clegg—Todd & Co., in the Rag, supplied them with all they needed.

Fisher T. Fish's position was more serious than the juniors knew. It was not only the loss of his golden dreams that worried him, he had more apprehensions on his mind than they were aware of. He kept it to himself, hoping for a turn of fortune, but that turn of fortune did not come. He had not the slightest chance of attracting a single customer, unless he offered his goods at cost price, and the "corner" in tuck was as dead as a doornail. And then came the news that Mrs. Mimble was returning at the end of the week, and Fish was in a panic.

His first intention had been to make some terms with Mrs. Mimble, so as to keep possession of the school shop. Now he would have been glad to get rid of it on almost any terms. But Mrs. Mimble's return meant more than that to him, and Fisher T. Fish's face was utterly woebegone. In his extremity he made up his mind to appeal to the Co.

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Peter Todd was in No. 1 Study, with the Famous Five, making up the tuckshop accounts that evening, when the woebegone speculator dropped in. There was a general grin from the juniors at the sight of Fish's face.

"How's business?" asked Bob Cherry affably. Fish groaned, and sank into a chair. "I guess you know I'm not doing any business," he said. "I own up. You've knocked me out, you jays! It was a ripping scheme, but—"

"But it was like all your giddy schemes—no good!" said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"I guess I'm going to appeal to you chaps," said Fish. "I'm in a hole."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You've got me by the short hairs," said Fish. "I give in."

"I don't quite see it's so bad as all that," said Peter Todd. "You lose your money, but it serves you jolly well right! You gave Mrs. Mimble fifteen pounds eight shillings and sixpence for her stock. You must have made something, and the stock will fetch something if you sell it off at half-price. You don't stand to lose more than five quid, I should say. It seems to me that you're getting off cheaply."

"I haven't got it to lose." "But you paid Mrs. Mimble."

"I haven't paid her!" groaned Fish. "What! But that cheque—"

"She couldn't change a cheque for twenty pounds; of course I knew that," said Fish. "I guess I showed her the cheque to show her I had plenty of money to pay. See? Then I was going to pay her out of the profits, after cornering the tuck. Mrs. Mimble thought I gave the cheque to Quelchy to cash for me, but I was really going to pay her out of the profits of the bizney. So I could have, if you fellows hadn't—"

"Well, all you've got to do now is to get the cheque changed, then," said Harry Wharton, puzzled. "I don't see the difficulty."

"But I can't! It wasn't to be changed!" explained Fish. "The popper wouldn't give me such a sum as a hundred dollars; and I never could have changed the cheque. He sent it to me to show, that's all, to use as capital, with instructions that it was to be sent back to him unchanged. After I'd used it, you see—to show, I mean—I sent it back to popper. It wasn't really mine."

The faces of the juniors became very grim. Fisher T. Fish's ideas of business, they knew, approached perilously near to swindling; but, well as they knew him, they had not expected this.

"You mean to say that when you bought Mrs. Mimble's stock you hadn't the money to pay for it?" said Wharton very quietly.

"Waal, you see, I should have had the money by the time she came back, if—"

"Did you tell her that?" "Of course not!" said Fish testily. "She wouldn't have sold me the business on terms like that. She supposed the cheque was in Quelchy's hands, to be passed through his bank, and that the money's waiting for her. I'd have had the money all right if—"

"You awful rascal!" "Oh, draw it mild! I guess it would have been all OK if—"

"People have been sent to prison for that kind of thing," said Peter Todd.

"I guess it was business," said Fish feebly. "If the corner had been a success, I'd have had plenty of the ducks to pay her, and some over for myself. You fellows are to blame. You wrecked my corner!"

"I suppose it's no good talking to you," said Wharton. "We thought you were only swindling us, and you were swindling a poor old woman as well. I suppose you haven't the cheek to ask us to find the money to pay your debt,

after the way you've welsed and rooked us right and left."

"I—I guess there'll be trouble for me!" groaned the unhappy speculator. "Mrs. Mimble won't see that it was business. She'll complain to the Head if I don't pay her. And the Head won't understand business. He'll think—"

"He'll think you're a blessed thief, as you jolly well are!" said Bob Cherry indignantly. "Now, don't say it's business again, or I'll punch your head! I'm fed up with your rot!"

"What am I going to do?" gasped Fish. "You fellows might help me out of a hole. There's the stock in the tuckshop, that's worth something; only I've had heavy losses, you see. I was paying Uncle Clegg ten bob a day for stuff to keep his prices up."

"Oh! So that was one of your dodges, was it?" "It was business, you know. Corners are always worked like that. But it cost me money. And I paid him shop prices, and haven't sold all the stuff. What I've sold of it mostly went for half of what I gave, thanks to you jays!"

Then Loder was squeezing me for tuck for nothing, and—"

"How much have you got towards Mrs. Mimble's money?"

"I guess I've got eight quid."

"Then you want seven pounds eight and six," said Peter Todd. "Well, this firm will give you five quid for what's left of your stock, and you can raise the rest yourself. That's the best we can do."

"Then I lose two pounds eight and six in cash, after all my trouble!" said Fisher T. Fish indignantly.

"Better that than getting sacked by the Head for swindling Mrs. Mimble!" said Todd drily.

Fisher T. Fish rose with a groan.

"I guess it's the best I can do," he said. "Come along to the shop, and I'll hand over the stock. That will be under cost price for it."

"Serve you right!" "And I guess this will use up my allowance for the rest of the term!"

"Just what you deserve!" "Oh, thunder! Don't rub it in. I know I've slipped up on it, but it was a jolly good speculation, all the same," said Fish. "You jays don't know anything about business!"

"Shut up!"

And so it was arranged. Fisher T. Fish had a narrow escape of getting into serious trouble over his latest wheeze, but the assistance of the Co. enabled him to settle with Mrs. Mimble when she returned, and he was only too glad to hand the school shop over to that good lady, and have done with it. Peter Todd & Co., too, were glad to be relieved from the necessity of keeping shop in the Rag. So everybody was satisfied.

Only Fisher T. Fish's satisfaction at getting out of the affair so cheaply was mingled with painful regrets. To make up the required sum he had had to borrow, and his allowance for the rest of the term was mortgaged in advance, and the enterprising Yankee, who had ruled the roost in the tuckshop, found himself reduced to such a state financially that he could not even order a ginger-pop in that same tuckshop!

And Fisher T. Fish realised dolefully that there was something wanting in his business methods, after all. And though he had certainly succeeded for a short time in the "corner in tuck," in the long run it was Fisher T. Fish himself who was cornered!

(Another splendid long complete tale of the Chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled "THE BOY FROM THE FARM!" by Frank Richards. Order your copy in advance!)



Our Magnificent Serial Story. Start To-day.



# THE BLUE ORCHID

BY SIDNEY DREW

A Wonderful Story dealing with the Thrilling Adventures of Ferrers Lord—Millionaire, and his comrades, Ching-Lung—Juggler and Ventriloquist; Rupert Thurston, and Gan-Waga, the Eskimo.

## READ THIS FIRST.

Ferrers Lord, the famous multi-millionaire, is engaged on one of his adventurous expeditions, in company with Ching-Lung (the Prince of China), Rupert Thurston, Gan-Waga (the Eskimo), also Prout, Maddock, Barry O'Roonney, and the rest of the famous band of stalwart seamen. Their quest is a field of blue orchids, which is said to exist somewhere up the great Amazon River, and their craft is a small steam launch, named the Blue Orchid, which has been captured from Lord's enemy in this enterprise, a German millionaire named Hausmann, who is continually pursuing the millionaire in his magnificent yacht, the Medea. Mainly owing to the craft of Vasco, a friendly native whom Ferrers Lord befriended on one of his earlier adventures, Hausmann is successfully thrown off the trail, and Ferrers Lord and his companions succeed in reaching Obidos. After staying there a day or two, they once more set out on their quest. They are crossing a huge wilderness, when they run short of water. They struggle on, and are half dead with thirst before they come across a river. Having quenched their thirst, they throw off their clothes, and sit in the river, shouting and splashing like a lot of schoolboys.

(Now go on with the story.)

### The Watcher of the Column—The Alarm—Hemmed In by the Warriors—Althara the Merciless.

Ferrers Lord glanced at his compass after they had rested for a couple of hours.

"Time to be going, lads!" he said. "Find a ford, Gan-Waga."

"Go straights acrosses. Not deeps," said Gan. "Sees the bottoms alls the ways."

They were soon safely over.

"By Jove, this is as pretty as the Thames in summer-time, Lord!" said Rupert Thurston.

"Yes," answered the millionaire, with a grim smile, "I admit its beauties. Do you see those trees with the pale pink blossoms? Can you imagine anything more lovely?"

"Nothing. They remind me of clusters of pink pearls."

"Ask Vasco what they mean."

"The devil-tree, Excellency!" said Vasco, shivering. "The white man who sleeps under their shade awakes no more! It is the fever-tree, Senor Thurston, and it breathes death. Wherever it blooms no European can live. Hasten, Excellencies, for he who sleeps here, sleeps his last long sleep!"

"Forward, forward!" cried the millionaire. "We must reach higher ground before we camp. Luckily the fever-tree only grows in swampy places."

"Excellency! Excellency!"

Wielding his axe, Vasco had slashed his way through a tangle of brushwood and saplings. His voice came back, vibrating with wonder and awe. Rupert, Ching-Lung, and the millionaire cocked their rifles and sprang through the gap. Thurston and the prince stopped amazed. Ching-Lung whistled, and Thurston echoed his whistle. Across a broad valley wound a row of tall stone columns. A few were broken and some had fallen, but the others still proudly reared their heads to the sky.

"They are the dots on Oscar Whateman's chart," said Ferrers Lord quietly.

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Ferrers Lord put the plan, which had been pasted on linen and carefully varnished to preserve it, in Rupert Thurston's hand. Ching-Lung looked at it over Rupert's shoulder.

"If that's the case," said the Prince, "we are warned to look out for fever and natives. This must be the locality marked 'D.' The fever seems to fit in; but what about the natives?"

"Those who live will learn, Ching. We must not dawdle, for fever is worse than natives. Just as a precaution, Thurston, please serve out a dose of quinine."

Gan-Waga wept when he heard the order, for he leathed quinine with his whole soul. Prout and Maddock held him while he swallowed the drug.

"Follow the columns, Vasco," said Ferrers Lord. "Have you finished with the chart yet, Ching?"

"Not yet, old chap. I'm still pondering. I'm taking it for granted that the cross indicates the spot where the blue orchids are to be found. Is that your opinion, may I ask?"

"It is natural to assume that it is so."

"Then, my friend," said Ching-Lung, "Whateman made a tremendous circle to get there. I'm no genius, but the few brains I've got tell me that the blue orchids are away to the Nor'-West, and on the other side of the river."

"Quite true," said the millionaire. "On the face of it, it seems absurd to make such a round. Probably they do, and it is a well-marked path. There may be acres of blue orchids, and there may be only a few square yards of them. Where poor Whateman went we can go. Commonsense tells us to follow his tracks. It would be folly to go blundering about in a fever-stricken jungle looking for what we might never find in order to save time."

"True, O king! You talk like a penny book. We'll follow the posts."

They examined the columns curiously. They were built of slabs of grey-coloured stone, and cemented with a mortar so hard that it snapped the point of Ching-Lung's knife. Many of them were overgrown with tropical creepers, and myriads of humming-birds sipped honey from their gorgeous blossoms.

"I wonder when and where these stones were quarried," said Ferrers Lord. "Look at the carving here, Ching!" "I'll wager the people who built these didn't carve that wretched stuff," said the Prince, glancing at the crude figures of dancing men, weird-looking jaguars, and quaint monkeys and tapers. "They're too silly."

"They are of much later date, and the work of natives. Perhaps we shall find an inscription."

"And you'll read it?"

"I hope to be able to," answered the millionaire with his quiet smile. "But I decline to promise. These columns are many centuries old. Hallo! Vasco has stopped. What is the matter?"

They hurried forward. The columns wound upwards and disappeared beyond the crest of a wooded hill.

"Great Scott!" said Ching-Lung. "That's not pretty!" A string of bleached human skulls hung round the base of one of the columns, and human bones were piled shoulder-high at its foot. Some of the bones had been gnawed by beasts of prey, and shimmering lizards nestled in the empty eye-sockets of the skulls and between the grinning teeth.

"A man, souse me—a man!" shouted the bo'sun.

Clear against the sky on the summit of the column that crowned the hill stood a figure.

"We must bag him," cried Ching-Lung. "Run for it!"

Vaulting on a horse, Ching-Lung sent it up the slope at a gallop. He reached the column only a length or two in front of the long-legged carpenter. The figure had vanished, though the mass of stonework was as bare as their hands.

"He's snugglin' down on the top, sir," said Joe. "He must be. Hi, can you see him, Tom?"

"No, I can't, by honey!" bellowed the steersman.

"Can't you?"

"D'ye think I'd 'ave axed you if I could, silly?" retorted Joe.

Ching-Lung walked round the smooth, tapering pillar in perplexity. How had the man got up there? Ferrers Lord struck the pillar with the haft of his hunting-knife.

"Hollow," he said.

A deafening, booming, sound startled them as it went racing across the hill forest. It came from the top of the column. As it hummed into silence a similar sound answered it from the distance.

"Faith, is that the dinner-gong?" remarked Barry O'Rooney.

"Very like it is, souse me!" growled Maddock, "and very like we'll be the dinner. What th—"

"Stand clear! Back there—back!" shouted the millionaire. "Don't touch it, man!"

Maddock had pulled off his cap. A little dart, plumed with a wisp of white cotton was sticking on the glazed peak. They rushed away out of range of the deadly blowpipe and its poisoned missiles.

"By honey!" said Prout savagely, "if I could get 'old of the fellow who shot that at you, Ben, I'd break him into pieces the size of canary-seed. Come out of it, you pig!"

The marksman refused to show himself, but the noise began again with redoubled vigour.

"That's more like a summons to fight than to go to dinner," said Ching-Lung, "and this isn't a cheerful place to fight in. I vote we get to the top of the hill, Lord, and find out what's happening."

It was a sensible suggestion. The sentinel in his strange watch-tower was not hammering away at the invisible gong for mere amusement. They raced up the hill and saw the pillars winding over another valley.

"Should I pay him, sir?" asked Joe, touching his cap. "He deserves it."

Once more the lonely figure on the column appeared against the sky like a statue, and the carpenter could have picked him off cleanly.

"No, no; let him alone, Joe," said Ching-Lung. "It was a near thing for Maddock, but it wasn't quite near enough. I never thought you were so bloodthirsty. What-ho!"

A column of men burst through a belt of trees. They advanced at a quick trot, and the sunlight flashed on spears and shields and tossing plumes.

"By Jove! It might be a Zulu impi," said Thurston, using his glasses. "Can you make them out, Vasco?"

"I see them, Excellency," answered the guide. "But I do not know them. They are a strange race to me. They are taller and fairer than any of the forest tribes I have ever seen. These are the devils they told us of at Obidos. We shall soon know whether the devils are bullet-proof."

"They're drilled, at any rate," said Ching-Lung. "Watch them now."

The column was ten wide and twenty deep. At a brook twelve feet wide the leaders sprang into the air. They cleared it like a machine, and the others followed, ten at a time, without breaking the formation. Ferrers Lord lighted a cigarette, and frowned slightly. He was thinking of years ago, when he had seen the terrible Zulu troops roll like a

black wave against cannon and bayonet, and fall in heaps, only for another wave to pour onwards, and still another, until rifles cracked and blood-stained bayonets gleamed no more on that dreadful South African hill. Was this to be another such tragedy?

"Send Oi may live! Here's another gang of the blessed blackbeetles," said Barry O'Rooney.

A second column swept out of the trees, the warriors running like deer, and keeping mathematical time. They swung away to the left.

"More behind, sir, souse me!" said Maddock. "We look like 'aving a 'oliday, don't us?"

The third column of plumed fighting men came from the direction of the river.

"M'yes," said Ching-Lung, meeting the millionaire's swift glance. "Exactly so."

He meant that if it were to be a matter of fighting, the fight would be sharp and brief; and Barry O'Rooney's face grew longer, and Maddock solaced himself with a bite from a piece of plug tobacco, while Vasco smoked his husk cigarette calmly enough. All his life the guide had been facing death in many shapes, and he did not fear it.

"By honey, if they think they're going to run slap over us they're a bit mistook," said Prout. "I'll wipe the eye of the johnnie wi' the blue feathers on his 'ead, just to teach 'em what's what."

"Keep that rifle down, Prout."

Prout meekly saluted and obeyed. Ferrers Lord stood with folded arms, watching the oncoming warriors. Had they held a strong position he would not have hesitated. Six hundred men were long odds for his little band to battle with, even under the most favourable circumstances. Here they had no cover. An attack from three sides at once, if desperately carried out, would sweep them away in a few minutes. The foe might pay dearly for their victory, but they could not lose.

Their faces were set and stern.

"Tink we gets out of this, hunk, Chingy?" asked Gan-Waga. "Not likes him, Chingy."

Before Ching-Lung could answer the first two columns had halted and drawn up in a long double line. They were within revolver shot of the hill. Some order was given, and joining hands, the warriors began to move slowly round one of the pillars.

The pace quickened into a trot, and the moving ring became a whirling circle of black and white and silver.

"Look at the tops of the pillars, Chingy," said Gan-Waga. A cloud of smoke was ascending from it. Swifter went the warriors in their wild dance, and then a great cry crashed from four hundred throats. Vasco started to his feet.

"Did you hear it, Excellency?"

"I heard it," said Ferrers Lord.

The shout rang out again, shrill, deafening, and triumphant.

"Althara—Althara!"

The smoke rose higher and denser from the summit of the pillar. The circle broke asunder, and with poised spears and upraised shields, the two lines of warriors hurled themselves at each other. With a dull roar and a clang of steel, shields and spears met.

"Althara—Althara!"

A door in the column opened, and a woman appeared. She was dressed in white, and she carried a spear and a brightly-polished shield. She walked slowly over the platform of shields beneath an arch formed of crossed spears. The shields were sloped as she neared the end of the line, and the queenly woman stepped to the ground.

"Althara the Merciless!" said Ferrers Lord. "The last of the Amazons!"

Thurston looked at him in bewilderment.

"Ridiculous!" he said. "Althara is a myth, a fairy tale. At any rate, she died, if she ever lived at all, about a hundred years ago. By Jove," he added, putting the binoculars to his eyes, "she's every inch a queen, and those diamonds in her hair are worth fortunes."

The warriors had fallen on their knees. Raising her bare arms, the woman pointed to the smoke with the blade of her spear. Then she slowly turned and faced the hill.

"I am going down," said Ferrers Lord lazily.

No one spoke. Flinging his rifle over his shoulder, the millionaire walked down the slope. The story of a warlike queen who ruled a strange land far back in the wilds was quite familiar to him. He had looked upon the tale as a mere legend, for the Indians declared that she spared no one who was rash enough or unlucky enough to enter her territory, and therefore nobody had come back to prove the truth of the tale. In old books of travel, crammed with exaggerations and lies, and from the lips of natives, he had read and heard of Althara the Merciless, who sacrificed her

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FOR NEXT MONDAY—

"THE BOY FROM THE FARM!"

"I see them, Excellency," answered the guide. "But I do not know them. They are a strange race to me. They are taller and fairer than any of the forest tribes I have ever seen. These are the devils they told us of at Obidos. We shall soon know whether the devils are bullet-proof."

"They're drilled, at any rate," said Ching-Lung. "Watch them now."

The column was ten wide and twenty deep. At a brook twelve feet wide the leaders sprang into the air. They cleared it like a machine, and the others followed, ten at a time, without breaking the formation. Ferrers Lord lighted a cigarette, and frowned slightly. He was thinking of years ago, when he had seen the terrible Zulu troops roll like a

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FOR NEXT MONDAY—

"THE BOY FROM THE FARM!"

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prisoners to her idols, and used sorceries and enchantments. She was wondrously beautiful. Althara the Merciless stood erect, her eyes gleaming like the diamonds in her black hair. Their glances met. Then Ferrers Lord bowed. The next moment spear shafts began to rattle against the shields and the swelling greeting crashed out again.

"Althara—Althara!"

Ferrers Lord smiled as the woman advanced a step. She addressed him in old-world Spanish, such Spanish as Columbus himself would have spoken. The millionaire found it a little difficult to understand, for a language alters greatly in three or four centuries.

"And who are ye, strangers," she said, "who awaken the Watcher of the Grey Pillar, and sound the war drum through my land?"

"We are travellers, lady, who come to seek no gold or gems, but only the blue flowers such as now you wear. We come in peace, and we would depart in peace, if you will graciously grant us your protection. We are honest men and not robbers. All we need we will pay for fairly and willingly."

"Then you are very brave men, or else the gods have made you mad, strangers, for it is written that all who enter this land must die. Here are my warriors ready to cut you up. Are you afraid?"

Her tone was soft and rich. Suddenly she changed her tone and spoke angrily.

"No, no, señor. Am I to admit every dog who comes whining to my gates? Others have done so, and where are they now? They are the slaves of the white men with the lightning sticks (guns) gathering the gum (rubber) at his bidding, and fawning at his heels. Ye must die, stranger! It is so written on the Grey Pillar by the hand of the dead. Bare your breasts to the spear, O strangers, and die like men!"

"When the first spear is poised to strike, lady," said Ferrers Lord, still smiling, "you fall beside me. The stranger and the queen will journey into the darkness in company. My men await with their fingers pressing the triggers of their firesticks."

"Caramba, ye are brave men!" said Althara quickly. "But it is unwise, stranger, to speak such words to a queen. I do not love to shed blood as some of my ancestors loved it. You look death boldly in the eyes, stranger. Come, I would

spare you even for that. Go hence in peace, and return no more."

Was it a trick? Ferrers Lord glanced at the lines of dark, sullen faces showing above the tops of the shields. If the savage queen meant what she said, her command was unpalatable.

"Lady, we have come far and through many dangers to seek the blue flowers," said the millionaire. "Let us, I beg of you, dwell in your land for a little while. Our food is nearly at an end, and our mules and horses are weary."

She flung down her shield. On the hill they waited for Ferrers Lord to wave his hand. The spears closed in around him, but he made no sign. What was the use of killing men when no good would come of it?

"It's a case of surrender, boys," said Ching-Lung. "Let's give in gracefully."

Barry O'Rooney threw down his cap and jumped on it to relieve his feelings. Twin walls of steel moved up from the hill, from before and behind, and closed round the little band.

"We've made a bad mess of it this time, souse me!" groaned Maddock. "Oh, you pretty-lookin' prize-packets! Shift that sticker from under my nose, you pink-eyed rascal, or I'll choke you, souse me!"

Maddock's last remark was addressed to a raw-boned warrior with a green plume in his hair.

"You'll get yourself disliked if you don't watch it, Benjamin," said Ching-Lung warningly. "I'm going to be nice to everybody, and try to keep a whole skin. Well, Lord, what's the worst news?"

"It is unnecessary to state that we are prisoners," he answered.

Vasco lighted another of his husk cigarettes.

"It is well to tell them that, Excellency," he said, in a native dialect that only the millionaire understood. "For in the forest, when the babies cry, our women frighten them with the name of Althara the Merciless. A man can only die but once."

"It is a sensible way of regarding the matter, Vasco," answered Ferrers Lord, with a yawn. "What does it matter?"

The hedge of spears closed round them, and they were marched away.

### How Ching-Lung Became a Wizard.

Ching-Lung entered the large palm-thatched hut. It stood in the centre of a large compound that was strongly walled in and guarded by warriors. The hut was very clean, airy, and comfortable. Ferrers Lord and Thurston sat on jaguar-skins, smoking their pipes, and Gan-Waga lay in a corner fast asleep and snoring. Prout, Maddock, Filson, O'Rooney, Joe, and the guide were lodged in another building in the same compound.

"I have just heard from Prout that the native beer is excellent," said the Prince, "and that the boiled chicken is not to be despised. As I came across, the little black beast with the squint told me, in excellent English, that we were all going to be killed at midnight amid great rejoicings."

"Hush!" said Rupert, lifting a warning hand.

"Oh, Gan! He's sound asleep. Cheerful news, eh? Makes you want to sing for joy, doesn't it?"

"Don't talk about it, Ching," protested Thurston.

"My dear fellow, why not? It's a most important matter. It's not the first time I've had the pleasure of being in gaol expecting to have my head sliced off at any moment. You've got us into a corner, Ferrers, but I don't blame you for it. I'd as soon be here as in Hausmann's tender clutches. I've poked about, but I can't find any chance of escape. They've got a whole regiment on watch outside the compound."

A native glided in and salaamed—a thin, white-headed man with a pronounced squint.

"Give him some brandy, Ching," said Ferrers Lord.

The squinting eyes glistened. Nothing except their weapons had been taken away from them.

"Where did you learn English?"

"Sailor on big ship long ago," said the man, with a wave of his hand. "Only boy, but not forget. He, he! What you come for?"

"We came for orchids."

"One big fool game, sare," grinned the native. "Get killed for it."

"My word!" said Ching-Lung, pouring out more brandy. "You're a cheerful beauty, Orlando. I call you that because I can't pronounce your proper name. Orlando, who is this queen?"

The native glanced round him swiftly, as if afraid of listeners.

"Not know," he said, in a quick whisper. "Chazarno, he



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big priest here when I boy. Great Queen Althara reign here one time, but she dead. Chazarno fighting with another big priest. Chazarno show writings say great queen no dead, but coming back. Big war then, and Chazarno and men take refuge in temple. Just when they going to burn temple and kill him, he came out with baby in his arms, and tell them it Althara come back."

"And they believed him?"

"Oh, yes! He, he, he! They kill other priest, and she queen now. Chazarno die at last, too, and Althara have all power. She drill warriors as good as old priest. Think her goddess that no die. Me know better. Live on big ship with white men. I priest, too. He, he, he! Good place for priest, and get much fat. You come see queen."

There was a clatter of spears as a body of men marched into the compound. Between lines of warriors and through crowded streets of huts, Ferrers Lord, Thurston, and Ching-Lung followed their guide. The palace was a one-storeyed building of unbaked bricks, and roofed with tiles. It seemed to cover a large area. Amid a blaring of horns they passed through the main gateway, and found themselves in a luxuriant garden where palms and creeping plants threw a pleasant shadow. There were soldiers everywhere. It was a veritable garden of spears.

"Umph!" said Ching-Lung. "This place bristles like a porcupine. You see the business-end of a spear poking out of every hole and corner. Even the two-foot-nothing high brats in the streets toddle about with spears in their little fists instead of rattles or sticks of toffee. Oh, it's a charming spot to reside in!"

"And yet," said Rupert, "I don't think they could raise more than a couple of thousand men all told. Hallo! So Althara keeps a menagerie."

As they were hurried along they caught a glimpse of a cage in which a dozen jaguars were lying asleep. The path opened on a beautifully-kept lawn, with a stream bubbling through it. The stream fell with a noisy roar into a rocky pool. As they crossed the rustic bridge their guide pointed into the gloomy depths.

"Sacred alligators live below, sares," he said, with an ugly titter. "He, he, he! They plenty well fed!"

"A marvellously cheerful gentleman, Rupert!" said Ching-Lung. "That remark gives to think, as the French people have it. I shall protest if they want to present me to an alligator in the shape of light refreshment."

Rupert felt creepy at the very thought. They were told to halt in the middle of the lawn, and plunging the blades of their spears in the turf, the warriors squatted down. Opposite them was a pavilion, the green blinds drawn close over the windows, and the doors shut. The whole building was smothered in crimson blossoms.

"Althara! Althara!" came the shout.

The door opened, revealing the queen. She was followed by a train of tall, stately girls, armed with shields and spears. A carved seat was placed for her.

"Come, O strangers and hunters of blossoms," she said, "and be happy that the sun still shines upon you! Welcome, O chief! Have my slaves attended to your wants?"

"We have everything except what we hold dearest, queen—our liberty," said Ferrers Lord.

Althara laughed, and turned her dark eyes curiously on Ching-Lung.

"Who is the little man with the tail and the yellow face? Surely he is not of your kindred?"

"No, queen. He comes from a country close to the rising sun," said Ferrers Lord gravely. "He is a great chief and a mighty wizard in his own land. It is a land of magic. Ching," he added, in English, "you must play some tricks if she asks for it. I have told her you are a wizard."

"Thanks, awfully!" said Ching-Lung. "If I make a mess of it, I suppose the alligators will have me for tea!"

"A wizard?" said Althara thoughtfully. "He is more like a monkey, stranger! Come, let the little sorcerer with the tail show us his magic! I, too, have magicians. It will be sport for us. Summon Charkoni."

"Do your best, Ching," muttered Ferrers Lord, his face still preternaturally grave. "They are going to match you against Charkoni, their chief sorcerer. I don't think the woman means us any real harm. If we can make a good impression, I fancy I can manage her."

Ching-Lung groaned. With a fierce yell a hideous-looking man bounded forward, and, throwing himself flat on the ground, crawled to the queen's feet.

"Rise," said Althara, "and show these strangers your magic!"

The man bounded to his feet.

"They are devils!" he spluttered, pointing a skinny finger at the white men. "They will bring evil upon our land and upon our people. Slay them, O queen!"

"I don't know what the old Aunt Sally's talking about," said Ching-Lung, "but I'm pretty sure it isn't anything nice! Ugly old image! He looks as if he'd like to stab us."

The devil-man came closer, and put his repulsive face within an inch of the prince's.

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FOR NEXT MONDAY—**"THE BOY FROM THE FARM!"**

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"To the red altar with them, O queen," he shrieked, "or they will bring doom and death to thy people!"

"I called thee to see thy magic, Charkoni, not to listen to thy foolish tongue!" said the queen sharply. "Silence. Show us thy craft."

"It is forbidden, O peerless one, that these unhallowed dogs should behold the wisdom taught me by the sacred spirits!" he began. "It is sacrilege, O queen, and the spirits would be angry!"

"Stand aside, Charkoni. It would be a dread thing to offend the spirits," said Althara. "Thou, O tailed man, show us thy mettle!"

"Do something, Ching," said Ferrers Lord. "A great deal depends on you. If you fail us we are lost!"

### The Magic of the Yellow Man!

Ching-Lung was wearing a pair of native slippers. He kicked one off and caught it. Then he gave it a shake, and out of it poured a stream of money, keys, cigarettes, rings, matches, and various other articles—for Ching-Lung's pockets were always well stored. Then he spread his handkerchief over the heap, and told their guide to pick the handkerchief up. Nothing was there!

It was a simple little trick, but they were a simple people. A gasp of wonder came from the surprised warriors, and Charkoni, the devil-doctor, ground his teeth as he heard it.

"Good magic, indeed, stranger," said the Queen. "Surely he of the yellow face is a good magician!"

"If I'd only known about it," said Ching-Lung, "I could have made their hair curl. As it is, I can only give 'em a few threadbare old gags that people would shy bricks and bad eggs at me for anywhere else. Fancy having to do this with fivers! Oh, my hat!"

A moment later twenty banknotes, roughly twisted into the shape of butterflies, were fluttering around him as if alive. Ching-Lung waved his paper fan, and the notes, following each other in single file, seemed to the eyes of the astounded spectators to enter his right ear, pass clean through his skull, and flutter out at his left ear. He opened his mouth, and the papery insects fluttered in one by one. The Queen clapped her hands.

"Verily, he is the best of wizards, stranger," she said; "but he is very ugly! Oh, a miracle! Surely he will burn!"

Ching-Lung, playing the most ancient of tricks, was exuding fire and sparks from mouth and nostrils. His wonderful pigtail was erect, and on it, as on a stick, rested his helmet, whirling round faster and faster. The helmet shot high in the air. Over and over across went Ching-Lung, like a living wheel spinning in a cloud of smoke. He bounded into the air and caught the helmet on his head.

"Bravo, Ching!" cried Rupert.

There was a solemn silence. It lasted while Ching-Lung drew a cigarette from his pocket with his foot and gravely placed it between his lips. Very solemnly he walked forward to where Charkoni stood glowering. The devil-man had painted his nose a vivid scarlet. Ching-Lung struck a match and threw it away. Bending forward, he placed the tip of the cigarette close to the wizard's nose and puffed it into a glow. It was another ancient wheeze, but it was new to the warriors of Althara. Grim, wound-scarred veterans and raw youths who had never been in battle chuckled with delight, and the chuckles culminated in a hearty burst of laughter.

"Tell thy yellow sorcerer to come hither, stranger," said the Queen. "He shall show us more of his wonders at another season. It is no light thing that he has made Althara and her warriors laugh. He shall be my wizard, for, in sooth, to look upon him is to laugh!"

Ching-Lung would not have been very flattered had he been able to understand the Queen's opinion of his personal appearance. A large two-handled cup was brought.

"Shouldn't wonder if the stuff were poisoned," said the prince. "I've heard of such little jests before."

His unpleasant doubts were dissipated when he saw her raise the cup to her lips. She handed it to him, and Ching-Lung found that it contained a sweet but good-bodied wine.

"Drink," muttered a voice at Thurston's elbow. "No kill if drink from cup same as Queen. Watch Charkoni."

The speaker was the little native with the squinting eyes.

"Give Lord the cup, Ching, quickly, and pass it to me," said Rupert. "It's a talisman that may save us."

Ferrers Lord heard. In an instant the cup was at his lips.

"Treason, treason! Kill the dogs! Kill the dogs, people, or ye are lost!"

Charkoni shrieked out the words and flung himself at Thurston with levelled spear!

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand new serial next Monday.)

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# My Readers' Page

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The Editor is always pleased to hear from his Chums, at home or abroad.

Thomas Smith (Glasgow).—Religion is not taken into consideration at Greyfriars. Wingate is the biggest boy at Greyfriars, Bunter is the heaviest. Esmond is still at Greyfriars. Bunter is about 5ft. 3in., in height, and weighs 14st. Bob Cherry is the champion fighter of the Remove.  
 "A Welsh Reader" (South Wales).—I am afraid that what you suggest is impossible at present.

**FOR NEXT MONDAY:**

**"THE BOY FROM THE FARM!"**

By FRANK RICHARDS.

In our next splendid, long, complete school story a new chum is introduced to Harry Wharton & Co. of the Remove Form at Greyfriars School. Harry Wharton first meets him under peculiar circumstances, and has reason to be thankful for his timely aid. Subsequently when he comes to Greyfriars, as a new boy of some distinction, Harry Wharton & Co. make a great chum of him, and find him in many ways a fellow after their own heart. At the same time, they cannot help feeling that there is some mystery about "Sir 'Arry," as the new boy is always called. As a baronet, his behaviour is somewhat strange, and the masters are also puzzled by his manner, which is very different from what they had been led to expect from him. However, he proves himself a thoroughly good sort, and when the crisis comes Harry Wharton & Co. to a man are ready to back up

**"THE BOY FROM THE FARM!"**

**A BIRMINGHAM READER'S MESSAGE.**

I am sure my chums will not begrudge the space occupied by the following letter from a fellow-reader, apropos of our latest companion paper, "Chuckles," which has achieved such a marvellous success:

"Dear Editor,—I have seen your announcements and notices in 'The Gem' and 'Magnet' Libraries about your new paper called 'Chuckles' for some time now, but it was only this week that I took the trouble to follow your advice and buy a copy. It is not too much to say that I was literally amazed by 'Chuckles'—amazed and charmed by what is, without any shadow of doubt, the brightest, best, and most splendidly printed halfpenny paper on the market. Why on earth I did not get it before I don't know. It only shows how stupid I was, because I did not know what I was missing. If you will allow me a little space in your Chat page for the purpose, I should like to send a little message to my fellow-readers of 'The Gem' and 'Magnet' Libraries, which papers I have read regularly for over five years. It is simply this: Don't delay another hour before paying your ha'pennies for the latest copy of 'Chuckles.' If you do, you are missing the finest ha'porth in the world. I say this because I honestly think that 'Chuckles' will please every single 'Gemite' and 'Magnetite' particularly; and if they don't get it now at once, one day they will want to kick themselves hard for not troubling to get it sooner.—Your sincere reader,

"A. G. B. (Edgbaston, near Birmingham)."

**REPLIES IN BRIEF.**

Will the following readers accept my best thanks for their most interesting letters:

B. Wright (Northampton); M. Stevens (Southsea); Miss Cynthia Westcott (Southsea) and G. Tratt (Walworth).

"A Loyal Reader" (Kingston-on-Thames).—Sorry, but am afraid your story is unsuitable. Thanks for sending it all the same.

T. P.—When Mr. Richards has time, his first task, as I have said before, will be to write a story of Harry Wharton & Co. for the "Boys' Friend 3d. Library." For the present he is awfully busy writing for "The Magnet," and "Chuckles," every week.

**FADS OF FAMOUS CRICKETERS.**

Most of our well-known cricketers—consciously or unconsciously—affect some characteristic, some little mannerism on the field, and, "by their tricks shall ye know them," has become quite an axiom on which frequenters of the county grounds rely for the differentiation of their favourite white flannelled heroes. At the head of the list we must of course place W. G. Grace, the "Grand Old Man" of the game. W. G. has, or rather had, a habit of pointing his left toe at the bowler when batting, and alternately stroking and tugging at his beard when fielding, and everyone who has seen him come out to bat will remember the process he always went through. He would, after carefully measuring his bat length from the stumps, take off a bail and with it scratch on the ground his safe limit for grounding the willow. Then after shaking the dust off the bail and replacing it on top of the stumps, he would take in the positions of the field with a lightning sweep of his eyes, and prepare to meet the bowling with that aspect of confidence so well-known to followers of the summer pastime. One favourite trick of his always caused great fun. When batting at the pavilion end he would cut the ball hard and then suddenly start walking away, while the fielder, if he "tumbled" to the joke would throw the leather up in the air. Then as soon as the spectators began cheering that "wonderful catch," W. G. would quietly retrace his steps and resume his place at the wicket, chuckling to himself the while.

**Signs of Impatience.**

The Hon. S. F. Jackson has a habit which is an excellent guide as to how things are going with his side. When his bowling is getting tied in a knot, he will be seen pulling away at the ends of his moustache, and if the tugging is particularly vigorous, it is practically certain that he is thinking of taking the ball himself and having a try at the batsmen. But, on the other hand if things are going well, and it is his opponents that are going through the tying process, he will be seen smiling and calmly smoothing his "face fungus," as a first-class bowler elegantly termed it one day.

Tom Hayward has also a mannerism that gives any cricket enthusiast who comes on to the ground late a good idea of how many runs Surrey's idol has put together. Tom will come in to bat in a leisurely way, often times wagging his head, and when he takes his place at the wickets his cap will as a rule be nicely and carefully adjusted on his head. However, as he gets going, and the runs begin to accumulate it is pushed further and further back, until when he is well set, it is quite on the back of his head. He has as well a playful little sham, something after the style of W. G.'s. When he has made a big score, and is therefore on good terms with himself, he will start for an impossible run after playing the ball back, dodging into safety before the sphere can be returned to his end. Out at last he will start for the pavilion at a quick run, half-way there he will slow up, and then finish the journey at a funeral pace. He first came into the Surrey eleven as a trundler, and now that he never bowls, a striking characteristic has been lost, for he used to start from a point near mid off, and run in with a peculiar swerve.

(Next Week: Another interesting cricket article.)

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