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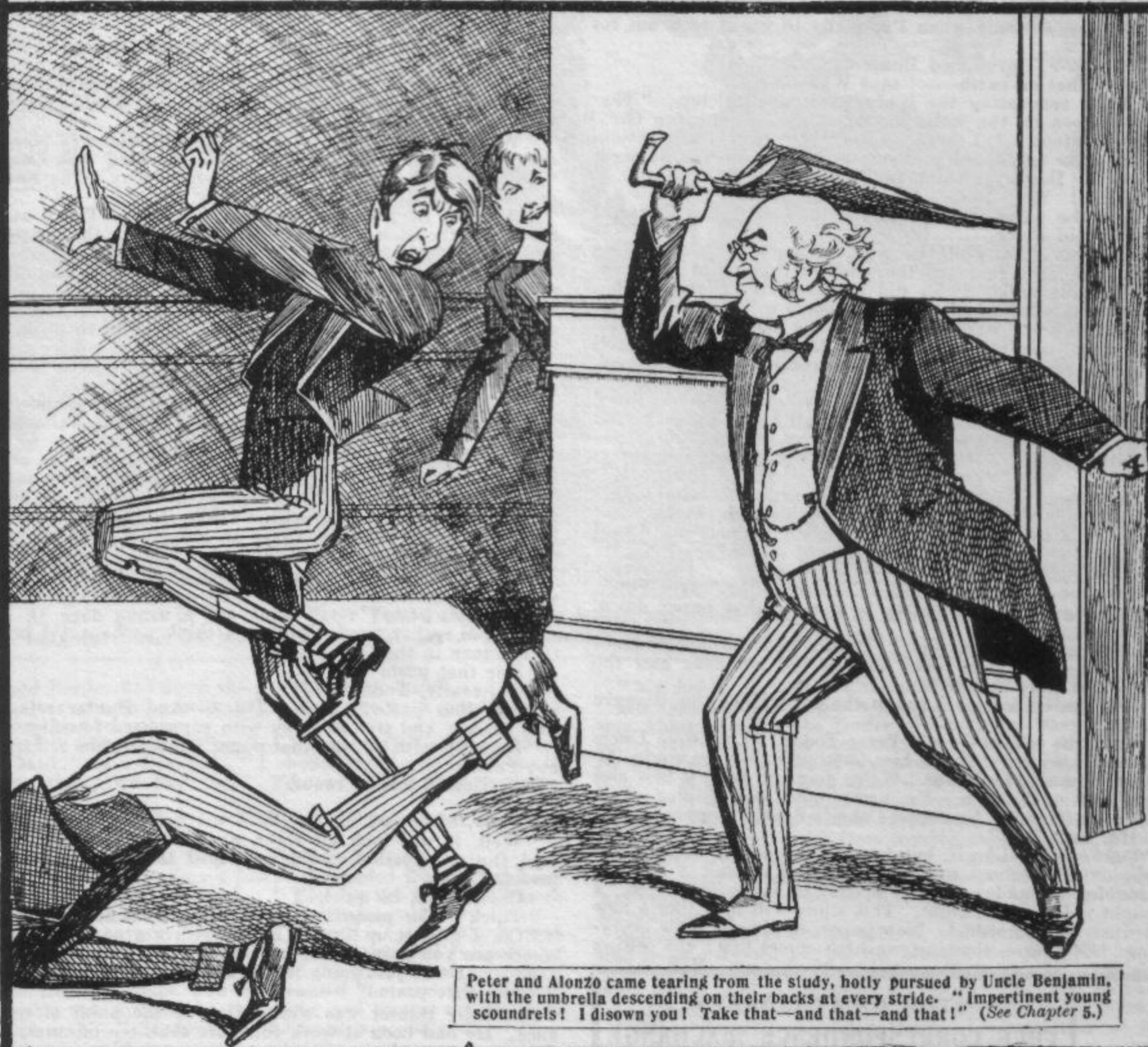
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LOOKING AFTER UNCLE

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums
of Greyfriars. - - - - - By FRANK RICHARDS.



Peter and Alonzo came tearing from the study, hotly pursued by Uncle Benjamin, with the umbrella descending on their backs at every stride. "Impertinent young scoundrels! I disown you! Take that—and that—and that!" (See Chapter 5.)

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Getting Ready for Uncle!

HARRY WHARTON looked into No. 7 Study in the Remove passage at Greyfriars in astonishment. Wharton was in his flannels, and had a bat under his arm. He had called for Peter Todd to take him down to the cricket, Todd having apparently forgotten that

the Remove were playing the Fourth Form that afternoon. But Peter Todd did not look much like playing cricket. No. 7 Study was in a state of extraordinary confusion. The chairs were piled on the table, and the hearthrug was sprawled over the chairs. Old "Daily Mails" were spread out over the study carpet and the fender. Peter Todd, in his shirt-sleeves, was stirring a sticky compound in a pail. His cousin Alonzo was trimming a roll of wallpaper, the



trimmings curling like serpents round his long legs and large feet. Tom Dutton was tearing the wallpaper from the study walls in great strips. Billy Bunter, in his shirt-sleeves, too, was standing with his hands in his trousers' pockets, blinking morosely at Peter Todd through his big spectacles.

Study No. 7 seemed to be very busy that afternoon.

"What the dickens—" began Wharton.

"Bunter!" rapped out Todd.

Bunter grunted discontentedly. Study No. 7 were hard at work, but Billy Bunter did not like hard work. He was in a bad temper.

"Stir this paste!"

"Oh, really, Todd, I don't see why you can't stir it!"

"Stir this paste!" roared Peter ferociously.

And Billy Bunter made a jump towards the pail, and took the big ladle, and began to stir.

Peter Todd was not to be trifled with when he gave orders. He ruled in No. 7 Study with a rod of iron.

"What's the little game?" demanded Wharton. "What are you breaking up the happy home for?"

"It's Todd's rotten, silly idea!" growled Bunter, blinking at Wharton over the pail of paste. "His silly uncle—"

"What?" interjected Peter.

"I mean his uncle's coming, and the silly ass—"

"Shut up, and stir that paste!" said Peter. "If you haven't got it ready when I'm ready to use it look out for squalls."

"Br-r-r-r!" grumbled Bunter.

"But what on earth—" said Wharton.

"We're renovating the study," explained Peter. "That paper's been on the walls for dogs' ages—ever since Greyfriars was founded, I think. After about twenty generations of kids have spilled ink and splashed things over it, it needs renewing. Don't you think so?"

"Ahem! Yes. But—"

"And the paint dates from the time of Julius Cæsar, I think," said Peter.

Peter was busy while he was talking. He was mixing paint in a large can, and the smell of that paint made the study simply reek. Peter did not seem to observe it, but Harry Wharton backed into the passage a little.

"We are new-decorating the study, in honour of my Uncle Benjamin," said the gentle Alonzo, looking up from the roll he was paring. "My dear uncle is coming down this week to pay us a visit."

"The study wanted doing, anyway," said Peter; "and we're going to do it. It's a case of all hands on deck, you know. Even Bunter's working—ain't you, Bunt?"

Bunter snorted. He was working, but he was not enjoying it.

"But we're playing the Upper Fourth this afternoon," said Harry Wharton; "and you're in the team, Todd."

"Oh, you can beat the Upper Fourth without me!" said Peter. "Put young Morgan in instead of me."

"But—"

"No time for cricket when we're decorating," said Peter. "How long are you going to be getting that paper down, Dutton?"

Tom Dutton did not reply. Dutton had the misfortune—or fortune—to be very deaf, and he did not hear half the things that were said to him.

"But the cricket—" began the captain of the Remove again.

"Blow the cricket!" said Peter Todd. "Last time Uncle Ben was down here, I saw him looking round the study—he noticed how shabby it was. We're going to have it new and clean for him this time. I'm pretty good as a painter. You remember the time I painted Coker's Sunday topper?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Coker didn't like it, but I made a good job of it," said Peter. "He seemed to think that pink wasn't a suitable colour for a Sunday topper—matter of taste, of course. I thought it looked all right. This study will look like a new pin when we've finished. New paper, new paint, new everything! Of course, the whitewashing comes first; the ceiling

hasn't been whitewashed since the time of the Tudors! I'm going to do that myself."

"But the cricket—"

"Bust the cricket!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, coming down the passage. "You ready, Toddy? Why, what—which—who—how—why—"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Johnny Bull, joining the staring juniors outside the door. "What the dickens—"

"Turning this study into a private lunatic asylum?" asked Frank Nugent.

Peter Todd sniffed.

"Haven't you ever seen a study renovated before?" he demanded. "Bunter, you slacker, you're not stirring that paste!"

"Look here, I'm tired," said Bunter, resting on his laurels, so to speak, after a dozen stirs. "I'll tell you what, Todd. I'll play instead of you in the eleven this afternoon. You know what a jolly good cricketer I am. And—"

"Will you?" grinned Harry Wharton. "Declined with thanks."

"I couldn't spare Bunter, anyway," said Peter. "Bunter's going to work. He's not much use, but it will bring his fat down a bit. If you fellows want to be useful, you can go and borrow Gosling's steps for me. I shall want them, to white-wash the ceiling."

"But what about the cricket?" said Bob Cherry.

"Hang the cricket!"

"We are preparing for Uncle Benjamin," said Alonzo.

"But if you really need a player, I should be very pleased—"

"Would you? You'd be the only chap who was pleased, then, if we put you into the team," chuckled Bob Cherry. "Come on, you fellows, and leave 'em to play. The Fourth are on the ground already."

"Will you fetch those steps for me?" bawled Peter, as the chums of the Remove went laughing down the passage. But Harry Wharton & Co. did not seem to hear.

"I'll fetch the steps, Toddy," said Bunter, laying down the ladle with alacrity.

"You'll stir that paste!" said Peter fiercely. "None of your sneaking off, and slacking. You're going to work, my boy."

"Shall I fetch them, my dear Peter?" asked Alonzo mildly.

"Yes. Tell Gosling they're wanted—most important. And buck up. The whitewash is ready, and I'm waiting."

"Very well, my dear Peter."

Alonzo Todd quitted the study. Bunter growled in a dissatisfied way. Outside, the sun was streaming down in the old Close of Greyfriars, and merry shouts could be heard from the direction of the cricket-field. Billy Bunter did not like passing his half-holiday as an amateur decorator. He didn't like work at all, especially hard work.

"I—I say, hadn't I better go and help Alonzo carry the steps?" he murmured.

"Stir that paste!"

"I—I'm rather tired, Toddy. I think perhaps I'd better take a turn in the Close—"

"Stir that paste!"

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

"Stir that paste!" roared Peter. And Bunter relapsed into silence, and stirred away with suppressed ferocity.

"Buck up with getting that paper down, Dutton!" rapped out Peter.

Tom Dutton looked round.

"Eh?"

"I say, buck up!"

"Well, it will look all right when the new paper's on," said Dutton, puzzled. "Of course, it looks mucked up at present."

"Oh, crumbs, be quick!"

"Thick? The paste?" asked Dutton, more surprised still.

"Oh, I give it up!" said Peter, with a groan. "Bunter, where are you going?"

"I—I—I was just going to see if Alonzo's coming."

"Stir that paste!"

But Billy Bunter was wrought up to the point of resistance. He had been at work for more than ten minutes, and the unaccustomed exertion was telling upon him.

"Look here, I'm not going to stand it!" he howled. "Blow your Uncle Benjamin! Blow your silly decorating! Blow you! Yah!"

And Bunter made a spring for the passage. Peter Todd made a spring after him, and caught his foot against the table, and it rocked, and the can of paint on it rocked, too. Peter clutched at the rocking can a little too hastily. It overturned, and the paint came swamping out over the unfortunate painter.

"Gerrough!" gasped Peter.

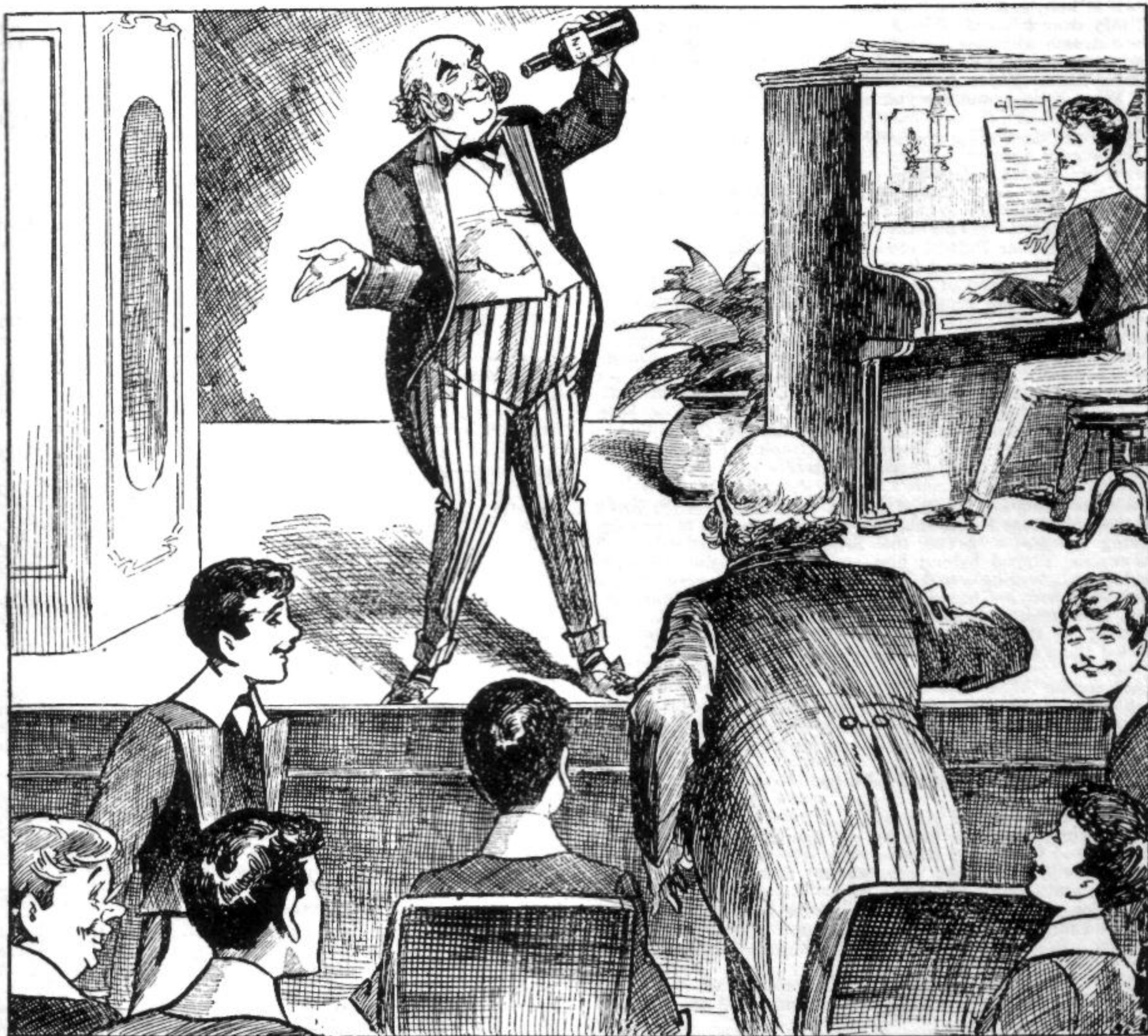
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At each pause in the song, Peter Todd raised a large bottle, and made a motion of drinking. Amid yells of laughter Uncle Benjamin jumped to his feet. "You disgraceful young rascal! How dare you?" (See Chapter 11.)

And Bunter fled down the passage at top speed, and Peter, who was streaming with paint, was not in a condition to pursue him just then.

"After him, Dutton!" yelled Peter. "Collar the cad!"

"Mad?" said Dutton. "I should think you must be, to waste the paint like that! You've ruined your trousers, too!"

Peter was mopping frantically at the paint that streamed down him.

"Go after that fat fool!" he shrieked.

"Who are you calling a fool?" demanded Dutton, catching only the last word, as usual. "You are the fool, it seems to me. We shall have to buy some more paint now."

Peter did not say any more. There were no words that would have described his feelings. He mopped furiously at the streaming paint, and breathed deadly vows of vengeance upon the fat junior who had caused the disaster. Bunter was at a safe distance by that time, and he was not likely to return to No. 7 Study while the work was going on.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Coker on the Warpath!

COKER of the Fifth stood in the doorway of the School House, looking out into the Close. He was waiting for Potter and Greene. The chums of the Fifth were going out for a drive that afternoon, Horace Coker, as usual, standing the trap.

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"WUN LUNG'S WHEEZE!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Coker suddenly.

His eyes had fallen upon a peculiar figure in the Close. It was Alonzo Todd. The Duffer of Greyfriars was staggering under the weight of a decidedly heavy pair of steps, which, by Peter's orders, he had borrowed from Gosling, the school porter. A small tip had induced Gosling to lend the steps; but a very large tip would have been required to induce him to carry them to the School House and up to No. 7 Study. But Alonzo never shrank from trouble, especially for the sake of others. That was Alonzo's way. He was always happy to make himself useful, which, as Vernon-Smith had remarked, was only as it should be, as he could never by any possibility be ornamental.

Alonzo Todd was not an athlete, and the steps were heavy and large. Alonzo panted for breath, and perspired in the hot sun, as he bore his burden towards the house. The steps were closed, and extended across his shoulder, and he had a considerable amount of difficulty in keeping them there.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Potter, joining Coker at that moment. "What's the little game now?"

"Those Remove kids up to something," said Coker, with a frown. Coker of the Fifth had great ideas about keeping juniors in order. If he had been a prefect of the Sixth Form, he could not have been more troubled by a pressing sense of duty towards the fags. The juniors looked at it in a different light. Their view was that Coker was an ass, and never could mind his own business.

Alonzo halted at the bottom of the School House steps, and

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looked up at the Fifth-Formers. Potter and Greene grinned down at him, and Coker frowned.

"My dear fellows," said Alonzo mildly, "would you have the extreme kindness to help me with these steps? They are somewhat heavy. I called to Bunter to aid me, but he did not hear. If you would lend me a hand——"

"What little games are you up to now?" demanded Coker severely.

"We are decorating the study, my dear Coker."

"My only aunt!"

"If you would kindly help me——"

"Certainly," said Potter, closing one eye at his comrades, and he descended the School House steps, and laid a hand on Alonzo's burden. "This way!"

"M-m-my dear Potter, you—you are turning me round!"

"Go hon!" murmured Potter.

He swung the end of the steps round, and Alonzo had to turn with them, in a state of great astonishment. When his back was turned, Potter let go the wooden steps, and applied his boot to Alonzo's person. The astonished junior staggered forward, and the steps rolled from his shoulder to the ground with a crash. Alonzo tumbled over beside them, and sat gasping. The Fifth-Formers roared with laughter.

"G-goo-goodness gracious!" gasped Alonzo. "You have caused me considerable pain, Potter! My Uncle Benjamin would be shocked—nay, disgusted! Grooh! I shall decline any further assistance from you, Potter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Alonzo scrambled up, and with a tremendous effort lifted the wooden steps to his shoulder again. Then he came staggering up the steps of the School House. Potter, still humorous, slipped behind him as he reached the doorway, and Alonzo, fearing a new application of Potter's boot, swung round suddenly. The long wooden steps swung round with him, of course, and there was a sudden yell from Coker and Greene, as the steps caught them across the chests, and hurled them backwards into the house.

"Oh!"

"Yaroo!"

Alonzo swung back again in surprise and concern. He swung back so quickly that the other end of the steps caught Potter on the side of the head, and hurled him gasping into the Close.

"Yow-ow-ow!" shrieked Potter. "You—you villain! I'll slaughter you!"

"Dear me!" gasped Alonzo.

He swung round to look at the damage he had done to Potter, and Coker and Greene, who were scrambling up, received their end of the steps again. Coker received it on the ear, and Greene under the chin. They roared and leaped away for safety. Alonzo, in a wild state of alarm and confusion by this time, swung round once more and bore his burden into the house, and made for the stairs, leaving Coker and Greene gasping behind.

"The—the mad ass!" yelled Coker, rubbing his ear. "He did that on purpose! He's nearly punctured my napper! I'll scalp him!"

"I'll slaughter him!" groaned Greene, rubbing his chin.

Potter came whooping in looking homicidal.

"Where's that idiot? Where's that dummy? Where's that howling maniac? I'm going to smash him! I'm going to spifficate him! I'm going——"

"After him!"

Alonzo Todd, quite alarmed by the ferocious exclamations he heard behind him, was hurrying up the stairs as fast as he could go. But that was not very fast, with the heavy wooden steps on his shoulder. Coker, and Potter, and Greene made a wild break up the stairs after him. Todd reached the first landing with the three seniors grabbing at him from behind. He swung round to rush up the second flight, and Hobson of the Shell, who was coming downstairs, received Alonzo's terrible weapon right on the chest. Hobson gave a roar, and slid down the stairs past Alonzo, and bumped into Coker.

Alonzo rushed up frantically. He was sure that the Fifth-Formers meant to hurt him—quite sure. It was very wrong of them, but he was quite sure of it. Fortunately Hobson's collision with Coker delayed the pursuit a moment. Coker shoved the Shell fellow off roughly; and Hobson, who was on fighting terms with Coker, and who was hurt, returned the shove with interest, and Coker grabbed him furiously, and they struggled on the landing. Potter and Greene were impeded by the struggling combatants, and Alonzo, gasping, reached the Remove passage.

The Fifth-Formers piled on Hobson, and the Shell fellow was bumped down on the landing, and left there breathless. Then the seniors rushed after Alonzo again. The unfortunate youth heard rapid pursuing footsteps, and broke into a desperate run. He was now on the straight for the home run, so to speak. He came along the Remove passage in fine

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style, the steps swaying, and crashing every now and then on the wall or a door.

Bolsover major and Skinner looked out of their studies to see what the terrific uproar was about. They soon discovered. The steps swept at Bolsover major like a battering ram, and hurled him breathless on the linoleum, and a moment later Skinner received a charge, and was clean bowled. Alonzo fled on recklessly, leaving victims strewn behind him like Achilles in the stricken plain of Troy.

"Stop him!"

"Catch him!"

"Hold him!"

"I'll slaughter him!"

Alonzo reached his study as the pursuers, having stumbled over Bolsover and Skinner, and kicked them out of the way, reached him.

They grabbed at the steps, and they grabbed at Alonzo; but luck befriended him. He swept the steps round into the study doorway, and rushed in breathlessly with them. He hadn't time to see where he was going—there wasn't a moment to lose with those clutching hands close behind him. But it was unfortunate—for the fellows in the study. Peter Todd, who was mopping paint off his clothes, was not prepared to receive a kind of Balaclava charge. The top of the steps caught him on the chest, and landed him in the fender.

"Help!" gasped Alonzo. "They're after me—I fear they are angry—oh, dear!"

He swung round towards the doorway to face the foe, and the steps collided with Tom Dutton's ribs. Tom Dutton was hurled into the corner where the pail of paste had unfortunately been placed. There was a loud squelching sound as Dutton sat down in the paste. And the sound that came from Dutton was indescribable.

"What the—how the—who the——" Peter Todd gasped. "You silly ass—you dangerous lunatic—you desperate villain!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Collar him!" shrieked Coker.

Coker & Co., dashed into the study, wild with vengeance. They collared Alonzo, and the steps came to the floor with a crash. There was a fiendish yell from Potter, who caught one end of them on his toe, and he hopped on one leg, clasping the other foot with both hands.

"Yaroooh! Grooh!"

"Ow! Ow! Help!" yelled Alonzo, who was being frantically thumped by Coker and Greene, who seemed to have mistaken him for a punch-ball, "Oh, dear! Help! My dear fellows, please don't! You are hurting me—you are really—ow—I assure you—yaroooh!"

"Smash him!" gurgled Coker. "Squash him! Thump him! Bump him! Slaughter him!"

Peter Todd rushed to the rescue. Peter Todd was a great fighting man; but he did not feel equal to dealing with three seniors with his fists alone. But there was still some paint in the can; only half of it was on Peter. The other half was at Coker's service, and Peter grasped the can, and swamped the paint over Coker and Greene. Potter had hopped out of the study. His toe felt several sizes too large for him, and he had had enough. Coker and Greene soon discovered that they had had enough, too. The paint squelched over them, and they roared and let go Alonzo, and backed away.

"Grooh!" gasped Coker. "You horrible young villain, keep that paint away!"

"Brrrrr!" stuttered Greene. "I—I— Oh, you young scoundrel—oh!"

"Give 'em the whitewash, Dutton!" yelled Peter.

Coker & Co. did not stay for the whitewash. The paint was more than enough for them. They fled.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Peter, as the enemy disappeared, carrying a considerable quantity of his paint with them. "Oh, dear! All the paint gone now! We shall want a new lot."

"Look at my bags!" shrieked Dutton. "That blithering idiot pushed me into the paste! Look at my bags!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" stuttered Peter, looking at them. "They look damp!"

"I—I—I'll squelch that howling idiot——"

Alonzo dodged round the table.

"My dear Dutton——"

"I'll scalp him! I'll——"

Dutton, infuriated, pursued Alonzo round the table. Alonzo fled from the study, with Tom Dutton hot on his track. Their fleeing footsteps died away down the passage.

"Come back!" roared Peter. "Come back and work, you slackers!"

But they did not come back, though certainly they did not look as if they were slacking at that moment. Alonzo certainly wasn't slacking. He was running as he had never run before in his life.

Peter Todd looked round the study and grunted.

"We shall want more paint—and more paste—brrrrr! Never mind, I can get on with the whitewashing!" And Peter set up the steps, and mounted them, and got on with the whitewashing.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. Tea in No. 1 Study!

HARRY WHARTON & Co. were playing the Upper Fourth that afternoon. They were playing hard, and beating their opponents hollow. Owing to a peculiar conjunction of circumstances, the Fourth Form had beaten the Remove a few days earlier, and the Removites were very keen to wipe out that defeat. Temple, Dabney & Co. wanted to repeat their victory; but as Bob Cherry remarked, they hadn't an "earthly." And the Remove players came off the ground very well satisfied with themselves, having beaten the Upper Fourth by an innings and twenty runs.

"And without Peter," said Bob Cherry; "and Peter's one of the best. The poor old Fourth don't have a look-in with us! No fear!"

"The no-fearfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But whyfully did not the esteemed Toddy play?"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"He's new-decorating his study, ready for his Uncle Benjamin," he said. "We'll give him a look-in and see how he's getting on!"

And the cricketers stopped outside No. 7 Study in the Remove passage and looked in. There was a smell of paint and whitewash in the study, which Hurree Jamset Ram Singh justly described as terrific. Peter and Alonzo and Tom Dutton were there, all of them in their shirt-sleeves, and all covered with splashes of whitewash and daubs of paint. Peter had almost finished whitewashing the ceiling. It was past tea-time, but Peter had not left off to rest. Bunter was not to be seen. He was giving the study a wide berth until the work was done.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, sniffing. "Are you starting as a scent establishment, or is there something up with the giddy drains?"

"Notice a smell?" asked Peter.

"Well, slightly!"

"Just a little bit!" chuckled Nugent.

"Well, I don't notice it," said Todd. "I suppose one gets used to it. Can't mind little things like that when there's work to be done. We're making things hum here, I can tell you!"

"By Jove, you are!" grinned Wharton; and Hurree Singh observed that the humfulness was terrific—as indeed it was.

"Nearly done the whitewashing," said Peter. "Have you finished mixing that new lot of paint, Alonzo?"

"Yes, my dear Peter."

"You seem to have got most of it on your clothes, you ass. Is that new paste ready, Dutton? We've got to get the paper up this evening."

"Eh?"

"Have you mixed the new paste?" roared Peter.

"I don't know about a waste," said Dutton. "It's cost a bit, but it will look very nice when we've finished. Don't you think so, Wharton?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"We've had to get in a lot of new paint—Coker took away most of the first lot on his hair—and there's a lot on my bags," said Peter. "What are you chaps sniffing at?"

"Well, the study's a bit smelly!"

"That will pass off," said Peter airily. "You can get used to it. I'm pretty hungry, but we're not going to leave off for tea. No time for slacking."

"My dear Peter, I am very hungry, too!"

"Can't be helped—no time for tea!"

"Come and have tea with us," said Harry Wharton. "Ready in five minutes."

"Now you're talking," said Peter. "We'll manage to get ten minutes off, if you get the tea ready. You're a Briton. I shall have finished this last corner in five minutes."

The chums of the Remove grinned, and went down the passage to No. 1 Study. Whenever Peter Todd took anything up, he was in deadly earnest about it; and he was evidently as earnest as usual in new-decorating the study. Perhaps it would look very nice when he had finished—but so far it was not very promising.

Billy Bunter followed the Famous Five into No. 1 Study.

"Jolly decent of you fellows to ask us to tea when we're so busy," he remarked.

"Eh? You were not busy!" said Nugent.

"Ahem! I've been helping, you know; I had to get off and have a rest, I was so tired," Bunter explained. "I'll poach your eggs for you if you like."

"Well, if you're coming to tea, you may as well make yourself useful," said Wharton, relinquishing the frying-pan to the fat junior. "Go ahead!"

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FOR NEXT
MONDAY—

"WUN LUNG'S WHEEZE!"

EVERY
MONDAY,

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ONE
PENNY.

Billy Bunter was a good cook. His heart was in that line of business. He was also a good ventriloquist; but there his gifts stopped. In the Form-room he was the biggest duffer in the Remove; and at games he was a bigger duffer still—though no amount of argument would have convinced him that he was not a better batsman than W. G. Grace, and a finer goal-getter than Steve Bloomer. The eggs were cooked to a turn, and immediately he had finished them Bunter started eating them. He had bolted three by the time Nugent observed him, and collared him.

"Hold on, you fat oyster!"

"Grooh! I suppose I'm going to have tea, ain't I?" said Bunter indignantly. "I'm jolly hungry. Are there any more eggs to cook?"

"No, you porpoise!"

"Then what are you fellows going to have?"

"Eh?"

"There are only twelve here," said Bunter. "I can manage them. You fellows are going to have toast—eh?"

"You—you gorilla! We're going to have eggs!" said Nugent indignantly. "If you've got any more room inside, you can fill up with toast."

"If!" ejaculated Bunter. "I've hardly started yet. I—"

"Shut up, and make the toast!"

"Well, here we are!" said Peter Todd, coming into the study with Alonzo and Tom Dutton. "You don't mind us coming in our working clothes, I suppose—honest workmen fresh from toil, you know. Too busy to change."

"Oh, my hat!"

The three honest workmen fresh from toil brought a terrific odour of paint into the study. They had got used to it themselves, but the fellows fresh from the cricket-field were not used to it. They sniffed emphatically.

"Notice the paint?" asked Peter calmly.

"Great Scott! Yes!"

"Don't mind a trifle like that," said Todd, sitting down at the table. "Hallo, is that Bunter? You're coming back to help after tea, you fat slacker!"

"Oh, really, Todd—"

"Let's have the window wide open, anyway!" groaned Wharton, and he jammed the sash up. "I say, that paint is rather nifty, you know."

"Pooh—a mere trifle!"

"Groogh!"

"What's the matter?" asked Peter.

"I—I say, you're making the study simply reek, you know!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You must have a ton of it about you, I should think!"

"That ass Bunter made me upset the can on my bags," explained Peter, helping himself to toast. "Don't mind it! I don't!"

"I—I say, Wharton!" gasped Johnny Bull. "I—I think I'll have tea in my own study, on second thoughts. Excuse me!"

And Johnny Bull hurriedly departed. Peter Todd did not seem to notice it. He was tucking into ham and eggs and toast with a keen appetite. He remarked that the smell of paint made the appetite keen. Harry Wharton & Co. did not feel that effect from it. It made them feel as if they were on a Channel steamer on a very rough day.

"Ahem!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Now I come to think of it, I really think I ought to have tea with Marky to-day. You'll excuse me!"

"The samefulness applies to my honourable self," remarked Hurree Singh. "The esteemed Marky will miss us!"

And Bob Cherry and Hurree Singh beat a simultaneous retreat. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent exchanged glances. It was surprising that the amateur painters and whitewashers could carry so much paint about them on their clothes, hands, and faces; but the atmosphere in Study No. 1 was almost thick with it. Perhaps it was due to the way the paint had been mixed. Wharton and Nugent were feeling quite faint.

"I—I say, you look after the—the guests," murmured Nugent. "I think I ought to go and have tea with Johnny."

"Don't mind me," said Peter, affably.

Nugent hurried out of the study. Harry Wharton hesitated a moment, and then followed him. He did not want to fail in courtesy towards his guests, but he could not stand it. The amateur painters were left in sole possession of Study No. 1 and the tea.

Billy Bunter rose from the fire, with a pile of toast on a plate.

"I say, you fellows, this will do!" he remarked. "Why—what—Where are they gone?"

Peter Todd chuckled.

"They don't seem to like the paint," he remarked. "Queer, ain't it?"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Bunter. "Pass the eggs!"
 "None for you," said Peter cheerfully. "If you don't work you're not going to eat. You can have some toast."
 "Why, you—you rotter!" yelled Bunter. "They ain't your eggs!"

"They're mine now. Shut up!"

"But I—I say——"

"Shut up!" roared Peter.

And Bunter, with an almost homicidal glare at his study leader, shut up.

Tom Dutton looked round the study.

"Aren't those fellows going to have tea?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! No. They don't like the paint."

"Faint!" said Dutton. "You don't mean to say they've fainted?"

"Oh, crumbs! They don't like the smell!" roared Peter.

"What bell?"

"Br-r-r-r-r!"

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Dutton.

"Still, if they're not coming to tea we may as well finish the eggs. I'm hungry."

And they finished them. When the table was quite cleared, the amateur decorators returned to Study No. 7 to resume work. Peter Todd led Bunter with an iron grip on his collar.

"I—I say, I—I want to speak to Wharton!" Bunter murmured.

"That can wait," said Peter cheerfully. "You're going to help in the paper-hanging now."

"It—it's rather important, and——"

"Not quite so important as the paper-hanging," said Peter, and he hurled Bunter into Study No. 7. "Stir that paint first."

"Oh, really, Todd!"

"Stir that paint!"

Bunter groaned and stirred the paint. Wharton and Nugent came out of Bob Cherry's study after tea, and, passing the open door of Study No. 7, found the decorators hard at work. Peter Todd was paper-hanging, and he paused for a moment to nod genially to Wharton and Nugent.

"Thanks, awfully, for the tea!" he said. "It was ripping!"

Wharton and Nugent smiled sickly smiles and walked on, and spent the next quarter of an hour waving newspapers about their study, and swinging the door to and fro to drive out the scent that had been left there by their late guests. And Wharton remarked with great emphasis that the next time he asked Peter Todd to tea anybody was welcome to use his head as a football.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Finishing Touch by Coker!

STUDY NO. 7 did their preparation in the junior common-room that evening. They came into the common-room showing many signs of their late labours, though rubbing and scrubbing with hot water and soap had cleaned them to some extent. A lingering odour of paint hung about them.

"Finished the decorating?" Vernon-Smith asked.

"Yes; done to a T!" said Peter Todd. "Whitewashing, paper-hanging, and painting—all done. The study is a bit smelly, of course. Can't use it again this evening. I've locked the door and taken the key away, in case any silly ass should go in and rub against the paint. Dry to-morrow, when Uncle Ben comes."

"Uncle Benjamin will be so pleased!" murmured Alonzo.

"Well, he's bound to be," said Peter Todd. "Tain't every kid who new-decorates his study just to please his uncle."

Billy Bunter looked up and blinked through his big spectacles.

"I say, Toddy, if old Todd——"

"Whom?"

"I—I mean, Mr. Todd. If Mr. Todd is pleased and hands out a good tip, I'm jolly well going to have my whack! I've done most of the work!"

"Lot you've done, you ass!" said Peter. "But we didn't do it for a tip from Uncle Ben."

"Rot! What did you do it for, then?" demanded Bunter.

"Sheer goodness and nobility of character, to please uncle," said Peter calmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When is Uncle Ben coming?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Some time to-morrow—after morning lessons most likely," said Peter. "I'm going to keep the study locked till then, and show him into it when he comes. It will burst on his gaze like a beautiful dream, you know. He's bound

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to be pleased, and we want to please him before he leaves England—don't we, Lonzy?"

"Yes, indeed, my dear Peter."

"You see," Peter explained, "Uncle Benjamin is going abroad—trotting over the Continent—and he's willing to take one of his dutiful nephews with him. He hasn't decided yet which to take. Alonzo would benefit most by the change, but I'm a more entertaining sort of chap as a travelling companion. So Lonzy and I are going to compete in looking after uncle and trying to please him, and the chap who pleases him most will be taken on a jolly long holiday to the sunny South. Of course, we both want to go—don't we, Lonzy?"

"I should be very happy to go," said Alonzo. "But I should be very pleased to relinquish my claim to you, my dear Peter. I will tell Uncle Benjamin I should prefer you to go, and I have no doubt——"

"I'll punch your head if you do," said Peter. "Uncle Ben is going to decide for himself. He's going to talk to the Head and our Form-master, and be guided by their opinion which of us deserves the holiday most. It will be a ripping holiday—Switzerland, and the Riviera, and Italy. It would do Alonzo worlds of good. But I should enjoy it more than Alonzo, so we're going to try to cut one another out in Uncle Ben's favour—ain't we, Lonzy?"

"My dear Peter——"

"And the goodest chap of the two goes," said Peter. "Of course, Lonzy is gooder than I am, but I'm going to be very good."

"You are not doing your preparation, my dear Peter."

"Blow the prep!" yawned Peter. "I've been working hard, and I'm jolly well not going to do any more prep."

"But Mr. Quelch will be angry to-morrow morning, my dear Peter."

"Blow Mr. Quelch too!"

And Peter strolled away, leaving Bunter and Dutton and Alonzo working at their prep at a table in the corner of the common-room. Alonzo Todd shook his head sadly. His cousin Peter was usually a very sensible and clear-headed fellow, but his usual good sense seemed to have failed him this time. Neglecting his preparation was certainly not a specially good method of getting a good report from his Form-master.

When the Removites passed Study No. 7 on their way to their dormitory, a smell of paint hung about in the passage outside the study. But Peter remarked cheerfully that it would all have cleared off by the time he unlocked the study door on the morrow. They passed Coker of the Fifth on the stairs, and Coker bestowed a glare upon the cheerful Peter.

"It's all right, Coker, old man," said Peter innocently. "We had enough paint to finish. You were welcome to your little lot. Nothing to worry about."

And Coker glared yet more ferociously, and went on his way. The Removites went to their dormitory, and Coker walked away to his study in the Fifth Form passage, with a thoughtful expression upon his face. Potter and Greene were in the study, eating nuts. Coker's frowning face broke into a grin as he came in.

"I've just seen that young scoundrel Todd!" he remarked.

"Blow him!" growled Greene.

"The young beast ought to be licked!" snapped Potter.

"I've got an idea!" said Coker.

"Oh, blow your ideas!"

"Look here, Potter——"

"If it's anything up against the Remove, you can keep it!" said Potter aggressively. "We know your ideas. We always get the worst of it. Take it away and boil it."

"It's a jolly good idea!" roared Coker.

"Rats!"

Coker glowered at his disrespectful study-mate.

"You silly ass! That young villain Todd mopped paint over us. There's some of the beastly stuff sticking in my hair now. He's been whitewashing and painting and papering his study——"

"We know that."

"Ready for his blessed Uncle Benjamin to come to-morrow," went on Coker, unheeding the interruption. "I suppose he's thinking of getting a whacking good tip from the old chump. You've seen his Uncle Benjamin—a giddy old ass if ever there was one. When he was here before he had the cheek to give me a long sermon for clouting a fag. What are fags for I'd like to know?"

"Well, that's right enough," agreed Potter.

"Like his cheek!" said Greene.

"That young villain has gone to bed now, and left his study locked up," said Coker. "That's so that nobody can get into it and spoil the new paint."

"Blessed if I want to go into the smelly place."

"Well, I do," said Coker. "And as a good many of the



Monsieur Charpentier brandished a bony fist in Uncle Benjamin's face. Uncle Benjamin brandished a fat one in return. In another moment a most unprecedented scene would have taken place. But Peter Todd rushed between. (See Chapter 15.)

locks on the Remove passage doors are the same make, we could easily get a key to open Todd's study."

Potter and Greene stared at him.

"What on earth for?" demanded Potter.

"Todd was very free with his paint for us," said Coker. "I think we may as well let him have some in return. I think we might improve the decorations in the study a little."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Potter and Greene together, understanding the great Coker's scheme at last. "Ripping!"

"We can get a pot of paint from Gosling," said Coker. "We can tip him a bob——"

"Ahem!"

"I'll tip him the bob, of course!"

"Jolly good idea!"

"And we'll improve Todd's study so that he won't know it again to-morrow," chuckled Coker. "How's that, what?"

"Ripping, old scout!" said Porter cordially. "You have some good ideas sometimes. Now those young rotters have gone to bed, the coast is clear. Let's get at it."

"Come on!" said Coker.

Peter Todd was in bed in the Remove dormitory, sleeping the sleep of the just. He would not have reposed so peacefully had he dreamed that three Fifth-Form fellows were

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"WUN LUNG'S WHEEZE!"

creeping into the Remove passage, one of them with a large can of red paint in his hand.

But Peter was not dreaming of Coker & Co.

No. 7 Study was locked; but it did not take Coker long to find a key in one of the neighbouring doors that would fit the lock. He unlocked No. 7, and the three Fifth-Formers entered it, chuckling.

They were busy in No. 7 study for about ten minutes. When they came out they were still chuckling, and they carefully locked the door after them, and replaced the key where it had been found. Then they returned to their own quarters, and sat down and roared.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Uncle Benjamin is Not Pleased!

COKER of the Fifth kept an eye on Peter Todd the next morning.

He wanted very much to see Peter's face when he looked into No. 7 Study.

But Coker was disappointed. Peter did not go to the study. He was out of doors till breakfast, and after breakfast he went into the Form-room. Coker grinned hugely as he went to his own Form-room with Potter and Greene.

"The young ass hasn't discovered it yet," he remarked.

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"All the better—give the paint time to dry!" chuckled Potter.

"I hear that his giddy uncle is coming after morning lessons," said Coker. "If Peter Todd takes him to his study before he knows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The chums of the Fifth yelled with laughter at the idea, forgetting that they were in the Form-room; and Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, promptly gave them fifty lines each. But Coker & Co. did not mind the lines. They were full of joyful reflections upon the coming surprise for Uncle Benjamin.

Peter and Alonzo were also in a pleasant state of anticipation that morning, though from different reasons.

Alonzo was looking forward to the visit of his celebrated uncle, who was to pass several days at Greyfriars as the guest of the Head. Mr. Benjamin Todd was an extremely wealthy old gentleman, and a liberal subscriber to the various school funds, and so he was a personage of some consequence. The affectionate Alonzo anticipated the effect of the newly-decorated study upon his uncle with great pleasure. Uncle Benjamin had remarked upon the appearance of the study, on the occasion of his last visit, and he was bound to be pleased by the industry of his devoted nephews.

Peter Todd found himself in trouble with Mr. Quelch that morning. Peter was generally one of the brightest scholars in the class; but this particular morning he failed to give satisfaction.

"Did you prepare your lesson last night, Todd?" Mr. Quelch demanded.

"No, sir," said Peter meekly.

"Indeed! And why not?"

"I didn't have time, sir."

The Removites almost gasped as Peter made that reply to the Form-master. For a junior to tell his Form-master that he hadn't had time for preparation was something quite new.

Mr. Quelch seemed unable to believe his ears for a moment.

"What—what did you say, Todd?"

"I didn't have time for prep, sir," said Peter meekly.

"Indeed! You had, doubtless, some occupation that was much more important than preparing your lessons?" said Mr. Quelch, with crushing sarcasm.

Peter did not seem to see the sarcasm.

"Yes, sir!"

"Wha-a-at! You will take a hundred lines, Todd!"

"Thank you, sir!"

"You are a stupid boy!"

"Yes, sir."

"You are impertinent, Todd!" thundered the Remove-master.

"Yes, sir."

"Wha-a-at! Hold out your hand, Todd!" almost shouted Mr. Quelch, seizing the pointer from his desk.

Swish, swish, swish!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"If you neglect your preparation again, Todd, I shall cane you severely. I would detain you after lessons, but for the circumstance that your relative is coming to see you. You are an impertinent boy. Sit down!"

"Yes, sir."

Peter Todd sat down, squeezing his hands ruefully. Alonzo gave him a most distressful look.

"My dear Peter," he murmured, "unless you are very, very careful, you will not obtain a good report from Mr. Quelch, and you will lose your chance of going abroad with Uncle Benjamin."

"Go hon!" groaned Peter.

Morning lessons were over at last, and the Remove were dismissed. Uncle Benjamin had not arrived yet, and the two Todds went down to the school-gates to wait for him there.

It was nearly the juniors' dinner-time when the station cab from Friardale rolled up to Greyfriars, with an old gentleman seated inside. The cab stopped at the gates, and Mr. Benjamin Todd alighted.

He was a little old gentleman, with pointed side-whiskers, and spectacles, and a silk hat. He carried a large umbrella under his arm.

"My dear nephews, I am glad to see you," he said, as he shook hands with Peter and Alonzo in turn. "What tricks have you been playing lately, you young rascal—what?"

"I, sir?" said Peter.

"Yes, you, you young scamp!" said Mr. Todd, with a fat chuckle. "I am not likely to suspect Alonzo of playing tricks."

"No, indeed, uncle," said Alonzo. "I trust I am of too serious a nature to expend time upon the perpetration of practical jokes. But you must not blame Peter—Peter is an excellent fellow. I have been much more comfortable at

Greyfriars since Peter came. The boys do not play such tricks on me now. Peter punches their heads. It is very rough, but it makes it more comfortable for me."

Mr. Todd chuckled again.

Although the kind old gentleman made no distinction between his nephews in the treatment of them, it was not difficult to see that his heart warmed more to the reckless and harum-scarum Peter than to the gentle and inoffensive Alonzo.

"We have a little surprise for you, uncle," said Peter. "You remember you thought our study was rather a shabby affair when you were here before—"

"Ahem!"

"Well, we've been new decorating it, specially for your visit," said Peter. "It was really Lonzy's idea—"

"Not at all, my dear Peter: it was your idea—"

"Rats! Come and have a look at it, uncle."

Mr. Todd walked across the Close with his two affectionate nephews.

Billy Bunter met them at the door of the School House, and Mr. Todd shook hands with him.

"Peter's study-mate, I think?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Bunter, blinking at him. "I've been doing up the study in honour of your visit, sir. These fellows helped."

"Well, you cheeky ass!" ejaculated Peter.

"Oh, really, Todd! I was going to say, sir, if you'd like me to show you the way to the tuck-shop, I am quite at your service—"

"Cheese it!" said Peter, without ceremony. "This way, uncle."

And he led Mr. Todd upstairs.

The old gentleman was piloted down the Remove-passage. Coker, and Potter, and Greene had an eye upon him, and they chuckled in chorus.

"Todd's going to show him the study!" murmured Potter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd, without a suspicion in his mind, inserted the key in the study-door, and unlocked it. He threw open the door, and stepped back for Mr. Todd to enter first.

"I hope you'll like it, uncle," he said. "It was done specially for your visit."

"Bless my soul!"

"Yes, indeed, uncle," murmured Alonzo, "specially for you! I trust you will approve of what we have done, dear uncle."

"M-m-m-m-y word!" Uncle Benjamin was gasping. "You young rascals!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"You impertinent young scoundrels!" roared Mr. Todd.

"Why—what—" gasped Peter. But he broke off. As he followed Mr. Todd into the study he saw the reason of his uncle's exclamations.

Peter Todd had left that study looking spick and span the previous night. But another hand had been at work since. There were daubs of red paint on the new wallpaper, and splashes of it on the newly-painted woodwork. On one wall a figure was roughly painted in red on the wallpaper. It represented a fat old gentleman, with a pair of extremely large spectacles, and a bottle labelled "WHISKY" sticking out of his coat-tail pocket. Under that hideous misrepresentation of a respectable old gentleman was painted in large, staring letters:

"UNCLE BENJAMIN!"

The two juniors stared at the caricature in horror.

There was a certain likeness to Uncle Benjamin in the caricature, too—though the features and the figure were absurdly exaggerated. But the worst of all, was the bottle labelled "WHISKY" protruding from his tail-pockets.

Uncle Benjamin was a strict teetotaler, with the most rigid views on the subject of temperance. No wonder the old gentleman's face was almost purple as he gazed on that insulting representation of himself, with his name daubed underneath, so that there was no mistake as to whom it was meant for.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Peter.

"You young rascal!"

"I—I—I—"

"My dear uncle—" stuttered Alonzo.

"You rascals! You impertinent young scamps! Specially for me—prepared specially for me, was it?" thundered Mr. Todd.

"I—I—I—"

"You—you—I—oh, dear—what—"

"Leggo!" roared Peter.

But Mr. Todd did not let go. He seized Peter by the collar with one hand, and Alonzo by the collar with the other, and brought their heads together with a resounding crack.

Crack!

"Yaroo!"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Great Scott," exclaimed Bob Cherry's voice in the passage, "what on earth's the matter?"

Bob almost fell down the next moment in astonishment, as Peter and Alonzo came tearing from the study, hotly pursued by Uncle Benjamin with upraised umbrella. The two dutiful nephews fled wildly down the passage, with the umbrella descending on their backs at every stride.

"Take that, and that, and that! Impertinent young scoundrels! I disown you! I wash my hands of you! Take that! Take that, and that, and that!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

The last swipe broke the handle of the umbrella. The two Todds disappeared down the passage, pursued by their enraged uncle, still belabouring them with the broken umbrella.

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "If Peter's been trying to please his uncle, he seems to have made rather a muck of it! Ha, ha, ha!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Rather Wet!

COKER of the Fifth yelled with laughter.

Peter and Alonzo came rushing down the stairs, with Uncle Benjamin after them. Coker & Co. were almost in hysterics. Their finishing touch in No. 7 Study had worked out better than they had anticipated. The fleeing juniors were gaining ground now, Uncle Benjamin being somewhat out of breath after the chase. And he had expended a great deal of energy with the umbrella.

The two Todds fled into the Close, and Uncle Benjamin halted in the doorway, brandishing the remains of the umbrella, and puffing with exertion and wrath.

"Anything the matter, sir?" asked Coker, suppressing his laughter.

Uncle Benjamin gasped.

"Impertinent young rascals! I will disown them! I'll disinherit them! I'll cut them off with a shilling, by Jove!"

"He, he, he!" cackled Potter.

Mr. Todd glared at him.

"What are you laughing at?" he snapped.

"N-n-nothing, sir! He, he, he!"

"I will go at once," snorted Uncle Benjamin. "Pretty manners my nephews are learning at Greyfriars, I must say—insulting their old uncle. I will go! And I will disown both the young scoundrels!"

And Mr. Todd took his hat.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Coker. "That's rather too thick, Potty. We don't want to get them into trouble to that extent, do we?"

"Ahem! Better let well alone," murmured Potter.

"That blessed caricature would get us into trouble if the old boy reports it to the Head, and he knows we did it."

"But—"

"Mum's the word," said Greene uneasily.

"Rot!" said Coker in his delightfully direct manner. "I'm going to tell the old chap how it was. Can't let it go as far as this."

And Coker hurried after Mr. Todd, who was putting his hat on.

"Excuse me, sir," said Coker in his politest tones. "Something appears to have annoyed you?"

"I should say so!" ejaculated Mr. Todd. "I have been caricatured, sir, by my own nephews, and the young rascals actually told me that they had prepared that insulting caricature especially for me! I am depicted, sir, as a staggering character the worse for drink, when my principles upon the subject of temperance are well known. For sixty years, sir, I have denounced the vile concoctions known as whisky, gin, rum, and by other vile names, and now—"

"Oh, that caricature, sir!" murmured Coker. "Todd didn't do that, sir."

"What?"

"They didn't know anything about it, sir," said Coker. "It was a joke on them, done after they'd gone to bed last night."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Todd.

"I assure you of the fact, sir. It was done by a chap that Peter Todd had daubed with paint," said Coker demurely. "I know the chap personally."

"Dear me! Are you sure of this?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"We—we saw it done, sir," said Potter.

"And it was not done by my nephews, after all?" exclaimed Mr. Todd, greatly relieved, and a little conscience-stricken for that summary chastisement inflicted upon Peter and Alonzo.

"Oh, no, sir. Some fellows in the Fifth Form, I believe," said Coker blandly. "Of course, I can't give their names, that would be—ahem!—sneaking. But we saw them do it. It was meant as a joke on Todd."

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ONE PENNY.

"Then I have been a little hasty," said Mr. Todd, taking off his hat again. "I must really make it up to my nephews in some way. I am very glad that you have told me this. Coaler—I believe your name is Coaler?"

"Coker, sir," said Coker, frowning, while Greene and Potter grinned.

"Yes, Coker, thank you very much. I must find my dear boys immediately, and tell them that I am acquainted with the facts."

Mr. Todd hurried out into the Close in search of his nephews. He sighted them in the distance, and ran towards them, and the unfortunate youths broke into instant flight again. They had had enough of the avuncular umbrella.

"Come back!" shouted Mr. Todd.

But the fleeing juniors declined to listen to the voice of the charmer.

Mr. Todd, anxious to explain, ran after them. He still had the broken umbrella in his hand, and the two juniors not unnaturally supposed that he was still bent on vengeance.

"Hoof it, Lonzy!" gasped Peter.

Alonzo panted.

"I—I—c-c-can't run much more, my dear Peter. I am out of breath."

"Dodge round the house, and I'll lead him on a dance," said Peter.

And they separated. Peter slackened down a little, to give the pursuer a chance of getting near him, so that Alonzo would have an opportunity of escaping. Alonzo dodged round the house, and Uncle Benjamin puffed on after Peter. Quite a crowd of fellows were following Uncle Benjamin. The chase had attracted attention on all sides. There were encouraging shouts to Mr. Todd from the fags.

"Go it, old 'un!"

"Buck up, fatty!"

"Two to one on the old 'un!"

"Put it on, Peter!"

"Look out, he's just on you!"

"Peter!" gasped Mr. Todd. "Peter, my dear boy, pray stop. It was all a mistake. I am very sorry—I assure you—"

"Oh, that alters the case!" said Peter, and he halted and allowed Uncle Benjamin to come panting up.

"I have been informed," gasped Mr. Todd, "a very kind lad named Coker informed me that that wicked caricature was perpetrated by someone else. He himself saw it done by a boy in the Fifth Form—"

"He did, did he?" murmured Peter. "I'll remember that!"

"It was very kind of him to tell me, as I was about to leave the school in a state of indignation," puffed Mr. Todd. "I am sorry for the mistake, Peter. I hope I didn't hurt you."

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "He hopes he didn't hurt him with that broolly! He must be a remarkably sanguine old gentleman."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't mench!" said Peter. "You did hurt me, as a matter of fact; but it don't matter. I'll take it out of Coker."

"But Coker was the kind lad who—"

"M'yes," said Peter, "awfully kind lad, Coker! I'll show him how I appreciate his kindness soon. I never forget kindness like Coker's."

"That is the proper spirit," said Mr. Todd approvingly. "Now let us find Alonzo. I fear that poor Alonzo is in a state of alarm."

"I fear he is!" grinned Peter. "This way!"

They went round the house in search of Alonzo, followed by a crowd. There was nothing to be seen of the Duffer of Greyfriars. A huge water-butt stood at the back of the house, and Peter looked round it, but Alonzo was not hidden behind it.

"Dear me," exclaimed Mr. Todd, "where is that boy? I am most anxious to find him."

They passed on, searching for Alonzo. A couple of minutes later the lid of the water-butt was raised, and several juniors who were near at hand jumped at the unexpected sight. They gasped as the face of Alonzo Todd appeared under the lid.

"My only hat," stuttered Skinner, "he's in the water-butt!"

"Great Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

ANSWERS

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

"I say, Lonzy, isn't it cold in there?" roared Bolsover major.

Alonzo's teeth were chattering. It was indeed cold, and very wet. He was up to his waist in rain-water.

"Is he gig-gig-gone?" gasped Alonzo, through his rattling teeth. They were going like castanets.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fuf-fuf-fear that my uncle is very angry!" stuttered poor Alonzo. "I am most anxious to avoid him! Groogh! I am very wet and very kik-kik-cold! Ugh!"

"Here he comes!" said Skinner. "Get out of sight—quick! He's coming back!"

Alonzo popped down into the water-butt again, and the lid shut down on him. Uncle Benjamin came along once more with Peter Todd and the army of juniors who were kindly helping in the search.

"Where can he be?" exclaimed Mr. Todd.

"Seems to have vanished into thin air," said Peter, puzzled.

"Hallo! What's that row? There's something in the water-butt!"

Click! Clicketty-clicketty-click-click!

It was the sound of the unfortunate Alonzo's teeth chattering in the water-butt. Peter Todd lifted the lid, and gave a yell.

"Here he is!"

"What!"

Clicketty-clicketty-click-click-click!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Alonzo!" gasped Mr. Todd.

Alonzo's shivering form rose into view.

"M-m-my did-did-dear uncle, I—I— Groogh!"

"Bless my soul! You will catch cold! My dear boy, it was all a mistake. I am sorry. Come out of that butt at once!"

"I am gig-gig-glad—"

"Come out!" roared Peter.

He grasped his cousin by the shoulders, and yanked him out of the water-butt, amid yells of laughter from the onlookers. Alonzo shivered in the midst of a pool of water.

"Come away and dry yourself, you ass!" gasped Peter.

And he rushed his cousin away to the house at top speed, followed by a trail of water and Uncle Benjamin.

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He was in the water-butt all the time! Ha, ha, ha! Poor old Alonzo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In the Remove dormitory, Alonzo was rubbed down by the energetic Peter in an exceedingly effective manner, which restored his circulation, but very nearly flayed him alive. He pleaded for mercy in vain; Peter was determined that he should not catch a cold.

He didn't; but by the time he escaped from Peter's energetic hands, he could not help feeling that the remedy was a little worse than the cold.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Fun in the Form-Room!

HARRY WHARTON & CO. came in laughing to dinner. Uncle Benjamin had gone to lunch with the Head. Alonzo looked very much like a newly-boiled lobster as he took his place at the Remove dinner-table; but he was not sneezing, so Peter's energetic preventive measures had evidently been efficacious.

Uncle Benjamin had made quite an impression on the Remove. Bob Cherry remarked that, considering his age, he was a first-rate sprinter; and the news that Mr. Todd intended to stand a handsome "spread" in the Rag to his nephews and all their friends at tea-time made him very popular.

The Todds had plenty of friends in the Form; indeed, the whole of the Remove became remarkably friendly when that news was known.

"Quite an old sport, your uncle, 'Toddy!' Vernon-Smith remarked, when the Remove came out of the dining-room.

"Oh, topping!" said Peter Todd. "Plays cricket, too! And runs—you've seen him run!"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"And an expert with the broly," said Peter, rubbing his shoulder reminiscently. "Quite an athlete for his age. He's got an idea in his head of playing cricket with us on Saturday, Wharton. He thinks he can play!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Wharton. "I don't want to be disrespectful to your uncle, Toddy, but we are playing the Shell on Saturday, you know, and—ahem—"

"Well, put Uncle Ben into the team!"

"Rats!"

"You can play anybody you like, as cricket captain," said Peter.

"I know that; but—but he can't play!"

"Well, he golfs," said Peter—"that's the next thing, you

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know. He's brought his golfing outfit here. I'm going to borrow his brasseys after lessons, and try myself. I've never played before, but there's plenty of room in the Close to practise. I really think you had better ask him to play on Saturday. You see, we want to look after him, and give him a good time. If we please him, he's going to take one of us abroad with him, as I've told you. Lonzy and I are at daggers drawn about it, ain't we, Lonzy?"

"My dear Peter—"

"I've got the start of Alonzo," said Peter. "Lonzy is too good. Uncle Ben was a boy himself once, and he rather likes a kid with plenty of go in him. Lonzy hasn't any go. You should hear him yell when I tell him about the practical jokes I play on people. Now, my idea of pleasing him is to play a series of practical jokes on him. He always appreciates them when they're played on others, and so he's bound to like the same thing for himself!"

"I fancy that's a mistake!" grinned Bob Cherry. "It's funny to see a chap sit down on a pin, but it isn't at all funny to sit down on one oneself!"

"Well, that's my scheme," said Peter. "Lonzy and I are in competition. Lonzy is going to be good; he can beat me hollow in that line. I'm going to play practical jokes on uncle, and show him what a clever chap I am in that line. I can beat Lonzy hollow there!"

"You'll jolly well lose your chance, I should say!"

"Oh, you don't know my uncle! He's quite an old sport!" said Peter airily. "He's going to dine with the Head to-night, of course. Some old fogies are coming. I'm thinking of making some improvements in uncle's evening-clothes for the occasion. That will be Practical Joke No. 1!"

"My dear Peter—"

"You fathead!" said Harry Wharton. "Do you think your uncle will take on a holiday with him a chap who plays practical jokes with his evening clobber?"

"Well, he appreciates that kind of thing, you know. He roared when I told him how we sewed up Loder's evening bags when he was going to a party."

"Yes; but they were Loder's bags, not his own."

"Oh, that's all right, you'll see!" said Peter cheerfully. "I'll practical-joke him until he doesn't know whether he's on his head or his heels. You leave it to me!"

"Well," said Bob Cherry, as Peter Todd walked away, "I always thought Peter was a sensible chap, with a level head; but it seems to me that he's a champion ass! He'll find that Uncle Ben won't appreciate his giddy humour on those lines, I fancy!"

"The want of appreciativeness will be terrific!" grinned Hurree Singh.

And the chums of the Remove all concurred. Mr. Todd was very proud of his lively nephew, and very pleased with him. He would chuckle to an unlimited extent over Peter's stories of "japes" on various unfortunate victims at Greyfriars. But when he became himself the victim of practical jokes, it was extremely probable that his sense of humour would fail him.

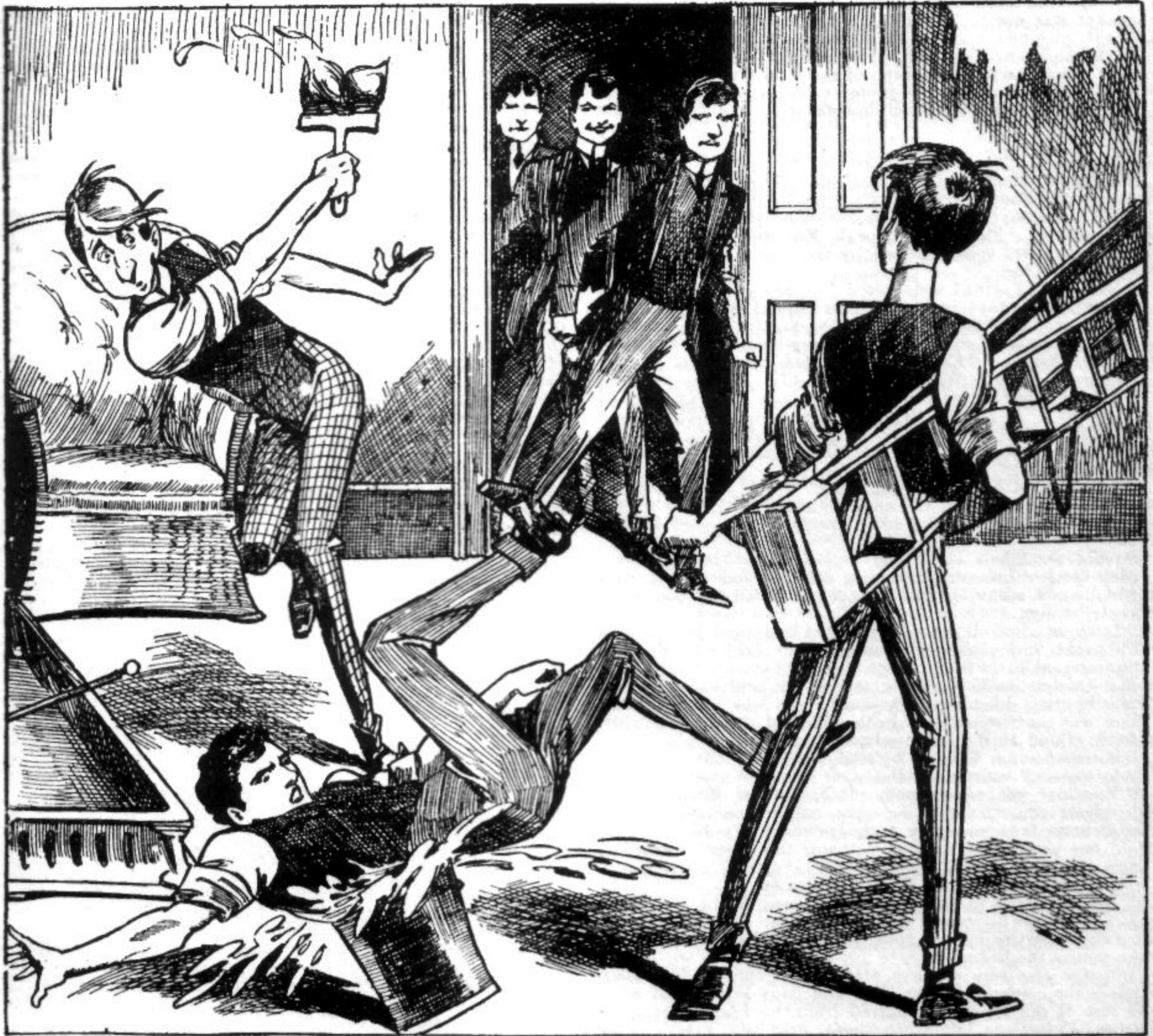
It certainly did not seem a very promising plan for getting into Uncle Benjamin's good graces, and obtaining that coveted holiday on the Continent. But when Peter had an idea in his head, it stayed there; argument was quite useless.

Harry Wharton & Co. were convinced that Peter was throwing away his chances. But undoubtedly Peter Todd had a way of falling upon his feet; and, at all events, they were interested to see how the experiment would turn out. It was likely to provide some fun for the onlookers, at least.

It was easy enough to see that Uncle Benjamin, though he was very attached to the kind and gentle Alonzo, preferred his lively and boisterous nephew, and was far more likely to choose him for his travelling companion. But he wanted to be very just, and not guilty of favouritism. His choice would depend upon his opinion of their deserts, to which the reports of their Form-master would contribute. And Peter Todd—apparently carried away by his belief in his uncle's appreciation of practical jokes—was certainly not going to work in the right way to obtain a good report from Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove.

Mr. Quelch was a few minutes late in the Form-room that afternoon, and Peter improved the shining hour by producing a "squeaker," the fearsome instrument that is used so much on holiday occasions on Hampstead Heath. It was quite a good "squeaker." When the bladder was fully blown out, the air escaped with a loud and sonorous squeak, with a tremelo note in it, lasting nearly half a minute. The squeaker was going when Mr. Quelch came into the Form-room, and he looked round sharply. Peter immediately popped the instrument out of sight under his desk.

First lesson that afternoon was geography, and the Remove were being taken on a personally-conducted tour, so to speak, among the capitals of Europe, when Mr. Quelch was sud-



"Help!" gasped Alonzo. "They're after me!" He swung round the doorway to face the foe, and the steps collided with Tom Dutton's ribs. Dutton was hurled into the corner, and there was a loud squelching sound as he sat down in the paste. (See Chapter 2.)

denly interrupted by a long-drawn, agonised squeak. He swung round angrily in the direction of the noise.

"What is that? Who made that ridiculous noise?"

There was no reply. No one had made it, as a matter of fact—it was due to Peter's instrument under his desk. Peter sat with a perfectly unconscious face, and Mr. Quelch, after a sharp glance over the class, proceeded. A few minutes later—

Sque-e-e-e-e-eak!

"What is that?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "Who is squeaking in that ridiculous manner? Was it you, Cherry?"

"I, sir? Certainly not!"

"Bunter?"

"Oh, really, sir—"

"It came from that direction," said Mr. Quelch, breathing hard. "If it is repeated, I shall severely cane the perpetrator! The Form-room is not the proper place for jokes of this kind!"

And Mr. Quelch went on with the lesson, with a dangerous gleam in his eyes. Peter waited for his opportunity, and distended the fearsome instrument, to which he had attached a long string. He stooped, and whipped it away to a distance under the desks.

Squea-a-a-a-a-akkkk!

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Mr. Quelch jumped. The sound came from the back of the class now.

"Who was that?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Skinner—Stott—Snoop—Trevor—was it you?"

"No, sir!" chorussed the juniors.

"It is some—some instrument, I think, that is being used to produce that ridiculous noise!" said Mr. Quelch, coming round to the back of the class. "Stand up, all boys on the last row! Immediately!"

Peter Todd, who was in the front row, smiled serenely. He had already jerked back the deflated squeaker by means of the string, and it was safe in his pocket. The back row of juniors stood up, and Mr. Quelch looked under all the desks, and made them hold up their hands to show that they were empty. But no instrument was to be found, and the Form-master retreated, his eyes glinting more than ever. But the lesson had barely restarted after the interval, when—

Sque-e-e-e-e-eak!

It was from a different direction this time. Mr. Quelch made a jump in that direction, and Peter had barely time to whisk the squeaker back with the string. All the Remove were grinning now.

"Stand up, all boys at this form!" shouted Mr. Quelch. "Turn out your pockets! I insist upon knowing who is the cause of this unseemly disturbance!"

Ogilvy, and Morgan, and Brandreth, and Micky Desmond stood up, and obediently turned out their pockets, but the squeaker was not to be found. Mr. Quelch retired, baffled. His eye gleamed upon Billy Bunter. He knew Bunter of old, and had caned him for ventriloquial tricks in the Form-room. He suspected something of the kind now, and he kept a very keen eye on the fat junior after that. Five minutes later there was an agonised squeak from the back of the class.

Squeeeeeeeek!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "This is not a laughing matter. Bunter, stand up!"

"Eh! Me, sir?"

"Don't say 'Me, sir'! Speak English!" shouted Mr. Quelch, who was quite excited by this time. "You should say 'I,' not 'Me.'"

"Yes, sir! I, sir?" stammered Bunter.

"I am aware that you play ventriloquial tricks, Bunter."

"Me, sir? I—I mean, I, sir? Oh, no, sir!"

"It is quite clear to me that you have been doing so now," said Mr. Quelch. "Come here, Bunter!"

"Me, sir—I, sir? What for, sir?"

"I am going to cane you."

"Oh, lor! I—I mean, it wasn't me, sir—I, sir!"

"Come here at once, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, taking a cane from his desk. "Not a word! Come here, and hold out your hand!"

Bunter rolled out before the class. He blinked furiously at Peter Todd. Just as the angry master was taking a grip on his cane, there came a loud squeak from under Peter's desk.

Squeeeeeeeek!

Mr. Quelch lowered the cane. That final squeak was evidently not made by Bunter, even with all his powers as a ventriloquist.

"It—it is, after all, some instrument!" gasped Mr. Quelch.

"This—this impertinence is astounding! I——"

Squeaaaaaak!

Mr. Quelch made a rush at the form, and caught Peter Todd by the shoulder, and swung him out of his place. There was the "squeaker" in the hand of the culprit! Mr. Quelch glared at the captured practical joker.

"So it was you, Todd?" he thundered.

"Ye-es, sir," murmured Peter.

"You may go back to your place, Bunter. I am sorry I misjudged you, though you have only yourself to thank. Todd, how dare you play such tricks in the Form-room? Hold out your hand"—swish!—"now the other"—swish!—"now the other again"—swish, swish!

"Ow, ow, ow!" roared Peter. "Yow-ow!"

"You will stay in an hour after lessons, Todd, and write a hundred lines!" rapped out Mr. Quelch. "If there is any further impertinence on your part this afternoon, I shall take you to the headmaster."

But for the rest of that afternoon Peter Todd understudied the celebrated Brer Fox, and "lay low." But when the rest of the Remove departed from the Form-room after lessons, Peter was left alone there, grinding Virgil, while the other fellows were crowding into the Rag for Uncle Benjamin's great spread.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Not Appreciated!

UNCLE BENJAMIN looked into the Remove Form-room half an hour later. Peter Todd was alone there, writing lines. He looked up lugubriously as the jolly, round face of his uncle appeared in the doorway.

"In trouble, I hear, you young rascal!" said Uncle Benjamin, with a sad shake of the head, though he was smiling.

"Yes!" groaned Peter.

"What have you been doing?"

"Only enlivening the Form-room a little. Geography's rather heavy, so I tried to improve it with a squeaker, but Mr. Quelch didn't like it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Uncle Benjamin. "Of course he wouldn't. Ha, ha, ha! And I suppose, if I take you abroad with me, you'll be playing tricks on the head waiter—what?—and putting mice into the soup—eh?"

"I'll do my best to keep you amused, uncle," said Peter meekly.

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, get your lines done. I wonder if I might speak to Mr. Quelch? After all, he might do me a little favour. Wait a minute."

And the old gentleman toddled away, and knocked at Mr. Quelch's door. The Remove master looked a little grim when he made his request.

"I am sorry to say that your nephew Peter has developed

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a most absurd mania for practical jokes of late," said Mr. Quelch. "Otherwise, he is certainly a promising scholar. However, you may tell him that he is excused on this occasion."

"Boys will be boys, you know," said Mr. Todd cheerfully. "We were both boys once—what? Thank you very much, Mr. Quelch."

And he returned gleefully to the Form-room.

"Come out of that, you young rascal!" he said. "Mr. Quelch excuses you."

"Good egg!" said Peter joyfully. And he jumped up, and danced on the well-worn volume of Virgil, and then followed his uncle from the Form-room.

Preparations were already being made in the Rag for the great spread. Several of the juniors had kindly offered their services to help in the shopping, Billy Bunter being, of course, among them. Enormous piles of good things were accumulating in the Rag, Mr. Todd having given the shoppers carte blanche, and informed Mrs. Mumble that the bill was to be sent to him. Judging by the amount of purchases that were carried into the Rag, the stock in Mrs. Mumble's little establishment must have been considerably depleted.

The Remove fellows were in great spirits, and they all voted Uncle Benjamin a brick. Fags of the Third and Second had come in in great numbers, too, and Temple, Dabney, & Co. of the Fourth had joined the feasters. And Mr. Todd, meeting that kind youth Coker, had invited him also, and Coker kindly came, and kindly brought some friends with him. So the Rag, large as it was, was pretty well crowded.

Mr. Todd was seated in the place of honour at the head of the big table in the Rag when the feast was ready. Alonzo sat on his left, and there was a seat for Peter on his right. Peter was still busy. This table and the other tables were crowded, and there was "standing room only" for a good many of the fags. But the eatables and the drinkables were in huge abundance, and that was what chiefly mattered.

"Where is Peter?" Mr. Todd asked, looking round.

"He's coming," said Harry Wharton. "He said he had something special to get."

Mr. Todd chuckled.

"Some more of his tricks, I suppose," he murmured. Evidently every fresh trick of his lively nephew delighted the old gentleman's boyish heart.

"Here he comes!" sang out Bob Cherry.

Peter Todd came into the Rag. He was half hidden by a huge bunch of flowers, which he had apparently brought to decorate the table. The flowers were in water, and the water was contained in a large silk hat, which Peter Todd held upside-down. The sight of that peculiar flower-vase made the juniors yell, and Mr. Todd laughed heartily.

"Peter, you young rascal, what is that?"

"Something new in flower-vases," said Peter cheerfully. "The fellows forgot to decorate the table, but I remembered you liked flowers, uncle." And Peter dutifully set down the silk hat crammed with flowers before his uncle.

"But—but that hat——"

"No vases handy," said Peter. "It doesn't leak—it's all right."

"But—some old hat, I suppose, no further use——"

"Well, it won't be much use after that water's soaked through it," said Peter. "But that doesn't matter—it isn't my hat."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Loder's?" asked Bob Cherry. "Loder will be pleased."

"No; 'tain't Loder's!"

"Oh, Peter, Peter!" said Mr. Todd, wiping his glasses. "You have taken someone's silk hat to put water and flowers in! You young scamp! Does the owner know?"

"No fear!"

"What will he say when he knows?" gasped Mr. Todd.

"Blessed if I know; I'm rather interested to hear him," said Peter, helping himself to rabbit-pie. "I thought I'd please you with the flowers, uncle; and I know you don't mind a little practical joke."

"Not at all," said Mr. Todd, beaming. "Boys will be boys! I am far from wishing to restrain the natural exuberance of boyish spirits. But when the owner of that hat—ha, ha, ha!—sees it, Peter—ha, ha, ha!—there may be—ha, ha, ha!—trouble."

"Practical jokers have to risk that," said Peter. "This is good pie."

"I hope it is not a master's hat, Peter."

"Not likely. Pass the salt, Wharton. Thanks!"

"Then whose hat is it, Peter?"

"Yours! Pass the pepper, Nugent."

Mr. Todd jumped. There was a yell of laughter along the table.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"M-m-mum-mine!" gasped Uncle Benjamin. "My hat! You young rascal, you have put water and flowers into my hat! Why, I—I—I—" Words failed Uncle Benjamin as he gazed at his topper, through which the water was already leaking.

"Oh, my Aunt Jemima!" gasped Bob Cherry. "You've done it now, Peter!"

"That's all right," said Peter calmly. "Uncle Benjamin likes practical jokes—don't you, Uncle Benjamin?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young rascal!" thundered Mr. Todd. "I—I'll box your ears—I'll thrash you—I'll—"

Uncle Benjamin's appreciation of practical jokes had failed all of a sudden.

"Why, my dear uncle—"

"Impertinent young villain—"

"But you said—"

"Never mind what I said. You—you—you—"

"Well, I thought I was pleasing you, uncle," said Peter meekly. "It seemed so funny, you know, to use your silk hat—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Uncle Benjamin controlled his wrath with an effort. The hat was ruined now, and there was no use in exploding. But it cost Uncle Benjamin a great effort to recover his flow of good spirits. It was quite some time before he was smiling again. Peter Todd's campaign of practical joking to please his uncle did not seem to have started very successfully.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. The Slave of the Ring!

THE feast in the Rag was a great success. After a time, Uncle Benjamin recovered his good spirits and his smiles, and even laughed at the silk hat with the flowers in it. But it was evidently a dangerous experiment, so far as pleasing uncle was concerned; and certainly Peter Todd ought to have taken warning by it. But that he had not taken warning was soon evident.

After the feast, Mr. Todd walked round the school grounds with Alonzo to look at Greyfriars, apparently preferring the company of a youth whose gentle mind never conceived the idea of making a flower-vase of the avuncular silk hat. Peter Todd did not seem to mind. He looked into No. 1 Study, where Wharton and Nugent were busy with the "scrip" for a forthcoming performance of the Remove Dramatic Society. On the morrow evening the Remove players were to perform, partly with a view to entertaining Uncle Benjamin.

Peter Todd had made the suggestion, as a part of his plan of looking after uncle, as he called it, and Harry Wharton & Co. were quite ready to oblige. A variety entertainment was likely to give the old gentleman quite a lasting impression of the powers and versatility of the Remove fellows, and Peter Todd had promised an original and striking "turn," the details of which he was keeping to himself for the present.

"Busy, you fellows?" he asked, as he looked into No. 1 Study.

"Going over the sketch for to-morrow evening," said Wharton. "We're thinking of giving a sketch, and half a dozen variety turns. That will fill the bill."

"Good! Don't forget my little bit."

"What is your little bit?" asked Harry. "We shall have to put it down in the programme, you know. Mr. Quelch is lending us his typewriter to knock off a dozen programmes."

"Mine's a song and dance," said Peter.

"Well, you can do that all right," said Wharton, with a nod. "What's it called?"

"Down with drink," said Peter. "A song in costume, with a dance."

"A blessed temperance song?" sniffed Nugent.

"Well, Uncle Ben is a teetotaller, and very strong on it," said Peter. "You know my object is to please him, like a dutiful nephew. Think I've got a good chance of cutting Alonzo out—what?"

"Blessed if I do!" said Wharton, laughing. "If you keep on as you've started, you haven't got a dog's chance of getting that holiday. Alonzo will beat you all along the line."

"You really think so?" asked Peter thoughtfully.

"Jolly sure of it."

"Well, we'll see. A chap can only do his best," said Peter. "Did I see a bottle of liquid glue in your study once?"

"I dare say you did. We've got one," said Harry. "What on earth do you want liquid glue for, now? If you're going to pour it down your uncle's back to please him, you'd better think twice about it. He was very ratty about your mucking up his topper."

"It's his evening shoes I'm thinking of," explained Peter. "He wears socks in them to keep his poor old tootsies warm. I was thinking of a good layer of liquid glue in the shoes, under the socks, so that he won't notice it when he puts them on. It will work out afterwards—see? A practical

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joke of that kind is sure to please a real old sport with a sense of humour."

"You ass!" roared Wharton. "Are you going to send him to dinner with the Head with liquid glue in his blessed shoes?"

"Why not?"

"I should think he would scalp you afterwards."

"Oh, he's an old sport!" said Peter. "He'll take it like a cherub. Is this the glue—thanks. I'll do as much for you some day, when you're trying to please your uncle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the cheerful Peter departed with the bottle of glue. Nugent and Wharton looked at one another, and roared.

Peter Todd made his way to his uncle's room, and was very busy there for a quarter of an hour or so. He took several things with him, as well as the bottle of liquid glue. Among his other supplies was a thin coil of insulated wire, fitted with a flat brass terminal. Peter Todd dabbled in electricity, having a turn for such things, and he had often contrived bells that rang in unexpected places by the simple process of attaching a length of wire to a bell-wire, and placing a terminal under the cushion on an armchair, or under the mat before a dressing-table.

Peter was using all his resources in the great task of looking after his uncle. He did not quit the room till he heard Mr. Todd coming upstairs, after his walk round the school with the gentle Alonzo. Mr. Todd met him at the door, and gave him a rather suspicious look.

"No more of your tricks, you young vagabond," he said.

"Oh, uncle!" said Peter reproachfully.

And he passed on before Mr. Todd could ask him any more questions. The old gentleman shook his head doubtfully, and went into the room. Dinner in the Head's house was in an hour, and Mr. Todd had to shave and dress. He took off his coat and collar, and stood before the dressing-table, on the little mat there, to lather his face. Mr. Todd took off his glasses to shave, and without them he was somewhat short-sighted, so it was only natural that he did not notice a thin, dark wire running from under the mat under the dressing-table, and then along the wainscot.

Only a few inches of the wire were visible, and not very visible on the dark floor. But if he had noticed that wire, he might have observed that it ran along the wainscot round the room till it reached the floor under the knob of the electric bell, and there ascended beside the fireplace, and passed under the knob, where it was connected up with the bell-wire.

And if he had lifted the mat before the dressing-table—which, of course, he did not think of doing—he might have seen there a flat brass terminal, placed so that when anyone trod on the mat, the button was depressed, and so placed the wires in contact, and sent the current along the bell-wire, with the result that the bell would ring in the regions below. But Mr. Todd was not thinking about bells and wires and hidden terminals; he was thinking about lathering his double chin.

There was a knock at the bed-room door, and Mr. Todd turned from the glass, with the shaving-brush in his hand, and his chin looking like the beard of Father Christmas.

"Come in!"

The door opened, and the maid looked in.

"Yes, sir!"

"Well?" said Mr. Todd.

"What is it, sir?" asked the maid, looking puzzled.

"What is what, my good girl?" asked Mr. Todd, equally puzzled.

"You rang, sir, I think."

"Oh, no! My hot water is here, thank you."

"Very well, sir." And the maid retired, and Mr. Todd went on lathering his chin. A minute later there was another tap at the door.

"Come in!" called out Mr. Todd rather wearily. The maid looked in again.

"You rang, sir."

"Rang! I did not ring."

"But—but I heard the bell, sir."

"It must have been some other bell you heard," said Mr. Todd. "I have not moved from the table. I require nothing, and I did not ring."

The maid, looking mystified, closed the door. Uncle Benjamin went on lathering. But scarce a minute had passed, when there was another tap, and the maid, looking quite flustered and red, looked into the room again.

"Well, what is it this time?" exclaimed Mr. Todd, beginning to lose patience.

"You rang, sir."

"I did not ring!" exclaimed the old gentleman testily. "I tell you I have not moved from this table."

"But it was your bell, sir," said the maid resentfully. "I asked cook to look, and it was the bell of this room, sir."

"Nonsense! I did not ring." The maid closed the door quite emphatically as she retired. Mr. Todd stropped his razor, and commenced operations upon his chin. Shaving was a laborious task with Mr. Todd, who had a great expanse to cover with the razor. He did not like to be interrupted when he was shaving, and he started, and uttered an exclamation of annoyance as a very loud tap came at his door. A glimmer of red showed amidst the white foam on his fat chin.

"Who is it? Come in! Dear me, this is growing intolerable!"

"You rang, sir!" exclaimed the maid, looking in with a red face.

"I did not ring!" roared Mr. Todd.

"Why, the bell is ringing now," said the maid. "I can hear it from the stairs."

"What! Then there is something wrong with the bell."

Mr. Todd came to the door, and the bell immediately ceased to ring. Consequently he did not hear it. He uttered quite an angry exclamation.

"This is nonsense!" he exclaimed. "My good girl, you

should not act in this manner. I dare say you think it is humorous; but it is unbecoming—really unbecoming. Pray go away!"

"Which the bell did ring, and I shall speak to Mrs. Keble about it," said the maid, as she flounced away with a heightened colour.

Mr. Todd snorted, and returned to his shaving. He had completed one side of his face, when there was a loud knock at the door.

"Go away!" shouted Mr. Todd. "I—I mean, pray come in. What is it now?"

This time it was Mrs. Keble, the housekeeper. She came in looking very grim.

"What is it you require, sir?" she asked.

"Require! I require nothing, only to be left in peace," said the unhappy old gentleman. "I really believe I shall never finish shaving—never! I have cut my chin twice already!"

"Then why did you ring, sir?"

"I did not ring!" roared Mr. Todd.

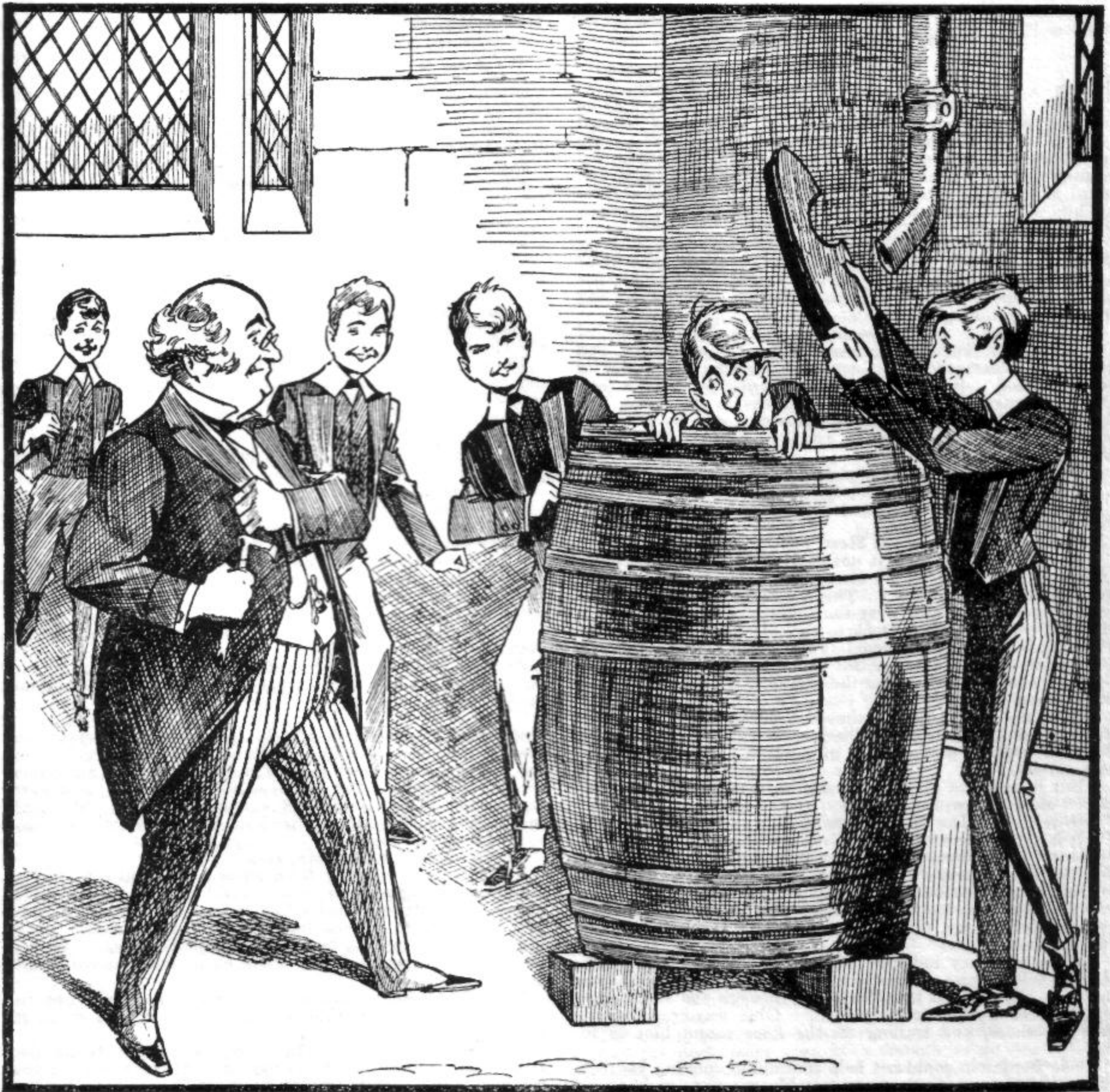
"I heard the bell, sir!"

"It was not this bell!"

"Excuse me, sir; I have been at Greyfriars long enough to



The wonderful example of pluck and bravery that Captain Scott set to the world must have inspired thousands of Magnetites, and made them ambitious to follow in the steps of this great explorer and hero!
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Peter Todd lifted the lid of the water butt, and gave a yell. "It's Alonzo!" he roared, and Uncle Benjamin gasped. "Come out of that butt at once!" he shouted. "M—m—my dear un—cle!" stuttered Alonzo, "Come out!" roared Uncle Ben. (See Chapter 6.)

know which bell rings when a bell does ring," said Mrs. Kebble firmly. "It was the bell of this room!"

"Well, I did not ring it!"

"Please, ma'am, the bell's a-ringing now!" came the maid's voice from the stairs.

"There must be something wrong with the bell!" exclaimed Mr. Todd. "Really—really, this is very trying!"

He ran across to the bell to look at it.

"Bless my soul! There is a wire here, and—and it—it goes under the mat!" Mr. Todd jerked the mat away from before the dressing-table, and a gleaming brass terminal was exposed to view. "Dear me! I've been standing upon it!"

"My goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Kebble.

"This is—is a trick—a—practical joke, I suppose!" exclaimed Mr. Todd. "I must say, Mrs. Kebble, such practical jokes on the part of the servants—"

"Nonsense, sir!" said Mrs. Kebble sharply. "It must have been one of the boys!"

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"The boys! Peter was here—Peter! I will thrash him!" howled Mr. Todd. "This is one of Peter's jokes!" He kicked the wire out of the way. "It is all right now, Mrs. Kebble; the bell will not ring again. This is—is most exasperating! The young rascal! I am sorry you should have been troubled! It is a ridiculous practical joke of my nephew!"

Mrs. Kebble retired, smiling a little; but Uncle Benjamin was not smiling as he resumed his shaving. He was in a towering rage, and he made several more cuts on his chin before he had finished shaving, which did not improve his temper.

"That—that wretched boy!" murmured Mr. Todd. "I had almost decided to take him with me; but—but now I think I had better take Alonzo. Peter is very amusing; but—but I fear I should find this kind of thing too much for me if he were with me often. I really think I shall not be able to take Peter. I have a great mind to box his ears! I have been too lenient with him on the score of his absurd practical

jokes! I fear I have encouraged him to be impertinent! The young rascal!"

And Mr. Todd changed his clothes and dressed for dinner in far from an amiable temper.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Sticky!

"**M** a word! What a daisy!" murmured Skinner. Uncle Benjamin did indeed look a "daisy" as he came down after dressing for dinner, and toddled down the passage towards the Head's house. He looked quite a handsome and imposing old gentleman in evening-clothes. Quite a little crowd of juniors, who had heard of the glue borrowed in No. 1 Study, had collected to see him pass. Uncle Benjamin had evidently not discovered the glue yet.

Harry Wharton & Co. could not help looking at his feet, wondering when he would begin to feel the glue. Mr. Todd frowned a little at the sight of Peter among the juniors; but he did not speak to him. He passed on majestically, leaving the juniors grinning.

In the Head's drawing-room, in the private house of Dr. Locke, Mr. Todd found several other old gentlemen, and he chatted pleasantly with them while waiting for dinner to be announced. Several times he glanced down at his feet. The glue was working through the socks in the shoes, and through Uncle Benjamin's own silk socks, and he was feeling an unaccountable dampness and stickiness on the soles of his feet and round his toes.

"Dear me!" he ejaculated at last. Dr. Locke looked at him inquiringly. "It is—is really extraordinary!" said Mr. Todd, reddening. "My feet feel very damp!"

"Indeed!" murmured the Head politely. "And—and sticky! Is it not extraordinary? Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Todd, as his shoes squelched. "I—I appear to be sticking to the floor! This is very odd indeed!"

The glue was working over the shoes now, and a thin trail of it ran over them, and stuck to the soles underneath. Mr. Todd made a squelching sound as he moved. The other old gentlemen looked at him in astonishment. Dr. Locke peered through his glasses at the snail-like trail Mr. Todd left on the carpet.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "You must have been treading in some—some adhesive substance, Mr. Todd. Someone has left gum, or—or glue about. It was, indeed, very careless!"

"But it seems to me to be inside my shoes," said the perplexed old gentleman.

"Dear me! How is that possible?" "It is very—ahem!—very——"

Dinner was announced at that moment, and they passed into the dining-room. Uncle Benjamin took Mrs. Locke in to dinner, and he had to submit to the discomfort of his sticky shoes. He could not explain to that good lady that his feet were sticky, neither was it feasible to take his shoes off just then.

But he was very unhappy during the soup and the fish. His feet felt stickier and stickier, which was not surprising, as the heat had worked the glue quite through the socks now, and his feet were swimming in it. Glue was creeping out over his shoes, and trailing on the floor round him as he sat.

Uncle Benjamin could not help continually moving his feet, and shifting in a most uncomfortable manner, and, as he saw that Mrs. Locke observed his extraordinary motions, he grew redder and more uncomfortable.

What was the matter with his shoes he could not imagine. But it was only too clear that there was something the matter with them.

That dinner, which otherwise Uncle Benjamin would have enjoyed thoroughly, was a long anguish to him.

When Mrs. and Miss Locke had retired to the drawing-room at last, and only gentlemen were present, Uncle Benjamin ventured to draw his feet out and look at them.

Glue clung to them in snail-like trails and blobs; his shoes were reeking with it. Mr. Todd gazed at it dumb-founded.

"What is the matter, my dear sir?" asked Dr. Locke.

"Glue!"

"Eh?"

"GLUE!"

"I—I do not understand——"

"Glue!" howled Uncle Benjamin. "My shoes are full of glue!"

"Bless my soul!"

"I—I—someone has filled my shoes with this—this horrible compound!" gasped Uncle Benjamin. "I did not observe it when I put them on! It is glue—my shoes are

full of it! Dr. Locke, I must ask you to excuse me while I retire and change my shoes!"

"Certainly—certainly, my dear sir. What an extraordinary occurrence!"

And several old gentlemen were smiling broadly as Mr. Todd squelched away.

Squelch—squelch—squelch!

Mr. Todd quitted the Head's house breathing fury. He was in a hurry to change his shoes, but he was in a greater hurry to interview his nephew Peter. He had no doubt that this was the outcome of Peter's visit to his room. There was a howl of laughter in the Remove passage when Uncle Benjamin came squelching along to Study No. 7.

Harry Wharton hastily opened the door of No. 7, where the two Todds and Billy Bunter and Alonzo were doing their preparation.

"Look out, Toddy! Here comes your uncle, and he looks ratty!"

"Dear me! What is the matter with uncle?" asked Alonzo, in concern.

"Glue!" grinned Wharton.

"Oh, dear!" murmured Peter. "There is no pleasing some people! Hallo, uncle! I thought you were dining with the Head!"

Uncle Benjamin came in, glaring through his glasses. He did not speak; he made a direct line for Peter Todd. Peter jumped up, and dodged round the table.

"Come here, Peter!" panted Mr. Todd.

"What for, sir?"

"You have put glue in my shoes!" gasped Uncle Benjamin.

Peter nodded calmly.

"Certainly, sir."

"What did you do it for?" howled Mr. Todd.

"Practical Joke No. 2," said Peter innocently.

"You—you young scoundrel! Come here!"

"Thanks; I'd rather keep at a distance," said Peter, dodging round the table again as his uncle made a rush for him. "You look rather cross, sir!"

"You young villain! I will thrash you within an inch of your life!" roared Mr. Todd.

"Only a joke, sir. If you don't mind my pointing it out, you are making our study carpet in rather a mucky condition, uncle!"

"I—I—I——"

Mr. Todd made another rush. Peter dodged again, and the old gentleman ran into the table, and set it wildly rocking. There was a crash as pens and ink and books and papers shot to the floor. The chase was growing hot, and Peter dodged out of the study and ran for his life. Mr. Todd squelched into the passage after him, but the nimble Peter had vanished up the stairs.

"Come back!" roared Mr. Todd.

But there was no reply from Peter. Evidently he had no intention of coming back. Mr. Todd shook a fat fist in the direction his nephew had taken, and squelched away to his own room, where he rang furiously for hot water, and for the next half hour he was busy cleaning off the glue. He was in a state of suppressed fury when he returned to the Head's house.

Peter Todd came cautiously down the passage when he had gone. A howl of laughter greeted him. Alonzo shook his head sorrowfully at his cousin.

"My dear Peter," he said, "you have made Uncle Benjamin very angry—very angry indeed! He is shocked at your conduct—nay, disgusted!"

Peter chuckled.

"That's all right, Lonzy. He's an old sport, you know, and he's bound to see how funny it is—presently!"

"I fear not, my dear Peter."

"Oh, rats!"

"He looked as if there would be homicide if he caught you, you ass!" grinned Bob Cherry. "I wouldn't give tuppence for your chance of going on that holiday. Lonzy will beat you hands down!"

"I really fear you are spoiling your chance, my dear Peter!"

"Wait and see!" chuckled Peter. "If it doesn't turn out as I want it I'll eat my hat. You go on being good, Lonzy, and I'll go on being bad, and we'll see which comes out smiling."

"I am afraid Uncle Benjamin will not take you upon that holiday, Peter, if you keep on like this," said Alonzo, shaking his head.

"Well, if he doesn't take me he'll take you. It's all in the family, at all events," yawned Peter. "But we'll see."

And Peter went on calmly with his prep. He did not see his uncle again that evening; but when the Removites went to their dormitory Peter Todd seemed to be quite satisfied with his success so far.

THE next day Uncle Benjamin seemed to have recovered his good-humour. He was very kind to both his nephews, though every now and then he turned a somewhat suspicious eye upon Peter, as if dreading some new sample of that young gentleman's humorous proclivities.

Harry Wharton & Co. were very busy that day. The variety entertainment by the Remove Dramatic Society was to take part in the Rag, and Mr. Todd, having been informed that it was planned for his especial delectation, willingly agreed to be present.

The programme was complete now. There was a sketch entitled "The Road to Ruin," with the Famous Five and Tom Brown and Mark Linley acting in it. There was a Welsh song by Morgan, which nobody would understand but Morgan, and an Italian aria by Temple of the Fourth, which nobody at all would understand. Then there was a clog-dance by Mark Linley, a ventriloquial turn by Billy Bunter, a duet between Bulstrode and Nugent, and, finally, a comic song and dance by Peter Todd. Uncle Benjamin was provided with a programme as he took a prominent seat in the Rag for the performance, and he read it over with nods of approval.

He was specially pleased with Peter's item. "Down With Drink!" was the title, a very pleasing title to Mr. Todd, who was an almost ferocious teetotaler. The title of Peter's song quite reinstated him in his uncle's good graces.

Alonzo sat beside Mr. Todd in the audience. Most of the Remove were there, and a good many of the Third and the Fourth, and Coker & Co. of the Fifth honoured the Rag with their presence.

"The Road to Ruin" went very well, and was followed by rounds of applause. And Morgan's Welsh song was very much cheered, and so was Linley's clog-dance. Peter Todd was next on the programme, and there was a little delay before he appeared. When he came on the stage at last there was a gasp from the audience, and the gasp was followed by a yell of laughter.

Peter had said that it was a character song, and that he would be in costume, but the juniors had not known what costume he would be in.

He was made up with great skill. He was dressed in frock-coat and grey trousers, and wore a pair of pointed side-whiskers in ridiculous imitation of those worn by his respected Uncle Benjamin. His natural resemblance to his uncle was increased by a skilful make-up, and for a moment some of the juniors thought that it was Uncle Benjamin himself who had walked on the stage.

Uncle Benjamin sat bolt-upright in his chair. A frown gathered on his brow.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the audience.

Peter Todd bowed to the shouts that greeted him.

Harry Wharton sat at the piano to accompany the song. Peter placed a copy on the music-desk before him, and Wharton started as he glanced over the words.

"You ass! You can't sing that!" he exclaimed.

"That's my song!" said Peter.

"But—but I thought it was a temperance song!"

"Bosh!"

"But your uncle——"

"It's a little joke on uncle—practical joke No. 3," explained Peter calmly.

"Oh, you ass!"

"Play up!"

Bolsover major announced the turn:

"Gentlemen, Peter Todd will now oblige with a song, Down With Drink!—a very well-known song on the halls."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Uncle Benjamin.

"Dear me!" murmured Alonzo.

Harry Wharton struck up the opening bars; there was no help for it. Peter Todd burst into melody. Peter hadn't a singing voice, but he could sing in a very comic manner, and the song went very well from the start. But what the audience enjoyed the most was its effect upon Uncle Benjamin.

The old gentleman sat gasping, for Peter's song, though it was entitled "Down With Drink!" did not advocate putting down drink in the way that Uncle Benjamin approved. It advocated putting drink down by way of the throat, and by means of the flowing bowl. And when he came to the chorus, and the audience were requested to join in, they joined in with a hearty good will.

"Down with drink! Down with drink!
Shove it down and never blink!
Take your whisky
And be frisky!
Down with drink! Drink! Drink!"

And the whole of the Rag burst into a roar:

"Take your whisky
And be frisky!
Down with drink! Drink! Drink!"

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FOR NEXT MONDAY— "WUN LUNG'S WHEEZE!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And at each pause in the song Peter Todd raised a large bottle, and made a motion of drinking amid yells of laughter. Uncle Benjamin jumped to his feet at last. He could stand it no longer.

"You disgraceful young rascal!" he shouted. "How dare you!"

"Sit down!"

"Shut up!"

"Don't interrupt the song!"

"Take your whisky

And be frisky!

Down with drink! Drink! Drink!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be angry, Uncle Benjamin!" murmured the distressed Alonzo. "This is only a joke of Peter's. He does not really advocate those dreadful, dreadful principles!"

"Stop it at once!" shouted Uncle Benjamin. "Do you hear me, Peter?"

But Peter went on with the second verse:

"When you see an old fright

With a face like a kite,

And a sad, lackadaisical manner,

Don't attend to his rot;

Take him in on the spot,

And stand him a whisky or rum, piping hot,

If it costs you your very last tanner!"

And the whole Rag roared:

"Down with drink! Down with drink!

Shove it down and never blink!

Take your whisky

And be frisky!

Down with drink! Drink! Drink!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out, Peter!"

Uncle Benjamin made a rush for the stage. He was fed up, and wild with indignation. To hear those shocking principles publicly advocated by his nephew was a little too much for the old gentleman, a steady pillar of half a dozen temperance societies. Peter Todd ceased singing all of a sudden, and bolted behind the screen at the back. Uncle Benjamin rushed after him, and the whole room rocked with laughter.

"Oh, my only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry, with the tears streaming down his cheeks. "Poor old Uncle Ben! It was only a joke! He can't take a joke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a sound of pattering footsteps in the passage. The audience made a rush to the door. They caught a glimpse of Peter Todd fleeing upstairs, with Uncle Benjamin hot on his track. Unfortunately for Peter, the padding he had been compelled to put on to imitate the rotundity of his uncle's figure prevented him from sprinting with his usual speed.

The enraged old gentleman overtook him on the stairs.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yaroooh!" roared Peter. "Help! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear uncle——" gasped Alonzo.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The variety performance had come to a sudden end. The rest of the performers were keen enough to go on, but the audience were gone. They had swarmed out to see Uncle Benjamin dealing with his humorous nephew. The enraged uncle was belabouring Peter Todd as if he were beating a carpet.

"My word! He'll slaughter him if he keeps on like that!" gasped Wharton. "I say, Mr. Todd——"

"My dear, dear uncle——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go easy, old gentleman!"

"Don't finish him off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Mr. Todd went on smiting till his arm ached and he could smite no more. Then he went away, leaving Peter gasping on the floor of the Remove passage.

The juniors gathered round the practical joker. Alonzo had tears of distress in his eyes. Harry Wharton & Co. fully expected to find Peter almost at the last gasp. To their astonishment, he sat up and grinned at them.

"Is he gone?" he asked calmly.

"Ha, ha! Yes! Ain't you hurt?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Hurt! No!"

"But he was pounding you——"

"Oh, that's all right! I could hardly feel it through all this padding," said Peter cheerfully. "I don't mind. It amused him, and it didn't hurt me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Peter went cheerfully into his study to remove his make-up.

The variety performance was over; but the audience all agreed that the unexpected turn by Uncle Benjamin was the best part of the programme.

But, as Bob Cherry remarked, if Practical Joke No. 3 hadn't spoiled Peter's chances of going on that Continental holiday, it was a giddy miracle; and the other fellows agreed with him. But Peter Todd seemed to be quite satisfied, and he spent most of the evening in planning fresh entertainment of the same kind for his affectionate uncle.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER. Something Like Golf!

CRASH!
Harry Wharton sat up in bed in the Remove dormitory. The rising-bell had not yet gone, but the summer sun was shining in at the high windows. Wharton had been suddenly awakened by a loud crash in the dormitory, and he rubbed his eyes and looked round him.

Peter Todd was already up and dressed. He was swinging a golf-club, and had evidently just made a stroke. A jug lay in fragments in a basin, showing that the stroke had not been made in vain.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Wharton.

Peter looked round cheerfully.

"Same to you, and many of them!" said Peter.

"What are you up to?"

"Golf!"

"You ass! You've smashed your jug!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"'Tain't my jug—it belongs to the school," said Peter. "I was trying to hit this ball; but I'm not a good golfer yet. Stands to reason, you can't become a good golfer at the first stroke. It requires some learning. Just watch me try again."

"Don't send that ball over here!" roared Bob.

"No; that's all right. Don't be alarmed."

"You silly ass! Get out of doors with it," shouted Nugent.

"You'll have to pay for that jug!"
"Uncle Benjamin will do that. He'll laugh like anything when I tell him I've been playing golf in the dorm," said Peter. "Here goes!"

Crash!

Peter Todd's brassey crashed on a washstand, and reduced it to a wreck. There was a crash of broken crockery.

The ball remained untouched, and Peter looked at it in surprise. There was a roar from all the Remove. Peter might succeed in hitting that ball in the long run, and nobody wanted a golf-ball driven at him like a bullet.

"Stop it, you ass!"

"Chuck it!"

"Get out!"

"I'm bound to hit this ball!" panted Peter. "If at first you don't succeed, you know, try, try, try again! I'm going to try, try, try again!"

And the club whizzed round once more, and this time it caught the ball, and the latter went whizzing towards the dormitory-window. Crash! Smash! The ball disappeared, leaving a jagged aperture in the middle of a pane of glass.

"You've done it now!" grinned Vernon-Smith.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! I do appear to have done it," agreed Peter. "That ball's in the Close now, and I'd better go after it. Uncle Benjamin will have some damage to pay for; it's lucky he appreciates practical jokes, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Peter Todd quitted the dormitory in great good humour, swinging the golf-club.

The rising-bell clanged out on the morning air, and the Remove turned out of bed. Bob Cherry looked out of the window. Peter Todd was in the Close, making deadly drives at the golf-ball, and cutting up the ground in great style.

"The silly ass!" said Bob. "He'll break half the School House windows before he's done. Blessed if I know what's come over him."

When the Removites came down, Peter was still at golfing practice in the Close. There was a window broken in the gym, so far. One ball had been lost; but Peter had a pocketful of them. They had cost his Uncle Benjamin half-crown apiece, but Peter did not seem to think that mattered very much. He was prepared to lose all of them, one after another. Perhaps he hoped his uncle would see the humorous side of having all his golf-balls lost.

"Ah! Up already, my young friends!" said Mr. Todd, as the Removites came out of the house.

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Mr. Todd had just come down, bright and cheery, in the morning sunlight.

"Dear me! What is Peter doing?"

"Playing golf!" grinned Johnny Bull.

Crash!

"Oh, my hat! The Head's window!" roared Bob Cherry.

There was a jagged hole in the window of the Head's study. The Head was not there yet, at that early hour. The ball was somewhere in the study; but Peter produced another from the supply in his pocket.

"Peter!" shouted Mr. Todd.

"Hallo, uncle!"

"Do you see what you've done?"

"Yes, uncle."

"That window will have to be paid for!"

"That's all right; you'll pay for it, uncle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young rascal——"

"Look out!" exclaimed Peter. "I'm just going to drive!"

There was a scattering of the juniors. Peter Todd knocked the ball away, and it whizzed over Uncle Benjamin's head, and carried off his Homburg hat. Uncle Benjamin gave a loud yelp as he suddenly found himself hatless.

"My word! That was a jolly good hit for a beginner!" exclaimed Peter.

Uncle Benjamin gasped.

"Peter! Put down that club at once! I—I—I——"

"Here goes!" said Peter, playing a fresh ball.

Uncle Benjamin probably thought that his head might receive the next shot, and he hurriedly backed away, glaring at the cheerful Peter.

The ball whizzed about a yard from him, and he gasped. Peter produced another from his pocket.

"Peter!"

"Yes; here goes!"

Crash! Whiz!

Uncle Benjamin fairly ran.

Whiz, whiz! Another and another ball narrowly missed him.

There was a shout of laughter from the juniors. They suspected that Peter was more skilful than he "let on" to be; certainly he was giving his uncle very narrow misses. Golf-balls dropped all round Uncle Benjamin as he sprinted for the house.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whiz! The last ball followed Mr. Todd into the house, and crashed on the hatstand, and rolled at his feet. Mr. Todd sank upon the settee, and gasped. He was quite out of breath with his sudden exercise.

"The dreadful young rascal!" he exclaimed. "I've been far too lenient with him over his practical jokes—far too lenient. Dear me! Dear me! Bless my soul!"

Crash!

It was the sound of another smashing pane of glass in the Close.

Crash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Only one ball left!" Peter's voice was heard calling.

"I'm going to try for the clock-tower with this one!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crash!

The ball did not reach the clock-tower, but it whizzed in through the window of Mr. Capper's bed-room.

Mr. Capper, the master of the Fourth Form, was shaving himself. The sudden crash at the window startled him. He appeared at the broken window the next moment, with red tinging the lather on his face, and an almost homicidal glare in his eyes.

"What is that? Who did that?" he shouted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Peter Todd had prudently retired from sight. Mr. Capper glared down upon the hilarious crowd of juniors in the Close. Then he retired from the window, nursing his vengeance till he should have finished shaving.

Peter came into the House, swinging the golf-club. His Uncle Benjamin stared at him speechlessly. Peter was a little too much for him.

"Great game, golf!" said Peter Todd cheerily. "Thanks for the loan of your brassey, uncle—do you call it a brassey or a niblick?"

"That is a brassey!"

"Good! You see I'm learning already! I've borrowed all the balls, and I'm sorry to say they're all lost——"

"Do you know those balls cost half a crown each?" roared Mr. Todd.

"Do they? How lucky you are rich, uncle!" said Peter.

"It will be quite a serious loss for a poor man, wouldn't it?"

"You—you—you—give me that club!"

"Certainly, uncle. It's a bit chipped; but I'm sure you won't mind that! I say, won't they stare when they find their windows broken—what? Ha, ha, ha! You'll have quite a big little bill to pay, uncle. Funny, ain't it? Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Todd grasped the brassey as if he was inclined to lay it about his merry nephew.

It did not seem at all funny to him.

"Go and find all those balls!" he stuttered at last. "Do you hear? Find them!"

"Like a bird!" said Peter.

Mr. Capper came downstairs three at a time. He had hurriedly finished his toilet, and he came down with a walking-stick in his hand, to look for the humorous person who had driven a golf-ball through his window. He started at the sight of Mr. Todd with a brassey in his hand. He naturally thought that the old gentleman had been golfing in the Close, and he could hardly use his walking-stick on Mr. Todd.

Peter advanced towards the Fourth-Form master with meek respect.

"May I go to your room to fetch uncle's golf-ball, Mr. Capper?" he asked demurely.

"Your—your uncle's?"

"Yes, sir. May I go and find it?"

"Yes," gasped Mr. Capper. "F-f-follow me, and I will give it to you."

And he hurried up the stairs again, wishing fervently that Uncle Benjamin was a junior schoolboy, so that he could have brought the walking-stick into play over his shoulders. Peter Todd followed him, and came down with the golf-ball in his hand. He handed it to his uncle.

"That's one!" he said. "It went through Mr. Capper's window. He seems to have cut his chin. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young villain! I wonder he has not caned you."

"I dare say he would," chuckled Peter; "only, you see, he thinks that it was you who were golfing in the Close."

"I?" gasped Mr. Todd.

"Yes. He can't cane you. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you—"

"Of course, you won't give me away, uncle. I'll go and find the balls and your hat. You'll want your hat for your morning trip, you know."

Mr. Todd sat speechless, and Peter sauntered out of the School House.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

A False Alarm!

"WHAT on earth are you up to?" The Famous Five asked that question together, as they came upon Peter Todd under the old elms in the Close. Peter was very busy. He had recovered his uncle's hat, and seemed to be devoting some attention to it before he restored it to Mr. Todd. The old gentleman was waiting hatless in the hall till his headgear came back.

Peter had turned down the lining inside the hat, and was pouring in red ink. The chums of the Remove watched him in amazement.

When the lining was turned back in its place, between the lining and the hat was a stream of ink, soaking in. But the lining concealed it from sight.

"That will take some time to soak through," remarked Peter, looking at the chums of the Remove with a sweet smile. "When uncle's napper is in it, it will get warmer, and then it will soak through quicker."

"You utter duffer!" ejaculated Bob Cherry. "It will run down his face—"

"Of course it will! I haven't put red ink behind the lining simply to improve the hat!"

"But—but what—"

"This is Practical Joke No. 4," explained Peter. "Uncle is going to breakfast with the Head, as usual. When he comes in he will have quite a rich colour after his walk. Don't you think so?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I played this on Loder of the Sixth once, and Uncle Ben laughed himself quite hoarse when I told him about it," Peter remarked. "You see, that shows that he sees the humour in a little joke of this sort."

"Ha, ha, ha! But that was Loder's hat, and this is his own!" roared Bob. "You'll find that makes a difference."

"It oughtn't to, from a point of view of humour."

"But it jolly well will, you'll see!"

"Well, I'll chance it."

And Peter Todd carried the hat away to the house. A few minutes later Uncle Benjamin came out with the hat on. The juniors grinned as they looked at him. As yet the ink had not soaked through; but when it did—

Mr. Todd always took a constitutional before breakfast. He came back just as the bell was ringing. Fifty pairs of eyes turned upon him as he came in at the school gates. The ink had worked through the hat-lining by that time. Little

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FOR NEXT
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"WUN LUNG'S WHEEZE!"

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streams of it were trickling down the fat face, giving Uncle Benjamin a remarkable appearance, somewhat like a zebra with red stripes. A yell of laughter rang through the Close as the fat little gentleman came trotting towards the School House.

Mr. Todd was breathing rather hard.

"Very warm this morning," he remarked to Wingate of the Sixth, whom he met at the door.

Wingate stared at him blankly.

"Very warm indeed. My face is quite perspiring—quite wet, in fact."

"My word!" murmured Wingate.

Mr. Todd walked in, and Wingate almost doubled up. The juniors were shrieking. The old gentleman took off his hat and hung it on a peg, and walked away at once for the Head's breakfast-room. He was only just in time for breakfast, and he did not want to keep his host and hostess waiting.

Dr. Locke and his wife and daughter were already in the breakfast-room. They said good-morning to Mr. Todd, and then looked at him with a strange, fixed gaze.

"Quite warm this morning," remarked Mr. Todd, as he sat down.

"Yes," murmured Dr. Locke.

"Dear me!" murmured Mrs. Locke. And Miss Locke turned her face away to conceal the smile she could not restrain.

"B-b-but, my dear sir," stammered the Head, "what—what is the matter?"

"The matter?" said Mr. Todd.

"Yes; you—you have had an accident?"

"An accident? No!"

"But—but your face—"

"My face!"

"Yes; you—you are bleeding!"

"Bleeding?" exclaimed Mr. Todd, in astonishment.

"Yes. There are—there are streaks of blood upon your face!" gasped the Head. "You—you must have cut yourself—badly!"

It did not occur to the Head that the red streaks were due to red ink. That was not likely to enter his mind. It was a long time since the Head of Greyfriars had been a member of a junior Form.

"I was quite unaware of it!" exclaimed Mr. Todd, greatly surprised. He took out his handkerchief and wiped his face, and then gazed at the handkerchief in astonishment and alarm. "Bless my soul! You are right. This is most extraordinary!"

The handkerchief was stained red.

Mr. Todd jumped up from the breakfast-table, and ran to a glass. He gazed at his reflection in horror. The wiping with the handkerchief had spread the streaks of ink all over his face, and his fat countenance looked like a newly-boiled beetroot. No wonder the old gentleman was alarmed. He gazed fixedly at the glass. Then he felt over his head for a cut, but there was no cut there. But his fingers came away from his hair thickly reddened.

"Dear me! I—I cannot understand this!" he gasped. "There is a great effusion of blood, but I can feel no cut—no injury whatever. This is most extraordinary! I—I fear I must be ill. You will excuse me, sir. I think I will retire to my room. Might I trouble you to telephone for a doctor?"

"Certainly!" said the Head.

Mr. Todd hurriedly retired from the breakfast-room. Dr. Locke telephoned at once for the school doctor. He was really alarmed about his guest. Twenty minutes later Dr. Pillbury dashed up to Greyfriars in his trap. The juniors were coming out from breakfast when he came striding into the School House.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Somebody ill!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

"Who's ill, sir?" asked Peter Todd.

"Your uncle, my boy," said the doctor, passing him without pausing.

"My uncle!"

"Oh, dear!" said Alonzo. "What can be the matter with poor Uncle Benjamin?"

"I wonder!" murmured Peter.

Dr. Locke met the medical man in the hall. The juniors caught a few of his hurried words. "Strange effusion of blood—no cut visible—some extraordinary kind of hemorrhage." Dr. Pillbury whisked upstairs to Uncle Benjamin's room.

Uncle Benjamin was awaiting him in a state of alarm. He looked greatly relieved as the medical man bustled in.

Dr. Pillbury gazed at his crimson countenance in astonishment.

"A most extraordinary thing, doctor!" gasped Uncle Benjamin. "I was quite well—quite well when I went out

for my morning walk. When I came in my face was covered with blood. Most extraordinary! There is no cut that I can discover; and I feel quite well now. Pray tell me what is the matter!"

The medical gentleman scanned his face and examined his head. Then he smiled.

"Is there just reason to be alarmed, doctor?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sir!"

"Excuse me—ha, ha!—no reason whatever for alarm. Fortunately, it is not blood!" the medical gentleman gasped.

"Not blood!"

"Nothing of the sort!"

"Then—then wha-what is it?"

"Ink!"

"Wha-a-a-a-at!"

"Red ink. Quite harmless, I assure you!" smiled the doctor.

Mr. Todd collapsed into a chair.

"Ink!" he stuttered. "Ink! Ink! But how could my face become covered with ink, sir, without my knowledge?"

"I really do not know, but it is undoubtedly ink. Someone may have placed ink in the lining of your hat, for a practical joke. I have heard of such things," said Dr. Pillbury, still smiling.

"My hat!"

Uncle Benjamin was out of the room with a single bound. He rushed downstairs, and grabbed his Homburg hat from the peg. He looked into it—it was reeking with red ink.

"Peter! Where is Peter? Peter, Peter!" stuttered Uncle Benjamin.

The Remove were just going into their Form-room. Mr. Todd rushed into the Form-room passage, brandishing the inky hat.

"Peter, you young scoundrel, you have inked my hat! You—you—"

The sight of Mr. Todd's crimson face elicited a yell of laughter from the Remove fellows.

Peter Todd dodged round the other juniors.

"It's all right, uncle. It was only a joke!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Joke!" shrieked Mr. Todd. "Only a joke! I will joke you. I—I—I'll—"

"Dear me! What is the matter?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, coming down the passage. He jumped at the sight of Mr. Todd's face. "My dear sir, what—what has happened?"

"This has happened!" roared Mr. Todd, brandishing the inky hat. "That villain of a nephew of mine had inked my hat—he calls it a joke! Mr. Quelch, may I request you to punish that young scoundrel?"

"Most certainly!" said Mr. Quelch grimly. "I do not approve of such jokes! Follow me, Todd!"

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Peter, in dismay. "I—I say, uncle, this ain't playing the game, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. He took a cane from his desk. "Hold out your hand, Todd!"

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

Uncle Benjamin stood looking on at the punishment with a perfectly ferocious expression upon his crimsoned face. Mr. Quelch laid on the strokes hard, and Peter fairly wriggled under them. Then Uncle Benjamin departed, and Peter wriggled to his place in the Form.

"Don't you think uncle's beginning to be fed-up, old chap?" Bob Cherry whispered.

Peter Todd groaned.

"Ow! He doesn't play the game! He thought it was very funny when I did it to Loder. Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" snapped Mr. Quelch; and the Removites suppressed their merriment, and morning lessons proceeded.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Well Run!

HARRY WHARTON & Co were thinking about cricket after morning lessons. It was Saturday, and a half-holiday, and the Remove were playing the Shell that afternoon. Peter Todd had persisted in his desire that Uncle Benjamin should be played in the Remove eleven, but Wharton did not see it. He liked Uncle Benjamin, and he was willing to help look after him and make him happy; but he did not want him in the Lower Fourth cricket team. That would be having rather too much of a good thing.

"My dear chap, it can't be done!" said Harry, as the juniors came out after dinner. "Your uncle is a nice old chap, but he's fat, and he can't run, and I don't suppose he can bat or field for toffee. Don't talk out of the back of your neck."

"Rot!" said Peter. "You should hear Uncle Benjamin

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talk cricket! He used to play a long time ago, when he was a youngster—"

"In the Dark Ages?" grinned Nugent.

"And he'd take it as a great compliment!" said Peter.

"I dare say he would; but we should lose the match with the Shell. It can't be done."

"Must be done!" said Peter firmly.

"Who's going to stand out and make room for him?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"I'll do that!" said Peter.

"Rot! We want you—must have you!" said Wharton decidedly.

"Love me, love my dog!" grinned Peter. "You can't have me without my uncle. Besides, you must play him—I've told him he's to play!"

"You've told him!" roared Wharton.

Peter Todd nodded calmly.

"Yes, I've told him. If you refuse him after that, it will hurt his feelings. Must be decent, you know."

"Well, you cheeky ass—"

"Besides, we can beat the Shell all right!" said Peter Todd. "I'll promise you to make a century—if I can. Now, then, is it a go?"

Harry Wharton looked at the other fellows. They all liked Uncle Benjamin, who had certainly been very kind and generous to the Removites during his stay at Greyfriars. Some of them, too, anticipated fun in seeing the old gentleman hopping on the cricket-field.

"Oh, let him play!" said Johnny Bull. "We can beat the Shell a man short!"

"It's a go, then!" said Wharton. "Penfold's going home this afternoon, and I should have to play another chap in his place. I'll play your uncle for Penfold, Toddy."

"Good egg!" said Peter. And he walked away in search of Mr. Todd. The old gentleman had come out after lunch, and was reading a newspaper under the shady trees in the Head's garden. He looked rather grimly at his dutiful nephew. He had not forgotten the ink in his hat yet.

"Well, what is it now?" he demanded.

"Ahem!" said Peter. "You remember I mentioned to you the other day, uncle, about playing cricket while you're down here. I told you you could play for the Remove. Well, Wharton wants you—Wharton's our skipper, you know. One of his men is going home to his people this afternoon, and he wants an extra player."

Uncle Benjamin laid down his newspaper, and blinked at Peter over his glasses. He looked pleased. Uncle Benjamin was still boyish at heart, and it pleased him to join in the games of young folks. But he had some doubts about his cricketing abilities.

"It's a long time since I've played cricket, Peter," he said dubiously.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Peter. "You're as fit as a fiddle, uncle, owing to your being a strict tectotaller, and all that. It's only a single-innings match. And our team is only a fag team, you know—chaps won't expect too much."

The Remove cricketers would have scalped Peter if they had heard him giving that disparaging description of the Form cricket team. But Uncle Benjamin nodded.

"Well, I should certainly like to play a game of cricket again," he remarked. "But—but I have no flannels here, Peter!"

"I know," agreed Peter. "But you can borrow them. Mr. Prout plays cricket, and he'll lend you some flannels like a bird."

Uncle Benjamin glanced down at the ample lines of his figure.

"Do you think Mr. Prout's flannels would fit me, Peter?"

"Like a glove," said Peter, adding inwardly that it was a very tight glove he was thinking of. "Come, uncle, don't make difficulties, when the fellows are relying on you to help them in a match."

Mr. Todd rose to his feet.

"Very well, Peter. Tell Wharton I will play."

"Right-ho! I'll ask Mr. Prout for the things, and take them to your room. Stumps pitched in a quarter of an hour."

And Peter hurried away, grinning. Uncle Benjamin toddled away to his room, and Peter brought the cricketing attire, which the Fifth-Form master had kindly lent for the occasion.

Mr. Prout, the master of the Fifth, was a stout gentleman, but his girth was not quite so extensive as that of Uncle Benjamin. Ample as the flannels were, Mr. Todd was likely to find them an exceedingly tight fit. But Peter did not mention that little circumstance.

"Here you are, uncle," he said cheerfully. "Play in ten minutes!"

"Thank you, Peter! My boy, I—I am somewhat sorry that I caused Mr. Quelch to cane you so severely this morn-

ing. After all, it was only a joke, though I was very much exasperated at the time."

"Oh, I knew you'd see the fun of it in the long run!" said Peter amiably. "That's all right. It's nothing to the tricks I'll play on you when I'm abroad with you."

"Eh?"
"I'll keep you laughing all the time with my little jokes," said Peter. "I'll hide your clothes, and put soup in your hat, and make you lose trains—in fact, we'll have a ripping time! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Peter—"
"Time's getting close!" said Peter. "I'll tell the fellows you're changing." And he vanished, leaving his uncle with a very thoughtful expression upon his face. The programme mapped out by the cheerful Peter for that trip abroad did not seem, somehow, to please Mr. Todd.

Ten minutes later a stout old gentleman, in exceedingly tight flannels, came down to Little Side, where the Remove cricketers were ready. Mr. Todd was breathing hard. Just after lunch, the tight clothes seemed even tighter. They looked as if they would burst upon the slightest exertion by the wearer.

"Here we are!" said Wharton. "Ready Mr. Todd?"
"Yes, quite!" gasped the old gentleman.
"We've borrowed Mr. Prout's bat for you," said Peter. "You look ripping, uncle. Anybody could see that you're a cricketer. Here come the Shellfish."

Hobson and Hoskins and the rest of the Shell team came on the ground. They looked rather curiously at Uncle Benjamin.

"Not playing Todd's uncle?" asked Hobson.
Wharton nodded.

"Oh, lor'!" ejaculated Hobson.
They tossed for innings, and Wharton was the winner. He elected to bat first. The Remove innings opened with Peter Todd and his uncle. Wharton was anxious to get Mr. Todd's innings over, so as to know what he had to expect from him. Peter received the first over from Hobson. The Shell fellows fielded deep. Peter was well known as a hard hitter. Quite a crowd gathered round to see Uncle Benjamin play cricket.
"Play!"

And there were encouraging murmurs from the grinning juniors round the ropes.

"Go it, uncle!"
"Play up, Falstaff!"
Peter Todd swiped away the first ball and ran. Uncle Benjamin ran too, but not at the speed of his nephew. Peter was at the opposite wicket before Mr. Todd had half crossed the pitch. He shouted along the pitch to the toiling runner:

"Put it on! Buck up! Don't slack!"
"Dear me!" gasped Uncle Benjamin.
He toiled on as fast as he could, and reached the wicket panting. There he hoped to find rest, but Peter was running back. There was a yell from the crowd.

"Run, you duffer—run!"
"Put it on!"
"Oh, dear!" gasped Uncle Benjamin. "I—I really—oh—"
He started running back along the pitch. The ball had been fielded now, and was coming in. Uncle Benjamin was a sportsman, and though he was feeling quite dreadful by this time, he did not want to lose a wicket for his side. He exerted all his strength and ran on, and his bat dropped on the crease in good time.

Fortunately for Uncle Benjamin, there was no time for more runs. The bowler had the ball, and Uncle Benjamin stood gasping as Hobson prepared to deliver. It was a warm afternoon, and those two runs had made Uncle Benjamin feel as if he were being baked. And he had heard an ominous rending sound in the flannel trousers as he gained his wicket. They fitted him like a very, very tight glove. His gaze rested on his nephew at the other end of the pitch, and it did not express avuncular affection. It was already dawning upon his mind that his playing in the match, in those tight clothes, was more due to Peter's sense of humour than to the fact that his services were required by the Remove eleven.

The ball went down again, and Uncle Benjamin fervently hoped that there would be no runs. But he was disappointed. Peter Todd drove the ball away in great style, and ran, and Uncle Benjamin had to run. He laboured along the pitch amid encouraging yells from the crowd and loud laughter from the fieldsmen.

"Bravo, Falstaff!"
"Put it through!"
"Get a move on!"
"Buck up!"
Uncle Benjamin reached the wicket, panting and stream-

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ing with perspiration. But the dreadful Peter was running again, and Uncle Benjamin had to run. He gave his nephew an almost homicidal glare as he passed him on the pitch.

"Go it, uncle!" grinned Peter.

Mr. Todd went it. There was a yell of warning to him as the ball was fielded and sent in. His wicket was in danger, and he put on a fearful effort and spurted for the crease. A final desperate bound, and he was there—and that last bound was too much for the tight trousers. There was a rending sound, loud and long-drawn-out, and a shriek of laughter, and a gasp of dismay from Uncle Benjamin as he felt a sudden cold draught. He did not rest at the wicket this time. He continued running—for the School House. His only thought was to get out of sight. Loud yells followed him.

"Come back!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Uncle Benjamin did not come back. He ran for the School House as he had never run for the wickets, and disappeared from view amid shrieks of laughter. His wicket was promptly knocked over, and the Remove were one down.

"Man in!" gasped Wharton.

But it was quite some time before next man was in. The whole field was in a roar, and seemed in danger of going into hysterics. The Remove had to finish that match a man short. But Peter Todd's hard hitting saved the day, and the juniors won by a narrow margin; and when they came off the field finally, Peter Todd was informed that he had had the narrowest escape in his life of being slaughtered.

"If we'd lost that match," said Bob Cherry solemnly, "we'd have hanged, drawn, quartered, and scalped you, you funny villain! And now you'd better go and see your uncle. I think he'll be glad to see you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Peter Todd wisely decided to give Uncle Benjamin a wide berth for the present.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER. A Little Ventriloquism!

"**B**EAST!"
Thus William George Bunter.
"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter with you?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, greeting the Owl of the Remove with a tremendous slap on the shoulder.
"Yar-o-o-oh!" roared Bunter. "You silly ass! You've nearly busted my shoulder-blades! Oh!"

"Only sympathy!" said Bob. "Whom are you calling a beast? Has Mr. Lascelles given you some extra toot, or has Quelchy made you wash your neck, or has the order gone forth that fat porpoises shall not have more than six helpings at dinner?"

"It's that rotten uncle of Todd's!" growled Billy Bunter, rubbing his shoulders. "I call him a beast—a regular beast! You know he's rolling in money. Well, I asked him to cash a postal-order for me—I think he might do that, as I'm Peter's study-mate, and put up with his beastly nephews—and the old rotter refused!"

"So you've had a postal-order?" asked Bob, in astonishment.

"Well, I—I'm expecting one," said Bunter peevishly. "It's all the same to him if I hand him the postal-order on Monday, I suppose? I think he's a beast, and his nephews are a pair of beasts! Alonzo's a silly beast, and Peter's a—"

"Well, what is it, Peter?" asked the cheery voice of that individual as he came along the passage and joined the two juniors.

"Ahem!" said Bunter, blinking at him. "I—I was just telling Cherry what a splendid chap you are, Peter, and what a really fine old fellow your uncle is."

"How nice!" said Peter. "I like you to speak of me like that, Bunter, when I'm not present. It shows what a straightforward chap you are."

Bob Cherry walked away, chuckling. All the Remove fellows knew exactly what a straightforward chap Billy Bunter was.

"I'm glad you've got such a good opinion of me, Bunt," continued Peter calmly, "because I want you to do something for me."

"Oh, do you?" growled Bunter. "I've got no money, and—and I'm just going to speak to a fellow, too. So-long! Yow! Leggo my car!"

NOTE.

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"You haven't forgotten how to ventriloquise, I suppose?" asked Peter.

"Of course I haven't! I was going to give a ripping show the other night, only your silly uncle spoiled it all—"

"My what?"

"I—I mean your—you ripping old uncle!" wailed Bunter.

"Leggo my ear, you beast!"

"Good!" said Peter. "Now, I want you to give Uncle Benjamin a sample of your wonderful powers, Bunter—a little joke on him, you know."

Bunter brightened up.

"Good! I'll make the old beast sit up!" he exclaimed.

"The what?"

"I—I mean I'll be glad to—to amuse your jolly old uncle, Toddy."

"That's better! Come along! He's in the library now, talking to Monsieur Charpentier. We can go in for a book—see? I want you to give him a high old-time—a regular first-class practical joke, you know. I'm trying to please him."

"I'll please him!" muttered Bunter vengefully.

Mr. Todd was seated in a deep easy chair in the library, chatting with Monsieur Charpentier, the French master at Greyfriars, when the two juniors came in. Several other Removites followed them down the passage as far as the library door, very keen to see Peter making further attempts to please his uncle. Peter Todd and Bunter opened one of the wall-cases, and the two gentlemen went on with their chat after a glance at them, while the juniors looked over the books. Billy Bunter cleared his throat with a preliminary cough.

"Is it zat you have been trying ze great game of ze cricket, isn't it?" Monsieur Charpentier was saying.

"Ahem! Yes," said Mr. Todd, with a slight frown in the direction of his nephew, who was busy with the books. "A great game, Monsieur Charpentier. You do not play cricket very much in France, I believe?"

"Non, non; but ve play ze great vinter game of football," said Mossoo. "Zat game is very much taken up in my country. Zere are some ferry fine French players of zat game of football."

"Rot!"

Monsieur Charpentier jumped, as that word was pronounced in Mr. Todd's voice. Mr. Todd heard it, too, and he glanced round, wondering who had spoken, not recognising the imitation of his own tones.

"I beg your pardon, monsieur?" said Monsieur Charpentier very stiffly.

"Not at all," said Mr. Todd. "You were saying—"

"A lot of bosh!" went on the ventriloquial voice, in exact imitation of Mr. Todd's tones, and the old gentleman jumped again.

"Monsieur, you are not polite viz me," said Mossoo, flushing red.

"I," exclaimed Mr. Todd—"I did not speak, Monsieur Charpentier."

"Zat is a whopper!"

"What!"

"Mon Dieu! I did not say zat—"

"Monsieur! You said—"

"I did not—"

"You French rascal!"

"Vat!" yelled Monsieur Charpentier.

"I—I—I—"

Peter Todd gave Bunter a fierce look. He wanted the Greyfriars ventriloquist to play a jape on Uncle Benjamin, but not to that extent. But Bunter had his own ends to serve. He was feeling very annoyed with Uncle Benjamin, and also with Monsieur Charpentier, whose ideas of French pronunciation disagreed with Bunter's, a difference that sometimes led to trouble for the fat junior.

"You sall call me rascal!" stuttered Monsieur Charpentier, crimson with rage and indignation. "Monsieur! If you were not ze guest of my respected headmaster, ze respectable Dr. Locke, I would pull you ze nose for zat!"

"Monsieur—"

"I zink zat you have been drinking viz yourself, zat you speak so—"

"Drinking!" roared Uncle Benjamin, touched upon his tenderest spot, so to speak, "I never drink, sir! I—"

"You are vun tipsy old duffer!" went on the ventriloquist.

Uncle Benjamin jumped up, as angry as Monsieur Charpentier now. He glared at the French master, and the French master glared at him.

"Monsieur, how dare you use such language to me? If I were not a man of peace, I would personally chastise you for that imputation!"

"Mon Dieu! I never said him! I—"

"You rotten frog-eater!"

"Sir!"

"Monsieur!"

"You insult me!"

"And you insult me!" roared Mr. Todd. "Bless my soul! I shall certainly complain to Dr. Locke of this!"

"And I sall complain also! But for my respect for Dr. Locke, I sould—"

"Yah! You're afraid!"

"Afraid!" shouted Monsieur, quite beside himself by this time. "I vill show you vezzer it is zat I fear you, you—you peeg!"

And he brandished a bony fist in Uncle Benjamin's face. Uncle Benjamin brandished a fat one in return. In another moment a most unprecedented scene would have taken place in the usually quiet and reposeful library of Greyfriars. But Peter Todd rushed between. He was alarmed at the extent matters had gone to, and he sincerely wished he had not brought the Greyfriars ventriloquist there for a joke on Uncle Benjamin.

"Hold on!" gasped Peter. "It's all right! It's only a joke!"

"A joke!" roared Mr. Todd. "A joke to tell me I drink!"

"A shoke!" shouted Monsieur Charpentier. "A shoke to call me a French rascal!"

"He didn't! You didn't! It was Bunter! He's a ventriloquist!" gasped Peter. "It's all right—it was Bunter all the time!"

"Bless my soul!" gasped Mr. Todd.

"Ciel!" ejaculated Monsieur Charpentier. "I remember me now zat zat Buntair have ze gift of to ventriloquise, isn't it? I have heard tell of zat. Buntair, you young rascal!"

"A—a—a ventriloquist!" exclaimed Mr. Todd. "Oh, oh! So that was it! I—I will have him flogged! I—I—I—" He stuttered with wrath. "Monsieur Charpentier, I beg your pardon! I supposed you—"

"Monsieur Todd, I beg your pardon! I supposed you—"

"He shall be flogged! I will speak to the Head!"

"I also vill speak viz ze Head!"

Billy Bunter had beaten a retreat from the room. But he ran into the arms of the juniors outside, and they promptly collared him. Harry Wharton & Co. considered that causing a quarrel between two peaceful old gentlemen was past a joke, and they desired to impress that fact upon Bunter.

"I—I say, don't give Bunter away to the Head, uncle," said Peter dismally. "I—I—it was my fault!"

"What! You are not a ventriloquist, too, I presume!" thundered Mr. Todd.

"Nunno! But—but I put Bunter up to it!"

"You—you did! What for?"

"Practical Joke No. 6," said Peter.

"You young rascal!" shouted Mr. Toda. "No, I will not complain of Bunter, but I will give you—" He looked round for a weapon, and Peter Todd fled. Uncle Benjamin was not safe at close quarters just then. There was an open window on the garden, and Peter cleared it at a bound and vanished.

There was a sound of scuffling in the passage, and the Famous Five appeared in the room with Bunter in their grasp, struggling wildly.



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"Here he is, sir," said Harry Wharton. "We're going to bump him!"

"Yaroo! Leggo! Yow—ow—yah!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Ow! Help! Fire! Murder! Yow—ow!"

"Bless my soul!"

"Mon Dieu!"

The juniors whisked out of the library, and Billy Bunter sat groaning on the carpet. Mr. Todd glared at him. Monsieur Charpentier did more than glare. He rushed towards the fat junior, and brought his boots into play. Billy Bunter yelled, and rolled out of the library. Then he picked himself up and fled.

"Ze young rascal!" ejaculated Monsieur Charpentier, as he came back panting into the room.

"My dear sir, I am sorry my nephew should have caused that young wretch to play such a trick. I really beg your pardon."

"Zat is nozzing!" said Mossou, with a gracious wave of the hand. "Ze boys vill be ze boys, as I have heard you say, monsieur."

But Uncle Benjamin was beginning to think that boys could be too boyish. And he decided to have a very serious talk with his cheerful nephew that evening.

THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Straw!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Painting again?"

There was a strong smell of paint in Study No. 7. Peter Todd was at work in his shirt-sleeves by gas-light. His study-mates were not to be seen. Bunter and Tom Dutton and Alonzo were apparently fed-up with the task of house-decorators. A large can of paint stood on the top of the steps in the study, and Peter Todd stood on the steps themselves, repainting the woodwork over the door. He grinned down cheerfully at Bob, as the latter looked into the study.

"Yes; I'm finishing," he remarked. "I've had to paint out all that Coker did here the other night. I couldn't leave that portrait of Uncle Benjamin as a permanent ornament."

"Ha, ha! I suppose not. I looked in to tell you that your uncle is coming upstairs. I think he's coming to see you."

"Let 'em all come!" said Peter.

A minute later Uncle Benjamin looked into the study through his spectacles. He sniffed at the smell of the paint. Peter Todd paused in his labour, and looked down at him. Uncle Benjamin blinked up. His head was lower than the top of the steps.

"Hard at work, you see," said Peter. "The other chaps have left me to do it all. You like to see a chap being industrious, uncle."

"Groogh!"

"What's the matter?"

Mr. Todd sniffed.

"I came here to speak to you, Peter," he said. "But I find it difficult to breathe an atmosphere—groogh—impregnated with the fumes of—groogh—paint! It is really most unpleasant."

"Oh, that's all right, you get used to it in time," said Peter cheerfully. "Sit down in that armchair, uncle."

"I have something very serious to say to you—"

"All right—sit down!"

Mr. Todd sat down in the armchair. He remained seated there for about the millionth part of a second and then bounded to his feet with a roar.

"Ow, ow, ow, ow!"

"Dear me! You've sat on the tacks!" said Peter regretfully. "Are you hurt?"

"Oh, ow ow! Did you know the tacks were there when you asked me to sit down?" roared Mr. Todd.

"Ahem! As a matter of fact, I did!"

"You young rascal—"

"Practical Joke No. 7!" murmured Peter gently.

Mr. Todd strode towards him and paused. His nephew was a little too painty to be touched just then, and the can of paint on the top of the steps might have been overturned. Mr. Todd paused, breathing hard.

"Peter, I have been considering very carefully. I do not approve of practical jokes."

"Don't you?" exclaimed Peter in astonishment. "You used to!"

"Ahem! I have had reason to change my opinion. I am beginning to think that you are an unmitigated young rascal!"

"Dear me!" murmured Peter. "I say uncle, hold these steps a minute, will you?"

"I wish to say—"

"Yes, but hold the steps a minute, while I move the paint can."

"Very well!"

Mr. Todd held the steps. His head was just under the paint can now. Peter Todd's elbow knocked against the can

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ONE
PENNY.

and it turned over. It was a wide, deep can, and it fell fairly over Mr. Todd's head and bonneted him.

There was an awful gasp from the old gentleman as the can fitted on his head, and the green paint streamed down his plump face.

"Ger-r-rooog-g-gh!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Peter. "You've done it now!"

"Gug-g-g-g-gh!"

"My dear uncle—"

"Grug-g-g-g-g-gh!"

"All the paint wasted now," murmured Peter. "Oh dear!"

Mr. Todd clutched the can from his head and hurled it upon the floor. His aspect was terrific. Green paint smothered his head and streamed down his face, completely disguising his features. He gugged it out of his mouth and blinked at Peter through the green stream.

"Grooog-g-gh!"

"What on earth's happened?" exclaimed Bob Cherry, looking into the study. "What—what—who—how—Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gug-ug-ug-ug-ugh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob, staggering back into the passage. "You've done it now, Peter! If you go on that holiday, you can use my head as a footer! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gug-gug-guggh!"

Mr. Todd dabbed at his face with his handkerchief, which was soon thick with paint. He was snorting and grunting hysterically. But, excited as he was, he kept between Peter Todd and the door. He did not mean to let the perpetrator of Practical Joke No. 8 escape.

"Groogh! You young villain! Gug-ug-ugh! You did that on purpose! Oh dear!"

"Of course I did!" said Peter cheerfully. "I'm not clumsy! Really, you shouldn't have put your head under the paint pot, uncle. It was too tempting."

"I'll—groogh—thrash you within an inch of your—gug-ug-ugh—life!" shrieked Mr. Todd. "I will—groogh—thrash you till you—groogh—howl for mercy! I—I—oh! This is too much! Groogh!"

He made a wild rush at Peter. The junior dodged round the table, with his infuriated uncle after him. Peter made a break for the door and fled into the passage. Mr. Todd came stumbling out in pursuit, and a yell of laughter greeted his appearance.

"Ha, ha, ha! It's a green Father Christmas! Ha, ha, ha!"

"A study in green!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Oh, my hat! Toddy has done it this time."

"Grooogh! Grooogh! Gerroogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sh-show me to a bath-room, somebody," muttered Mr. Todd. "My gracious! I—I—oh, I will flay that young villain! Oh dear! Gug, gug, gug!"

Bob Cherry, almost weeping with mirth, led the old gentleman away to a bath-room, and for an hour or more Mr. Todd was busy with rubbing and scrubbing. When he was quite exhausted, and could rub and scrub no more, there were still many traces of paint about his ears and hair; they had to be left to wear off with time.

When Peter Todd came into the common-room later—after cautiously looking round for his uncle—a yell of laughter greeted him. Only Alonzo was not laughing. Alonzo was looking very sad and sorrowful.

"My dear Peter," he said, "you have completely lost your chance now. Uncle Benjamin is infuriated with you. He says he would not take you with him under any consideration. He says that nothing would induce him to do so."

"Go hon!" murmured Peter.

"But it is serious, Peter. He has told me to pack my box to-morrow, ready to leave Greyfriars with him on Monday," said Alonzo distressfully. "I am truly sorry, my dear Peter. Although I should like that holiday very much, I did not want to be preferred to you; and if you had only been prudent, Uncle Benjamin would certainly have taken you. I am sure that he would have taken you, my dear Peter!"

"Well, you never can tell!" said Peter philosophically. "You can't say I haven't taken a lot of trouble to please uncle. That paint was worth three shillings!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Uncle Benjamin has quite decided now. He has spoken to the Head, and I am to go with him on Monday. I am to pack my box—"

"Sure it's settled?" asked Peter, with interest.

"Quite settled, my dear Peter."

"Then I'll let Uncle Ben off to-morrow," said Peter generously. "Sunday's a day of rest, anyway. I'll give Uncle Ben a rest."

(Concluded on page 27, column 2.)

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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'Rooney, 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. The adventurers stumble across a village which is reigned over by a beautiful woman, who is known as Althara the Merciless, and are captured and taken prisoners. Ching-Lung, however, tells her he is a wizard, and by simple, yet wonderful, conjuring, he earns a reward from the queen, and the whole party are eventually reunited. Hausmann attacks the village. Realising that their lives are in great jeopardy, Ferrers Lord and his party gain the confidence of the Indians by a clever ruse, and induce them to join forces against the Germans. Four hundred native warriors are sent to dislodge the enemy, but the latter, with the aid of a couple of Maxims, have no difficulty in repulsing them. They return to the village, the majority of them wounded. Then it is that Ferrers Lord hits upon a scheme, and is just about to explain it to the queen, when Ching-Lung informs him that Tarface, whom he suspects of treachery, is listening.

(Now go on with the story.)

Ferrers Lord's Scheme—Althara's Warning,

It was one of the prince's marvellous inspirations. He did not understand a solitary word, and yet he seemed to know intuitively that the millionaire was going to say something that it was safer for the little traitor not to hear.

"A very useful hint and a timely one, Ching," said Ferrers Lord. "I'll have him sent out of earshot."

Tarface retired at a sharp order from Althara.

"This is my plan, Queen. You must tell the warriors that the white men are cunning rogues, and very treacherous. You must send the interpreter and some of your soldiers to them, saying this: 'The Queen has taken the firesticks from her white prisoners, and the Queen needs many firesticks. She has still a powerful army, but she wishes for peace. Send her, then, twenty firesticks and the things to shoot out of them, and then the Queen will know that you are honourable men. If the Queen thinks the gift worthy, she will give up the white prisoners to you.'"

Althara's face brightened.

"Truly," she said, "the cunning of a thousand serpents is within you. And what then?"

"Then we will escape. We ask only for six hours' start. Tell them that we have escaped, and their hatred of us is so great that they will leave the village and pursue us. Tell your warriors only of the firesticks."

It was a clever plan. Like all savages, no better bait could be offered than a gun. If Hausmann parted with only a dozen rifles, it would arouse the cupidity of the warriors. If they obtained a dozen guns, the value of their prisoners would suddenly increase, and they would probably demand fifty guns.

"Hallo, the beggars are interested at last!" said Ching-Lung. "I wish I understood the lingo."

As the Queen spoke the warriors seemed to awaken. She spoke well. She told them that it would be folly to trust the white men without some proof that they meant to deal honourably, and that the prisoners were very valuable. If they must sell them, they must sell them for the highest

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price. When she ended, the sullen silence was broken by a burst of cheering and the thunder of spear-butts against the shields.

"Althara! Althara! Kill the dog who insulted the Queen!"

Okarni had just recovered his senses. In another instant a dozen spears would have pierced his body, but the angry warriors fell back as the Queen raised her hand.

"Nay!" she cried. "He is an old man, and to-day he lost his only son. Old men are often foolish, like young children. Let him live. Bring that man to me."

Even Ching-Lung forgave Tarface. His face was green with terror, and his knees knocked together. His face turned greener still, and his knees shook more violently when he heard what he had to do. And when Ferrers Lord had briefly explained his scheme, Ching-Lung seized the miserable interpreter by the ear.

"Tell us the joke, gentle Tarface," he grinned. "What are you laughing about? Don't keep it all to yourself."

He got no reply, except the music of chattering teeth. Tarface seemed to be always in trouble.

"Do you think Hausmann will part with the rifles?" asked Rupert.

"I hope so, Rupert. A few rifles more or less can make no difference to him. When he finds out how strong the natives are and that they mean to show fight, he'll begin to barter. Besides, I mentioned that they had taken away our weapons, but he does not know that these fellows haven't got them. It is also probable that he will send some of his men back, and when he learns that the place is impregnable he will be even more eager to deal."

"Wait a moment, old chap. I think you've missed a strong point, though I'm almost afraid to say it."

"What point?"

"He's the man in possession," said Thurston. "He may use threats—burn down and loot the village, for instance."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, Rupert," said the millionaire, smiling. "It was a point I did not overlook. People who

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ere in such a tight place must overlook nothing. It is almost impossible to burn down the village without burning down the palace."

"That's true; but I don't quite follow you," said Thurston.

"Rupert, thou art a goat!" said Ching-Lung. "Let me unfold the dreadful mystery. Hausmann isn't altogether as well in health as he'd like to be, and I'm the cause of it. The palace is a pretty comfy sort of show, and if it got burnt down he'd be out in the cold, cold street, a long, long way from a hospital. It's a million to nothing the palace would go with the rest; the whole place is as dry as tinder. That's why. Seest thou? Any more points, please?"

"Wild ducks that swim and floy and quack, don't give us any more points, for the love of marcy!" said Barry O'Rooney. "Ut's all points—spear-points! There's fifty of 'em outside the cave this blissed moment ready to jab us av we throy to run away! Bedad, it's worse than a knife-factory in Sheffield! Oi wish Oi was in Sheffield!"

"I wish you was, by 'oney," put in Prout, "and then we shouldn't 'ear so much of your jaw!"

"You've dropped somethin', Tommy."

"What 'ave I dropped, Irish?" asked Prout, looking about him.

"Only a couple of h's, me bhoy. Bedad, ivery toime yez open your mouth yez murder the King's English!"

"Ho, ho, hoo! Him faces murders anythings, Barry," said a weak voice.

They all cheered. Gan-Waga's smiling face was thrust between the curtains of the litter.

"Blessings on the swate mug of ut!" cried Barry. "Isn't ut loike sunshoine in a fog to see that chivvy smoilin' at yez? And the little button of a nose in the middle of ut, loike a tin-tack in a Dutch cheese! And the mouth of ut, and thim little black-currant oies twinklin', and the whiskers throyin' to grow on aich side of ut! Oh, Gan, Gan, me darlint Gan, whin yez grow up yez won't be a man. But don't sthart to worrit, and don't sthart to wape, bekase ut isn't your fault, me poor suet-dumplin' of an Iskimo, that whin yez arrove at the age whin most people think they're men yez'll only be an ape!"

"Yo' goes and fry cinders!" said Gan cheerfully. "Yo' goes and scrub yo' faces on the door-knocker!"

Gan was getting better; and they cheered again.

"Av Oi owned a face loike yours, sonny, d'yez know phwat Oi'd do?"

"Yo' be so prouds yo' go offs yo' nut."

"He's been off that for years, souse me," grinned Maddock.

"What's yo' do, hunk, Barry?"

"This is phwat Oi'd do!" said the Irishman. "Bedad, ut was yoursilf gave me the oidea, and there's a fortchun in ut. Oi'd go to some big brass-foundry, d'yez see, and see the boss and ax for a job at fifty quid a week. Wid your face he'd jump at the offer. The work would be loight and aisy. All yez would do would be loie down and keep shovin' your face in sand—makin' moulds for brass dure-knockers. Phwat?"

There was a burst of laughter, which brought the old crone who nursed Gan hurrying into the cave. She uttered a volley of abuse, which they luckily did not understand, and Gan's face vanished. Then a warrior entered and handed Ferrers Lord a ring. It was the ring he had left in Althara's cup, and he guessed that it meant that the Queen needed him.

"I'm wanted, lads," he said.

Althara was walking up and down restlessly under the column. She turned swiftly to the millionaire.

"Stranger," she said, "Okarni seeks thy life. Foes spring up around thee like grass after rain. He is but a worm whom I can crush under my tread, but he has many friends, and I cannot watch all the spears that may be lifted against thee. Stranger, you must go."

"And where must I go, Queen?"

"You must go to the village. The men I send I can trust. Even the interpreter who betrayed you is to be trusted now. I will pick out Okarni's men and send them to the forest to guard the women. That cannot be done at once, and a spear-stab is a swift thing. Truly, I thought Charkoni had come back from the grave when I saw thee that night. As a warrior you must go, for I would save you if I can."

"Then I will go," said Ferrers Lord.

Again Althara gazed at him in wonder and admiration.

"All things are prepared," she said, after a pause.

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FOR NEXT MONDAY—**"WUN LUNG'S WHEEZE!"**

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ONE PENNY.

"Farewell, stranger! At last have I seen a man! May good luck attend you!"

Ferrers Lord went to the mouth of the cave

"Ching!" he called.

"Hallo!"

"You have Vasco's revolver, I think," said the millionaire.

"Please let me have it. I'm leaving you in charge. I am— This revolver is loaded, I hope? Ah, I see it is! I am going to interview Hausmann—as warrior."

"All right."

They shook hands. Ching-Lung entered the cave whistling, and the millionaire walked into the tunnel.

The Finding of the Blue Orchid—In the Enemy's Camp.

Ferrers Lord kept his hands in his pockets, and his right hand held the revolver ready for instant use. The tunnel was not guarded. He reached the middle of the plank and then wheeled round. A warrior was creeping along like a cat behind him; but the millionaire's quick ears had heard the sound. He levelled the weapon.

With a hoarse grunt, the man drew back, and a spear rattled against the rock and went clattering into the well.

"You barked your knuckles for nothing, friend," thought Ferrers Lord. "It was good advice the Queen gave."

He went on again. Two natives were on guard where the path turned. Were these Okarni's friends? Ferrers Lord advanced unhesitatingly.

The men little guessed how close they were to death. One suspicious movement would have sealed their doom. Even the iron-nerved millionaire experienced a queer sensation as he passed between them, as they leaned on their spears. They took no notice and he breathed more easily.

The stone had been moved aside. Tarface was there, and on the ground squatted a dozen warriors.

"Are these the men?" asked the millionaire.

"Yes, sare."

"And what are your orders?"

"Go forest," stuttered the little native. "Got paint and warrior dress. You put on. We wait sun go down, and then go village see white men. You not kill me? Queen say you kill me."

"I'll kill you at the first hint of treachery!" said Ferrers Lord grimly. "That is what Althara meant. I have a revolver here, and I never miss. Be faithful, and you are safe. If I die myself the next minute, I'll shoot you down as soon as I suspect you to be playing a double game."

"Oh, me play fair—me play fair! What else do?"

"Well, mind you do play fair. What—!"

A push sent Tarface staggering; and Ferrers Lord ducked down. A spear stood quivering and trembling in the ground in front of him, after almost grazing his back.

Two of the warriors leapt to their feet and rushed back. Presently there was a shrill scream of agony, and then silence. The men returned and wiped their reddened spears on the grass, and Tarface cried out of sheer terror. It had been a near thing, but vengeance had followed swiftly.

"I shall quarrel with Okarni," said the millionaire.

"Come, come, man; pull yourself together!"

A prod from a spear brought the interpreter back to his senses. He jumped up with a yell of pain and anguish. The native who had administered this gentle reminder grinned.

At a glance, Ferrers Lord saw that his escort consisted of the very flower of Althara's army. They were all chiefs and officers, and the prompt justice the would-be assassin had met with at their hands told him that he could trust them implicitly.

They marched across the hot plain and entered the forest. No one offered to relieve Tarface of the bundle containing the fur robe, paint, and head-dress, and he was in a state of perspiration and semi-collapse long before they gained the welcome shelter of the trees. The warriors promptly made a fire of damp wood to keep away the flies.

"The orders are that we do not leave until sundown?"

"Them Althara's orders," answered the panting interpreter.

"And very wise orders," thought Ferrers Lord.

In the light of lamps, candles, or torches, the risk of discovery would be greatly lessened. But it was still a long time before sunset. For a time he leaned against a tree thinking. If this plan failed, their only hope that remained would be to take to the forests. If they returned without the rifles, even that hope might be a vain one, for the infuriated and disappointed warriors might insist on handing them over to Hans Hausmann. And the refuge of the caverns was as difficult of egress as of entry. Even Althara

might not be able to smuggle them out. Gan-Waga, too, would be a dead weight.

"Interpreter," he said suddenly, plucking an orchid, "do you know these flowers?"

"Oh yes. Fool white men come get 'em and take 'em way. No come here, but far there." Tarface waved a perspiring hand in the direction of the Amazon. "All white man fools."

"Thank you. Did you ever see a blue one?"

"See all kinds, but blue. Red, yaly, white, stripey, and spots on," said Tarface, shaking his head. "No blue, no blue."

"Show those fellows the flower and ask them if they ever saw one like it, only blue."

"Ask 'um yourself. No, I ask, I ask."

Ferrers Lord had merely reached for a spear, and the action made Tarface hurriedly change his tone. The bloom passed from hand to hand and there was much shaking of heads. Suddenly one of the warriors nodded.

"Chap say see 'um, but big liar," said Tarface. "He no see 'um. He get drunk and dream it. He bad lot."

"Ask him where?"

"Say plenty—not mile away—take you if like. They in forest on big tree. You fool if go. He big liar."

"Tell him I'd like to go," said Ferrers Lord.

The warrior stretched himself and stropped his spear on his shield, giving the weapon an edge like a razor. Ferrers Lord was prepared for a disappointment. He knew that the natives could see nothing beautiful in flowers, and it was more probable than not that if the blue blossoms were found they would prove not to be orchids at all, but some worthless forest plants of the creeping type. Still a ramble in the forest would be more amusing than standing still.

"Ask him again if the flowers are that shape," he said to Tarface.

"Him say yes, but him big liar."

"It's a good thing for you that I don't know his language," said Ferrers Lord; "or I might repeat the flattering things you are saying about him. Tell him I am ready."

The warrior took off his plumes and discarded his shield, for both would have hampered him. He gave the spear another sharpening, and felt its edge with his thumb. Then

he beckoned to the millionaire, and a moment later they were plunging into the green gloom of the vast forest.

A forest Indian, not a plainsman like the rest, thought Ferrers Lord.

He could see the spear flashing to and fro in the man's hand, and cutting a path as if by magic for them both. Not once did he hesitate. He twirled the heavy spear as if it had been a Malacca cane.

"What is your name?" asked the millionaire, not expecting a reply.

The native looked round with a smile.

"Douravo!" he answered sharply.

The spear cut down like a flash of light and a headless snake lashed and writhed in the undergrowth.

"So I have learned something. 'Douravo!' means beware. Friend Douravo, I shall call you Douravo, if we get out of this corner I should like to take you with me. You are an excellent woodman, and I like everything that is excellent. Cleverly done!"

The deadly spear had transfixed a parrot that had risen with a loud scream. The native turned again and smiled. Ferrers Lord smiled too, and pointed to a high branch on which a squirrel was perched. His revolver cracked, and the little animal toppled down. It touched the ground in two halves, cut asunder by the unerring spear. Ferrers Lord shook hands with his guide and patted him approvingly on the shoulder. The undergrowth grew denser and denser.

Suddenly the man stopped and gave the millionaire the spear. Overhead the lianes and mighty creeper hung like a network of green cables. It was impossible to see more than a third of the way up the tree.

Seizing a dangling liane, the man began to climb swiftly. Like all forest-bred Indians, he could climb like a monkey.

He disappeared into the green wilderness, but great beads of moisture kept falling, which told the millionaire that he was still climbing. Presently a shout came from above.

"Douravo!"

Something came rustling and rattling through the leaves and fell close to the millionaire's feet.

"Odontoglossum Lordii, the blue orchid!" said Ferrers Lord.

He picked it up. It was a true *Odontoglossum*, but such a one as no European, except poor Oscar Whateman, had ever set eyes upon. That one plant, if sold in the London auction rooms, would draw buyers from all parts of the world to fight for its possession. Millionaires would bid for it frenziedly—more frenziedly than ever they had bid for priceless jewels or priceless paintings.

Ferrers Lord picked it up. It had not been broken in the descent. There were twenty-nine blooms on the spike, and not one alike. They were all blue, blue as sapphires, and wonderfully large. The bulbs were of dull crimson hue, very fleshy, and slightly pointed. He examined the amazing orchid with quiet curiosity. At what cost had he purchased this eighth wonder of the world? He had seen it, he had taken it in his hand, perhaps that was all. So far as its value went in pounds, shillings, and pence, to him it was valueless, for he was rolling in wealth. The vain-glorious boast of a man he despised, a threat, an insult, and this had come of it. Hans Hausmann, writhing under the defeat of his horse, had boasted that he would sell blue orchids for sixpence each, knowing that Ferrers Lord alone possessed one. And this had come of it!

"You are very beautiful," said the millionaire; "but you have cost many a life already. Bah!"—he shrugged his shoulders—"it was not your fault but mine. Whatever the price is, we must pay it."

He lifted one of the blossoms to his nostrils. The days of miracles were not past. The orchid had a scent!

Ferrers Lord let the plant fall as if it had stung him. The scent was faint, delicious, but utterly strange to him. Beautiful as it was, it gave him a sensation of horror and loathing. The man of iron winced as if he had picked up some poisonous reptile by mischance. The next instant a humming-bird was hovering over each blossom like a living gem. Then the native slid down the liane and Ferrers Lord again took up the blue orchid.

"Douravo!" he shouted, and sprang aside.

A tiny green snake slid over his sleeve with a hiss. It fell at the native's foot. The man gave a cry and dropped backward. Down came Ferrers Lord's boot, crushing the snake. The native lay shivering.

"Did it bite you?"

Ferrers Lord grasped the man's ankle and examined his foot. There was no mark. He knew that the bite of that snake meant certain death. He knew now also why he had flung down the orchid in loathing and disgust. Though he had not seen the venomous thing lurking there, its colour craftily matching the colour of the bulbs, instinct had warned him of the danger.

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"Come," he said, "you are safe. I do not blame you for being frightened. It was enough to shake the nerves of any man. Here, take your spear and let us go back. I have seen enough."

Tarface was almost drunk when they returned, and that explained why carrying the bundle had made him perspire so much. He had carried more than robes, paint, and plumes, for he had carried a jar of wine. Still, there was no hurry. Ferrers Lord emptied out the rest of the wine and ordered the interpreter to go to sleep. Then he undressed. In half an hour he was a native, to all appearance, and the warriors nodded their approval. Althara had enclosed a small mirror, once the property of Mr. McNish, and small as it was, the millionaire felt confident when he looked at himself in it, that, with the shield to cover half his face, it would take a keen eye to detect him. He sat down and smoked. The sun sank lower, and Tarface's nose and the flies kept up an incessant hum between them. At last Ferrers Lord shook the sleeper.

"It is time," he said.

The plain was bathed in crimson light. Tarface was practically sober now, but very timid. Ferrers Lord hurried him along and schooled him threateningly what to say. The village came into view, every roof looking as if it had been soaked in blood. And there two men in khaki uniforms were busily throwing stones at a bottle stuck on a stick, while six other men looked on with true German seriousness, and made small bets with each other about which of the stone throwers would hit it first. The tall savage—Ferrers Lord—laughed behind his shield. There was a yell and a rush for rifles.

"Speak to them, fool!" cried the millionaire.

In an instant spears were in the ground, and the warriors had raised their empty hands. After a glance at them the stone-throwing went on again. Ferrers Lord bit his lips. By a fluke one of them smashed the bottle, and after waiting to collect his bets, he swaggered forward.

"Which of you pigs speaks German?" he asked in that language.

"Speaks English," stammered Tarface. "Not know what say, but me English."

"Himmel! You look English. Vot you vant? You come do surrender?"

"Come see chief," said the trembling Tarface. "Got message from Queen."

"Dot all right. March on den." He pointed to the village.

They walked into the village without a soul to oppose them. The millionaire touched Tarface.

"Hide these flowers," he said, "and when I kick your heel let them fall."

"I get kill if do dat," whined the interpreter. "All white men fools 'bout dese tings."

"You'll get killed if you don't."

Tarface pushed the blossoms into his belt and pulled down his robe over them. As they took the turn into the main street of the village, a man came sauntering along, smoking a pipe. He was quite unarmed. He stopped, looked, and then ran as if for life. Then a bugle sounded.

"Tell them hands up," said Ferrers Lord, "and walk more slowly. Halt, halt! Tell them to halt!"

The interpreter was only just in the nick of time. Rifles cracked, and the leading native dropped as a hail of bullets swept past. He got up unhurt, for the bullet had only struck his shield, but his arm was tingling. Then the sun sank, and it was dark. The crash of rifles died away.

"Stand still!"

"Stand still!" gasped the terrified interpreter.

Ferrers Lord caught his arm. He heard a rush of footsteps. Two men only were with him, the man who had guided him to where the blue orchids grew and Tarface. The others had fled. Voices sounded behind them, gruff and guttural. The Germans, who had been playing at throwing at the bottles, were returning.

"Call 'help, help!'" said the millionaire. "Call loud or I'll kill you."

"Help, help!" The interpreter's voice was a terrified squeak. "Help, help, help!"

Somebody struck a match and a loud burst of laughter followed.

"All run away but you," said a man in German. He gave Ferrers Lord a kick. "Get on pig."

Ferrers Lord looked at him out of the corner of his eye, and photographed his picture on his mind. Torches gleamed brightly above the barricade, and eager voices shouted to one another. Almost before they knew it, they were in the palace. They had been absolutely thrown over the barricade between two Maxims.

(Another splendid long instalment of this grand serial next Monday.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 335.

LOOKING AFTER UNCLE!

(Continued from page 23.)

"If you had been more prudent, my dear Peter—"

"Just my luck, ain't it?" said Peter, with undiminished cheerfulness. "Never mind; it's all in the day's work!"

And the loss of his chance of going on that much-coveted holiday did not seem to trouble Peter in the least. If it did, he bore it with great fortitude.

Uncle Benjamin did not even speak to his lively nephew the next day. He kept at a safe distance from him. He did not seem to feel quite safe, somehow, when he was anywhere near Peter.

After lessons that day, Alonzo's box was brought down into the hall. Mr. Todd came out, after bidding farewell to the Head.

Alonzo, though sorry that his cousin was missing the holiday, was very happy at the prospect before him. He promised all the fellows to send them picture postcards from Switzerland and Venice and Rome and Naples. All the fellows shook hands with him most heartily, and wished him luck.

Mr. Todd shook hands with Peter for good-bye, with a severe brow.

"Happy journey, uncle!" said Peter meekly.

"I think I have made the best possible arrangement for a happy journey in my choice of the nephew who accompanies me," said Mr. Todd grimly. "I will not conceal from you, Peter, that my choice would most probably have fallen upon you; but, after my experiences of the last few days, I see that it would be quite impossible. I am afraid that my patience would not be equal to the strain. To be quite plain, nothing would induce me to take you. I am sorry, but such is the fact!"

Peter looked properly penitent.

"However, I forgive you all your absurd tricks," said Mr. Todd, feeling that he could safely do that, now that he was going safely out of reach of Peter's humorous proclivities; "and here is a little parting gift, my dear boy!" He pressed a folded fiver into Peter's hand. "Good-bye, my boy!"

"Good-bye, uncle! Best luck, Lonzy!"

And Mr. Todd and the lucky nephew stepped into the cab and drove away, followed by a cheer from the Remove fellows. Peter looked after the cab till it had disappeared, and then turned back into the house. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry took him by either arm, and marched him off to No. 1 Study, where Johnny Bull and Nugent and Inky had prepared a tremendous feed ready.

"Sit down, kid," said Wharton. "You're the honoured guest!"

"I say, this is ripping of you chaps!" said Peter, willingly taking a seat. "Comforting me in the hour of affliction—what?"

"Well, I suppose you must be feeling rather sick about that holiday," said Harry. "You would have had a splendid time, I suppose?"

"Yes, rather. Pass the ham!"

"But what on earth induced you to play those idiotic pranks on your uncle, Todd?" demanded Bob Cherry. "You've usually got a little sense. But—"

"Can't you guess?" asked Peter, with a chuckle.

"Blessed if I can!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Didn't you want to go?" demanded Wharton, a light breaking on his mind.

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, ass, I wanted to go—only I wanted Alonzo to go more, see? Alonzo isn't very fit, and a trip like that will do him worlds of good—see? But I knew Uncle Ben would take me. You see, I'm rather a livelier chap to have along with one than poor old Lonzy! I couldn't very well tell Uncle Ben I didn't want to go. Besides, it wouldn't have been true—I did want to! But I wanted him to take Alonzo, and I had to work it without letting him suspect the little game! See now?"

"My hat!"

"I say, Toddy, you're a brick, you know!"

"Oh, rot!" said Peter.

But the Famous Five insisted that Peter was a brick; and when the Remove fellows came to understand the deep scheme that Peter had schemed, and carried out so effectually, they voted Peter a brick, too. The scheme had certainly been a great success, and it was a long time before the juniors ceased to chuckle over Peter Todd's peculiar method of looking after uncle!

THE END.

(Another grand tale of the chums of Greyfriars next Monday, entitled "Wun Lung's Wheeze!" by Frank Richards. Order your "Magnet" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)



My Readers' Page

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FOR NEXT MONDAY:

"WUN-LUNG'S WHEEZE!"
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Is our next grand, long, complete tale of the chums of Greyfriars. As the title reveals, Wun-Lung, the wily Chinese, plays a big part in the story, and as his actions are Oriental—to say the least of them—you may be certain that there are plenty of lively incidents in

"WUN-LUNG'S WHEEZE!"

A FRIENDLY SHAKE.

Sometimes funny things will occur, even in the best regulated houses. "Bulldog" tells me that last week his mother engaged a new housemaid. The girl was instructed to bring up an early cup of tea for "Bulldog's" mother and father, and, on her first morning, the master of the house hopped out of bed, opened the door a few inches, and held out his hand for the tray. The girl had already placed the tea on the floor, and evidently failed to understand what was required. She hesitated for a moment, and then, seeing the hand move impatiently, she summoned up her courage and thook it heartily.

Thanks, "Bulldog!" I hope your excellent little story will amuse your fellow-Magnetites as much as it did me.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

- "A Loyal Reader" (New Zealand).—Thanks for letter. Best of luck for your footer team!
- T. Coyle (Glasgow).—Very many thanks for your postcard and your appreciative remarks about "Chuckles."
- H. Simmonite (Oldham).—The first issue of "The Magnet" Library appeared February, 1908.

LITTLE-KNOWN CRICKET RECORDS.

When the Bails Will Not Fall.

One of the most singular instances of being caught out in first-class cricket took place in an Essex and Derby match a year or so back. Mr. F. L. Fane was the victim. He just touched a ball from Warren, and it dropped between the feet of Humphries, the Derby wicketkeeper. The latter quickly realised the situation, and, gathering up the ball from between his ankles, appealed, and was allowed the catch. There are many other unusual ways in which batsmen have been given out. Several have been caught through playing the ball into their own pockets, some have been out because their hats—in the days of old cricketers used to play in top-hats—or caps fell upon the wickets and knocked the bails off, while in a match between Sussex and England, J. Broadbridge threw his bat at an off ball, hit it, and was caught. Occasionally batsmen have been declared "not out" under remarkable circumstances, an instance in a match at Hong Kong being a particularly good example. On this occasion the middle stump was bowled out of the ground, but the bails did not fall. On investigating the cause, it was found that the sun's heat had melted the varnish and glued the two bails together and to the two upstanding wickets. At other times the bails have been knocked off, but have fallen back into position again, while the ball has been seen to go between the stumps without removing the

bails. A University player once had a wonderful "stroke" of luck. In cutting he knocked the stumps almost horizontal, but such was the force with which he brought his bat down on the top of the wickets that he drove the bails into them, and the umpire had no hesitation in giving him not out.

Some Peculiar Accidents.

In days gone by bowlers were as a rule not over-fond of work, and never thought of running after a ball that had got past them. But G. F. Grace was not built that way, and once sprinted after a "sevens" that had been hit off his bowling, trotting back to send down the next ball. Another hard worker was Dr. E. M. Grace. He was one of the most brilliant fielders at point England ever had, and in a match in which he was taking part, a professional, who had been deceived by one of the "coroner's" wily lobs, and who had been caught by the bowler at short leg, remarked: "Good heavens, there ain't anything that chap can't do. I expect he'll be wanting to wicketkeep to his own bowling next." However, that was one of the few things "E.M." did not attempt.

The record wide ball must have been that sent down by Tom Emmett, the famous Yorkshireman. Tom liked his bowling to be treated with respect, and when a certain batsman would persist in treating it with contempt, he determined to try his fastest "express." He rushed to the crease and let fly, but just as the ball was leaving his hand he slipped, and the leather "clean bowled" over the unfortunate umpire at the other end. For a long time after that no one, not even his most intimate friends, dare mention "wide" in Tom's hearing.

That old saying, "After a wide a wicket," came true in curious fashion in a country-house match some time ago. A well-known All-England player was batting, and appeared well set when the bowling was changed. The new trundler, the estate carpenter, sent down a remarkable over. The first five balls were wides—very much so—but the sixth was "dead on" the middle stump, and the batsman was so surprised that he never attempted to hit it, and was out!

Two balls delivered by a fast bowler in a local match will want some beating. From the first the wicket-keeper had the exciting and unpleasant experience of being simply bombarded. One of the bails struck him over the left eye, the other on the chin; one stump hit him on the thigh, another on the right side of the face, and the ball nearly broke his wrist! The second ball hit the middle stump, knocked it out of the ground, and sent it whizzing round in the air, after which it dropped back into its original position!

An Arctic Record.

"During the first innings there were hit no fewer than sixteen drives of twenty runs each." This reads like the description of a match in which a team of giant Thorntons and Jessops were engaged; but it isn't, for it is taken from an account of a game played in the Arctic regions in March, 1823, between the crews of the Hecla and the Fury. The stumps were pitched on smooth ice, and when the wind got behind the ball it travelled a great distance.

The performance of Mr. Charles Absolom for Wood Green against Willesden in 1872 must surely be a record, though it will not be found in the cricket handbooks. Every batsman in each innings was either caught, bowled or run out by him! There is something for our modern bowlers to think over.

Another wonderful feat worthy to rank with this was also performed in a club match. The two crack batsmen of a side went in first, and when they had knocked up well over three hundred runs between them, the innings was declared closed with no wicket down. Instead of being given a rest, the batsmen were next set on to bowl, and in a very short time they had got rid of their opponents twice for a total of sixteen, taking ten wickets each.

(Another Grand Cricket Article next week.)

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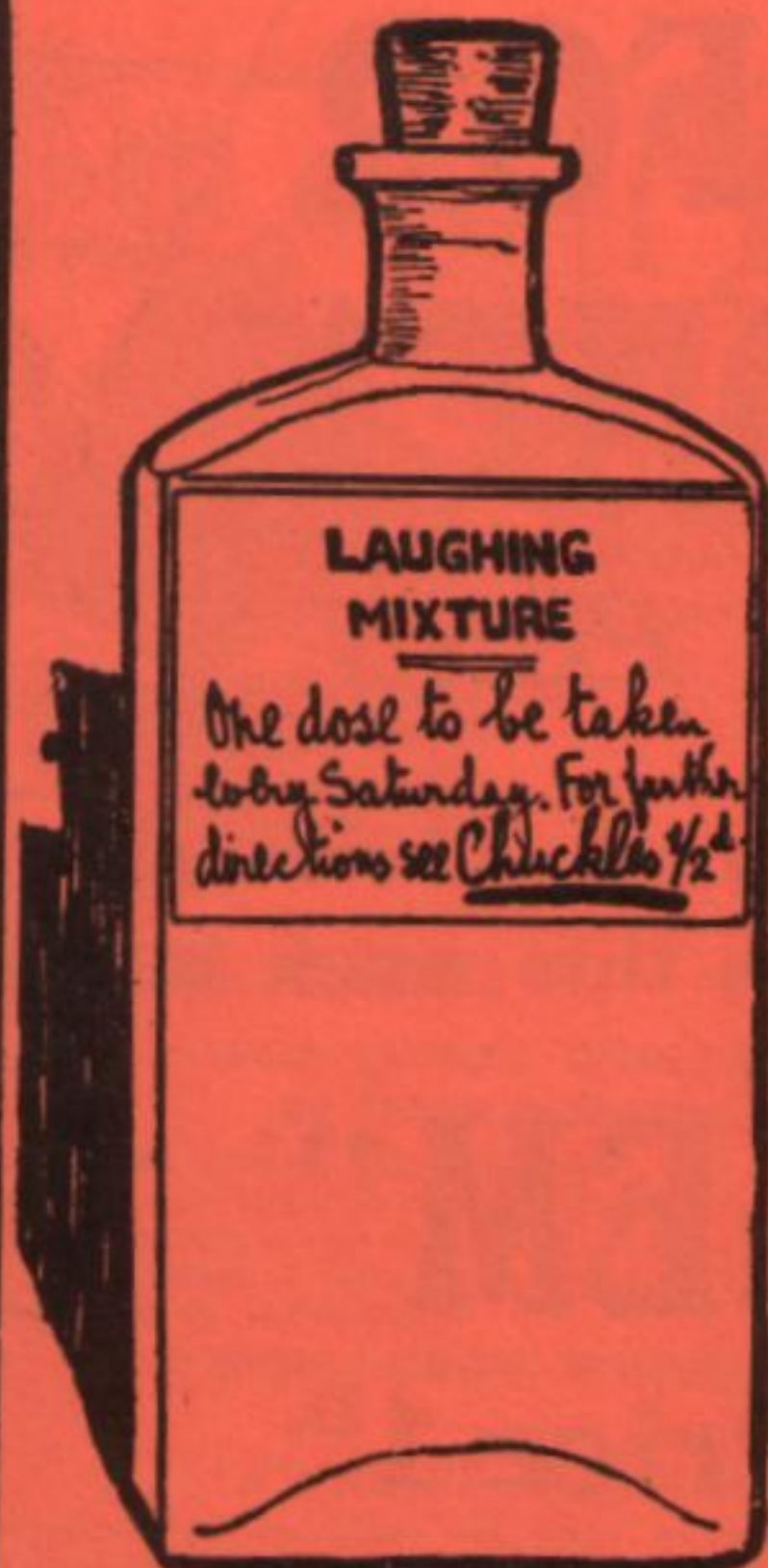
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